No. 20 (Spring 2011) ISSN 0975-4881

dialog

A BI-ANNUAL INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURAL STUDIES
PANJAB UNIVERSITY, CHANDIGARH

CALL for PAPERS

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, 2011. 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.

o. 20 (Spring 2011) ISSN 0975-4881

dialog

A BI-ANNUAL INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

EDITOR : AKSHAYA KUMAR

A Scene from Mahesh Dattani's 30 DAYS IN SPETEMBER staged by the students of the Department in English Auditorium on March 11-13, 2011

Rediscovering Humanities in Literature

Rana Nayar

We are poised at a critical juncture in our history. The 20th century was a century of World Wars, an extended Cold War, Holocaust, Partitions, ideological collisions, death of imperialism, birth of neo-imperialism, collapse of erstwhile Soviet Union, triumph of market-driven capitalism and American globalization. In a way, we have experienced so much in our recent history that it may take us several generations to absorb and assimilate the impact of what we have collectively been through. One of the most obvious inferences we can draw from this situation is that the world around has changed at a frenetic, maddening pace so much so that it has left most of us reeling under the shock, quite disoriented, even off-centered. In his book, *The Future Shock,* Alvin Toffler says that one of the defining words of our contemporary reality is 'Change' and that this change is likely to take place at such a staggering pace that it would leave most of us in the middle of a maelstrom, swirling like leaves in a whirlpool.

One of the ways in which this frenetic change has impacted our lives is that it has given us a permanent sense of co-habitation with multiple crises. Be it the Great Depression or Economic Recession, failure of the ruling elite or the rights of the marginalized, oppressed minorities, fact of political corruption or the fiction of bureaucratic indifference, we, no longer, talk now in terms of finding a remedy or a solution, rather insist on how we can negotiate,' 'circumvent' or 'manage' these crises. One of the ways in which the 20th century has changed our perception of our situation, milieu and circumstances is the way we invariably talk in terms of the 'management approach' over the 'diagnostic approach.' Until the end of the 19th century, it was the 'diagnostic approach,' supported by the medical science, which held sway over the human imagination. But somehow, the swirling changes in the 20th century compelled human beings to re-examine their approach to problem-solving. From attempting to find abiding, permanent solutions, which were nowhere to be found, as the problems far exceeded the limits

of human understanding, to 'managing' or 'containing' or 'cohabiting' with the problems, there has been a great leap forward.

Now before I start outlining the exact nature of the 'crises' (I'm deliberately and self-consciously using the plural form here) confronting the 'Humanities,' let me raise a few semantic questions, which may even appear rhetorical to some. Let me first go into the history of the term 'Humanities' and see what kind of implications it has for the subject under discussion. The term 'Humanities' derives itself from the root word 'human' and is ideologically linked to the philosophy of 'humanism' that, we all know, gained currency in the West during Renaissance. As we all are familiar with what happened during Renaissance, I see no reason why I should elaborate on the social, political or cultural practices that supported, endorsed or legitimized Humanism. However, if I have to historicize this 'idea' or 'concept,' then it may safely be traced back to the 4th century BCE, a period in history that saw the emergence and consolidation of the Greek language, literature and civilization.

Though not many people are likely to accept this, but what happened before and after and also on account of the thought propagated by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle is closely tied to the philosophy of 'Humanism.' Despite their apparent differences, all the three great philosophers, in their own distinctive ways, promoted 'humanistic' tradition. 'Humanities' as a branch of knowledge and discipline is, however, a later invention, whose contours had begun to emerge around 16th and 17th century and coincided largely with the project of Enlightenment. Let me clarify, once again, that when I speak of Enlightenment, I'm not referring to the kind of Enlightenment Buddha experienced, which is purely spiritual in nature, but to the triumph of scientific reasoning, progress as also concerted efforts to build a material culture around these principles.

Now before I run into any semantic problems, let me clarify that I have a definite sense of what 'humanism' is or could possibly be. In one word, 'humanism' is a man-centric philosophy, and here I'm using 'man' not in its 'gendered' sense, but in its 'generic' sense. It has nothing to do with the primacy of man over woman, or woman as inferior to man or a whole lot of other ideological slants that our post-modernist/post-structuralist friends often give

to it. Somehow, 'humanism' has been made into such a 'pariah' term these days that often we end up celebrating anti-humanism, without realizing its deeper implications. It is one thing to question the assumptions of 'humanism' or the project of Enlightenment that derived itself from it, but it is quite another to denounce it, lock, stock and barrel. In a way, the bad days of 'humanism' started with the arrival of Theory, which has apparently knocked 'humanism' out of the reckoning. Even since our friend Derrida challenged the notion of 'metaphysics of presence' and the rationale behind the logo-centric 'subject,' in the 1960s, not only has 'Humanism' become a bad word for most of us, but those of us who do believe in 'humanism' are constantly on the defensive, running for cover, almost to save our lives or our teeth.

I do not want to sound pedantic here, but let me say that ever since the moment of Theory arrived, we have stopped thinking of 'man' as a unified being and have increasingly begun to think of ways in which we can possibly split, divide, and fragment his identity. The markers of man's identity are no longer his ability to either 'be' or 'become' but have been 'contaminated' or marked by race, gender, nation, class, caste, ideology and what have you. I'm not saying that Theory has not served much purpose. It certainly has, and that purpose is to make all those classes that have been marginalized, oppressed and colonized through history to reclaim their identity, and provide them with a framework within which they could, if possible, even create their own narratives of liberation. But has it really happened? Are the blacks in America or South Africa in a much better position today than they were in, say, 1960s? Have the colonized nations been able to work towards their 'narrative of emancipation' by overturning the colonial practices/ colonial institutions or by re-creating the indigenous ones, instead? Have women across the world become freer and reclaimed their dignity after all the efforts made by the First World and/or the Third World Feminists? As a result of Theory, our hermeneutic and textual practices may have changed, but our economic, political and cultural practices have largely remained unchanged. If Theory has only given rise to another kind of neo-colonialism or neo-imperialism, or has only given us new logic for the sustenance of globalization (another unequal economic/political order), then I'd

certainly prefer to side with the age-old, time-tested notions of humanism, even at the risk of being labeled a dinosaur.

Having said this let me now proceed to another dimension of the problem. It's alright for me to assert that I favor the 'return of humanism' in some form, whatever it may be, but things are not as simple as they appear to be. Having been viewed with suspicion and distrust over the years, humanism is certainly in a state of deep crisis, today. Now, as far as I'm concerned, there are three possible ways in which we may configure this crisis. At this point, I would like to raise this question: when I do talk about the 'crises' (the plural version), what is it that I'm really talking about? Am I talking about the crises 'in' humanities, crises 'of' humanities or crises 'for' humanities? Though it might appear that it is just another linguistic game I'm playing with you, which has to do with the arbitrary change in the 'middle term' or 'preposition' of the proposition, it is not quite so. With each semantic shift, you would concede, a concurrent lexical shift would occur and our understanding of the problem would alter and shift, qualitatively and substantively, acquiring very different contours, even problematic. For instance, if it is conceived as crises 'in' humanities, it would possibly mean that there are crises everywhere, and so also in humanities, where the latter is merely a shadow or a reflection, big or small, of the former.

However, if I insist upon perceiving it as 'crises of humanities,' somewhere the assumption is these crises are peculiar to humanities, a particular branch of knowledge or discourse and, therefore, deserves to be viewed in isolation from the crises of the culture to which we belong. But in case, I choose to formulate it as crises 'for' humanities, one of the direct implications would be that these crises have been created, even manufactured for humanities by the forces inimical to it. I do not know if you, as readers and listeners, share my understanding of these propositions, but if you do, then it certainly gives me the legitimacy to proceed further, and if you don't, some more clarification may be needed on the subject. My point is very simple: there are only two ways of looking at any crisis; either we see it in 'relative' terms or in 'absolute' terms. Further, we may perceive it either as a byproduct of both internal and external factors or merely the result of the factors extrinsic to

it. My understanding is that crises in humanities is the resultant of both external and internal factors, is not peculiar to humanities but is an expression of much larger crises. On the one hand, it confronts other allied disciplines such as natural sciences, pure sciences and social sciences, while on the other, our own culture, as well. In other words, I'm hinting towards my preference for the relativistic, holistic approach, not the absolutist, segmented one.

Another point I wish to make is that my frame of reference for discussing these 'crises' is strictly native and Indian, not Eurocentric, circumscribed as it is by my understanding of our own context and milieu, with culture (in its broadest sense possible) being its overarching expression. At this stage, it might be argued that humanisin, as a philosophy and ideology, too, is a Euro-centric concept and that it has a definite context of European Renaissance within which it originated, flourished and finally decayed. It may be further argued, what kind of distinction am I really making between two variants of humanism, Indian and Euro-centric? The popular perception of humanism, undoubtedly, brackets it with European Renaissance, and to that extent, it is perceived as a European or Euro-centric notion, though Europe had experienced humanism much before Renaissance actually dawned. The first flush of humanism in Europe, as I said earlier, coincided with the early phase of Greco-Roman civilization when Socrates, Plato and Aristotle held sway over human knowledge and thought. My point is historicizing humanism backwards is very simple: that humanism has a history that goes as far back as 4th century BCE. If this was the case with the European history, then what was the situation in the Indian context?

In the Indian context, the concept of humanism has, from the ancient times, been closely tied to the notion of *dharma* and is perhaps as old as is the history of *dharma* itself. One of the questions worth raising here is: Did the notion of *dharma* emerge with the *Manusmriti* or does it predate it and has beginnings elsewhere? Without putting too fine a point on this, let me say that the notion of *dharma* is to be found in our myths and legends, especially in our epics, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata,* where it exists either as a normative principle or as exceptionalism. As it happened in Europe centuries later, the notion of humanism

took its roots in the Indian context in our philosophical system, our structures of thought and feeling, our cultural matrix. To a large extent, it drew its main stimulus from the theological framework of Hinduism, though in its long journey through history, it became secular in nature as it sought synthesis with theological frameworks other than those of Hinduism, such as Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism. It is a sheer quirk of history (isn't it?) that so many world religions found a home in India, had an interface and dialogue with other religions, and ultimately helped in consolidating, re-defining and challenging the limits of humanism from time to time.

My point is very simple: our concept of humanism is much more comprehensive, more composite and more synergetic or hybridized than the European notion could ever hope to be. It is not simply a case of scoring brownie points here, but a way of suggesting that our history has been much more inclusive than the European history, and as such, inclusivity, catholicity, comprehensiveness could easily be isolated as specific markers of Indian humanism. While in the West, the whole grid of humanism hinges upon the notion of existential, philosophical dualism, or what often passes off as 'Self-Other' differentiation; in the Indian context, it's the all-inclusive, monotheistic notion of the 'Cosmic Self' that assimilates and is assimilated, that absorbs and expands, that recognizes no 'Other' except as an expression of the 'Self.' Besides, in the West, humanism is broadly seen as a god-centric or a man-centric philosophy, but in India, it is neither god-centric nor man-centric, but dharma-centric philosophy. At this point, some elaboration of the principle of *dharma* becomes absolutely necessary. Dharma, as it is understood in *The Mahabharata*, is something that pre-existed man and shall also exist after the generic man has ceased to exist on the face of this earth. In other words, *dharma* is said to be unchanging, immutable reality that is neither born nor dies, neither increases nor decreases, quantitatively or qualitatively. It is something that supersedes the temporal existence of man or men and so acquires an eternal, universal form and/or character.

In the penultimate chapter of *The Mahabharata*, when Yudhisththira finally decided to renounce the world and leave on his last journey to heaven, he was accompanied by his wife, brothers

and a dog. Slowly, his wife and brothers fell by the wayside, but the dog continued to bring up the rear. When the moment came for him to enter the portals of heaven, Lord Indra offered Yudhisththira a choice between his faithful dog and heaven, saying, "Heaven has no arrangement for people with dogs. Think it over, good Yudhisththira. My suggestion is, you forget the dog. No wrong will be done if you do." Yudhisththira said, "To abandon anyone who is devoted is immoral. It is as immoral as killing a Brahmin. Great Indra, I'll not abandon this dog even if it means losing heavenly bliss." As the story goes, that very moment, the dog transformed himself into the god of Dharma and began to sing Yudhisththira's praises. Nowhere is the concept of *dharma* enunciated better than in the last chapter, where the significance of *The Mahabharata* is finally summed up in these words:

"Vyasa condensed the Mahabharata
for the sake of Dharma.....
From dharma comes success and pleasure:
Why is dharma not practiced?
Never reject *dharma* – not for pleasure, not from fear,
Not out of greed either.
Dharma is eternal. Discard life itself,
but not dharma.
Pleasure and pain are not eternal,
The soul alone is eternal."

It is this equivalence between *dharma* and *soul* that needs to be examined somewhat critically if the true meaning of *dharma*, enunciated as it is in our ancient texts, is to be grasped in its totality. *Dharma* is not only a moral precept or imperative that guides our path of life in this world, but a governing principle that determines our position in the 'other world,' too. *Dharma* is not simply a regulatory principle of social engineering, as we often take it to be, but also a way of enlarging our consciousness, and expanding our soul and spirit. In other words, *dharma* is the only connecting link, a bridge across this world and the world hereafter, the world of materiality and that of spirituality. *Dharma*, at once, offers deliverance from this world and from the next; a way of imposing order on the worldly life and also a way out of this world into a state of transcendence that *Moksha* promises. *The Mahabharata*

also reminds us that the performance of *dharma* is a sacred duty, enjoined upon every living being, especially in the critical times, when adherence to *dharma* becomes a pretext for self-questioning or a calculated personal risk. Even in face of a Nietzchean nightmare, when one has lost the last vestiges of love and hope or faith in the legitimacy of human bonds, *dharma* stands firm as the sustaining, if not the guiding, principle of our life and existence.

Now my exposition of *dharma*, especially in the way in which it has been done in some of the preceding paragraphs, should not mislead my listeners into believing that I'm trying to give it specifically a Hindu-orientation or suggesting that it be treated as a Hindu-centric notion. Far from it, I'm only suggesting that though it may have originated in Hinduism, it certainly has undergone several changes and modifications through history, especially as it was, from time to time, incorporated into and re-interpreted by the exponents of Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism in India. Though the Buddhists, the Jains and the Muslims may have been somewhat harsh and unforgiving in their emphasis on and orientation of *dharma*, Christians and Sikhs have recognized in it the only possibility of regulating social as well as the spiritual lives of its adherents. I have no hesitation in saying that the concept of *dharma*, as it either exists or is practiced today, is neither pure nor uncontaminated, as it doesn't belong to a particular religious denomination or group, but over the centuries, has truly become a hybridized, indigenous form of humanism that is truly Indian in character, form and spirit. If I have gone to such pains to discuss this idea, it is only to emphasize that when in India we speak of 'crisis in humanities,' it is this absence of *dharma* in our emotional, social, political, religious, intellectual and cultural life that we are essentially trying to bemoan.

At this juncture, the question arises: Are there any solutions to this absence of *dharma* and the consequent threat to our humanity, our very existence? As I said earlier, we are living through the times when 'diagnostic approach' has already been abandoned in favor of the 'management approach.' Does it mean, we should now stop talking in the language of abiding solutions, permanent cures or prescriptive remedies? In a way, yes, but to accept it in totality would mean that we are walking into the trap of Euro-

centrism. My argument all along has been that when it comes to crisis, nothing works better than our home-grown prescriptions, our own remedies. Often, in the times of crises, borrowed ideas fail to work for indigenous problems. So, if we can allow ourselves to step out of Euro-centrism, for some time, we may be able to work our way around our crises. In the 19th century, the West (read Nietzsche) had already proclaimed that 'God is dead' and now it has declared (read Derrida and company) that the quintessential 'man' in the sense in which we have always understood him, is now a 'de-centred subject.' Death of God and decentring of 'Man' have left them in a situation where they are busy re-writing 'histories' and re-reading 'textualities.' The author of their lives is 'dead' and now they want the reader (read Consumer) to step in and start playing an active role in scripting meanings. As far as they are concerned, there is perfect symmetry of thought and action. With the triumph of capitalism and globalization, markets have multiplied and so have the consumers. In that context, it makes sense to search for plurality of meanings, which creates more and more fissures and internal divisions.

But can we afford to abandon our God? Can we afford to ignore our dialogic tradition, our composite culture and our plurality that celebrates difference? More than ever before, it is now that we need to re-visit our Bhakti poets, revive interest in the Sufi tradition and look for other similar paths that reinforce our faith in both God and Man. This is where the 'management,' not the 'solution' of our crises lies, and this is where the ultimate redemption of our divided culture also lies. Let me now remind you of that composite culture, that dialogic tradition, of which we are the true inheritors, the inheritance that we have somehow lost in our times, because of which we, too, often feel, lost as a generation. Jalaluddin Rumi, a great Sufi saint says, "Try and be a sheet of paper with nothing on it./Be a spot of ground where nothing is growing,/Where something might be planted,/A seed, possibly from the Absolute." Why go far, we have our own version of Sufism, available in Punjabi language and culture. At this point, I'm thinking of Baba Farid, who says: "O Farida! Why do you wander through the dark forests/ Pushed back by the thorns, pricking your tender toes/Why don't you return to the silent corners of your heart/Where your *Sain* resides, unbidden, waiting to greet you." Of course, not to forget

Baba Bulleh who says: "I am emancipated, emancipated I am,/I am no prisoner of being born a Syed,/All the fourteen heavens are my territory,/I am slave to none./Only they shout loud while calling others to prayer/Whose hearts are not pure./Those who go to Mecca on pilgrimage/Have little else to occupy them here."

Let us bring back this humanism, which is already in our blood, and in our culture; not some borrowed, alien notion that has no connection either with our life or our literature. Once that happens, we would have taken care not only of our class rooms but of our society as well. It is the return of this kind of 'humanism' that can help us rediscover ourselves as human beings, negotiate the multiple crises we are facing today, or pave the way for our emancipation, at both the individual and the collective levels. Thank you!

——*——

(Text of the Keynote delivered at GHG Khalsa College for Women, Sidhwan Khurd (Ludhiana) in September 2010.)

The Poetics and Politics of Space: A Reading of Mahasweta Devi's Subaltern Stories

Rekha

Within Mahasweta Devi's[i] creative oeuvre space emerges as an important narrative-thematic axis. Though this spatial dialectics informs all her stories, as an aesthetic activist prop, it is most salient in her subaltern stories. In these stories, she does not delineate space as a mere background, but utilizes it as a significant normative, ideological and embodying presence, that not only impinges on the lives of her protagonists but, in fact, constitutes and controls the very contours of their psychological, social and political being.[ii]

The salience of space as a value loaded presence within principal-subaltern inter-locked existence manifests itself with different foci in her subaltern stories. Read from the vantage point of spatial axis, her stories seem to echo each other in their structural and thematic concerns. They seem to be different takes on the spatio-temporal praxis of similarly placed subaltern subjects to ultimately provide a blueprint for subaltern articulation and emancipation. For Mahasweta Devi space is not only a value loaded entity, it is also a protean presence. Consequently, the very idea of space keeps on imbibing varied semantic overtones. The resultant semantic accretion renders space into a complex, contradictory and multilayered phenomenon that extends from physical to metaphysical, from psycho-somatic to cultural, and from historical to ideological.

This paper attempts to read Mahasweta Devi's four subaltern stories – "The Witch," "Dhouli," "The Hunt, and "Draupadi" – to understand and analyze her activist poetics at the cross-section of Principal-Subaltern tension along spatial axis.[iii] The selection and arrangement of stories understudy is deliberate. Instead of sequencing them in the chronological order of their publication, these are sequenced as to plot the thematic-ideological

evolution of activist aesthetics that Mahasweta Devi was apparently attempting through her literary writings.

I

Physical configuration of/in Mahasweta Devi's subaltern narratives, especially in stories understudy, is intimately fused with the interlocked dominant-dominated existential fault-line of their inhabitants. In her story "The Witch," for example, she conceptualizes the community/village life of the subalterns in terms of a series of inside-outside divisions. The inside is one's own and hence sacrosanct; the outside is alien and impure. Though consensual, this spatial arrangement is nevertheless relative, contextual, fluid and concentric. What is deemed as outside in one context may become inside or socially acceptable in another context.[iv] An illegitimate intrusion into either space invites violence. As the plot of "The Witch" unfolds the underling socio-political matrix of this spatial division become very palpable. The subalterns of the Kuruda catchment region, "[i]n the communism of poverty [. . .] belong to the same class, they're 'comrades'". (67) At the macro level, all the native people, Dushad-Ganju-Oraon-Munda vis-à-vis the mainstream middle class or the non-natives/outsider, mark themselves as 'insiders' or rightful and legitimate offspring of the soil. And the relation between the two, despite their close physical proximity, is necessarily governed by suspicion and mistrust. Within this insider-outsider hierarchical opposition, perpetually kept agape by the mechanism of the mainstream feudalistic-modernistic mindset, the possibility of genuine cross bonding is, at best as bleak possibility. The location of Sharan Mathur – a social activist – in the story exemplifies the ambivalence of this possibility. Though accepted by the *pahaan*, an important tribal functionary, as a friend, he still fails to find complete legitimacy within the 'imaginative insides' of tribal Hesadi.

The mutual 'othering' of the Principal and the Subaltern works either way. If the dispossessed and ignorant natives/denizens view the *dikus* with suspicion, the enlightened citizens of the nations (the relief officers, mission workers, the sadhus of the seva sangh, jamindars, mahajans, jotedars, contractors, police, politicians and bureaucracy) in turn demonise these villagers as ones who "by nature [are] totally unfeeling" (62) and are extremely indifferent to human/patronising touch of the civilised world and the state.

This proclivity of the natives render them sinners, and the village they inhabit by extension becomes "the dens of sinners" (59), in the eyes of the Hanuman Misras, the religious and political overlords of the region. Mahasweta Devi thus, hammers home the fact that the process of mutual demonization is not only social but also a spatial act.

The appropriation of subaltern space by the dominant classes affects the subaltern viciously. In "The Witch" this viciousness manifests itself in three forms: first, it leads to the loss of natives' agency to the likes of Hanuman Misras; secondly, it leads to a re-adjustment of their cultural beliefs; and thirdly, deprived of any "niche in the man-made economic cycle" and dispossessed by the vagaries of nature – their only hope – the natives find themselves "redundant" within their own space (116). This realization of redundancy, the threat of being wiped out and a consequent desperation for survival turn them fearful. The fear, metamorphosing itself into violence, seeps into the interstices of their habitation and personality and turns the soft soil into granite.

Within the natives themselves, the socio-spatial matrix is conceptualized differently. The entire region is conceived of in terms of special characteristics: "The women of Hesadi are bad tempered; the Oraons of Kuruda lazy, the men of Burudi quarrelsome. And every ten-fifteen years, some old man or woman of Murahi becomes a Daini". (69) The inside-outside division constitutes their inter-village organization. This is apparent from the way each village *pahaan* is initially concerned with the safety of his village alone, and not with that of the entire region. The gendered division of space, even within subalterns, at the time of crisis becomes very conspicuous: it is outdoors for men and indoors for children and women. This pattern governs *adivasi* life in almost all the stories of Mahasweta Devi. In "The Witch," this spatial segregation is rehearsed again and again by the people of Kuruda, Murhai, Hesadi and Tura. They reel under the "formless" terror of *daini*, let loose on them by Hanuman Misra, the Hindu *deota* of Tahar. There are rules for *daini* hunting. The *pahaan*, i.e., the tribal priest, strikes *nagara* to inform the natives about the presence of *daini* in the

Jilad forest and to prepare them for hunting it. The psychological and spatial meaning of *nagara* strikes is very palpable:

> The nagara is sounded. Men begin to collect. In their hands, burning mashaals, their waistcloths heavy with stones. Women pick up the children and bolt the doors. No one looks accusingly at the pahaan. The pahaan's face is agonised (98).

Though the community as a whole is endangered by the threat of *daini*, it is the woman who invariably faces the impact of this threat twice over. She finds her space and her movements further restricted within the society already circumscribed by mainstream bulldozing, despite the relative egalitarian character of the tribal society. The suspicion and sanctions are directed more brutally towards her than towards her male counterpart. Her movement is more closely watched, for the menstruating woman is believed to be more susceptible to the influence of *daini*.

It is through Somri's tale in "The Witch" that Mahasweta Devi poignantly exposes and mounts a scathing attack on the bias that inheres in woman's gendered location dented by dual patriarchal onslaught. As a member of an emaciated subaltern collectivity, her existence is not only confined by its socio-spatial configuration, but is also endangered by the intrusion of the Principal class. Somri's deafness and mental dwarf-ness, and her molestation and deliberate demonisation (she is very cunningly marked as a *daini* by thakurs of Tahar) and her consequent sub-human existence outside the periphery of civilisation, symbolically capture the forced silence, insubordination and commodification of a woman situated within the matrices of conflicting patriarchal domains. The 'other' not only exploits her bodily but it also cunningly exploits the superstition of the "us" to chase away this contaminated body out of its bound. The female body, once ejected out of the legitimate space, is forced into a life of wilderness.

However, with the retrieval of Somri, now a mother, at the end of the story, the tribals are ultimately able to see through the oppressive and hegemonising discursivity of the likes of Hanuman Misras. They also resolve not to work in his brick kilns. But, this

optimism is very fragile. The confrontation still lurks beneath the calm surface. Even when Somri is ultimately retrieved and reclaimed by the Munda tribals of Tura village, she is reclaimed more as a mother than as an autonomous individual. Woman's destiny is still bound with the destiny of patriarchal norms.

"The Witch" from the vantage point of principal-subaltern spatial conflict, thus becomes a deconstructive tale that documents the dilemmas of the natives marginalized, both socially and spatially, by socio-political configurations in the name of development and modernization to explore the impact of the psychological and physical geography of the margins. In the process, she lays bare the socio-spatial topography of the subalterns and foregrounds its implication for/on women.[v]

II

If in "The Witch" Mahasweta Devi foregrounds subaltern demonization as a function of mainstream hegemonic manipulation of the physical, psychological and cultural spaces, in "Dhouli" she draws attention to the enmeshed structuring and interlocked patriarchal interrelationship between private and public spheres and how they impinge on the subaltern female body. That women bodies, sexuality, and gender identities are sites/spaces where cultural notions of normality and indeed, social respectability are created and contested, is made most explicit Dhouli's poignant tale.[vi] She becomes a metaphor of subaltern/female body as an embodiment of hegemonizing and exploitative patriarchal praxis at the cross-section of class and caste, tradition and modernity, feudalism and capitalism.

The ethical-moral context of Taharr, the locale of "Dhouli" normalises the sexual exploitation of *dusad* women by *deotas* as an upper caste and class privilege. Here land, female-body and money (*zar, joru, zameen*) blur into and substitute each other. Those women who passively conform to this arrangement are patronized and those who dare to infringe on it become vulnerable not only to inter but also intra-caste/class exploitation. This is clear from the respective fates of Jhalo and Dhouli in the story. Whereas Kundan-Jhalo relationship epitomizes the pragmatics of this social convention, Dhouli-Misrilal relationship, at least initially, threatens

to destabilize the value matrix inherent in this arrangement. Being an unresisting and available body, Jhalo secures herself through her passivity. Her body becomes a site on which upper caste virility and authority traverses, maintains and propagates itself. On the other hand, Dhouli-Misri's relationship is a result of an aberration called love between two un-equals. As Misri is not a man enough to lay his claim over Dhouli's body, as ordained by the caste-gender nexus and as Dhouli dares to cling to an illusion of utopian romance stubbornly, their relationship puts into crisis the concept of manly honour inherent in the power dynamics of class hierarchy.[vii] As a consequence, the dominant order in this story is up against a dual feminine confrontation. The *deotas* not only have to suppress the encroachment of the feminine 'other' in the form of Dhouli but also have to deal with the apparent feminisation of Misrilal manifest in his tender emotions for Dhouli. To retrieve their caste name and retain their power position, they temporarily banish Misrilal from the village and pressurise Dhouli, under economic coercion, to either conform to the status quo or face eviction.

In the story, Mahasweta Devi thus, showcases the predicament of a subaltern body within caste-class-gender nexus. A mere pleasure-trope, it can only secure itself materially through an exploitative patronage that is inherently ironic: it is safe as long as there is someone to patronise and stake claim on it, but the moment this claim is relinquished or resisted, or the normal coercive pattern between upper caste male and lower caste female slackens, it becomes vulnerable to the lustful gaze of its own community.

Dhouli's avowal of love, even if passive, is an infringement of the prevalent ethical code. It is construed in terms of dangerous or unruly passions detrimental to the dominant and dominated social order. Her love is interpreted as a snare by the upper caste and moral depravity by her own caste. This system, where articulation of female desires is a taboo and sexual coercion a rule, manoeuvres to turn Dhouli's body into an orphaned or rejected body. Deprived of moral-ethical marking, it is rendered into a sinful body both in legitimate and illegitimate relations. The feudalistic gaze, both in its conscious and unconscious manifestations, not only manipulates her emotionally, but also pulverises her bodily.

Mahasweta Devi manipulates male gaze as a narrative-trope to deconstruct its repercussions on Dhouli's circumstances. She builds up the initial contours of Misrilal-Dhouli relationship as interplay of gazes thus:

> Brahman, *deota*, Dhouli had never as much as raised her eyes to look at him, [. . .] One afternoon, as she was bathing in the waterfall [. . .] Misrilal tossed a leafy twig at her. He didn't laugh or make obscene comments. He simply said, 'I'm madly in love with you. Why won't you even look at me?'(5-6)

Despite Misri's apparent love for Dhouli, his demeanor replicates, even if unconsciously, a feudal tendency to reduce female body into a sensual spectacle. His manners have a taken-for-granted-attitude vis-à-vis Dhouli, her location, her body and her protests. Dhouli's responses, in the beginning are tentative, her gaze doubtful and her protests embody a fear of subaltern female within the feudal context. However, under Misri's constant protestation of love, and his caressing gaze, Dhouli soon arrives at an emotional crossroad. At this juncture, she – at the level of body/desires – straddles a precariously delicate balance. Being a woman and a widow, she has to deface her body/desires. Widowhood renders her into an inauspicious body that has to shun certain auspicious spaces and activities like singing marriage songs. Her act of admiring herself is a surreptitious and blasphemous act. Yet Misri makes her aware of her beauty and youthfulness. Utterly confounded, she yields to her body and its desires that she, being a widow, had so self-consciously disciplined. She is enthralled by the seductive yet emancipatory potentials of her body and its language but is also threatened by its destructive reality: "And yet, a sense of triumph. She Dhouli, a *dusad* girl, had driven a brahman's son crazy."[viii] But this sense of triumph via body, in her case, is continuously punctured by the images of her past. Her memories resurrect her as a body entrapped in oppressive situations: being battered by her husband, toiling in the fields, eating the leftovers after the male members had finished their meals, or being eyed by the brother-in-law. These images, indicating a conscious de-prioritisation and subordination of bodily needs like hunger to male needs, define life for her. These palpable bodily memories hang on her as a heavy burden, and in order to nip the impending bodily violence that lurks

behind Misri's advances, she desperately tries to evade his presence by swapping her professional space/duties with her mother. But the grazing grounds in the forest, instead of insulating her from him, makes her accessible to his passions.

Despite his overt avowal of modernistic rhetoric – "I don't care about things like caste and untouchability" (12) – Misrilal covertly yields to the dynamics of gender arrangement within class and racial context. Having tamed him, the dominant order, to repair the damage that has been wrought on the prevailing ethos of the community, transfers the ultimate burden of Misri's guilt on Dhouli's body. It seeks to restore the honour of the family/community by denying Dhouli food and space in Taharr. Dhouli thus becomes a victim of her passion and of a sexist society: "It's always the fault of a woman. For not considering a brahman's honour, she's even more to blame". (13)

Dhouli's sense of recognition, i.e., a Brahmin *deota* is subjugated by her beauty, is short-lived. Her liminal space, a result of 'unusual' brahmin-dusadin bond, soon gets her into cleft-stick of patriarchal ego-clash. Her body becomes a tug of war between upper caste staus-quoist connivance and her own community's rejection. This leads to a simultaneous suppression and rejection of Dhouli as a human being. She becomes doubly outcast. Doubly ejected, she finds herself in a socio-economic no-man's land.

But in her refusal to leave Taharr, Dhouli challenges the spatial and sensual hegemony of the upper caste. Instead of dying and hence symbolically de-bodying herself, she chooses to turn the site of her exploitation into the site of resistance and control: "I tried to kill myself. But then I thought, why should I? You can get married, run a shop, see movies with your wife, and I have to kill myself? Why? Why? Why?". (31) Here she deliberately exploits and tramples upon the masculine notion of female sexuality as a gateway to honour and disgrace. Her act of inviting the first customer home, tantamount to a wilful insertion of her body into public and economic domain over which the feudal order had tried to lay an exclusively personal claim. And in the process, she exposes the hypocrisy and sexism of patriarchal verdict:

> Dhouli cannot practise prostitution in this village. [. . .] Such sinful activities cannot continue in the heart of this village. This village still has *brahmans* living in it. *Puja* is still done in their homes every day (31).

In becoming a prostitute, she puts to shame the very order that had shamed her in the first place. Though premised on the commoditization of the body, her entering the professional market is an empowering act – an act where she becomes the master of her own body. But Mahasweta Devi is quick to show the ad-hoc nature of this empowerment. Dhouli's story, thus, underlines how woman's sexual subordination in the domestic sphere reflects on and reinforces her sexual commodification in the public sphere, both being coterminous with each other. The feudalistic gaze reduces her hierarchised and inferiorised 'body' into a commodity that could be bartered for land and money to satisfy upper caste lust. This process ushers in a socio-economic order in which she loses autonomy over her body and desires and gets framed within/ by the dominant sensual gaze.[ix]

III

In her stories "The Hunt" and "Draupadi" Mahasweta Devi moves from socio-cultural to political spaces to problematize the subaltern women's location within these spaces. Both the colonial and the post colonial spaces are fraught with similar spatial divisions that hierarchizes and otherize and thus lead to multiple exploitation of the tribals, especially tribal women. In "The Hunt" Mahasweta Devi approach to this issue of spatial subalterization of women is more nuanced. Instead of conceiving of colonial and post colonial dominant-dominated spatial configuration in terms of mutually exclusive binaries, she sees these as zones of inherent ambivalences. At the same time she is ready with an empowering blueprint to resist feminine marginalization within an heirachized society.

Mary Oraon, the protagonist of the story, is a child of colonial exploitation and a victim of post-colonial mainstream intervention into the margins. She is an illegitimate offspring of Bhikni, an Oraon tribal and her Igm Australian master, Dixon's son. Such a birth makes her both an insider and an outsider simultaneously within the Oraon society. Though economically and

socially well entrenched in her surroundings, she, nevertheless, lives with an awareness of being "different." The sense of being different helps her manoeuvre a space where she can be herself and can make her own decisions without being encumbered by mores of the community. Nobody objects to her decision of marrying Jalim, a Muslim boy. But this spatial autonomy not only estranges her community from her at a cultural level but also renders her emotionally vacuous:

> She sits at any Oraon house in the village, fries wheatcakes on a clay stone, eats with everyone. Just as she knows she'll marry Jalim, she also knows that had she resembled any Oraon girl [. . .] Oraons would not have let this marriage happen.
>
> Because she is the illegitimate daughter of a white father the Oraons don't think of her as their blood and do not place the harsh injunctions of their own society upon her.
>
> She would have rebelled if they had. She is unhappy that they don't. In her inmost heart there is somewhere a longing to be part of the Oraons (5).

Mary Oraon's existence thus gets spatialized in a very complex way. Her 'outside status' within gendered-enclosures of Oraons, in turn, makes her vulnerable to the 'outsider,' i.e., the exploitative capitalistic-feudal mainstream symbolised by Tehsildar-Banwari nexus.

Mary devises different methods to resist the mainstream vandalization of her space and eroticisation of her body. Initially, she seeks to fight the 'erotic gaze' of Tehsildar Singh by revealing the predatory economics of his brokering deal to Prasad and the villagers. She even threatens to cut off his nose, i.e., use violence-impregnated warning as a defensive/survival tool. But this threat does not work on one who is physically and economically more powerful than her. Tehsildar Singh sees it as a mere 'posturing' and cunningly bides for his chance to lay hands on her. She finally exploits the cultural resources at hand to counter the animalistic

appropriation of her body by the mainstream exploitative agency. She strategically appropriates the ancient tribal ritual, *Jani Parab*, into an act of contemporary resistance to outwit and kill her potential rapist. The way Mahasweta Devi narrates the whole episode is very significant. The narrative tenor not only resurrects the tribal ritual as a cultural trope for gender empowerment within the community, but also transforms it into a potent subaltern tool of political resistance. The almost incantatory description of the act of killing a beast/demon sanctifies the violence inherent in it into a legitimate act of purification. The act not only empowers by tapping the latent feminine energy/shakti, it also restores the order:

> Mary caresses Tehsildar's face [. . .] . Mary is watching, watching, the face changes and changes into? Now? Yes becomes an animal.
> - Now take me? Mary laughed and held him, laid him on the ground. Tehsildar is laughing. Mary lifts the machete, lowers it, lifts, lowers.
> [. . .] Mary stands up. Blood? On her clothes? She'll wash in the cut. [. . .]
> Mary comes out. Walks naked to the cut. Bathing naked in the cut her face fills with deep satisfaction. [. . .]
> In the women's gathering Mary drank the most wine, sang, and danced [. . .] with the greatest relish. [. . .] as if she had made the biggest kill (16).

IV

In "Draupadi" Mahasweta Devi takes up the spatial probe of female existence from multiple angles. Herein a tribal woman, Dopdi, is situated at the intersection of class struggle within the contours of gender and nation. This location is then used as a creative pre-text to explore its repercussions on/for the protagonist. At the very onset of the story, Mahasweta Devi inserts Dopdi, the tribal rebel, in a situation where her very name renders her identity problematic. It amounts to encroaching upon/poaching on the mainstream values: "What is this, a tribal called Dopdi?".(19) It disturbs their appropriatory episteme. She, nevertheless, becomes a problem, a query/ quarry that has to be solved/hunted down, if

the sanctity of the 'official-spaces' and episteme has to be preserved.

Dopdi and her husband Dulna, "the dancing and ululating couple," constitute the tribal face of violent subaltern resistance to the Principal. It is a resistance that is being crafted and nurtured by the 'gentlemen-revolutionaries' who seek to give voice to the tribal/ peasant repression by channelising their aspirations through naxalite ideological framework. This ideology creates a space for the likes of Dopdi and Dulna for 're-empowerment.' But the 'voice' that these people get is not unproblematic. Mahasweta does not valorise Dopdi or romanticise the space of/for resistance created for her by the naxal leadership. Dulna and Dopdi work as couriers, as informers on feudal lords of the area for Arijit and his naxalite band. Their resistance and the hardship it brings, put them in a space where they are caught between the contrary pulls of sympathising 'other' (articulated through the comforting 'voice' of Arijit) and the callous and parasitic 'other' (Senanayak or feudal state order). The forces circumscribing their new space are callously pragmatic. Consequently, Dopdi and Dulna come to inhabit a space, a "Neanderthal darkness" (20) that is created at the cost of their familial and communitarian life.

The emotions that sustain Dopdi in her new-space, however, spring from her cultural ethos. She persists with the movement, not out of any well-formed ideology but because of her love for her dead husband, Dulna. She cannot betray him or the movement for which he had died. Secondly, her fidelity to the movement springs from the purity of her blood. It is the purity of her blood that makes her an insider, a true inheritor of the tradition. "Draupadi" is a story of a tribal woman in abnormal times. And the crisis invariably forces a re-alignment, re-investment and reinterpretation of the cultural norms. Hence, what might have been seen or experienced as a restrictive and reductive patriarchal practice in normal situation is re-interpreted by Dopdi as an empowering strategy. It enables her to insert herself in a traditional continuum as a legitimate insider, despite occupying a space outside domesticity, and privilege her resolve/decision – "I swear by my life. [. . .] Nothing must be told"

(31) – as a legitimate and heroic one. In contrast, Shomai and Budhna, despite being males are discredited.

Thus, working at a cross-road of two essentially patriarchal configurations, one spearheaded by Senanayak and the other by Arijit, Dopdi seems to negotiate a space for herself and work for her supposed cause by realigning herself within her own cultural/ masculine tradition. This, along with the deliberate and constant mental toughening of herself as to her much too familiar fate as a fugitive, enables her to rise up to the might of the state and take it by surprise.

Being a tribal, a woman and a naxalite, Dopdi vis-à-vis the patriarchal state bears a brunt of triple deviancy. She is a political, moral and gender deviant. Outside the pale of normative gendered boundaries, as envisioned by the 'other,' she can be 'made up' without compunction. It is ironically at this juncture that she, till now at the receiving end of the "voice of the male authority" finally emerges as an autonomous agent of her own subject. In the process, she in turn 'unmakes' her making and thus reverses the subject-object equation and emerges as the most powerful subject. Like Dhouli, Dopdi's empowerment, at best, remains tentative. The forces of exploitation have received a set back but only temporarily. Nevertheless, a possible space for resistance has been explored.

V

As is evident from the foregoing discussion, Mahasweta Devi's subaltern narratives repeatedly show how space is strategically manipulated by socially dominant to control and hegemonize the dominated. She employs space as an important narrative prop around which the subaltern-dominant tension unfolds and impinges on the lives of her subaltern characters, especially subaltern women. It is, in fact, in the handling of the spatial enclosures that the worldviews, aspirations and actions of her protagonists are laid bare.

However, instead of positing spatial division as exclusive inside-outside or public or private binaries, Mahasweta Devi's narrative plots draw attention to the enmeshed and interlocked patriarchal/dominant/colonial inter-configuration between the public

and the private. Subaltern/gender dehumanization, in her stories, at times, is the result of deliberate fudging of spatial categories, in a way that the renders public and the private, ours and theirs, personal and political into mirror images of each other. It is the dominant/public gaze that constructs and confines the subaltern/other, and it is this very gaze that that both presupposes and reinforces the subordinate status of woman and stereotypical views of their roles and responsibilities. Within such a socio-political spatial dynamics, a woman is trapped within a never ending loop of multiple-subordination.[x]

To begin with, her narratives, however, initially unfold along the conventional spatial premises and her protagonists are acutely aware of and experience space in such binary oppositions as private and public, danger and safety, ours and theirs, mainstream and marginal or pure and polluted. These categories seem to operate with inflexible ceremony within the family/home such that the physical space of the 'inner/ours' – are zoned and evaluated in terms of its degree of 'privateness.' But as the narratives move on, the marginalized people start experiencing even these spaces as repressed spaces in two mutually conflicting ways. They tend to guard these spaces and are yet exposed to the intrusion of the mainstream/patriarchal within the same space. They try to re-possess these spaces through redefinition of the conventional or try to break free from these enclosures that can now hardly ensure their dignity, or take a leap of memory into these to reinvent, represent or realize the inner space of their imagination.

Mahasweta Devi thus, though underlining the ubiquity of spatial and subaltern configuration of gender vis-à-vis woman, nevertheless actively critiques and challenges this conceptual division of spaces as public and private. In doing so she deconstructs the liberal views that construe public sphere as the legitimate domain of state/dominant intervention and private sphere as the domain of individual/gender autonomy. She not only brings out the irony of this division but also the fallacy of this distinction through the poignant narration of the individual underpinnings of this distinction on the subaltern woman.

Mahasweta Devi, in fact, problematizes this very notion of binary bifurcation of spaces suggesting the possibility of alternative spatial configuration through the advocacy of the personal as the political. Defining politics in terms of power, she visualizes it not only in terms of the dominant/state/public sphere but also as a potential that pervades every aspect of personal life. Though largely concerned with understanding subaltern women within the manipulative web of public sphere, she also portrays her as one trapped by family, a central part of society's power structure and the chief institution of patriarchy. Understood thus sexuality and sexual relations no more remain private and individual matters but – bound up as they are by male definitions, desires and notions, also get implicated within the notion of power and politics. As such all issues related with sex and sexuality become the extension of male authority and power and get replicated as relations of dominance and submission. By fudging the distinction between the public and the private, the personal and the political, Mahasweta Devi, does not let her readers the solace of conventional narratives based on conventional spatial demarcation of action and conduct.

This spatial critique also enables Mahasweta Devi to come clean on the stereotypical attributes that are usually associated with gender types. The attribution of gender to space also necessitates corresponding associative traits to human nature inhabiting these spaces. Both the infringement of space or the coercive imposition of these associative spatial traits usually leads to normative rupture, which the dominant would seek to streamline through coercive means employing *saam, daam ,dand, bhed.*

By critiquing the gendered organization of spaces and spatial organization of gender, Mahasweta Devi turns her literary oeuvre into transformative political practice. Drawing on subaltern women's experiences she reconstructs them to reflect on the politics of subalterization, genderization and marginalization. She revises the conventional meaning of politics and power. She seeks to reconstruct power as empowerment; authority as 'compassionate authority' based on the need for empathy and understanding. She refuses to use the public/private distinction in unproblematic way; she rather incorporates the political issues of gender and sexuality while narrative her women-centric tales.

Notes:

i. Mahasweta Devi is a prolific writer. Her activist writings take into their ambit almost every theme related to human exploitation. Here the term subaltern story is used as a convenient category to focus on those stories of the aurhor that exclusively deal with the predicament of tribals, especially in Palamu region.

ii. Within Mahasweta Devi's activist oeuvre space is present as one of the vital principals of socio-political organization. Further it has been It has been convincingly argued that space is not a neutral entity. It invariably is the function of the visible and invisible socio-political configurations and manipulations of its time. Spatial organization constitutes, is constituted by and reflects the ideological investments of the dominant at any given time. Consequently even gender, as a set of social relations and practices, is constructed and negotiated spatially, and it being embedded in spatial organization is constructed socially. For further exposition of this idea in Indian context, see in particular Seemanthini Niranjana, Gender and Space: Femininity, Sexualization and the Female Body (New Delhi: Sage, 2001).

iii. Mahasweta Devi, "The Witch," Bitter Soil, trans. Ipsita Chanda (Calcutta: Seagull, 1998); —, "Dhouli," Outcast trans. Sarmistha Dutta Gupta (Calcutta: Seagull, 2002); —, "The Hunt," Imaginary Maps, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Calcutta: Thema, 1993); —, "Draupadi," Breast Stories, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Calcutta: Seagull, 1997). All succeeding references from these stories have been abbreviated as "W," "Dh," "H" and "Dr" respectively.

iv. The boundaries of the spatial enclosures are permeable. The spatial notions such as 'permissible' and 'non-permissible' space, 'public' and 'private' space or 'our' and 'their' space are continuously constituted and reconstituted. This conceptual formulation is dependent on what is termed as a system of constraints – capability constraints, authority constraints – and helps emphasise the articulation of spatial

dynamics of cultural codes. The cultural authority constraints vis-à-vis subalterns and women include codes of honour, shame, modesty, disgrace, manhood and 'woman as property.' These codes give subjective significance to different spaces and consequently, determine the spatial boundaries between individuals and communities, employing the criterion of 'us' and 'them' at the cross section of class, caste, colour and gender.

v. This process, given the unequal power equation that exists between the mainstream and the marginalized, is analogous to the process of colonisation. The 'outsider-have/coloniser' imposes and perpetrates itself by saam, daam, dand, bhed, on the 'natives/colonised.' The coloniser prospers by exploiting the 'colonised other' and yet resents their (colonised) existence. Entrenching itself in their lives and spaces, the dominant forces the dominated into existential ghettos. The dominated responds in multifarious ways that range from protest to rebellion or from strategic collusion to hegemonising awe or from fatalistic yielding to passive disgruntlement. Gayatri Spivak's "Draupadi: Translator's Forward" to Breast Stories (1-18) is particularly illuminating as to this aspect of Mahasweta's credo. Also refer to John Scott, Power (Cambridge: Polity, 2001).

vi. There exists three approaches to gender in terms of the significance of body difference: the idea of natural difference which treats body as a machine; the idea of two separate realms of sex and gender; and the idea of gender as a discursive or symbolic system which treats body as a canvas on which society paints. The 'body as canvas' approach treats gendered body as a product of disciplinary practices. This approach however emphasises the 'signifier' to such an extent that the 'signified' practically vanishes. The authors understudy, capitalising on this aporia and positing materiality of the body as an indispensable aspect of female reality, take female body both as an object of the social process (whether symbolic or disciplinary) and as an active participant in social process. They interlock sexuality and desire with social life and politics. The detailed exposition of this argument is contained in Connell 28-52.

vii. Within feudal worldview, sexuality, power, and social-political praxis flow into each other. Herein the sexual control over the subaltern female translates directly into power of various kinds, both public and private. Kundan in this story exemplifies a close connection between the culture of feudalism and the power and image of male oriented aggressive sex. He employs his virility as a "metaphor for political power and socio-moral strength; a metaphor that mixes together elements of masculine psychology and colonial ideology." Joseph S Alter, "Celibacy, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Gender into Nationalism in North India," The Decolonization Reader ed. James D. Le Sueur (New York: Routledge, 2003) 324.

viii. This mixture of dissent and desire, the hateful and the hegemonic in Dhouli's response to masculist gaze is a peculiar feature of the 'colonized body.' This paradoxical thematic constitutes the core of many protagonists in resistant writing. It, in fact, reoccurs in Mahasweta Devi's stories in many guises, highlighting the problematic interdependence of discourse and praxis and a constant tension between them as represented in complex 'colonial' situation. In "Draupadi," for example, it crops up as the dialectics of 'blood' (Dopdi) and as contradiction between sympathy-duty ((Senanayak).

ix. The concept of gaze describes a form of power associated with the eye and the sense of sight. The gaze probes and masters. It penetrates the body and bounds it as a passive object. Vis-à-vis women, this objectification inheres in their stereotyping – through devaluation or over valuation – as a symbol either of sexual corruption or of Platonic purity and beauty. This concept is elaborated in Laura Mulvey, Visual and Other Pleasures (London: Routledge, 1984).

x. This argument has been advanced by many feminist critics. For the nuanced exposition of this argument the following may be referred: Hirschmann, N.J, Rethinking Obligation: A Feminist Model for Political Theory (New York: Cornell University Press) 1992; Nicholson, L.J, Gender and History: The Limits of Social Theory in the Age of the Family (New York: Columbia University Press) 1986; Wilson, E., Women and the Welfare State (London: Tavistock), 1977.

Mahasweta Devi, "The Witch," *Bitter Soil*. Trans. Ipsita Chanda. Calcutta: Seagull, 1998.

- - -, "Dhouli," *Outcast*. Trans. Sarmistha Dutta Gupta. Calcutta: Seagull, 2002.

- - -, "The Hunt". *Imaginary Maps*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Calcutta: Thema, 1993.

- - -, "Draupadi". *Breast Stories*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Calcutta: Seagull, 1997.

John, Mary E. *Discrepant Dislocations: Feminism, Theory and Postcolonial Histories*. Berkeley, Calif: U of California Press, 1996.

Katyal, Anjum. *Rudali: From Fiction to Performance*. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1997.

— "The Metamorphosis of *Rudali*,' in *Muffled Voices: Women in Indian Theatre*. Ed. Lakshmi Subramanyam. New Delhi: Shakti Books of Har-Anand Publications, 2002: 192-214.

Mahasweta Devi. *Stanadayini o Annanyo Galpo*. 1979.Calcutta: Karuna Prakashan, 2001 rpt.

— , *Imaginary Maps*. Tr. Gayatri C. Spivak. Calcutta: Thema, 1993.

— and Usha Ganguli: *Rudali*. Trans. Anjum Katyal. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1993.

Mukherjee, Tutun. "Of Other Voices: Mahasweta's Devi's Short Stories translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak," *English and the Indian Short Story*. Ed. Mohan Ramanan & P. Shailaja. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2000: 94-105.

Salgado. K.M.. "Tribal Stories, Scribal Worlds: Mahasweta Devi and the Unreliable Translator," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 2000; 35 i: 131-145.

———*———

Contemporary Theory and Fictocriticism

Sharanpal Singh

The inaugural decade of the present century bears witness to many significant shifts of emphasis in the discipline of critical theory in the humanities. There have been moves to discard theory and put it in the dustbin of history. This was done without adequately dealing with the resolution of methodological and philosophical problems arising consequentially from such a venture. Earlier on, last two decades of the twentieth century were marked with criticism whose hallmark was politics of textuality and discourse. Contemporary theoretics is characterized by an idiom of engagement and activism. This is on display in present day cultural-theory journals, like recent issues of *Boundary 2*, discussing "Pathology of Empire, "analyses of post 9/11 era of Abu Ghraib. *Social Text* has carried articles like "Emergency Democracy", and "Urban Modernity on the Periphery". *Transition* focused on such inflammable issues as "Avenging History in the Former French Colonies". *Public Lecture* has deliberated upon the likes of "The Terrorist Imaginary", and "Untimely Vision : Aime Cesaire, Decolonization, and Utopia."

The effort to go beyond the theoretics of recent times has resulted in the resurfacing of a new formalism, the appearance of a new textuality that is almost contrary to the earlier formalistic stance. Herein, the reader is encouraged to indulge in surface reading (Gioia, Best and Marcus). Texts bear witness to truth. We must peruse the complexity of literary surfaces. Earlier hermeneutics of the critic's endeavour to unravel latent meaning(s) in a text is repudiated. The search for rupture in ideology is viewed unfavourably. Thus the earlier credo of *explication de texte* finds fewer votaries. At least one of its versions is replicated in fictocriticism. University of Minnesota held a conference on fictocriticism in 2009, where some of the tenets of this mode of criticism were adumbrated upon. There was large scale secretion of adrenocorticotrophic hormone among the erudite participants. Critique was viewed to lie in the domain of aesthetics, since it has more tangible politics than theory. The discussers contemplated

upon the relationship between academic research and creative practice to uphold practice based research. They opined that contemporary curricula should comprise of a concomitant of intellectual inquiry and creative practice. This will lead to new modes of viable social engagement, since fictocriticism blurs boundaries between critical and literary modes of writing. Consequent upon this is the proposed defunding by some institutions of academic projects focusing on critical social theory in favour of the creative arts, with an aim to redefine and redemarcate the contours of humanities and humanistic studies.

Fictocriticism views creative writing itself as theory, and theory finds fulfilment in literature to accomplish its political agenda. There is the reincarnation of theorist as artist, but in this avatar the theorist would be more political than was formerly the case because now he is implicated in practice, and does not merely abstractly theorize. On the one hand, it puts fictocritics in a more committed role, and on the other hand, the term practice is deployed in a manner of alluding to the performing of identity. This includes the execution of responsibility of being an intellectual, who is, herein, theorizing practice. Consequently, fictocritics move away from abstract thinking, and fictocriticism saves itself the labour of abstruse philosophical thought. This truncates their theory and politics to the domain of textual interpretation, which stands emaciated in contemporary digitization.

The attempt to move beyond theoretical dominant, although not true of fictocriticism, also implies a general sense of exhaustion with its abstruseness, as also with the dictum that one's theory has politics as one of its vital constituents, and so trying to eliminate this concern with politics, and instead returning to the nostalgic attachment with aesthetic pleasure. There is also the feeling that the political issues facing us, like recession, economic servitude, brutal bureaucratization, cold war and privatization are more pressing that need immediate attention. Here, theory is viewed as a luxury that can wait another time another day.

There is much in theory that is Nietzschean and for Nietzsche theory comprised of rhetoric, to a considerable extent.

He explained it in "On Truth and lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" : "Truth is a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms and anthropomorphisms" (*The Portable Nietzsche 42)*. In this sense another version of theory has emerged that proclaims itself as immediately political. It views theory as politics performed, attempting to distance itself from poststructuralism, which prioritized discourse. This theory is distinct from critique (which involved self-analysis and relating it to a ground), and declares that theory itself is the practical world. Theory, according to this variant, is that locale where earlier unarticulated concepts are articulated, perspicacious insights are presented and newer constellations of meanings are formed with ever expanding ambits and domains. It seeks a willing repudiation of concordance with experience or such proof as is mandatory for emergence of newer modes of perception. The idea behind such thinking is that grounding on the already existing would traduce its politics. This mode is skeptical of debate, because agonistic argumentation will shatter the aura of the literary writing, and tend to loosen its terminology and syntax. The reader exists in an adversarial space. This strain of thinking is largely post-Althusserian, with Spinoza as their key Marxist thinker, alongwith aspects of Deleuzian thought. It manifests a general hatred of capitalism, to laud French situationism and Italian autonomism (Macherey, Montag, Holland *et al.* and Lotringer and Kraus). Their most impressive writing is anchored on political Derrideanism. Derrida's later works, especially on such diverse themes as friendship, gift and the concept of cosmopolitanism have been under their intense focus. They view literary or cultural studies not as a mode of investigation but as an instrument to develop a new form of politics, a new political project, centred on the performative act of doing theory (Hall and Birchall). We are confronted with a plethora of problems in the contemporary world, like : mass unemployment, governmental corporatization, and a suspicion concerning intellectual activities. It is in such a world that theory has to up its ante and establish a public role for itself to counter politics and the political.

Thus, theory has reincarnated itself. Once upon a time, it disentangled linguistic complexities; it pontificated upon semiotic and semantic in the poetic, in the true vein of post Jakobsonian era; it engrossed itself in cultural mediation, and now come to a

proclamation of its own political immediacy; so compelled to adorn a dissembled guise. This is, to say the least, inconsistent with its earlier discursive phase. There is present structured indeterminacy. Language of political immediacy engenders counter value, and a departure from liberal humanism, although even in its repudiation of the erstwhile liberal humanist it shares some of its aesthetic value with it, through iterations of revisions and refutations. This defines it in the hermeneutive act, with characteristics of pluralism, open-endedness and the rigours of complexity, where features of irresolution and undecidability are the veritable telos.

Jacques Derrida, while delineating "the structurality of structure", and inaugurating poststructuralism, in his much acclaimed "La Structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines" (trans. "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences") in 1967 at Johns Hopkins explained the janiform character of theory. He said:

> Perhaps something has occurred in the history of the concept of structure that could be called an 'event', ... this event will have the exterior form of a *rupture* and a *redoubling* (Derrida 247).

Thus this tradition of theory manifests a philosophical doubling in its methodology. On the one hand, it speaks to articulate a concept or theoretics, while on the other hand, qualifying it *ad infinitum* to attenuate it, resulting in the eroding of much of its force. Theory manifests an urge for political effectivity, but then it puts little credence in traditional forms of political organization and praxis. It affiliates with dissidence for political authenticity and then repudiates commitment, both civic and political. Also attempts to systematize thinking are not taken far enough. Now, theory's force and virtue lie in signifying, in its theoretical rigour and formalism.

The work of earlier theoreticians like Antonio Gramsci, Frantz Fanon or Jurgen Habermas stood in direct engagement with earlier relevant thought. Dialogics was its defining feature. The thinkers vociferously conversed with their predecessors and contemporaries. Presently the posture is largely stand-offish. The

utterances are singular but alone. The work of earlier thinkers is not ignored, rather present writing banks too heavily upon them. Of course, the academic and conceptual levels are not lowered, but there is little consistent engagement with those with whom it disagrees. The central feature of critique has always been a comprehensive conversation with antagonists, and to discuss on the adversary's terms, but the arguments of theory, today, are fierce and unyielding, but epigrammatic. The utterances are disembodied whose veracity lies in their being oracular but pontificating. The rigour is the charm, like Yeats's poem, "The Fascination of What's Difficult." Of course, a particular mode of inquiry can be hypercomplex, and win its way through indirections but it should be sans dissimulation, since that would preclude critique. Moreover, a form of discourse is integral to its prime characteristic of being egalitarian, and in terms of both tradition and history the *summum bonum* of discourses has always enshrined in them the salient features of negotiation, debate, assessment and exchange.

Thus, theory takes on the thematics of political immediacy, which is characterized by the features of conflict and demystification, and concatenates it with its own aesthetic indeterminacy. It appears to be self-contradictory, because theoretics manifests an imaginary subject, and is sans centrality, but this presently is the manner in which it strives to affirm itself. This is reminiscent of Raymond Williams, who argued in *The Politics of Modernism* that in this tradition theory's tropes and metaphoricity resemble the figuratives and figurations of literary modernism. Literature is what eludes the system, something that cannot be verified for both modernism and contemporary theory.

A precise diagnostics of this defining trait of janiformity has been efficaciously attempted by Pierre Bourdieu, whose *Rules of Art* has been an important addition to literary criticism in the nineties. Bourdieu probes the concept that aesthetic thinking is its own lofty end, since this has been the inclination of the intellectual. He examines the rationale of the oft repeated statement that politics resides within aesthetics, as also its socio-academical backdrop. Bourdieu portrays the inaurgural attempt to stress an insurrectionary core to the practice of autonomous art. *Rules of Art* elaborates

upon the artist's social situation, by decoding philosophical underpinning of some contemporary ideas. Bourdieu defines the duplicitous nature of literature :

> This discourse which speaks of the social or psychological world as if it did not speak of it; which cannot speak of this world except on condition that it only speak of it as if it did not speak of it (*Rules of Art* 03).

He dissects the artist who, on the one hand, launches a literary revolt against the bourgeois privilege, and, on the other hand, aspires to attain that materially comforting affluence. The artist is hyper conscious of his mercenary surroundings and environment, and while languishing without patronage or allies in high places manifests contempt for the public, which in effect is his readership (and like Thomas Stearns Eliot, ejaculates : "In the room the women come and go, Talking of Michel Angelo.") He, as Bourdieu explains, gradually, devises "the cult of disinterestedness ... – a prodigious reversal, which turns poverty into rejected riches, hence spiritual riches" (*Rules of Art* 28). Artists are generally insecure and indistinct; they are heroic in some of their gestures as also suppliants for patronage and fulfilment of material needs and resolution of pecuniary problems, who, as Bourdieu says, employ "the ambiguous use of a citation which may have the value of either ratification or derision, and expresses both hostility ... and identification" (*Rules of Art* 31). This is to make us realize that whereas theory of the last few decades expostulates that language speaks man, and the system of discourse supersedes the subject, then this insight did not come from end of the century linguistic studies, but, as Bourdieu explains, it has been a middle of the nineteenth century aesthetic strategy. Bourdieu presents instances from the works of Gustave Flaubert and Charles Baudelaire to reveal the literary field as a "world apart, subject to its own laws" (*Rules of Art* 48). He goes on to dwell upon the vulnerable position of the artist, who, he says, is caught between the market and the censor. He is intransigent and volatile, although his position is one of indeterminacy. The artist has such "autonomy" that he would be taken in by the one in authority as a dependant. Suffice it to say that this is the general condition of Anglo-American theory. Here

we can instance a group of writers who strove to displace the tradition of the left, but the media portrayed them as proxies of the left. Analysing *Sentimental Education* as ironic sociology, Bourdieu discusses Flaubertian sense of writing and goes on to comment upon the phenomenon :

> The intensified experience of the real that they have helped to produce in the very mind of the writer, is to oblige the reader to linger over the perceptible form of the text, with its visible and sonorous material (*Rules of Art* 109).

It may be pointed out that these gestures of doubling, or of a duplicitous nature in the politics of this tradition are not confined to this or that particular theorist. They have been embraced across the whole field in order to gain an ethical comprehension of the politics of such writing, especially of its formal nature. Here we can cite the example of Jacques Ranciere, who adapts to the dictum of opposition to opposition, but only that he is combative and antagonistic to Bourdieu's work (evidenced by such Ranciere texts as *Politics of Aesthetics* and *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. Ranciere's "ignorant school master," Jacotot, is delineated as a counter-Bourdieu.

Ranciere, in *Dissensus,* writing on the aesthetic dimension of politics, uses the word "dissensus", and then explains that the word does not mean conflict. He elaborates on his understanding of the term :

> It is a perturbation of the normal relation between sense and sense.... What is specific to politics is the existence of a subject defined by its participation in contraries (*Dissensus* 29).

The inclination to move away from the oppositional and the adversarial is a figurative rendering of the middle path of mainstream liberalism. It is a contradictory accompaniment to the immediate political turn now more overtly evident in theory. It must be mentioned that all gestures in theory are not rhetorical. Sometimes they can be epistemological in nature or even a strategy

for reading. Of course, all gestures imprint their varied and specific political outlook. This also restricts the repertoire of theory, to become iterative in nature. A few of these rhetorical gestures have been listed by critics (Brennan 292) :

1. Circularity : It is so structured that it compromises the efficacy of critique, by showing it to be reproducing what it set out to criticize. For instance, Fredric Jameson said :

> The structuralist perspective always grasps contradiction in the form of the antinomy : that is to say, a logical impasse in which thought is paralyzed and can move neither forward nor back (*Valences of the Dialectic* 43).

But a little later, in the same text, he says : "The opposition between truth and falsity... was the vocation of the dialectic (and its unity of opposites) to overcome and to trascend" (64). This seems to be a near ally of deconstruction.

2. Hypertrophe : This is employed for purposes of deliberate overstatement. Some instances can be readily cited : There have been so many detailed, painstaking, and nuanced studies of the Jewish holocaust; nevertheless Giorgio Agamben says that no one has ever really studied the Auschwitz disaster. Then, factory and working conditions have been studied from so many perspectives, like sociological, psychological, vocational, and still Antonio Negri declares that factory is nothing less than a prison house.

3. Assemblage : This comes into use when names of a number of thinkers are cited by way of stressing the authenticity of the argument, without realizing that the intellectuals so mentioned hold philosopho-academic positions that are incompatible with one another, and even sometimes cancelling/repudiating the insights of each other. The position of every authority, so mentioned, should be clearly delineated and distinguished; at least the incoherence of the amalgam, so gathered, be clearly mentioned and marked.

4. Groundlessness : This is indulged in when in order to imply that present statements are in the nature of a complete break from

earlier modes of thought, the author completely frees his statements from any allusion to earlier philosophical proposition or reference to sensual or objective world. He thinks that this is the only way to show that his work is beyond routine thinking.

These characteristics engender a specific mode of writing, with a similar style, but to evince that it is politically autonomous, theoretical writing must stress a specific manner of reading. This reading can be of contemporary socio-cultural phenomenon, of a *zeitgeist*, or critiquing particular periodization. Notion of reading gathered force during the times of New Criticism, when the significance of the sacrosanctity of text led to the espousal of the modernist *explication de texte*. But techniques of reading are prescriptive in nature, like New Criticism repudiating intentional fallacy, to equip readers with the efficacy of aesthetic appraisal of the modernist text. Two modes of reading are aspired for : (a) reading against the grain, and (b) productive reading. Reading against the grain's avowed purpose is to enter a text to unravel meanings and insights contrary to conventional interpretation. According to Louis Althusser there is little concern with the grain nowadays, instead the interest is in philological content, and to fill the text with content that may not harmonize with the referents, all in order to proclaim "innovation" and "openness" to "difference" in the text (Althusser 140). There is the invention of the past on presumably political grounds, instead of the problematization of textual meaning.

Productive reading is a manoeuvre to assign meaning to a text depending on the work's production of political effectivity. This is reminiscent of Nietzsche who expected a work to be not merely "invented", but also "life affirming" (apart from "instructing"). He put it in *Untimely Meditations* : "I hate everything that merely instructs me without augmenting or directly invigorating my activity" (59). This is what is "productive" according to Neitzsche. Thus, there is an alteration in focus, and instead of the emphasis on the work's content, the stress, here, is on its creating an effect. Macherey says :

> What at first glance appeared to be on the order of planned or involuntary falsification turns into

> forms of expression which, by virtue of being deviant, are no less authentic in their own way, and in any case are necessary: there are, if I may put it this way, 'true errors', which reveal meanings that no one can claim to be radically foreign to the work itself" (25).

Adorno and Horkheimer are severe on those who opine that "fruitfulness" be the prominent yardstick for theory (*Dialectic of Enlightenment* 203).

Thus, rhetorical gestures of doubleness have come to stay with theory. Some of these lack coherence, and can simply be discerned as marks of allegiance. A few of the statements, like the following, evoke the feeling of *deja vu* :

(a) All arguments must avoid *a telos*, and *metaphysical thinking*.

(b) All strategies to be *negotiated.*

(c) Never try to *speak for* or *represent others.*

(d) Proper place to occupy is in the *interstices.*

(e) A sound critic never *disagrees with* others, because that would be too definitive, rather he *puts pressure on* those views he is skeptical about.

There is duplication of these views, *ad infinitum.* Such vocabulary falls between ambivalence and duplicity where indecision and indirection are considered as insights. It was within the (now marginalized) tradition of critique that the critic's eyes were focused on his role as an intellectual in an economic and political setting. The character of knowledge must be placed in the context of a dialectical comprehension of contradiction and opposition, facilitating a (provisional) stand. This will allow him to gauge from that standpoint and see where and what he is. Theory thrived because it demonstrated to the people that language is more than being a mere vehicle of information, or a field of semantic

play. It showed that it is the medium of all social interaction, civil society and politics, and this made the theorist's role as central and pivotal to the operation of power and politics, in the domain of the humanities. But, today the scenario is not unlike the disputations of the left, where, still capitalism, Marxism, and exploitation are being discussed militantly, but without the espousal of the revolution, and the repudiation of actual organizational resistance. Similarly, this tradition of theory echoes this particular brand of "freedom". Thus critics critique, but it is critique itself that is being interrogated and critiqued, producing only disavowals.

Works Cited and Bibliography

Adorno, Theodor and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Trans. John Cumming. London : Verso, 1979.

Althusser, Louis. *Essays in Self-Criticism*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ : Humanities Press, 1976.

Best, Stephen and Sharon Marcus. "Surface Reading : An Introduction". *Representations* 108, no. 1 (2009) : 1-21.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Rules of Art : Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Trans. Susan Emanuel. Stanford, California : Stanford Univ. Press, 1995.

Brennan, Timothy. "Running and Dodging : The Rhetoric of Doublenss in Contemporary Theory," *New Literary History*, 41, (2010), 277-299.

Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972 (1970); 247-272.

Gioia, Dana. "Notes on the New Formalism." *The Hudson Review* 40, no. 3 (1987) : 395-408.

Hall, Gary and Clare Birchall, eds. *New Cultural Studies : Adventures in Theory*. Athens : Univ. of Georgia Press, 2006.

Holland, Eugene W., Daniel W. Smith and Charles J. Stivale, eds. *Gilles Deleuze : Image and Text.* London : Continuum, 2009.

Jameson, Fredric. *Valences of the Dialectic.* London : Verso, 2010.

Lotringer, Sylvere and Chris Kraus. *Hatred of Capitalism : A Reader.* Los Angles : Semiotext (e), 2001.

Macherey, Pierre. *In a Materialist Way,* London : Verso, 1998.

Montag, Warren. *Bodies, Masses, Power : Spinoza and his Contemporaries.* London : Verso, 1999.

Nietzsche, F.W. "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense." *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York : Viking, 1954; 42-46.

__. *Untimely Meditations.* Cambridge : Cambridge University. Press, 1999.

Ranciere, Jacques. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster : Five Essays* in *Intellectual Emancipation.* Trans. Kristin Ross. Stanford, California : Stanford University. Press, 1991.

__. *The Flesh of Words : The Politics of Writing.* Trans. Charlotte Mandell. Stanford, California : Stanford University Press, 2004.

__. *The Politics of Aesthetics.* Trans. Gabriel Rockhill. London : Continuum, 2004.

__. "The Aesthetic Dimension : Aesthetics, Politics, Knowledge". *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 1 (2009).

__. *Dissensus : On Politics and Aesthetics.* London : Continuum, 2010.

Williams, Raymond. *The Politics of Modernism : Against the New Conformists.* London : Verso, 1989; 31-80.

——*——

Retelling a Tale
Multiple Readings of "Duvidha"

Minakshi Jain and Shruti Sharma

Heralding an erasure of the authority of the writer and ushering in an era of the reader's primacy Barthes writes:

> ...a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is ... someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted.[1]

The multiplicity of the text, when shifted to the arena of the reader, is subject to endless retellings/reviewings. From the time of its making through that of each viewing, an artwork is at every point in time an interactive, creative event.[2]

A tale is retold whenever a reader applies her creativity actively. As readers actively create new meanings the text gets enriched and keeps expanding. The texts that have inherent capacities for expansion inspire artists from different genres/ media for *recreation*. The folklores fall into this category. Literature in general, novels and short stories in particular have often provided the filmmakers with a rich storehouse of culturally rooted experiences that make interesting screenplays for creative directors. The film director as a creative reader 'views' a text to explore its visual potential. The screenplay is another creative and imaginative deconstruction of the text into multiple images which are converted by the director and his team into shot-divisions, i.e., a heap of broken images. When this heap of images undergoes the process of editing, the penultimate act of creativity lies in constructing a new text by applying the editorial scissors to whatever is inessential. The viewer/ critic finally create, recreate, and renew the text in collaboration

with the editor / director / screenplay writer / story-novel writer. The repeated acts of re-viewing/ recreating rejuvenate the text and keep it alive.

Artists discover the advantages of hybridity in the process of interanimation between different art forms. Such exchange proves very productive for artistic creativity. With the advent of the modernist movement the exchange between different art forms became more common and led to redefining of the art forms. The nature of interpenetration has been defined by Jean Mitry as, "a novel is a narrative that organizes itself into a world; a film is a world that organizes itself into a narrative"[3]. The critic George Bluestone defines movie adaptations as cinematic paraphrase of the original work:

> In the cinema, aesthetic expressiveness is grafted onto natural expressiveness -that of the landscape or face the film shows. In the verbal arts, it is grafted, not onto any genuine prior expressiveness but onto a conventional signification- that of language -which is generally expressive.[4]

This article proposes to look at three retellings of a Rajasthani folktale: Viyaydan Detha's story Duvidha ,its inter-pollination with the film medium by Amol Palekar in Paheli, our retelling of Duvidha as Bhoot.The art work goes through numerous phases of creative writing, reading , viewing, screenplay- writing, direction, editing. The viewer/reader supplements the creative process infinitely.

Duvidha

Vijaydan Detha is an eminent Rajasthani writer and a Padma Shree recipient. More than eight hundred of his stories have been translated into English and many other regional languages. Duvidha is a kind of folktale. It translates certain aspects of rajasthani culture and marwari life originally into the language of Rajasthan. An affluent Marwari businessman, Seth, marries his son, Dulha, to abeautiful girl of sixteen, Dulhan. The bridegroom is an obedient son and a typical Marwari busy calculating expenditure and maintaining accounts. The marriage party on its way back to

the village stops to rest under a khejri tree.The rural folks, like any other unenlightened community, share a faith in the existance of spirits without a body, a bhoot. A bhoot that resides on the tree is captivated by the beautiful bride, so much so that he faints when the bridegroom's party leaves the place. On their way to their home the bride is in for a similar kind of experience when the groom tells her that he will be leaving home the very next morning and will stay away for the coming five years. The bride is completely crestfallen with all her romantic dreams of conjugal happiness dashed to the ground. She cries her heart out during the wedding night as the groom keeps busy preaching about her duties towards her in-laws and family honour. He decides to postpone the consummation of their marriage till his return after five years. The wishes of the bride are not taken into consideration anywhere by anybody. She has to wait for a ghost to do that. The ghost figure is an intricate and ambiguous creation. By endowing him with the ability to incarnate into any physical form the writer has given him a divine shade. The ghost does not enter the body of the bride or the groom which a spirit is believed to do. The ghost human divine shades are made to coexist in this bhoot. When he runs into the bridegroom on his way to Disaawar, he discovers a golden opportunity to fulfill his "human" desires. He acquires the persona of the husband and decides to replace him in his home. He shuts up his father's resistance by cooking up a story of five gold coins that he would hand over to the greedy father every morning. The elated wife fails to believe when the ghost tells her that he is not her husband but that ghost on the khejri tree who fell in love with her the moment he saw her. The ghost proposes to leave in case the bride decides not to accept him as her husband. The ghost declares his love and also discloses to her the ennobling impact of this love which has converted him to a kind hearted spirit. He could not cheat her, nor could he think of entering her body or the body of her husband since it would have caused pain to them. As the woman decides to let the ghost live with her, time flies happily for both of them.

At the end of four years, while the wife is in labour pains the inevitable happens. The married husband returns to claim the woman. The calculative and callous father does not pay any heed

to the desperate plea of his son. He is worried more about the prestige and honour of his family than about identifying his true son. The villagers and her husband, nevertheless, refuse to bury the matter and insist on justice being done. They propose that the matter be taken to the king. On the way to their king, a cunning shepherd offers to solve the paheli, there and then. He devises three tests to identify the true husband and through his vile imprisons the ghost into his chhagal and throws him into the river. The husband, after cursing the ghost to his heart's content, freely forgives his wife presuming that she too was unaware of the ghost's truth. The poor wife accepts her fate silently and leads a puppet life ever after with empty eyes and empty heart, "Aankhen sooni, Hriday soona".

Paheli

Vijay Dan Detha's story *Duvidha* has been twice adapted into movies. The first attempt was made by the experimental director Mani Kaul in 1973. The second time *Paheli* was made by the veteran actor Amol Palekar in 2003. Mani Kaul's movie Duvidha won much critical acclaim and the Best Movie in the Critics Category in the Filmfare Awards 1974, but remained a commercial failure. The movie was a skilful inter-animation of different art forms, like classical and folk music and different schools of paintings. Unlike Amol Palekar's *Paheli*, it retained the 'negative' end of the story.

Amol Palekar's *Paheli* has hybridized the folk tale with the vibrancy of the film medium. The movie has enhanced the impact of colorful rustic dresses of the desert region, the grandeur of the feudal havelis, the flora and fauna of Rajasthan. The director has very effectively transplanted the various cultural elements like the camel races and puppets on to the already very culturally loaded narrative of Vijaydan Detha. The introduction of a pair of puppets as the worldly wise guardians of the ghost is a brilliant stroke of genius as it blends harmoniously with the culturally rooted tale. The puppets underscore the humane and the elevated character of the protagonist, Kishen the ghost performed by Shahrukh Khan. Our Bollywood superstars are known for superb double role performances. Vijaydan Detha's story was tailor-made for providing a challenging double-role to King Khan.

The induction of the subplot of the Seth's elder son and his wife played by an absent Suniel Shetty and a very gorgeous and intent Juhi Chawla, gives depth and dimension to the story. Juhi's fate further provides a kind of counterfoil by underlining the possible destiny of Lachhi had the ghost not entered her life. The inclusion of camel race adds colour and spice to the cultural flavour of the narrative. Making the most of the power of the visual medium, the deft director has also introduced a squirrel and a colorful bird as the two incarnations that the ghost takes in order to have a full view of the bride's heavenly beauty, played by Rani Mukherjee.

The strength and vitality of the film medium is underscored very effectively at a moment of emotional climax where, according to the writer, language fails. The writer falls back upon silence during such moments of perfect harmony-"jahan bhaasha atak jaati hai wahan maun kaam kar jaata hai, ab kuch kehna sunna shesh nahi raha, swatah hi ek dusre ke anta ski baat samaj gaye" (178). It is an opportunity for the visual media to step in and provide expression to the unspeakable epiphanic moment. The miracle of the meeting of the human and the superhuman is made palpable in front of the viewers' eyes with all its sublimity, with its entire earthiness through the song:

dheere jalna dheere jalna
zindagi ki lau pe jalna
dheere dheere dheere dheere dheere jalna
zindagi ki lau pe jalna
kaanch ka sapna, gal hi na jaye
soch samajh ke , aanch rakhna

The movie has redefined the original text of the seventies by changing the end of the story. Giving in to the demands of the commercial cinema i.e., a 'positive' end, the director of Paheli has reinterpreted the entire text. By making the 'preetwaala' ghost enter the body of Lachhi's lawful husband the director has answered righteous desire for happiness as well as the ghost's illegitimate yearning for the woman's love. The easy solution to a mind boggling dilemma did win approval from the masses, though the movie did not succeed at the box-office. The altered end also generated a number of questions in the minds of thinking viewers. If the ghost and the

husband were to be united, why could not the ghost enter the husband's body right in the beginning? Such viewers felt befooled and cheated. Though for a creative viewer there is scope for justification in the movie. The ghost, at places, has been presented as a manifestation of the love in a woman's heart which might justify the merging of the two. It would mean that the husband has been transformed into an ideal romantic one, something that was missing in him earlier.

There are instances when the medium of words is more effective and appropriate. At some places, the drama that happens in the mind/ soul of the character, which is also crucial in understanding the folklorist element and the intention of the writer, is glossed over in the visual medium. The inner dilemmas lend themselves more easily and effectively to the verbal medium. One such instance is the conversation between the ghost and Lachhi, when the ghost meets her for the first time as her husband. The ghost is presented as a highly humane and conscientious being in both the narratives. The ghost decides to cheat the parents and the villagers but not the woman he loves truly. The woman is completely taken in and very confident that it is her husband who has returned. In the story the woman considers it an affront to her character when the ghost hints that it might be some other person disguised as her husband who could have entered her bedroom. She thinks that had it been somebody other than her husband, he would not have been able to stay in her bedroom since she is a perfect "pativrata". Vijaydan Detha, at this point, makes the ghost thinks that since he is another man this is a proof of her tainted status. These musings are nowhere in the movie. Both the forms present the ghost as an elevated character. In the story, the reason for elevation has been underlined and that is the ghost's love for the woman. The aim of the ghost is to woo the woman and not to offend her; therefore the ghost is made to redefine "husbandhood" in a subversive manner. The ghost pleads that since he is the true lover he is eligible to be her husband and by virtue of this definition the wife's status too is not corroded. The man who became her husband by the ritual of marriage had no love for her and loved money instead. The woman is finally won over and the wall of resistance penetrated by the appeal that the ghost makes to her heart and to her ego. By declaring his infinite and sublime love for

her and by offering to leave that very moment in case she does not want him to stay, the ghost finally clinches the deal. She did not decide by thinking because "soch samaj kar aisi baat ka jawaab dena kitna dubhar hai..." (177). She was guided by some 'achiti lehar', some involuntary thought process that brought to her mind the entire baggage of discrimination that she underwent as a woman, right from the time of her birth. This moment she is being allowed to freely exercise her right to decide for her life. Though it is her decision yet, she lays the onus of it upon the man when she says, "jaane wale ko rok na saki to phir raaniwaas mein aanwale ko kaise roke?" (178). The storywriter muses for a moment, "kahin ye dulhan ke mann ka hi bhoot to nahi tha, jo saakaar roop dharkar prakat hua?" (178).This explains part of the ambiguity in the ghost figure. .

The inner workings of human as well as ghostly mind, its myriad shades that sharpen the edge of a folktale and intensify the appeal of the writer are sometimes lost in the refined and more populist medium that, nevertheless, enjoys a wider appeal. Christian Metz opines" like two intersecting lines, novel and film meet at apoint and then diverge. At the intersection, the book and shooting script are almost indistinguishable. But where the lines diverge, they loose all resemblance to each other, for each works within the framework of its own conventions." [5]

There has been a literature versus film debate regarding Duvidha/ Paheli that argues that the film adaptation has ruined the spirit of or the sanctity of the text. This is relevant not only in this case but others too, including Pareenita, Devdas, Hazaar Chaurasi Ki Ma, Omkara etc. the writers too have reacted differently to the adaptation of their novels/ stories. R. K. Narayan was unhappy with the movie adaptation of his novel. On the other hand Vijaydan Detha was satisfied and did not disapprove of the changed ending. Alice walker was grateful to Steven Spielberg not only for a sensitive portrayal of the emotional complexity of her novel *The Colour Purple* but also for introducing her work to her own family who otherwise never bothered to read her works. Both the forms benefit from each other. As Henry James says, "Art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon curiosity, upon the exchange of views and the comparison of standpoints" [6]

The medium of literature and that of film are both expressions of creativity and a mutual exchange of the two is part of a wider creative process. As Joy Gould Boyum says:

> In assessing an adaptation, we are never really comparing book with film, but an interpretation with an interpretation – the novel that we ourselves have recreated in our imaginations, out of which we have constructed our own individualized 'movie', and the novel on which the filmmaker has worked a parallel transformation. For just as we are readers, so implicitly is the filmmaker, offering us, through his work, his perceptions, his visions, his particular insight into his source. An adaptation is always, whatever else it may be, an interpretation.[7]

The two art forms are, in fact, complementary. The study and understanding of both the forms is important. None of them is dispensable. They can share a very effective complementary relationship as brought out by the comparative study above. Certain aspects of the narrative can be presented more effectively through the medium of words while some other aspects could be highlighted and communicated forcefully through visual presentation only. The creative urge of the artist, the communicative function of art and the creativity of the reader/ viewer can be fulfilled when the two forms function in a complementary manner. That way both the forms stand to gain out of each other and the viewer's creative participation and enjoyment is certainly multiplied.

Bhoot[viii]

This *aakha teej*[ix], which Kamala had been looking forward to with anxiety and trepidation, had finally come. She had no memory of her wedding; she could not even recollect what Sarju looked like then. It was fifteen years ago that both their parents had made them husband and wife. During these long years, they did not meet and so she had no idea how he looked like now. The parents of Kamla prepared for the "gauna" unaware of the rumours that were doing rounds in the village. At the village well, the milkmaid

whispered," Do you know, Munni's father went to Sarju's village last week. Sarju's friend, Mohan told him that Sarju did not want to marry an uneducated girl whom he does not even know." The maid of Kamla, Dhania joined her, "O Yes! Since he has become a big Babu , he has got big education now, he has become a citywalla." Tappu's mother was not to be left behind, she added, "Do you know that he has become a C.A.? it is a very big thing, one has to study a lot and then you can buy a big car, a bungalow and anything you desire." The maid replied," then the sahib would need a memsahib in such a bungalow. Our poor Kamla!"

The poor Kamla, at home was looking extremely gorgeous. Her dulha, Sarju in the front room was not comfortable but like an obedient son, he had come for the "gauna" ceremony. Even he had no memory of his *dulhan's* face. His mind was preoccupied with the bond he had signed with T.C.S., according to which he will have to leave for Gurgaon and stay with the firm for the coming three years. He was rather relieved that he won't have to live with the "village bride" for another three years. His parents had already made it clear that Kamla would stay with them in the village.

While he was lost in his thoughts, Kamla entered the room, surrounded by the women of the village. Her beautiful face was concealed behind an equally gorgeous veil. Sarju felt disgusted by the veil. Now he rather wished to have a look at her face. He was also irritated by the women who kept teasing him. Tappu's mother said, " Dulhe Raja, have you seen your *dulhan*? Do you know she has a squint? Otherwise she is beautiful." Another woman said, "Don't worry, Jamai Babu, you will have to speak loudly to her but nobody would blame you for shouting. Poor Kamla, she is hard of hearing." Sarju really began to have some misgivings about his bride. He already did not like the idea of taking home a woman he did not know and with whom he was married when he was ten.

On their way back to the village, in the car Sarju became more impatient wanting to have a look at the face of his bride. As soon as she stopped crying, she lifted her veil and asked him for water. Sarju could not take his eyes off her face. The bride nudged him again for water. Sarju had to make an effort to hand over a

glass of water to the beautiful bride. The bride too continued to throw sidelong glances towards the groom.

The car stopped by the roadside to rest. All the members of the bridegroom's party sat under a *peepal* tree for lunch. The bride surrounded by the other women lifted her veil and was busy eating when something dropped from the tree into her plate. The bride looked up. That very moment a ghost sitting on that branch looked down. The ghost felt as if hundreds of temple bells were ringing around. He had never seen such a heavenly sight. He forgot himself for a moment.

At home, in the village Sarju's packed suitcases welcomed the bride. She cursed her fate when she came to know that Sarju was leaving that very day. Pretending to be tired Kamla retired to her room and crying her heart out, she fell asleep. She woke up with a start and discovered that it was Sarju's departure time. The elders of the family were already bidding farewell to the groom while giving him instructions to take care of himself in the city. Sarju couldn't not help throwing a brief glance in the direction where Kamla was standing. His heart felt a tinge of sadness and surprisingly, he discovered that he was sad for both of them.

The ghost who had followed the bride loses no time and enters the bride's room as soon as her husband leaves the village. He is so heart-stricken that inspite of the confusion in his mind, he could not help entering the body of the bride. Kamla with a heavy heart and now with a heavy body too, feels drowsy. She goes to bed early . Kamla feels uneasy and behaves clumsily when her mother-in-law calls her for tea. Her absent-mindedness and clumsiness are attributed to her husband's departure initially. When she continues to move clumsily and behave in a strange manner, day after day, her parents-in-law become worried about her health. They take her to the village "vaidya" who diagnoses her symptoms to be those of a ghost-stricken person. On his recommendation, the villagers take her to an "ojha" who is believed to rid people of spirits. The ojha addresses the spirit and threatens the ghost to either leave Kamla's body or be ready to be burnt. The stubborn ghost does not listen. He was irredeemably infatuated by the

woman. He could not be forced to leave her. Kamla's agony mental as well as physical keeps increasing. She becomes extremely pale and thin. Her face loses its charm.

One day while she is standing in front of the mirror, the ghost is astonished to discover the deterioration in her health and beauty. This is a moment of realization for the ghost. His heart melts with pity at the sight of Kamla's face, which at one time was so heavenly that he had left everything for her sake. Moved by true love, the ghost decides to leave the body of his beloved. He appears in front of the frail Kamla. She tries to regain her consciousness and rubbing her eyes she witnesses the ghost standing in front of her. She asks, "Who are you? How dare you enter my bedroom?" "I am not what I was and I was not what I am. I used to live on that *peepal* tree under which you sat while on your way to your village. I was a ghost then and till the very last minute, I had not imagined that I would ever be separated from you. I have been transformed by the power of my true love for you. I have left your body only because I could not see you in pain. I seek your forgiveness for all the suffering that I have caused during the last few weeks. I would happily accept any punishment you wish for me." Kamla has completely recovered by now. She begins to understand her plight. In the ghost's offer, she discovers an opportunity to change her fate. She commands, " If you really want to do something for me take me to my husband and you are forgiven. That you never bother any woman in future and go back to your ghost life will be your retribution." The ghost agrees readily and sadly.

Notes and References

Note: All the quotations of the story are from the text *Katha Dashak* edited by Harichran Sharma, published by Puneet Prakashan, Jaipur in 2006.

---

[i] David Lodge, ed. *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (New York: Longman Inc. ,1988)

[ii] Charles Jansen, *Studying Art History* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Eaglewood Cliffs, 1986) 7.

[iii] Quoted inn Gaston Roberge, *The Subject of Cinema* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1990)

[iv]George Bluestone, Novels into Films (Berkeley: University of California, 1957) 62-63.

[v] Christian Metz, Film Language (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[vi] Published in *Longman's Magazine* 4 (September 1884), and reprinted in Henry James, *Partial Portraits* (Macmillan, 1888). <http://people.bu.edu/rcarney/newsevents/hj1.shtml>

[vii] Joy Gould Boyum, *Double Exposure: Fiction into Film* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1989) 62-62.

[viii] This is a tale 'retold' by the writers of the paper, interpreting/ reading the story of "Duvidha" in a new light. Incidentally, narratives remain in eternal gestation in human beings when told, and when they become part of a cultural tradition they are folk tales and when written down they become short stories. The significant fact is that these tellings and re-tellings should go on for there is a story-teller in each one of us.

9 *Aakha teej* is the day when the maximum number of marriages take place in India because it is the day when even a pundit need not be consulted for a marriage to be solemnized.

———*———

Camera Obscura and Projections of the Unconscious

A Phenomenological Study of Orientalism in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's *The Householder* and *Heat and Dust*

Vivek Sachdeva

> If in ideology men and their realizations appear upside down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on their retina does from the physical life-process. (Marx and Engels as quoted by Loomba)

Camera Obscura has been a favourite metaphor with Marx and Engels to show the process of inversions and misrepresentation during the perception of reality and its representation. *Camera Obscura* is an optical device with a hole which produces upside down images on the wall or screen. Aristotle also understood the principle of *Camera Obscura* and viewed the crescent shape of eclipsed sun projected on the ground. The natural *Camera Obscura* in human body is the eye which also receives lights from the outside world and projects inverted images on the retina. Marx and Engels have used *Camera Obscura* to discuss how human perception and representation of reality is not so innocent a phenomenon as believed to be. They believed that "reality is spontaneously and necessarily" (Loomba 26) inverted by human mind. All human perceptions, including ideas, are structured by 'lived experiences'. Thus for Marx, consciousness is not an essential and pre-existing entity. It is not the human consciousness that determines the outside reality; rather it is material reality that determines the consciousness. Marx and Engels used the metaphor of *Camera Obscura* to illustrate how capitalism itself produces inverted reality which almost convinces people to accept it as the correct and proper ideology of the world.

However, in this paper the metaphor of *Camera Obscura* is being used to illustrate how human perception is influenced and

shaped by the 'lived experiences' of an individual. The inverted perception of reality constitutes the 'latent' contents of human consciousness which get manifested in the writings of the individual. From the above stated position, the attempt shall be to deconstruct the notions of objective portrayal of India generally associated with Jhabvala's art of fiction writing. The endeavour shall be to 'expose' how Jhabvala, who has her roots in Europe, is also, unconsciously, propagating the image of the Orient through her fictional writings. From the position of Phenomenology, it is assumed that 'lived experiences' played a very important role in constituting and structuring Jhabvala's consciousness and her perception of India, and her creative writings shall be taken as symptomatic of her unconscious. Jhabvala's consciousness, shaped by her 'lived experiences', which also includes culture and language she was exposed to as a child, determined her perception of outside reality. If the unconscious is structured like language, Jhabvala's 'lived experiences', linguistic experience being one of the most important and crucial of all the 'lived experiences', has structured her perception and expression about India, which on surface seems to be objective, but, if explored, European prejudices against the East can be seen working in the undercurrents. Thus, in the present study, the attempt is to understand what were those 'lived experiences' that structured Ruth P. Jhabvala's consciousness and how the patterns of her unconscious are repeated in her writings. Banking upon the assumptions of Psychoanalysis, it is assumed in the present study that, Ruth P. Jhabvala's writings are symptomatic of her unconscious- an essential part of her consciousness as a writer. Psychoanalytic literary criticism does not limit itself to psychical state of the author or characters in the world of fictional narrative. In Marxian parlance, such a psychoanalytic study can be called 'vulgar' psychoanalytic study. Though there is not any fixed way of carrying out psychoanalytic criticism, yet all the variants do agree that

> literature (and what closely relates to it: language, rhetoric, style, story-telling, poetry) is fundamentally intertwined with the psyche. Hence, understanding psychoanalytic approaches to literature requires us to reflect upon various ways in which this close connection is conceived (Surprenant 200).

All variants of psychoanalytic literary study would agree that creative writings do reflect the mechanisms of the unconscious. Inverting the Descartian proclamation that 'I think, therefore I am' Lacan says , 'I am where I think not'. Thus, to Lacan the unconscious was the kernel of the being. Lacanian understanding of the unconscious was different from that of Freud. If Freud believed in a pre-existing chamber of unconscious, "Lacan sees he unconscious as coming into being simultaneous with language" (Wright 153). "The unconscious is not a chaotic mass of disparate material [...], but an orderly network, as complex as the structure of a language" (Berry 106).

Phenomenology primarily is concerned with the analysis of "structures of experience" and consciousness. Phenomenology is the study of 'Phenomena' i.e. as things appear in our experience. The Phenomenological approach, which is different from clinical study of psychology, Ontology and Epistemology, attempts to carry the study of "essential properties and structures of consciousness". Phenomenologists believe that consciousness is always 'conscious' of something. Borrowing from Brentano, Husserl believes that 'intentionality' constitutes an important philosophical position with Phenomenologits. Intentionality is "the directedness or 'aboutness' of many, if not all, conscious states...Our beliefs, thoughts, wishes, dreams, and desires are about things. Equally the words we use to express these beliefs and other mental states are about things" (Blackburn 188). Intentional Object, the object of consciousness, is constituted in many ways such as memory, perception, signification et al. Phenomenology does not limit itself to the things described or as experienced by an individual. It, rather, in spite of being anti-reductionist, uses reductions as tools to understand 'idea' or 'essence' of things or the phenomena- it be a feeling, an idea or perception. Phenomenology studies

> the structure of various types of experience ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity [...] According to classical Husserlian phenomenology, our experience is directed toward — represents or "intends"

> — things only *through* particular concepts, thoughts, ideas, images, etc. These make up the meaning or content of a given experience, and are distinct from the things they present or mean. (SEP).

Thus, through varied experiences, consciousness gets directed towards 'intentional object' (the concept which includes abstract ideas and feelings as well) and develops a complex structure of awareness or 'aboutness' regarding temporal awareness, spatial awareness, self awareness, kinesthetic awareness, awareness of other, linguistic awareness and social awareness. All the structures of awareness work simultaneously in an individual's every day activity, which gives the individual cultural awareness too. The temporal, spatial, social and cultural awareness play an important role in constituting the awareness of the self and the 'Other'. As in the dualism of self and other, the Other is always understood in relation to the Self.

The relation of Ruth P. Jhabvala vis-à-vis India and literary tradition of novel writing in English in India has always been ambivalent and enigmatic. During her stay in India, Jhabvala called herself a European living in India. But she has been placed differently by different critics. Haydn Moore Williams believes that though Ruth Prawer Jhabvala herself is a European but she belongs to the tradition to which P. Meadows Taylor, Kipling and John Masters belong. On the other hand, Somdatta Mandal places her among those women writers who were writing fiction in India after independence. The major concerns of these writers used to be marriage, man-woman relationship and portrayal of middle class. Problematizing her position vis-à-vis Indian society, she has also been discussed either as "insider-outsider" or/and "outsider-insider" (Prasanna 30). Nevertheless, almost all the critics have appreciated Jhabvala's works for her comic art, objective depiction of Indian lifestyle and "understanding of the socio-economic dimension" (Newman 92) of Indian society. It is her close personal experience of Indian life and her creative cult of a novelist that take her nearer to indigenous Indian writers like R. K. Naraynan and Raja Rao. Appreciating Jhabvala's art, Khushwant Singh cites her, together with R.K. Naraynan, as a fine interpreter of contemporary India in fiction.

From the perspective of Phenomenology, 'lived experiences' of Ruth P. Jhabvala, including her linguistic experience played an important role in structuring her perception of India during her 25 years stay in India. As already said if the unconscious is structured like language, Ruth P. Jhabvala's exposure to English language at an early stage structured her perceptions of India and like *camera obscura* her mind projected the inverted images of India in her fictional writings. Ruth P. Jhabvala was born in Germany in 1927 to Jew parents. In order to escape Nazi Germany, her parents had to leave Germany when she was only 12 years old, though her parents were among the last to leave Germany. From 1939 to 1951, she stayed in England. During this stay, she was weaned off to a new language and culture. Jhabvala had shown good propensity to acquire English language. She attained a degree of an M.A. and wrote an M.A. thesis on 'The Short Story in England, 1700-1750.' In retrospect she sees this period, during which time she studied many of the great European classics and acquired the tools of her trade as an author. In 1951, she got married to Cyrus Jhabvala, whom she met in a party in London, and came to India.

Though Ruth P. Jhabvala was displaced from her native place at a very young age, the major dislocation of her life was when she got married to Cyrus Jhabvala. Her moving out of Europe and first encounter with India, which Jhabvala confessed in her writings that she had accepted 'blindly', made India her 'intentional object'. As "the problem of intentionality is that of understanding the relation obtaining between a mental state, or its expression, and the thing it is about [...] Intentional relations seem to depend on how the object is specified" (Blackburn 188). Thus, if it is the through directedness or aboutness that consciousness comes into being or gets structured, the object perceived or the intentional object also attains its meaning or identity the way it is perceived. Her English education, exposure to European classics, research work in English literature and English upbringing constituted the matrix of her 'lived experiences' which ultimately had determined her perception of India in pre-conceived images. She became strongly aware of her European self when she made a brief visit to England during her stay in India. After this visit, her perception about India underwent a major change. The fiction that she produced after her brief visit to England portrayed Orient in stronger terms

than her earlier fiction. Even if it is happening unconsciously with Jhabvala, she is portraying the 'Other' continent in her writings.

Though she has been acclaimed for the portrayal of themes of marriage, social behaviour, romantic love, lust for money, Jhabvala, unconsciously, has created certain images which propagate the Orient. 'Heat' and 'Dust' have become recurrent adjectives for Jhabvala to describe the landscape of India in most of her novels. The world that Jhabvala portrays in her fiction is of morally corrupt businessman, oversexed men, world of spices, mud houses, poverty, sickness and also exotic side of India through the Nawab and his palace in *Heat and Dust*. Jhabvala writes her novels from the position of an outsider who is trying to come to terms with Indian reality. She herself says that her books may appear objective, but really they are the opposite. She further adds that her "work can never claim to be a balanced or authoritative view of India but is only one individual European's attempt to compound the puzzling process of living in it." If her novels have come out of a "puzzling process", her perspective of India cannot be taken as objective and authentic as it is most likely to bring out the preconceived images and prejudices that most of the Europeans have against the East. After having migrated from Germany, Jhabvala, as a young child, used to feel a sense of lost and uprootedness. England to this child was not only another territory to live with her parents, but England came to her wandering, uprooted soul as a refuge. Her feeling indebted to England is evident when she says, "England opened out the world of literature for me...I made up for my disinheritance by absorbing the world of others. The more regional, the more deeply rooted a writer was, the more I loved them" (The Hindustan Times). Jhabvala nourished her mind on the writings of Rudyard Kipling and E. M. Forster as *Kim* and *A Passage to India* were her favourite texts. Her stay in England when she was growing adult and reading English texts which are 'rooted in the regions', as said by Jhabvala herself, constituted her 'life-world' in terms of Phenomenology. This life-world was ultimately shaping her 'perception' of England as well as the 'Other' world at which her consciousness was directed. Though, on the surface, she seems to present a comic and objective portrayal of Indian society, but Jhabvala, like other European travellers who had produced writings about India to construct Orient,

has given certain stereotypical images of India. At the same time, it cannot be denied that her 'lived experiences' were different from the 'lived experiences' of earlier travellers, but not the position from where she was looking at India. Since creative writing is a process in which the unconscious gets an outlet and the process is not completely within the control of the conscious mind of the author, it does reflect certain patterns of the mind which can be sometimes even oblivious to the author himself/herself.

Jhabvala's unconscious association with the Orient becomes evident as she decides to pick titles of her novels from Hindu scriptures; whether it is *The Householder* or *Get Ready for Battle*. The titles of *The Nature of Passion* and *Get Ready for Battle* are taken from the Gita and *The Householder* refers to four stages of Hindu life and the title of *To Whom She Will* comes from *Panchtantra*. As Jhabvala intends to understand her contemporary India through her puzzling encounter, the frame within which she perceives India is of the Epics and Puranas, which reflects her pre-conceived notions about India.

The Householder has been studied as a comic portrayal of Indian society as seen by Jhabvala. Such discussions are largely focused on Prem's growth as a householder. "Jhabvala creates a number of incidents which mark Prem's graduation to the status of a householder" (Agarwal 45). Jhabvala is said to bring inherent comedy in Indian society on surface. *The Householder*, for example, is based on the second *ashrama* (stage) in Hindu view of life i.e. *Grihistha ashrama* – the stage of the householder. It concerns "an ordinary young man's slow attainment of a status of the householder" (Agarwal 41). When Prem is married to Indu he is still fumbling to find his feet in his personal and professional life. He wants to be impressive just like his father and wants Indu, his wife, to imitate his mother while treating her husband. Prem, whose ideas on marriage "have been shaped primarily by his mother's exemplary deference to her late husband, applies ancient rule and childhood memory to present experience with amusing results" (Gooneratne 131). In the process of attaining manhood, when he is struggling as a householder, he is enamoured with the life of a religious guru free of all corrosive worldly cares. He meets Hans, a German, who, along with other Europeans, is practicing yoga in

India. That Ruth, as said by Gooneratne, is presenting this situation with objectivity, without making any comments or revealing her intentions, though her insinuating ironic tone cannot be denied. "The humour with which Ruth Jhabvala traces Prem's 'progress' is thus given a delicate ironic edge" (Gooneratne 129).

Jhabvala within the single frame of this narrative has given all the hues and shades which reflect her Orientalist way of looking at Indian society. In this comedy, as claimed by various critics, Jhabvala has presented the struggle of a young man to prove himself as a teacher and as well as a husband. Ironically she roots the title of the novel in Indian philosophy. Thus, she is able to bring on surface the philosophical backbone of Indian way of life through the character of Prem. Prem is working as a teacher (the *Guru*), who is supposed to show the path of righteousness (*Dharma*) to his students. The job gives him salary, though meagre, to meet his economic needs (*Artha*) so that he can enjoy material pleasures of life, especially after marriage (*Kama*). Since, at the professional front, Prem is not able to maintain discipline in his class room and he feels threatened that he might lose his job; at the personal front, he feels economically burdened because his wife is pregnant. At the same time, he finds himself ineffective as a husband in front of his wife whom he wants to respect him the way his mother used to respect his father. Threatened and burdened from all sides, he finds no hope of his deliverance (*Moksha*). Searching for the ways to attain *Moksha* from corroding worldly worries, he finds an escape in Swami ji, a spiritual teacher. Prem makes frequent visits to the Swami ji, who later initiates him into the path of the householder.

Through Prem, Jhabvala has also ridiculed the social structure and customs of India. With the European gaze, Jhabvala scorns the social structure in which a man gets married by virtue of the chronological years that he has lived for. Moreover, the bride is also chosen by the family, mainly by the mother of the groom; and the man remains under the influence of his mother. Such a relationship in Indian society is not an independent man-woman relationship as in the west. Marriage, according to Hinduism, is rather a religious sacrament. The purpose of marriage is threefold- *Dharma*, *Praja* (Pogeny) and *Rati* (Sexual Pleasure). The three purposes of marriage are arranged in accordance with the

importance they carry in human life. *Dharama*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha* are the guiding principles of Hindu marriage as well. It is only through marriage that a man can have *Grihistha ashrama*, which also gives the novel its title. The stage of *Grihistha ashrama* is essential before a man before he can proceed onto *Vaana Prastha*. The search for *Moksha* would also remain imperfect and deficient, if the man has not gone through the stage of the householder. In this larger scheme, the individuality of man or woman becomes subservient to the *dharma* they are supposed to follow in life.

But, when perceived from the eye of a European, the institution of marriage becomes a subject of ridicule and is perceived in the light of Freudian concept of Oedipus Complex. At every step, Prem, like a victim of Oedipus complex, 'imitates his father' and is also looking for his mother in his wife. He wants his wife to respect him the way his mother used to respect his father; he even wants his wife to cook like his mother. He may not be a suckling infant but still wants to be fed by his wife the way his mother had fed him. "It would be nice to have her here: she would make the flat more comfortable and homelike and also perhaps she would teach Indu how to cook the dishes he liked" (Jhabvala 32). He rejoices in the news of his mother coming to him as his desire to be with his mother would now be fulfilled. His desire for his mother, for the food he likes and making his flat comfortable is, in Psychoanalytic terms, a boy's desire for his mother - the state of 'plentitude', which Prem is looking for. Prem is said to have grown into a man when he cleverly sends away his mother to his sister in Bangalore and is ready, breaking the umbilical connection with his mother, to come back to his sybaritic wife.

Europeans have always pined for having metaphysical connection with India. Such an India was primarily land of spirituality and ascetics where Jhabvala found

> Even the beggars, the poverty, they didn't bother me then; they seemed right somehow, a part of life taken out of the West (like death, which was also always present, in India, carried on a bier in front of my window down to the burning ghats, or

> the vultures swooping over something indescribable in a ditch). It was life as one read about it in the Bible; whole, I thought; pure, I thought.

Her European background and strong fascination for India during her first stage of encounter with the country gave her a preconceived notion about India as a land of spirituality or divinity, which she tried to see even in beggars and sights of death. Hinduism preaches austerity, detachment and simplicity, but does not glorify poverty. The difference between the two remains incomprehensible to Jhabvala and generally to the Westerner, who mistake one for another. Jhabvala's glorification of sights of poverty and attempt to see divinity in poverty reflects her over generalised and over simplified European perspective of India and Indian philosophy. So, when, later on, she discovered another side of India as well which she, like any other European, could not reconcile with her own image of India, she found herself disillusioned. Jhabvala herself in one of her writings has said

> There is a cycle that Europeans-by Europeans I mean all Westerners, including Americans-tend to pass through. It goes like this: first stage, tremendous enthusiasm-everything Indian is marvellous; second stage, everything Indian not so marvellous; third stage, everything Indian abominable. For some people it ends there, for others the cycle renews itself and goes on. [...] When I meet other Europeans, I can usually tell after a few moments conversation at what stage of the cycle they happen to be.

If, according to Ruth P. Jhabvala, every European falls in the trap, then Jhabvala herself was no exception, which she has also admitted. India has always been "an object of reverend wonder for many western writers" (H-Shihan 13) in the beginning. Though later on they might get disillusioned with India and the preconceived images of India that they were cherishing might get broken. In almost all the novels written by Jhabvala, the westerners are not merely encountering and discovering India for themselves, it also becomes a journey into themselves as well. Esmond (*Esmond in India*),

Clarissa and the Hochstardts (*A Backward Place*), Hans (*The Householder*), Lee, Margaret and Evie (*A New Dominion*), Olivia, Chid and Narrator (*Heat and Dust*), they all traversed the space within while traversing the space without. Especially characters like Hans in *The Householder*, Lee, Margaret and Evie in *A New Dominion* and Chid in *Heat and Dust*, came to India to explore India's spirituality, but they later realized their bodies are not meant for hardships of Indian asceticism or they found oversexed self-proclaimed gurus and decided to leave India disillusioned.

The land of poor people and beggars is also a land of ascetics and sages for them. Since Jhabvala was also finding "the life in the Bible" when she came to India, her characters also come to India on a spiritual quest. Hans, in *The Householder*, is a German who practices Yoga and has come to India in search of a sage he saw in a dream. By the end of the novel, Hans is disillusioned with his search for a Guru. In the beginning when Hans meets Prem for the first time, he is extremely excited about India and spirituality. He finds everything about India so spiritual that he opines- "we can wash off our dirty materialism when we come here to your India. Off with it!" (Jhabvala 30) He has come to India because he had had a dream about an Indian sage who was wearing only his loincloth sitting under a palm tree. Hans was captivated by ascetic's eyes brimming with love and compassion.

> "...His eyes, oh his eyes!' Hans called raising his hands in rapture... 'Such pity, such kindness there in those eyes. Such love. And they are looking at me. Yes, at me. Yes, at me. Hans Loewe' he indicated himself with his forefinger.' And what do they say to me, those marvellous eyes?...
>
> 'Their message is simple,' said Hans. 'It is only this: "Come, Hans";' and he smiled, showing his tiny teeth and his gums. 'Yes, only come, Hans. But it is enough. I take the rucksack on the back, I am here..." (Jhabvala 32).

Other Europeans inhabitants in the house where Hans was living in were so fascinated by Yoga that Hans's landlady asked Prem,

on their first meeting, about the yoga he practiced. Hans was ecstatic on having some spiritual experiences he got while practicing yoga and yearned for more. His excitement about Indian spirituality is a typical disposition that every European tends to show in his/her early encounter with India. By the end of the narrative, Hans is haunted by the thoughts that he is not growing spiritually. Finally, he decides to leave Delhi for South India in search of a Guru who might help him on his spiritual path. H. Summerfield sums up Jhabvala's attempt behind portraying religious gurus in her works. Summerfield opines that

> The aspect of Indian civilization furthest removed from the rational empiricist outlook, however, is the country's rich religious life, with its artistic, philosophical, and devotional components. In recent years certain lightweight gurus, very different from the great figures of Hindu philosophy and holiness, have attracted numerous Western disciples, and since the mid-sixties scathing portraits of such men have enriched Mrs. Jhabvala's works along with a comic and pitiable parade of their gullible European and American disciples (86).

Even the statement made by Summerfield also reflects the stereotypical binaries in which Europeans perceive Indian reality. India is being perceived as a land away from "rational empiricist outlook" and for her "rich religious life" in which now have emerged some 'corrupt' and 'lightweight' gurus who easily dupe "gullible Europeans and Americans". Jhabvala's orientalist perspective is also structured by such binaries and her narratives are structured around such Eurocentric binaries.

Jhabvala continues with ironic portrayal of spirituality in *Heat and Dust*. The novel is about a young lady who comes to India to unravel the mysteries associated with her Grandfather's first wife, Olivia. In the process she encounters almost similar experiences that Olivia had experienced in India in 1920s. This parallelism in the narrative structure allows the writer to set up comparison of Indian society in two different time frames.

Jhabvala's attitude while dealing with the issue of spirituality in *Heat and Dust* is slightly ambivalent. On the one hand, narrator becomes the spokesperson of all the Europeans who come to India in search of spiritual peace and on the other hand, she is very critical of Chid or Chidananda who is exploring his spiritual self during his stay in India. While talking to Inder Lal, her landlord, the narrator says,

> I try to find an explanation for him. I tell him that many of us are tired of the materialism of the West, and even if we have no particular attraction towards the spiritual message of the East, we come here in the hope of finding a simpler and more natural way of life. He says why should people who have everything-motor cars, refrigerators-come here to such a place where there is nothing? (Jhabvala 95)

There is Chid, who is also English and has come to India with the same spiritual quest; but the attitude of the narrator is quite ironical while portraying him and other Europeans. Europeans generally are introduced to Indian spirituality either through discourses of an ascetic or Indian scriptures which is followed by their strong urge to seek spirituality in India and finally, they arrive here. Once they arrive here, the process of their being cheated begins; all they get on reaching India is dysentery and they realise that realising spirituality following the instructions of an Indian Guru is a tough job for them and finally, they decide to quit disappointedly. It is in this light that the character of Chid or Chidananda has been portrayed. He got interested in Indian spirituality through books and came to India.

> For months he had lived there, like an Indian pilgrim, purifying himself and often so rapt in contemplation that the world around him had faded away completely. He too developed dysentery and ring-worm but was not bothered by them because of living on such a higher plane; similarly, he was not bothered by the disappearance of his few possessions from the temple compound where he

> lived. He found a guru to give him initiation and to strip him of all personal characteristics and the rest of his possessions including his name. He was given an Indian name, Chidananda (Jhabvala 23).

From this perspective, Anglo-Indian ascetic is jeered at, thrown stones and he finds it difficult to sleep under trees as directed by his guru. When the narrator brings him home, Inder Lal is very much impressed with his knowledge of Hindu religion but the narrator feels that such ascetics are in no way better than "sturdy set of rascals to me- some of them heavily drugged, others randy as can be, all it seems to me with shrewd and greedy faces" (Jhabvala 63). The narrator of the novel has always been critical of Indian spirituality and Chid's almost intellectual infatuation with this philosophical idea. If pilgrimages are meant for giving comfort to aching souls, to help one realize one's inner self and to rejuvenate one's inner self, then Chid's removing his orange attire and coming back into Khakis signifies his disillusionment with Indian spirituality, his coming to terms with himself, his realising his real Christian self.

The narrative also explores the (im)-possibility of romantic relation between East and West through the relationship between Olivia and the Nawab in the colonial India and the Narrator and Inder Lal, her landlord in post-colonial India. Both the Indian men who developed a relationship with English women have sick wives. Inder Lal's wife was chosen by his mother who did not want to have an educated wife for her son. Jhabvala, like in *The Householder*, is being critical of the Indian institution of marriage in this novel too. In *Heat and Dust*, Jhabvala is not going into the philosophical aspect of Indian society, but making her observations about India as she perceived it. It is important to note the impressions that the narrator is gathering while her stay in India. Like *A Passage to India*, this novel too does not give any hope regarding having inter-racial relations.

While speaking on the nature and function of the narrator in the novel, Yasmine Gooneratne states that *Heat and Dust* employs "a single narrator, whose function is not only to relate two stories-

her own and Olivia's- but to present characters in such a way that they reinforce, without strain or loss of objectivity, this double exposure of event and experience" (Gooneratne 235). Though it is the narrator who is working on the life of Olivia and recording her discoveries in her diary, yet, the colonial India, though discovered by unnamed narrator while working on Olivia's life, is seen from the perspective of *burra memsahib*. The world that the narrator discovers is Olivia's world as seen by her. The narrative talks about Olivia's loneliness, her spending time in doing up the house and frequent visits to other British women. The narrative, though set in 1923, remains silent on contemporary political upheavals as after 1919 the political situation of colonial India was burning with fires of agitation and struggle for freedom. The narrator's deliberate silence can be ascribed to the only reason that it was being seen from the point of view of Olivia. She could think of making plans of a tour to Shimla or look for a companionship in the Nawab, but not the heat generated by the political circumstances. The Nawab has also been perceived from the same angle. He is discussed more as a lover and less as an administrator. It is only towards that end that he once displays his displeasure against the British officer. Even later, the Nawab is more occupied with arrangements he had to make for Olivia. Reticence regarding the political scene of India seems to be a deliberate choice on the part of the narrator as for the narrator the struggle was not an important event.

Description of landscape and people is another area which also reflects Jhabvala's Orientalist way of perceiving and describing India. Not only in *Heat and Dust*, but in her entire *oeuvre* she, finding no beauty in India, has described Indian landscape in terms of only 'heat' and 'dust'. When Olivia goes out for an excursion with the Nawab and Harry, the landscape has been defined as "so hot and dusty [...] utterly flat and monotonous" which in European eyes was so abominable and Olivia was 'learning to like'. Even the modern India is no different. Instead of having noticed the changing face of India in 1970s in which the second narrative is set, the narrator is looking at beggars and poverty stricken people. India in the 1970s could not be called an advanced India as compared to Europe, but it was certainly no longer what colonial India was. "There are the town's cripples, idiots, and resident beggars. They move around the streets and, whenever anything of interest is going

on, they rush up and form part of the crowd" (Jhabvala 79). The narrator is still portraying India as an ugly land of beggars and cripples with no education and scientific advancements. If there is any modern educated Indian man, Inder Lal, he has been described as "**a typical Indian**[1] clerk, meek and bowed down with many cares" (Jhabvala 50) as his young looking face looks older "because of careworn expression" (Jhabvala 50). The superiority complex of the West gets manifested even while giving physical attributes to the characters. Inder Lal is described to be shorter than the narrator in height and cannot match up with her pace. The narrator is not merely taller but "so much taller than he is" and the narrator walks "with long strides" and keeps "forgetting that this makes it difficult for him to keep up with" (Jhabvala 49) the narrator.

Within two time frames, Jhabvala has portrayed three Indias for us, but every India is presented in a stereotypical fashion which contributes to the Orient. The first India is the colonial India dominated by the British officials. This is the world of perfect order, rooms are decorated in European style, men and women following their British customs and life style to show Indians outside their world the difference between the West and the East. Olivia, unlike Indian women as shown in the Palace, reads and plays on piano to spend long days. Mrs. Saunders finds her Indian servants to be extremely rude and shrewd. She opines that servants "were devils; and that it was not stupidity on their part- on the contrary, they were clever enough when it suited their purpose-but it was all done deliberately to torment their masters" (Jhabvala 28). She feels even sexually threatened by her servants and attributes over-sexed nature of Indian men to their habit of eating spices in food. Harry, who spends most of the time with the Nawab in his palace, likes Olivia's room and her European tastes. Harry felt at home in Olivia's drawing room. "Harry declared himself charmed with her room- he loved her black and white prints, her Japanese screen, her yellow chairs and lampshades" (Jhabvala 18). After reaching Olivia's room he felt as if he "had crossed a desert and had at last reached an oasis" (Jhabvala 18).The second India is also colonial, but the world of the Nawab is presenting the image of *exotica*. That is the place where Orient architect and interiors could be found. The palace is divided into different quarters. Women have their own quarter, the Nawab has his own and Harry, who lives with the Nawab, is given

his own big room. There are "elegant, though more in Indian style with floor-level divans covered in rich textures, and little mirrors in enamelled frames" (Jhabvala 28). There is diaphanous silk for ladies to float around and they are served "sherbet and other refreshments from a succession of trays carried in by servants" (Jhabvala 28-29). The elegance of the Palace has its own charm associated with the Royalty in pre-colonial India.

The third India is post-colonial India. This world is in complete contrast with the worlds shown earlier. There is neither British order, nor the charm and elegance of Indian Royalty. The old buildings which were once used as residences and offices with the British are now Indian government offices and have lost their charm and glory. Even the Palace of *Khatm* state is in dilapidated condition. This is the world of beggars, cripples, idiots and mentally sick people. Perhaps, the narrator is suggesting pre-colonial India still had some charm and poetry associated; but the free India has lost all glories and is full of filth and disease. All the images shown in three Indias in the novel portrays India either as an exotic land or Indians as indolent, oversexed, corrupt, chaotic and a "bundle of rogues" which justifies the presence of the English on Indian land as their world is perfect and orderly, their men work hard as all the English men, but for Harry, work diligently for the Empire in India. Edward Said has also shown how European perspective is premised with binaries such as: "If colonised people are irrational, Europeans are rational; if the former are barbaric, sensual, and lazy, Europe is civilisation itself, with its sexual appetities under control and its dominant ethic of hard work" (Loomba 47). Indulgent Nawab, who is also a poor administrator, is juxtaposed with Mr Douglas, who epitomises the European values of hard work. The Nawab's palace is so corrupting a place that Harry, who is staying there, is not working at all; Olivia, who pays regular visits there, gets astray and fumbles into a devastating romantic relationship with the Nawab. Even the narrator looks at India as a corrupting and disfiguring land. In the beginning of the novel, before the narrator has started narrating the story she, while talking about her impressions of India, says- "they are no longer the same because I myself am no longer the same. India always changes people, and I have been no

exception" (Jhabvala 2); and later while describing the behaviour of English visitors at the Guest House she says-

> The girl was particularly indignant- not only about this watchman but about all the other people all over India. She said they were all dirty and dishonest. She had a very pretty, open, English face but when she said that it became mean and clenched, and I realised that the longer she stayed in India the more her face would become like that (Jhabvala 21).

Her fearing that "the more she stayed in India, the more her face would become clenched" also reflects the deep-seated superiority complex in the psyche of the colonisers and their tendency to look down upon India.

It is very difficult to state that Jhabvala was also writing to propagate the image like earlier writers, political thinkers, travellers and literary writers who were generating knowledge first to create and later to widen the gap between two binaries of the Orient and the Occident. Jhabvala's situation is ambivalent because of socio-political conditions in which she travelled India. When Jhabvala came to India, India had got freedom from the British Rule and owing to Nehruvian policies, India was marching on the path of modernization. Prem in *The Householder* refers to five-year plans and building of dams while conversing with Hans, who was looking only for spirituality in India. Jhabvala recorded her impressions about India on the basis of her first hand encounter with this land. But as *Camera Obscura* inverts the images, the inversion in case of human perception takes place in the human mind and the same inverted images are manifested in writings. Jhabvala's writings are also a victim of the same. Jhabvala, owing to her 'lived experiences' and structured unconscious, also perceived Indian reality in the stereotypical fashion. Though she was portraying Indian reality with objectivity, as claimed and acclaimed by various critics, the notion of objectivity, thus, itself becomes an unstable and questionable category as the process of perception, assimilation and projection itself is not so innocent and results in inversions of

perceived reality at every stage.

Works Cited:

Agarwal, Ramlal G. *Ruth Prawer Jhabvala: A Study of Her Fiction*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1990.

Berry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. New Delhi: Viva Books, 2010.

Blackburn, Simon. Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy. New York: OUP, 2008.

Gooneratne, Yasmine. *Silence, Exile and Cunning: The Fiction of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala*. 2nd ed. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1991.

H-Shihan, I. *Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's Heat and Dust*. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2006.

Jhabvala, Ruth P. *The Householder*: Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980.

— *Heat and Dust*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1994.

Loomba, Ania. Colonialism/Postcolonialism. London: Routledge, 1998.

Newman, Judie. "Postcolonial Gothic: Ruth Prawer Jhabvala and the Sobhraj Case." *Modern Fiction Studies*. 40.1 (Spring 1994): 85 - 100.

Prasanna, A. Hari. "Of Living in Two Cultures: Expatriate Women in Jhabvala's Fiction." *Commonwealth Writing: A Study in Expatriate Experience*. ed. R. K. Dhawan and L. S. R. Krisna Shastry. New Delhi: Prestige, 1994. 30 - 37.

"Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's Testament". *The Hindustan Times*

Weekly. Dated 27th July, 1980.

Summerfield, H. "Holy Women and Unholy Men: Ruth Prawer Jhabvala Confronts the Non-rational." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*. 17.3 (July 1986) 85-101.

Surprenant, Celine. "Freud and Psychoanalysis." *Literary Theory and Criticism*. ed. Patricia Waugh. Delhi: OUP, 2006.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/#6> dated 12 November, 2010.

Wright, Elizabeth. "Modern Psychoanalytic Criticism". *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction*. Ed. Jefferson, Ann & Robey, David. London: B.T. Batsford ltd., 1987.

———*———

Art of Narration: An Analysis of the Psychonarrative Technique in *The Girmitiya Saga*

Kapil Chaudah

> The more *inner* and the less *outer* life a novel presents the higher and nobler will be its purpose...Art consists in achieving the maximum of inner motion with the minimum of outer motion; for which is the inner life which is our true object of interest. Schopenhauer (qtd.in Cohn, 9).

These words of Schopenhauer point to the fact that one's real self is inside one's being; what is visible outside is only its reflection. The art of narration considers it as an essential component of characterization in any literary work. A writer intends to show how an individual's mental world interacts with the world outside him/her by representing his/her state of mind. This technique is called psychonarration. Giriraj Kishore in his *The Girmitiya Saga*, a narrative biographical account of Mahatma Gandhi's life and experiences in South Africa, deftly uses this technique. The present paper attempts to analyse the psychonarrative style of Kishore by applying Dorrit Cohn's narrative model.

Cohn's model is primarily based on the stream of consciousness genre that has been prevalent in fiction writing for over a century. It naturally demands a brief discussion over the genre and how Cohn reformulates it. First, stream of consciousness is defined as "a continuous succession of experiences, and what gives the stream its unity from one moment to the next is the fact that this succession is itself experienced" (Dainton, 4). The blueprint of human actions and behaviour is drafted by this unity of experiences. It has a diachronic quality, i.e. it covers the entire body of experiences. Stream of consciousness novelists reproduce characters' mental impressions to relate them to the external world.

Before we proceed to discuss Cohn's psychonarrative formula, a fundamental question has to be addressed: Does consciousness exist? As a matter of fact, the existence of human consciousness has been in dispute. Theological discourses have alluded to a divine element imperceptible to human senses. They have asserted the presence of a realm beyond the material world. For example, the Bible says, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal" (II Corinthians 4:18). The Gita talks about "the Absolute, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified" (165). Buddha, too, coined a term *alaya-vijnana* or 'store consciousness' to refer to a zone where past experiences are deposited (Osho, 74). These experiences have a direct bearing on the present life of an individual. Likewise, various religions have indicated to a mysterious entity that pervades the whole universe.

However, rational minds are hardly convinced of spiritual realities; they refute them as "metaphysical leftover of religious belief in the soul" and demand "empirically verifiable facts" (Forter and Miller, 1) to testify the claims about inner phenomenon. Anything that is not material is immaterial to them. All they care for are scientific truths, the rest is simply non-existent.

It is hard to find empirical evidence for mystical or physic concepts. Consequently, theology and science remain strange to each other, and at times hostile too. Fortunately, psychological studies, particularly psychoanalysis, have made a remarkable contribution to lessen the gap between the two. Psychoanalysts have explored different dimensions of human mind and on the basis of their research and findings have designed a scientific model to forward their discoveries about the psychic world. The thrust of psychoanalysis is the unconscious mind, a reservoir of lost and repressed wishes that intervene in the working of the conscious mind. Milton et al say: "Unconscious wishes, when blocked and frustrated, generate wish fulfilling phantasies, also usually unconscious, which then feed into the construction of dreams, symptoms, slips and jokes. The 'ph' of phantasy denotes unconsciously generated process as distinct from a consciously constructed daydream, or fantasy" (23).

However, since psychological approaches have been developed from the investigation of individual minds, they lack scientific precision. For the same reason, they have been criticized. The central objection is that the subjective nature of psychic experiences throws them open for all kinds of interpretations that hardly add up. Despite these shortcomings, psychoanalysis is capable of delving into concealed domains of consciousness and dig out some incredible facts. This capability qualifies it to serve as intermediary between psychic and scientific worlds. It eventually validates the stream of consciousness mode of narration as tangible and substantial.

In her *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction,* Cohn dissects this genre and invents her psychonarrative methods for fiction writing. She considers the description of inward life an indispensable component of narrative portrayals. According to her, a writer can create a close familiarity between the characters and readers by bringing out the formers' invisible selves. This personal acquaintance with the characters helps readers to find out the rationale for their actions. A sort of mental interaction between the two is born out of it. Seen from the characters' inside worlds, the fictional world outside seems a reality. Cohn refers to Kate Hamburger, a literary theorist's views on it: "...the representation of characters' inner lives is the touchstone that simultaneously sets fiction apart from reality and builds the semblance (*Schein*) of another, non-real reality" (7). Cohn elaborates on it. She attaches high value to characters' interiority in fiction. An open access to it not only gives a clear and comprehensive idea of the characters' dispositions, but points to the deeper meanings of the text as well to the degree that fiction appears fact. In a sense, it is more real than reality for even in real life individuals' private worlds remain a mystery. Cohn observes that "the most real, the "roundest" characters are those we know most intimately, precisely we could never know people in real life" (5). The above discussion stresses the role of psychonarrative technique in fiction.

Cohn talks disapprovingly of heterodiegetic style of writing in which an omniscient narrator tells the story all by herself/himself.

S/he is the sole authority who controls the characters' destinies. They look more like puppets without much freedom to think or feel. They often act as blank screens to project the narrator's own self. Cohn criticizes "the presence of vocal authorial narrator, unable to refrain from embedding his character's private thoughts in his own generalization about human nature. Not only he is far more interested in his own commentary or events than mediations these events may release within his characters, he is also committed by his narrative stance to explicit, often didactic, evaluation" (22). This description reminds us of T. S. Eliot's views on the functions of an artist. According to him, an artist is only a catalytic agent who has to pass through "a process of depersonalization" (Ramaswami and Seturaman, 171). He asserts that "the progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (171). Likewise, a literary artist facilitates actions within and between characters. S/he reports their thought processes as an indifferent observer and allows free interplay between them. S/he is an eye through which readers can foray into individual characters' psyches and can find out themselves the truth of their beings. One of the ways to achieve it is to reveal the inner selves of characters. Cohn proposes three modes of narration for it: (14)

a. **Psychonarration**: the narrator's discourse about a character's consciousness
b. **Quoted Monologue or Interior Monologue:** a character's mental discourse
c. **Narrated Monologue:** a character's mental discourse in the guise of the narrator's language.

To elucidate, psychonarration is used to depict the mental and emotional states of a character in the third person. Quoted Monologue reproduces them in the first person; in a way, in the character's own voice. Narrated Monologue is a complex mode. It partakes of the other two modes; it follows the third person speech and at the same time, its informal style makes it sound more conversational than contemplative. In other words, it is the narrator who speaks the character's mind, but with such a sense of immediacy that readers hear 'dual voice'. Often short or incomplete sentences, exclamations, and informal expressions create

this effect. These three modes are capable of representing the characters' mental discourses in subtle details.

Giriraj Kishore applies this psychonarrative technique in his *The Girmitiya Saga*. In fact, it is a prerequisite to portray the conflicting and reflective life of Gandhi. Gandhi set high ideals for himself and pursued them with diligence and sincerity. In addition, an insatiable thirst for Truth led him to the spiritual realm. He was politically as much conscious. Kishore sketches his personality against the socio-politico-spiritual matrix. He makes a painstaking and thoughtful effort to represent this intricate self through psychonarrative technique. For a systematic analysis, the three modes will be discussed in order they have been presented above.

(I) PSYCHONARRATION (PN): The first example of PN occurs in the very first passage that introduces Gandhi. It goes:

> Mohandas too had his dreams. These were the dreams that had taken him to London to study law. But when he arrived in Natal, his dreams already like pieces of cream in an ill-washed pan, bits and pieces of his dreams still stuck to him. He would gather together the remains of his shattered dreams, plant them again and gather a new crop (Kishore, 58).

At once, readers enter into Gandhi's dreamland, where broken dreams lie all around. Gandhi appears an ordinary youth aspiring big things but hardly able to achieve them, yet unable to get rid of them either. Readers can anticipate his individual character as well as his future actions.

One incidence that hurts Gandhi's sentiments deeply is his unfair treatment at the hands of his brother-in-law. Gandhi leaves the money saved up for his London visit with him. When he asks the money back, the brother-in-law refuses to return it arguing that crossing sea is an 'an irreligious act' and he will not let Gandhi commit it. Gandhi is stunned:

> To Mohandas it was as if someone had dropped the mirror of hope that he had brought from home

> with him, and it had shattered. It was impossible to gather the pieces together again. It was in smithereens. If he tried to gather the pieces the attempt would leave him bloodied all over (63).

These words reflect the unsettled state of his mind. He was so helpless as if his plans for study abroad had drifted far away from him, never to be retrieved.

(II) QUOTED MONOLOGUE (QM): It is more frequently used in the novel. It foregrounds Gandhi's character whereas the narrator acts as the background. Gandhi can directly and freely speak his mind without any external interpretation. Readers can actually read him and get to know what he is irrespective of the narrator's views about him. A few examples can elucidate these points. After being thrown out of the train in South Africa, Gandhi's mind is caught up in sheer agitation. He questions himself:

> What should be my next step? Should I go back? thought Mohandas. But how can I? I am here on a year's agreement. My self-respect and the honour of my country are closely linked to the question of staying on or going back. But how can I save my self-respect in the present conditions? (115-6)

Through this first person account, readers hear Gandhi loud and clear so much so that the narrator is almost forgotten. An interpersonal link between the character and readers is built that binds them with a sense of affinity.

Further, QMs are often marked by a string of questions, as in the above example, to reveal Gandhi's 'ambivalent impulses'. How his 'wish and counter-wish' (Freud, 47) are in conflict is best expressed by self enquiry. Here is an example: once Gandhi received a proposal from the South African government that if he withdrew the *Satyagraha* movement (in South Africa), the government would repeal the Asiatic Law that was introduced to restrict the Indian population in South Africa. Gandhi accepted the

proposal. But the government broke its promise. It pushed Gandhi into introspection:

> "Where did I go wrong? *Satyagraha* was not wrong. Trusting people was not wrong. Was there a deficiency in my determination?" (807)

At another point, he gets absorbed into self-investigation feeling that his actions have upset the government, and now it is coming down hard on the poor girmitiyas and innocent Indian traders. He asks himself:

> "Is yours a pious aim or an impious one? Is it self-serving or does it serve others?...Has anyone ever achieved anything without sacrificing his own self?" (970)

This emotional ambivalence breeds dilemma and perplexity in Gandhi's mind. It is plain to see how his inner and outer worlds interact with each other. For the sake of clarity, I wish to add that the above questions are self-addressed and therefore, they are indirectly in the first person.

In the next example, Gandhi can be seen contemplating on the social conditions in India through a series of interrogatives. Technically, the quotation is in first person plural instead of singular and without inverted commas in the novel. Nonetheless, ideas are projected with such a directness and immediacy that one is sure that one is hearing Gandhi's own words and voice. It reads:

> Were there no excesses committed in India? Were the whites alone guilty of excesses? At least, they only targeted others; we Indians did not spare even our own people. Could one say everything was hunky-dory in India? Was there no bloodshed? Was there no inequality? Was there no hunger? (319)

The frank and honest criticism of the Indian society, though expressed quietly to himself, is very vocal in its appeal. There is such a flow and force in the pithy sentences that overwhelm readers.

(III) NARRATED MONOLOGUE (NM): As discussed above, NM is complex by nature. To recall Cohn's definition: "(Narrated monologue) is a character's mental discourse in the guise of the narrator's language." The voices of the narrator and the character alternate to the tune of the latter's emotions. The mode in itself is descriptive as psychonarrative, however what is said has such strong personal undertones that the voices seem to overlap. An example from *The Girmitiya Saga* can illustrate it. Gandhi and Kastur sometimes quarreled over Sheikh Mehtab, Gandhi's friend. Kastur disliked him for she thought he was spoiling her husband. But Gandhi saw no reason to keep him off. Kishore says:

> Mohandas felt that his world was falling apart, that he was being stripped naked. Still, Sheikh Mehtab was his companion in joy and sorrow. How could he forsake Mehtab just because Kastur wanted it? Why did she want it? (71)

Reading the above passage, particularly its last part, one can visualize listening to Gandhi himself; yet the third person description points to the role of the narrator. This overlapping impression is the typical feature of NM. Further, the following example, focuses on another technical side of NM. It is based on punctuation. At a point in the novel, Gandhi is surprised to know that there are no Indian lawyers in South Africa:

> So many distinguished Indian traders and not a single Indian lawyer! And then, he didn't quite realize when a thought stole into his mind: who knows he may earn the honour of being the first Indian barrister! (80)

It is an ideal passage of NM where the character can be clearly heard behind the narrator who acts as mouthpiece. Interestingly, both sentences are exclamatory that give an informal touch to the expression.

(IV) MIXED MODES (MM): They are artfully inserted into the texture of the novel to give a natural flow. The narrator

and the character can perform their roles independent of each other. Some passages are very personal in tone and therefore can be aptly narrated in the character's original voice. At the same time, the narrator can facilitate communication between the character and readers adding clarity to the context. It calls for the role of MM. A sample can be tested from above example of NM where the first sentence and the second half of the next sentence have the manner of personal intercourse and rest of the last sentence comes from the narrator. The working of MM can be more distinctly seen in the next passage. Note that its beginning and end are in PN and what is in between is NM:

> Mohandas became restless. Could there be so many truths in a single case? The truth of the plaintiff, The truth of the defendant, The truth of the judge, the lawyer's truth? Isn't there such a thing as the ultimate truth? The truth to be established could well be a fabricated truth, couldn't it? He wanted to ask Mr. Baker (his senior lawyer) this question, but held back (197).

Moving on, the combined effect of PN and QM can be gauged by the following example. It begins in PN mode and then swiftly switches to QM that expresses the idea with greater emphasis because it sounds pure and authentic. It reads:

> Deeply entangled in the affairs of Natal, he wasn't able to shake off Rajkot either. Several questions about himself pursued him relentlessly and gave him no peace. Why am I here? Am I trying to run away from my responsibilities at home? (368)

On the whole, three modes unfold the mechanism of Gandhi's psyche wherein lies the secrets of his persona. Knowing his intimate self makes reading a lively experience. Some descriptions are so vivid that Gandhi seems to be privately conversing with the readers. In this sense, the novel embodies an art that conceals art. Further, Gandhi's metamorphosis from an ordinary man into a visionary is well recorded in his thoughts and emotions that appear in their genuine form and content through psychonarration.

In summary, the art of narration has evolved dramatically over the past century. Growing interest in human psyche opened new channels of experimentation in fictional style. Its first major product was the stream of consciousness genre that considered consciousness as a single unit and related it to the lives of fictional characters. The genre got real impetus from psychoanalytical studies of the unconscious mind and its immeasurable influence on individuals. Later theorists inquired into the mental dimensions of fictional beings in broader details and suggested more refined ways of reproducing them. Cohn's psychonarrative was an appropriate model for it. *The Girmitiya Saga* proves to be an ideal work to evaluate its accuracy and effect. To conclude, psychonarrative technique is an essential part of objective writing in that it bares the characters' minds that the readers can see the way Dhritarashtra did when Sanjay told the events of the Kurukshetra War in the great epic *Mahabharta.*

Works Cited

Dainton, Barry. *Stream of Consciousness: Unity and Continuity in Conscious Experience.* London: Routledge, 2000.

Cohn, Dorrit. *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Forter, Greg, and Paul Allen Miller. *Desire of the Analysis.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.

Freud, Sigmund. *Totem and Taboo.* Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004.

Kishore, Giriraj. *The Girmitiya Saga.* Trans. Prajapati Sah. Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2010.

Milton, Jane, Caroline Polmear and Julia Fabricius. *A Short Introduction to Psychoanalysis.* London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2004.

Osho. *Main Mrityu Sikhata Hoon*. New Delhi: Diamond Pocket Books (Pvt.) Ltd., 2002.

Ramaswami, S., and V. S. Seturaman, edi. *The English Critical Tradition: An Anthology of English Literary Criticism*. Vol. 2. New Delhi: Macmillan, 2008.

Srimad Bhagavadgita. Trans. Jayadayal Goyandka. Gorakhpur: Gita Press, 2000.

The Authorized (King James) Version of the *Bible*. USA: The Gideons International, 1983.

———*———

To Eat or Not
Hunger, Humiliation and Resistance in Dalit Food Narratives

Vijaya Singh

Is there a politics in the portrayal of hunger, is the question, I wish to ask at the very outset of this paper. The answer of course is an unmitigated yes. The immediate question then would be how does this politics come into play? What tools are employed in the portrayal of hunger by whom, to what effect? The word hunger here is not merely about the act of being hungry once or twice or even more, but about a perpetual state of hungriness forced upon a 'people' by an inequitable society in a systemic denial of food and humanity to it. So insidious and twisted is the relation of food to exploitation that the very structure of responses to hunger and its excesses brings into play a complex range of attitudes and reactions. In India itself, the issues of food and caste are so intertwined that strict rules are formulated about who eats with whom and what.

It is not for nothing that in the *Ayurveda* and elsewhere, food itself is categorized into *satva, rajas* and *tamas*: qualities that translate into human classification itself. So that in the hierarchy of things the Brahmin represents *satva*, the Khsatriaya *rajas*, the Shudra and the outcaste *tamas*. Of course, this at one level is a rather simplistic breakdown of the three *gunas* and their respective representatives. And though, we know that no one individual may represent a *guna* in totality, it is also true that the outcaste is condemned to *'tamas'* both metaphorically and literally. Her food is shrouded in *tamas*: leftovers, and such food that is given in charity or grudgingly in return for labour. If *satva, rajas* and *tamas* are indeed qualities of food then there is a systematic denial of *satva* and *rajas* to the outcaste. This segregation of food and the still stricter segregation of who eats with whom, at what social event and when then go on to become the very markers of a 'civilization'. So much so that if the act of touch/non-touch is the barometer of exclusion in the Indian society then 'food' operates as the other paradigm of exclusion.

It is not just a coincidence that most dalit short stories and autobiographies revolve around the quest for food, the humiliation associated with it, and the desire for a life where food is *bought* and not *brought* from other people's homes. Autobiographies and stories like *Joothan* by Om Prakash Valmiki, "Poisoned Bread by "Bandhumadhav, *Akkarmashi* by Sharankumar Limbale, "Paddy Harvest" by Mogalli Ganesh, "Pongal" by Bama and others immediately come to mind when thinking of food/hunger and the issue of caste exploitation.

This of course, is not to say that hunger and food are not issues in the writings of other writers, but to highlight the association of food and humiliation in a caste specific context, and to also show how literary representations of hunger are structured. This leads one to ask yet another question. What constitutes humiliation within the framework of caste and literary representations? And might one introduce a category called, 'literary justice'?

In this context it would be instructive to look at the debate surrounding Munshi Premchand's short story, "Kafan". The story itself has become a site for caste contestations and the autonomy of art. For those who take the side of Premchand the story is a masterpiece in terms of its craft and "understated horror" (Mukherjee 146). They argue the story is best read symbolically as to how the absence of money "dehumanizes" man. Meenakshi Mukherjee in her book *Realism and Reality* describes "Kafan" as "among the most memorable of Premchand's stories because, although nothing is solved here the question has been stated precisely and disconcertingly" (147). It is interesting to note that not once does she use the term caste with reference to the story in the entire discussion; it is almost as if the story exists in a caste vacuum. For her the story is mainly about poverty in a feudal society. Similarly critics like P.N. Singh, Bacchan Singh, Namvar Singh and others too find in the story a representation of the horror of poverty in a society that is inimical to the very existence of the poor.

Dalit critics on the other hand, find in the story a grotesque reversal of reality, and feel that it reproduces structures of caste humiliation. They question the very assumptions of its poetics and are shocked at the upper-caste writer's refusal to recognize the

demonization of the dalit in the story. Which leads one to ask the question that Om Prakash Valmiki asks, in his essay, "Premchand ki Kahani 'Kafan': Ek Punarmulyankan" "could Premchand have imagined a story like "Kafan" with brahmin characters?"(91). It is an important question and not merely a rhetorical one. It brings into play the issues of realism, reality and representation.

This sharp division of critical opinion on the story is unfortunate because it willy-nilly categorizes criticism into pro-dalit and anti-dalit. At the same time, however this divide is indicative of the fault-lines that already do exist in the Indian academia on the issue of caste and have only now become visible. It also points at the internal contradictions of the Indian elite, who ever so carefully scrutinize the west's representation of India but choose to be wilfully ignorant over matters of caste exploitation. Arguing in favour of Premchand they forget what Edward Said (a favourite with most postcolonial critics) in his *The World, The Text and The Critic,* says, that "texts are worldly, to some degree they are events and even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted" (4).

Thus, I wish to re-look at "Kafan" in the context of the debate surrounding it to examine the issues of representation of hunger, exploitation and humiliation, and to ask, why the story continues to draw battle-lines between upper-caste critics and dalit critics. I will also look at extracts from Sharankumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi,* Om Prakash Valmiki's *Joothan*, Bandhumadhav "The Poisoned Bread", Mogalli Ganesh's "Paddy Harvest" and Bama's short story "Pongal".

The story, "Kafan", as we know revolves around the issues of caste, deprivation, hunger, and moral, ethical behaviour expected during the death of a close family member. The story written from a third person point of view provides an outside perspective to 'hunger' and the total moral collapse of its chief characters, Ghisu and Madho in responding to the death of a family member. The story opens with the imminent death of Budhia, Madho's wife, who is writhing in pain inside the hut. Her agony inside the hut and the feast of potatoes outside the hut are the twin spaces where the

story unfolds. We don't see her; we don't hear her voice, only her pained guttural utterances before those too are rendered completely silent. This deathly silence and before that her lack of voice yet another silence become the event for the articulation of Ghisu and Madho's hunger. To sidetrack for a while, because I feel this is an important transgression and must be made, even if I cannot elaborate upon it here. The silenced Budhia and her agony inside the hut is the site that no male writer either dalit or upper-caste desires to visit. It is really a story about men, by men for men. She is only a name, an absence that is at the heart of the story. Without her absence the story cannot come into existence. Her absence is the necessary condition for the story to take place.

Hunger of course is another kind of absence but to be hungry is to exist, to stake one's claim on the resources of the world. But to cease to exist is to give up all claims on the world. It is Ghisu and Madho's hunger that consumes Budhia; they collaborate to end her and her unborn child's claims upon the world. Both he and his father Ghisu are in fact, waiting for Budhia to die even as they peel the hot potatoes and transfer them to their hungry mouths. Madho's worry at this hour is not that Budhia is dying but that Ghisu, his father might steal from his share of roasted potatoes, if he so much as goes inside the hut to take a look at his wife. Even as the two hungrily devour the hot potatoes they talk of a wedding feast to which Ghisu was once invited, while Budhia thrashes about in pain inside the hut. Budhia death becomes yet another occasion for them to eat and to drink with some even to spare. The act of feasting on the money meant for Budhia's kafan by Ghisu and Madho is akin to cannibalizing- it is interesting to note that the food items they consume as described by Premchand, include 'kalejis', puris and achar. Kaleji, as we know is the heart. By extension it would seem then that the two ate the heart or the life force out of Budhia.

The gargantuan and immoral hunger of Ghisu and Madho that subsists on the goodwill and charity of the upper castes-which they routinely abuse- reduces them to the level of beasts. Their complete moral failure: first, in refusing to so much as even spare a moment for the dying woman, pregnant with a child, and then in spending the money meant for her kafan in eating and drinking,

jolts the reader into a state of disbelief, and outrages any vestige of sympathy one might feel for a poverty stricken duo.

In contrast, the upper caste jamindar is portrayed as benignly despotic, who even in the event of a justifiable exasperation, will not shun his *dharma* and doles out a few rupees for the last rites of Budhia. There is an excess of stunned outrage both in the writer and the reader on the total moral collapse of the two male characters in the story, which remains unbalanced in the lame explanation the author provides of an inhumane and unjust society which gives rise to such characters. This point is simply not registered, and what remains with one at the end of the story is the unmitigated decadence of Ghisu and Madho. Nothing in the story redeems them. Indeed, the conduct of Ghisu and Madho in the event of Budhia's death in child birth, and Ghisu's happy declaration that those who provided the money for Kafan will do so again, paints them as monsters incapable of feeling even the most basic of human emotions.

Where, on the other hand the belief of Ghisu in the largess of a society that will provide the kafan a second time, even if grudgingly, as against the lowliness of Ghisu and Madho redeems the upper caste to a small measure. Meenakshi Mukherjee reads in the contribution of the villagers towards the cost of Budhia's kafan, "traces of the traditional value system of an organic community where participation is obligatory, where responsibilities are shared"(146) . Such a reading of the story arises out of a romantic understanding of a dalit's life in an Indian village. In *Joothan* and elsewhere, there are accounts after accounts of how the dalits are forced into unpaid labour and how they are physically abused and humiliated if they refuse to work. To quote from the above text:

> This time around, the basti folk had refused to work without being paid...Fifteen days after this event, two constables had come to the basti and taken ten people with them. They caught whoever happened to fall in their way...those who had been captured from the basti were being made to stand like a rooster, a very painful crouched up position. Moreover they were being beaten with batons. (38)

In a yet another instance, Valmiki is forced to sow cane a day prior to his board exam by the upper-caste landlord:

> We had a gap of one day before the maths paper. It must have been about eight or eight thirty in the morning. The basti was quiet. Apart from the old people and the children, everyone else had left for their tasks. I was alone in the house.
> Fauz Singh Tyagi, whom everyone in the village called Fuaza came and stood before me, a huge staff on his shoulder. He said, 'bey Chuher, what are you doing?'
> 'I am appearing in the board exams. Tomorrow I have to do the maths paper', I replied in a low voice.
> 'Study at night...come with me. I have to sow cane.' Fauza ordered. I told him repeatedly that I had to study for my paper tomorrow, but he was adamant. He held me by the elbow and dragged me to his field. (57)

Similarly in Mogalli Ganesh's Paddy Harvest, the outcastes' dream of harvesting the crop grown on illegal land, and on the land seized by the rich upper caste landlords from the untouchables, is turned into a nightmare when the police ransack their houses for the hidden paddy and beat up the residents of the outcaste colony. As Ganesh, memorably says, "The very body of the untouchables' colony was being stripped naked"(21).

That Premchand should have chosen the site of a pregnant Budhia's death, caused by the wilful neglect of Madho and his father Ghisu, for playing out the drama of hunger and morality makes it impossible to read the story as an ironic comment on the society from which it springs, as is claimed by some eminent critics. In story after story, autobiography after autobiography the dalit writer exposes not only the lie of such representations but the structures of prejudice that operate in the minds of even those who are celebrated as the spokespersons of the downtrodden.

In sharp contrast to "Kafan", in Sharankumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi,* the young Sharankumar is severely admonished by

his grandmother for picking up *jowar*(Millet) from the resting place of a corpse, and this in the event of their not having enough to eat. She prefers to eat *bhakari*(bread) made out of *jowar* picked out of dung, than to accept *jowar* kept at the resting spot of a dead body. One can see why the dalit reader should feel humiliated at the portrayal of Ghisu and Madho's immoral hunger. The stress of the story is not on a society which persists with a pernicious system of oppression and discrimination, but more on the individual who fails to perform his moral duty in a moment of acute personal crisis. The death of Budhia is that moment in the story from which Ghisu and Madho can never recover their humanity. It is this horror of failed humanity against which the dalit scholars protest and question the legitimacy of such a representation when in fact 'truth' is the exact opposite of it.

Where for Premchand, the theatre of hunger and morality is played out at the doorsteps of a dalit family, for Bandhumadhav it is played out in the fields of Bapu Patil, the upper caste landlord, who not only expects free labour from the dalits, but happily hands over stale, rancid pieces of bread in exchange for the day's labour in the short story "Poisoned bread". The story in many ways is the exact opposite of "Kafan". There is an almost similar cast of characters here: a Grandfather and a grandson, working in the fields of a landlord; the issue of hunger and exploitation. Except that there is no woman here, other than the grandmother who in some ways is implicated in the death of her husband. Here too, it is the occasion of a death which forms the basis for the story. Unlike Ghisu and Madho the two men, Yetalya and Mhadeva neither steal nor cheat but offer their honest hard work in exchange for some grain. But their day's hard work is rewarded by caste abuses and stale bread from the pen of the animals. On the contrary, young Mhadeva's spirited defence in asking to be treated as human beings only results in enraging the landlord more and more until the threat of a physical abuse becomes imminent. Unable to get any corn Yetalya settles for the stale crumbs as reward for the day's labour eventually leading to his death by dysentery.

Where in Premchand's story the dalits can't stop eating, in Bandhumadhav story, it is food that causes death. This food itself

is poisoned by the inhumanity of the upper-castes. The moment of death in Bandhumadhav story becomes a transformatory moment for the grandson. Yetalya finally sees the connection between food and caste and exhorts his grandson to abandon the land right of Mahars, to get education and to lead a free life. Unlike Budhia, Yetalya does not die alone. He dies surrounded by his family and neighbours. It is interesting to note as a critic points out that even though the first line of "Kafan" is "Chamaron ka kunba tha" (Valmiki 88) not a single neighbour comes asking after Budhia.

In dalit stories hunger/ food become sites for philosophizing about life, about hunger, about human relationships, about transformation, about resistance, defiance and even poetry. For Limbale, bhakari is turned into an object of poetry and philosophy:

> Bhakari is as large as man. It is as vast as the sky, and bright like the sun. Hunger is bigger than man. Hunger is more vast than even the circles of hell. Man is only as big as a bhakari, and only as big as his hunger. Hunger is more powerful than man. A single stomach is like the whole earth. Hunger seems no bigger than your open palm, but it can swallow the whole earth and let out a belch. There would have been no wars if there was no hunger. What about stealing and fighting? If there was no hunger what would have happened to sin and virtue, heaven and hell, this creation of God? If there was no hunger how could a country, its borders, citizens, parliament, constitution come into being? The world is born from a stomach, so also the links between mother, father, sister and brother. (50-51)

In Bama's short story "Pongal", Essakkimuthu refuses to accompany his father Madasami to the landlord's house to get pongal rice in return for a rooster, a huge pumpkin, sugar-cane sticks, a bunch of bananas and four measures of rice. He argues with his father, and asks him if it is not unfair that they should exchange all this for a bit of pongal rice and a towel worth ten rupees. Madasami tied as he is to the custom of centuries cannot

understand his educated son's logic. Accompanied by his wife and younger son he goes to the house of the landlord only to return disappointed at the treatment meted out to him. On his return he decides to throw away the pongal rice into the feeding tub of the cows, which the cows duly refuse to eat.

Similarly in Ganesh's story, "Paddy Harvest", the widow, Thopamma turns the rotting beef garland into a weapon to resist the policeman who had rushed into her house to search for hidden paddy:

> About four days back, Thopamma had carved beef out of a slaughtered bullock. After eating some of it, she had cut up the rest, strung pieces into a garland, and hung them out to dry before being preserved, But the pieces had not dried properly and had begun to rot, swarming with worms and flies. They stank horribly. To resist the policeman who rushed into her house, the only weapon she could lay her hands on were bits of beef. She thrust them on the nose of the policeman and had him running for his life to escape the killing stench. Then Thopamma ran out and gave the DC the same treatment, spoiling his white clothes. (22)

But this spontaneous rebellion is short lived. The police can't digest the fact that a 'mere woman' wielding garlands of rotting meat could humiliate them. The Circle Inspector begins to suspect that Thopamma act of defiance must have wider dimensions and is convinced that the old woman's act is distinctly naxalite in style. The incident goes on to become a serious political issue and the villagers are suspected of inciting an armed rebellion. Thopamma is arrested but manages to give the police a slip. But in the eyes of the colony, as Ganesh says, "the image of Thopamma grew and grew till it appeared a supernatural force. In their dreams they now looked hopefully to her arrival" (24).

Thopamma act of defiance in the face of hunger and humiliation becomes for the villagers a beacon of hope. If realism is about reflecting the real world- and indeed there are many kinds

of realisms- then the real that filters through Premchand's Kafan is the realism of guilt that takes the shape of accusing the victim herself of the plight that she is into. Instead of examining the practices of the society in which Ghisu and Madho are located Premchand inflicts the guilt of the dominant society onto Ghisu and Madho. He resolves the problem of inequity and injustice, by creating characters that are immoral and irresponsible.

In stories of Bama, Ganesh, and Bandhumadhav and in autobiographies of Om Prakash Valmiki and Sharankumar Limbale the dalit characters are not ineffectual beings incapable of retaliating back. They rebel, even if it is only in refusing to eat the food given in charity by the upper-caste and laugh –as in the stories of Bama- at their tormentor reducing him to a caricature. By retaining control over food and creating conditions of hunger the upper castes institutionalized 'humiliation' for the dalits. But in the stories of dalit writers the protagonists begin a journey of recovering their self-respect and self-worth by refusing to eat food that is tainted with caste. Food that is the first condition of dignity is recovered in these stories as the site for resistance and protest.

Works Cited

Bama. *Harum-Scarum Saar and Other Stories*. Trans. N. Ravi Shanker. New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2006.

Basu, Tapan, ed. *Translating Caste: Stories, essays, Criticism*. New Delhi: Katha, 2002.

Dangle, Arjun, ed. *Poisoned Bread: Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literatures*. 1992nd ed. Bombay: Orient Longman Ltd, 1969.

Limbale, Sharankumar. *The Outcaste: Akkarmashi*. Trans. Santosh Bhoomkar. New Delhi: OUP, 2003.

Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India*. Delhi: OUP, 1985.

Premchand, Munshi. *Premchand : Deliverance and Other Stories*. 1990th ed. Trans. David Rubin. New Delhi: Penguin, 1969.

Said, Edward. *The World, the Text and the Critic*. London: Faber and Faber, 1983.

Valmiki, Om Prakash. "Premchand ki Kahani ' Kafan' : Ek Punarmulyankan." *Pakshadhar*. Kendriya Hindi Sansthan 08 (2003): 85-92.

Valmiki, Om Prakash. *Joothan: A Dalit's Life*. Trans. Arun Prabha Mukerjee. Kokata: Samay, 2007.

——*——

'Words' as Weapons of Resistance A Critical Reading of Rigoberta Menchu and C.K. Janu's Narratives

Jaskiran Tiwana

The first part of the paper is an exposition of Rigoberta Menchu's ethnographic account of the lives of the Guatemalan Quiche Indians and their political repression by the American-backed despotic military junta, revealing the brutality of the complicit capitalist-property relations of the American and Guatemalan ruling elites. Menchu's mobilization of the indigenous Guatemalans in a full-scale resistance movement against the oppressive military regime is a subversive act that complements her articulation of subjection through her 'testimonio'. Her memoir or 'testimonio' is, thus, a cross-cultural construct that serves to bridge the wide chasm between theory and activism. The second part of the paper analyzes C.K. Janu's narrative of tribal struggle against the successive democratically-elected governments of Kerala that have rendered the tribal community landless and homeless by confiscating their forest lands. The tribals share a close relationship with the forest, referring to it as their 'mother forest'. Not just a source of livelihood, the forest represents their very identity; all their traditions and customs are inextricably linked to it. But in the global-capitalist scheme of things where 'private property' assumes tremendous importance, the tribals are being evicted from their 'natural home' and their forest lands allotted by the state government to certain corporations for economic activities or for making wildlife sanctuaries or for certain 'tribal-centric' projects. To get her community's alienated lands back, Janu engages in peaceful demonstrations and sit-in strikes. Her democratic resistance highlights the undemocratic nature of the State's actions as it ruthlessly suppresses these non-violent protests through physical force. The last part of this paper elucidates how the subaltern resists the hegemon and articulates agency. The idea that globalization is largely a gender-neutral process is contradicted by its many ramifications that have had incapacitating effects on the lives of poor third world women. Even so, Menchu and Janu's

narratives prove that women are not mere victims of globalization as they resist, challenge and subvert the process at various junctures in their particular local contexts.

Both Menchu and Janu have been at the receiving end of capitalist gluttony that has changed their lives irrevocably. Forced by specific circumstances to pitch their 'personal' for the 'political', both constitute a strong subalternist expression of resistance. The power structures made up of the local elites and the hegemonic West (exercising control mainly through its global financial institutions) are subverted through "words". This subversion occurs at the confluence of the political, economic and cultural interests of the ruling elites and hence is more effective. "It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time", writes Michel Foucault (133). Through the articulation of subaltern agency, Menchu and Janu take away the ability to distort facts and hence, history from the centre. Along with the prevention of distortion of history, their narratives offer a revisionist perspective on the course of events. In the process of 'writing (or rather narrating) back to the empire', they create an alternative stance to the dominant discourse propagated by the centre. It then becomes an effective subversive strategy whereby the marginalized assert their sovereignty, thus challenging the centre in its position of complacent authority.

After the Spanish colonial rule that lasted about five centuries, it has been the American neo-imperialist forces that are draining the natural resources of Guatemala. Through the multi-national corporation, the United Fruit Company of Guatemala, the Americans were able to rake in huge profits for a long time. This was due to the complicity between the ruling elites in both countries. This usurpation of the country's resources is evident from the piece of information that if each foreign corporation is counted as an individual, then 98% of the land in Guatemala was owned by fewer than 150 people. The United Fruit Company was once the biggest landowner and had Allen Dulles, the CIA director and Walter Bedell Smith, a former CIA head, on its board of directors. Also included were Henry Cabot Lodge, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations,

John Cabot, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs and John Foster Dulles, the legal advisor to the Company (San Juan Jr. 31-2). As the Company's profits were temporarily threatened by the mild land reforms instituted by Jacobo Arbenz, the President of Guatemala, the CIA convinced the Eisenhower Government that Guatemala had turned into a "Stalinist beachhead" (Stoll 46) and that communist influence was strong. This resulted in the military coup in Guatemala in 1954 which toppled the democratically-elected, reformist government of Jacobo Arbenz.

Post coup, the American Government gave massive aid to the military junta that swiftly transformed Guatemala into the 'killing fields' of the last four decades (San Juan Jr. 32). The genocidal slaughter that took place has been unprecedented in the history of the American hemisphere in the modern times. It points to the actuality that global-capitalism is a violent, negative process that induces the merciless decimation of those who come in the way of returns and profits. It further marginalizes those who already live on the edges of society and are assumed to be easily dispensable. In the process, women become doubly marginalized by virtue of their being women and also being hit the hardest by skewed globalization policies. Menchu talks about the plight of Guatemalan women in general and the exploitation they have to undergo for sheer survival. On the 'fincas', where hundreds of indigenous workers are forced to stay in make-shift shelters, she writes:

> [There] are people who've gone through a great deal, a lot of upheavals in their lives. Prostitutes and people like that. So it's a very difficult atmosphere to live in and children are not looked after very well. Mothers are very tired and just can't do it. This is where you see the situation of women in Guatemala very clearly . . . most of them [the children] have bellies swollen from malnutrition and the mother knows that four or five of her children could die. . . .Many girls have no families and earn only the little they get in the *finca*, so you start getting prostitution. (Menchu 36-7)

By giving voice to her experiences of growing up in the Guatemalan 'altiplanos' (the mountainous region in the north-west of Guatemala where the majority of the Indian population lives) in a close, community-bound environment and working hard on the coastal 'fincas' (plantations or estates where coffee, sugar, cotton, etc. are grown) to the subsequent tragic civil war years in Guatemala, Rigoberta Menchu overcomes the subalternist tradition of silence. Like the Chicana feminist, Gloria Anzaldua, she refuses to "have her tongue tamed" (Anzaldua, in Hunter 585). At the height of civil strife in Guatemala, Menchu crosses the border over to Mexico where she lives as an exile for many years before coming back to Guatemala when the violence ends. When on the run, she meets her sympathizer, Elizabeth Burgos-Debray in Paris and narrates her story of pain and loss to her. Thereafter, her story is published as a memoir or more accurately, a 'testimonio' that takes her personal experiences beyond the borders of Guatemala and into the hearts and minds of the international audience. Menchu narrates her experiences to Burgos-Debray in Spanish (which she consciously learns in order to break out of the linguistic isolation within which most indigenous Guatemalans found themselves restricted) that are then translated by Ann Wright into English.

Menchu's autobiographical narrative belongs to the genre of testimonial literature which is an apt medium for expressing personal experiences. A 'testimonio' is a "narration of urgency", "a powerful textual affirmation of the speaking subject itself", and a narration that "always signifies the need for a general social change in which the stability of the reader's world must be brought into question" (qtd. in Sanford 53).Taking activism out of literary discourse makes it impotent. It loses its efficacy, its engagement with the outside world. Rather, it becomes sterile and loses its vigour. In recent times, there has been a displacement of the "activist culture" which reached its high in the 1960s and early 1970s in the West with a "textual culture" (Ahmad, *In Theory* 1).

To bring this deadened set of literary formulations back to life, theory needs to be infused with activism. And Menchu's narrative does exactly that. It combines the potency of words on paper with affirmative action. This makes the narrative more urgent and compelling, setting off a chain of positive actions and reactions.

Through her 'testimonio', Menchu has been successful in raising international awareness about the atrocities committed against indigenous Guatemalans. It has been largely due to her efforts that many Guatemalan military officials involved in the Maya massacres have been prosecuted for war crimes and are being tried in the International Court of Justice today.

A 'testimonio' also conforms to the concept of the 'aesthetic' that Tharu and Lalita speak about in the introduction to their seminal work, *Women Writing in India*. This 'aesthetic', they write, "must undo the strict distinctions between the literary and the social text, abdicate the imperious functions it has been charged with over the last century and a half, and redesign itself to orchestrate contradictions and cherish the agonistic forms of insurgency and resistance" (Tharu and Lalita 39). A 'testimonio' thus has affinity towards this 'aesthetic' because it deals with the material social reality of the narrator-protagonist's life which is inscribed in words by the transcriber to give the work a sense of 'being of the real world' and not being adrift in any imaginary, fictitious or non-real realm. It relates the real-life incidents and 'lived' experiences of the former's life which are affected by the social, economic and political realities of her specific geographical location. These experiences do not fall into any universalist patterns or pre-conceived notions and assumptions of the general plight of third-world women. In this case, though Menchu represents third-world women to the extent that she is subjugated by patriarchal authorities, yet it has to be understood that these experiences are particular to her and cannot be generalized in a broader sense and taken to be true of *all* third-world women. This is one way in which third-world feminism differs from Western feminist thought as the universalist assumptions of the latter are questioned and replaced by the historically specific material reality of groups of third-world women. "It is only by understanding the contradictions inherent in women's location within various structures," writes Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "that effective political action and challenges can be devised" (33).

There are some contradictions and inconsistencies too regarding 'testimonio' as a literary genre because it has to tread the difficult path between orality and literacy. Amy Nauss Millay

talks about the complexities of the transcription process (154). It becomes problematic as there are bound to be certain discrepancies owing to what the narrator-protagonist wants to say and how the transcriber conveys it to the readers. Though Menchu is purported to be speaking on behalf of an ethnic group, "her narration deviates significantly from this conception of a cultural totality, and conveys indigenous culture as fragmentary and secret" (Millay 154). This is a downside of testimonial literature that cannot be avoided. What has to be appreciated, though, is that a 'testimonio' not only performs the difficult task of bridging the chasms between two different cultures, languages and sensibilities but it also seeks to bring together the widely divergent areas of theory and activism.

John Beverly and Marc Zimmerman define 'testimonio' as an "extraliterary or even antiliterary form of discourse", a "means of popular-democratic cultural practice" (qtd. in Millay 156). But Millay criticizes these definitions of 'testimonio', asserting that this genre is not perfectly reliable and is based on "a complex sociopolitical negotiation shaped by Western ideological and aesthetic concerns" (156). There is a creative tension that runs through this autobiographical narrative, confirming it as the fusion of two minds; one invoking the oral tradition to narrate an intense experience, the other inscribing it to give it the permanence of words. "The autobiographical redaction", claims San Juan Jr. "unites in a precarious but heuristic tension the political and scientific concerns of both the anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos-Debray and the protagonist Menchu. Ethnography mutates into a unique practice of dissent combining both alternative and oppositional stances" (37). Despite the straining towards two different directions, there is a structural coherence and an organic unity that holds the text together. Though there is some repetition in it, it only serves to highlight the intensity of the experience. It emerges as a powerful narrative which is an amalgamation of personal thoughts, experiences and ideas, thus, managing to convey the very essence and spirit of a resilient and proud people.

The current global economy which is a "permanent war economy" has robbed millions around the world of land, food and water even in peace-time (Shiva, *Globalization's New Wars* viii). Its instruments of war are "coercive free trade treaties",

"technologies of production based on violence and control, such as toxics, genetic engineering and nano-technologies" (Shiva vii). This global economy which is destructive and life-effacing is possible only by virtue of immense complicity between the ruling elites within and beyond national boundaries. As Janu explains:

> Nearly all the rare chola forests in Idukki have been destroyed with the tacit approval of the forest department. About 15 tourist resorts have been sanctioned in the ecologically fragile area near Anayirankal Dam in blatant violation of existing rules and norms. The forest department also did not raise objections when over 5,000 acres of pristine forest land at Mankulam were handed over to 200-odd non-tribal families during the LDF government's reign. The department also did precious little to protect the rare nilgiri tahr at the Eravikulam National Park. And in Mathikettani, ganja was cultivated openly with the approval of the forest authorities. (qtd. in Mukundan Menon)

The notion of nature as a nurturing, benign force is dying a fast death; a rupturing of the relationship between humankind and their Terra Mater has occurred. Irreverence and disrespect have replaced the sacredness of this relationship. Humans are fast alienating themselves from the placental force which nourishes and sustains them. In the current 'economy of death', corporations like Halliburton, Monsanto and Bechtel rule, patenting seeds, water and biodiversity of third-world countries. Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) have brought thousands of farmers in third-world countries into the debt trap and on the brink of suicide as seeds are made too expensive and out of their reach by the patents of multi-national corporations. These patents ensure that seeds that are 'genetically modified' by these so-called 'life sciences corporations' can only be planted once and that their capacity to germinate if planted again is terminated. Farmers are treated as criminals if they are found to be saving seeds from their own harvests. 'Life sciences corporations' is a euphemism for big chemical companies that buy up seed and biotechnology companies to form even bigger conglomerates (Oakley 142). Thus, taking

away the livelihood of the rural poor, corporate globalization gives rise to vicious cycles of turbulence, violence and death where negative forces like fundamentalism, militarism and terrorism thrive.

"The symbolism of Terra Mater," asserts Shiva, "the earth in the form of the Great Mother, creative and protective, has been a shared but diverse symbol across space and time, and ecology movements in the West today are inspired in large part by the recovery of the concept of Gaia, the earth Goddess" (*Staying Alive* 41-2). With the advent of global-capitalism, this view has undergone a sea change; nature is no longer the nurturing, life-giving 'Great Mother' but a resource to be exploited. This devaluation of nature is linked to the marginalization of women in society as women and nature work in partnership with each other to produce and reproduce life. It also means the derecognizing of women's domestic work as 'productivity' is now seen in terms of capital accumulation only. Unlike men's exploitation of nature for generating profit, women's relationship with nature is not based on domination and control. It is based on mutual give-and-take as women not only collect and consume what grows in nature but make things grow, thus *producing* life (Shiva, *Staying Alive* 42-3). Their role in producing sustenance has been crucial in maintaining the delicate balance between nature and mankind. This harmonious relationship has been disrupted by the violent conniving and manipulations of the globalization process. It is now replaced by a masculine, technology-driven, science-oriented psychology which sees everything in terms of profit and loss.

Another disturbing phenomenon is that of feminism being very cleverly co-opted by the global-capitalist system in its 'development' project. Women fighting for sustainability, peace and justice are made to believe that their interests collide with those of the progressive, liberal, 'development' endorsers who work for the 'emancipation' of women by including them in the workforce. But this is only an eyewash as barring a small percentage of educated, professional, mostly middle-class women who are employed in well-paying, respectable professions, the majority of third-world women sweat it out in 'sweatshops' in third-world countries or are employed in lowly-paid construction work where they are discriminated against not only in terms of less wage-rate

but also in their easy dispensability when not required. Some of them work as domestic workers in rich and middle-class households where they are vulnerable to exploitation. Many are unsuspecting victims of human trafficking or enter into prostitution for sheer survival. In the development discourse, this class difference is highlighted for reasons obvious and not-so-obvious; for instance, in television commercials and advertisements, urban, middle-class women are depicted as being the market-savvy ones or the intelligent 'consumers'.

As a corollary then, poor, rural women are taken to be the ones involved in hard, manual work such as related to agriculture, thus primarily being 'producers'. But this distinction between "middle-class consumerism in a liberalized economy" and the "World Bank reports on poor women's economic productivity" is pointed out by Mary John "as precisely being the way poor women are classed and gendered in development discourse" (John, in Sunder Rajan 170). It is also a deliberate masculinist strategy which aims at creating a division *within* and *among* women so it becomes easy to co-opt the ones who are educated and aware and hence, nullify the threat, even if somewhat mild, to patriarchal authority. This attempt at inclusion of feminism into the global-capitalist system is a dangerous trend as issues vital to feminists like the unbiased division of labour and social and economic security of women are conflated with the paradigm of 'progress' which actually works to marginalize them.

The exercising of power by the forces of globalization largely takes place over the bodies of disenfranchised and marginalized women, particularly, the tribal indigenous women. A few facts would be in place to support the above argument - women form 70 percent of the world's poor and the majority of the world's refugees. They also comprise almost 80 percent of the displaced persons of the third world. Women own less than one-hundredth of the world's property but are the worst hit by the effects of war, domestic violence and religious persecution. Women do two-thirds of the world's work but earn less than one-tenth of its income. (Mohanty 234-5).

These statistics are a pointer towards the present situation of women in the world. Globalization has not only led to the 'feminization of poverty' but also hijacked the public spaces of democratic activism, leaving little room for engagement in socially relevant deliberations. Responsible citizenship is replaced by crass consumerism. Money has assumed 'capital' proportions. The distance between people who take decisions and those who suffer their consequences has increased enormously. Opaqueness and lack of accountability have permeated the workings of those at the helm of global affairs.

In its relentless march, global-capitalism does not care about ecological consequences or if it does, it is only to prevent the developing third world countries from reaching the advanced level of development that the industrialized countries of the West have attained. Environmentalism has been more a way of holding back the developing countries and less a genuine effort to stop ecological damage. It has proved to be an effective method for "limiting the South's ambitions" (Biel 141). Eviction of tribal communities from their forest lands to convert the latter into wildlife sanctuaries is also a part of this elitist environmentalism. N. Ravi Shanker, the translator of Janu's narrative into English, writes in his Translator's Note, "A day before the police action to evacuate tribals from the forest tract they had forcibly occupied under Janu's leadership, a statement signed by several cultural and environment activists was published in the newspapers, demanding that the government act to oust the tribals from the forest area, a sanctuary for wild life. I am sure they hung their heads in shame later, seeing the police in action" (Janu x).

"Globalization is a political project and it needs a political response", asserts Shiva (*Globalization's New Wars* 121). This response comes from an impartial and inclusive global activism where there is an engagement with power and the complex ways in which power works at multiple levels. Narrating of personal experiences in autobiographies, memoirs and 'testimonios' by women, minorities, tribals and other oppressed groups, thus using the power of "words" is a cogent way of challenging the dynamics of power structures. "Words" are Menchu and Janu's most

powerful weapon with which they challenge their oppressors. Through their 'testimonios', these women not only assert their cultural sovereignty but also subvert the opprobrious apparatuses of power in their socio-political contexts. The potency of the published word helps in getting them support from different parts of the globe and takes their struggles beyond their geographical boundaries. Their local activism thus takes on a global visage and has the ability to make their specific, context-bound struggles into a comprehensive global activism that encompasses various civilizational idioms. This is the 'grassroots globalization' that has the potential of challenging and subverting the different power structures of the world. The emergence of a "capitalist civilization" that has reorganized the national, regional and local cultures of the world has to be challenged *en masse* (Ahmad, *Globalization* 103). The connections between the local and the global have to be forged to form a comprehensive resistance movement.

The socio-specific, contextual positions of both Menchu and Janu highlight their locality as against the hegemonic 'global'. This locality is condescended by the 'global' as characterizing a slow, embedded existence devoid of change and shackled in retrogressive orthodoxy. Nonetheless, using all possible means of agency available to it, the 'local' poses stiff resistance to the 'global' from its limited context. The resistance of Janu's tribal Adiyar community, which is one of the most peripheral and marginalized communities in the country, threatens not only to erode the legality of the State but also makes its democratic essentials seem mere rhetoric as they are already compromised to a great extent by the State's own power politics. The democratic nature of the tribal resistance discredits the State even more. The latter's neoliberal obligations to capitalist organizations and multinational corporations, forcing it to structurally adjust its economy, theoretically go against its sovereign as well as democratic fundamentals. As the middle and upper classes reap the benefits of liberalization policies, the tribal poor are further pushed towards the margins, making them the worst sufferers of capitalist development.

The contradictions of a globalized world simultaneously allow for the "subversive possibility of women seeing beyond the

local to the global" (Eschle, qtd. in Nagar 275). There has already been a significant shift in feminist discourse where one "grand theory" trying to "explain all aspects of women's subordination" is being replaced by "forms of theory which are more sensitive to local contexts and to differences among women" (Jackson 27). Third-world feminism conforms to such a context-specific analytic and is critical of the detached, impersonal style of the Western feminist discourse. More importantly, it supports a dynamic feminist activism that is complementary to the theorizing of the personal. Menchu and Janu's narratives lend themselves to a third-world feminist analysis as along with voicing the personal, they also asseverate that 'personal is political'.

Works Cited

Primary Sources:

Janu, C.K. *Mother Forest: The Unfinished Story of C.K. Janu.* Narrtd. to Bhaskaran. Trans. N. Ravi Shanker. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2004.

Menchu, Rigoberta. *I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Narrtd. to Elizabeth Burgos-Debray. Trans. Ann Wright. New York: Verso, 1984.

Secondary Sources:

Ahmad, Aijaz. *In Theory: Classes, Nations. Literatures*. London: Verso, 1992.

—. *On Communalism and Globalization: Offensives of the Far Right*. 2nd ed. New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2004.

Biel, Robert. *The New Imperialism: Crisis and Contradictions in North/South Relations*. London: Zed, 2000.

Foucault, Michel. *Power/ Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Ed. and trans. Colin Gordon. New York: Harvester, 1980.

Hunter, Gordon, ed. *American Literature, American Culture*. Oxford: OUP, 1999.

Jackson, Stevi, and Jackie Jones, eds. *Contemporary Feminist Theories*. New York: New York UP, 1998.

Menon, Mukundan C. "C. K. Janu: Experience is my Guide." *InfoChange India News* 20 January 2010.

Millay, Amy Nauss. *Voices from the fuente viva: The Effect of Orality in Twentieth-Century Spanish American Narrative*. [New Jersey]: Rosemont, 2005.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. New Delhi: Zubaan, 2003.

Nagar, Richa et al. "Locating Globalization: Feminist (Re)readings of the Subjects and Spaces of Globalization." *Economic Geography* 78.3 (2002): 257-284.

Oakley, Ann. *Gender on Planet Earth*. Cambridge: Polity, 2002.

San Juan Jr., E. *Beyond Postcolonial Theory*. New York: St. Martin's, 1998.

Sanford, Victoria. *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Shiva, Vandana. *Ecology and the Politics of Survival*. New Delhi: Sage, 1991.

—. *Globalization's New Wars*. New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2005.

—. *Staying Alive*. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1988.

Stoll, David. *Rigoberta Menchu and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans*. USA: Westview, 1999.

Sunder Rajan, Rajeswari. *The Scandal of the State: Women, Law, and Citizenship in Postcolonial India*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003.

Tharu, Susie, and K. Lalita, eds. *Women Writing in India*. 2 vols. Oxford: OUP, 1993.

———*———

New Media Writing
Reading Michael Joyce's *Twelve Blue*

Dharamjeet

> *The end of linear writing is indeed the end of the book, even if, even today, it is within the form of a book that new writings — literary or theoretical — allow themselves to be, for better or for worse, encased. It is less a question of confiding new writings to the envelope of a book than of finally reading what wrote itself between the lines in the volumes. That is why, beginning to write without the line, one begins also to reread past writing according to a different organization of space. If today the problem of reading occupies the forefront of science, it is because of this suspense between two ages of writing. Because we are beginning to write, to write differently, we must reread differently.*

Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* In the above quote, Jacques Derrida talks about the end of "linear writing" and, with it, the end of the book. The linear nature of writing was an inevitable consequence of the print medium in the form of a book. In other words, we can say that every medium (or "writing space") on which writing is done structures the possibilities within which a writer can write. Each kind of "writing space" entails a specific "mode of writing". In other words, literary writing, instantiated in the "writing space" of a page, allowed a particular "mode of writing" and "organization of space" (Derrida 86). Derrida also hints at the emergence of "new writings" which are breaking away with this tradition of linear writing, although the medium in which these new kinds of writing practices are encased is still predominantly 'the book'. Arguing in a similar vein, Robert Coover wrote a provocative article in the *New York Times Book Review* (1992), titled "The End of Books". Coover's argument was somewhat similar to Derrida's when he hailed the hypertext as a technology which, for

the first time, enabled writers to break "the tyranny of line" (Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort 706). The attempt to break the hegemony of linear writing started early in the twentieth century. T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) are some of the noted examples of such attempts to break with the notion of "linear writing". More recent examples are Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962), Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch* (1966), Robert Coover's short story "The Babysitter" (1969), Derrida's *Glas* (1974) and Milorad Pavic's *Dictionary of the Khazars* (1988). All these works, together with many avant-garde movements, can be considered struggling, at different levels, for a different "mode of writing" within the confines of the book. There have also been experiments with the book form, like the short early twentieth-century movement known as Artists' books. Many of these experiments may be said to have anticipated hypertext.

The coming of hypertext has greatly extended the possibility to experiment with its (hypertext) functionalities in the literary domain and to invent a new kind of non-linear, multi-sequential, and topographic "mode of writing". The idea of non-linear, polyphonic and multi-sequential nature of writing has already been argued by many poststructuralist literary theorists. The writings' of these thinkers have forced us to re-think our traditional understanding of 'text', 'work', 'textuality', 'the literary' and the institution of literature. Jay David Bolter in his book *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print* comments that the electronic space of writing is "...not only topical", but also "topographic" (36). His use of the metaphor of topography is very close to Derrida's idea of "organization of space". Bolter further says that "topographic writing as a mode is not limited to the computer medium, for it is possible to write topographically for print or even in manuscript" (36). Writing as an artistic practice is not only about noting down your thoughts and ideas on some material medium. It is also about a writer's attempt to play with the medium, mobilizing it into ever new possibilities. The interface of writing includes the surface of the page, the font, the spacing between the lines, the title page, its design, the typography etc. All these constitute a 'text' and are significant as far as the art of writing is concerned. Derrida's *Glas* is an example which foregrounds the importance

of medium in writing. Moreover, the act of thinking and writing are not really linear, as they include writing, cutting, composing, and recomposing, jumping from one place to another, from one idea to another (associatively) without any linear relationship between two consecutive ideas other than their spatial contiguity in the mind.

Writing in the new media emerged during the 1980s with the coming of, to use Raine Koskimaa's words, "hypertext authoring tools". The word "hypertext" was coined by Ted Nelson. It is composed of two parts 'hyper' and 'text'. The prefix hyper has Greek roots, meaning "over", "above"', "beyond" and "besides". Ted Nelson was the disciple of Vannevar Bush who, in 1945, wrote a thought-provoking article in the Atlantic Monthly titled "As We May Think". In this article he talked about the heaps of information that we humans have been able to produce and accumulate. He remarked that our present system for storing this vast storehouse of information is not efficient. The process is very hectic and time-consuming, and as a result researchers waste a lot of time trying to find the required information. To speed up this process of access and retrieval, he designed a storage machine called *Memex* to organize this information based on the workings of human mind. Bush visualized this machine on the basis of his understanding of the human mind. He writes that the human mind "...operates by association. With one item in its grasp, it snaps instantly to the next that is suggested by the association of thoughts, in accordance with some intricate web of trails carried by the cells of the brain" (Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort 44). Nelson, inspired by Bush, launched himself on his own hypertext project, *Xanadu* (1960) and it is still ongoing. In his book *Literary Machines* Nelson defines hypertext as follows:

> ...Well, by 'hypertext' I mean non-sequential writing—text that branches and allows choices to the reader, best read at an interactive screen. As popularly conceived, this is a series of text chunks connected by links which offer the reader different pathways.

The idea of hypertext in computer sciences was taking shape at the time when, on the other side of the Atlantic, critical

theorists like Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, under the banner of post-structuralism, were questioning our dominant conceptual systems based on centre, hierarchy, and linearity. These developments were taking place concomitantly around the 1960s. George Landow in his ground breaking study *Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology* comments on this relationship, noting that "critical theory promises to theorize hypertext and hypertext promises to embody and thereby test aspects of theory, particularly those concerning textuality, narrative and roles or functions of reader and writer" (4). Hypertext allows the author to structure the text as a network of lexias with many entrances and traversal paths. An idea of the ordinary hypertext can be grasped on the basis of the following graphic representation:

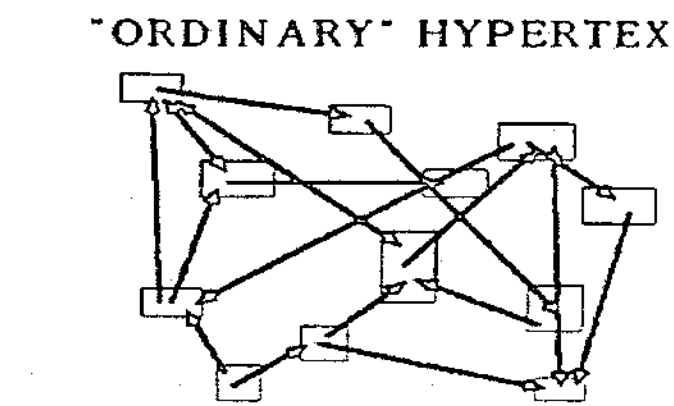

Fig 1. Hypertext, Raine Koskimaa, *Digital Literature - From Text to Hypertext and Beyond.* <http://users.jyu.fi/~koskimaa/thesis/thesis.shtml>

In the above diagram we can see that hypertext is a network-like structure composed of blocks of texts, which may be described, using Roland Barthes's term, as *lexias*, linked with other lexias through some kind of linking structure. In this structure, the reader can enter from anywhere and her/his starting point becomes her/his point of departure for the unfolding of narrative. As a result the linear structure of the plot with a beginning, middle and an end dissolves into a multi-linear and multi-sequential narrative which

can be read depending on the reader's choice of path. The "hypertext authoring tools" literally allowed writers to materially experience what it means to create de-centred and fragmented narratives having a multi-linear and multi-sequential network-like structure which give relatively more freedom to the readers. The readers can participate more actively in the unfolding of the narrative. Reading thus undergoes a change. N. Katherine Hayles defines hypertext fiction as a fiction "characterized by linking structures" (Hyales 6). Michael Joyce observes that hypertext is "the text that escapes and surprises by turns" (MFS 580). Espen J. Aarseth states "Hypertext...refers only to the physico-logical form (or arrangement, appearance) of the texts, and not to any fictional meaning or external reference they might have" (Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort 762). One can say that hypertext fiction is about how the text is linked together, its physical form, its structure, its emerging materiality and about what kind of reading practices it entails. It is not about "... the plot, or the narrative, or any other well known poetic unit" (762).

One of the first writers to venture into the field of hypertext fiction was Michael Joyce. He started his literary career with *The War Outside Ireland* (1982). It was a print novel and it earned him the Great Lakes New Writers Award. He moved into the electronic space of writing and created his first hypertext fiction titled *afternoon: a story* (1987) published by Eastgate Systems. This work is available in many versions and a study of these has been made by Matthew Kirschenbaum in his article "Save As: Michael Joyce's *afternoons*". Following them Joyce wrote two long hyper-fictions, *Twilight, A Symphony* (1996) published by Eastgate systems and made available on CD-ROM, and *Twelve Blue* (1996) published by *Postmodern Culture* and later by Eastgate Systems in 1997. This work has recently been published again by Electronic Literature Organization in 2006 in an electronic anthology at http://collection.eliterature.org/1/. Other than fiction, Joyce has also authored *Of Two Minds: Hypertext Pedagogy and Poetics* (1995), *Othermindedness: the emergence of network culture* (2000) and *Moral Tales and Meditations: Technological Parables and Refractions* (2001). His most recent work of fiction is *Was* (2007) which is in print form.

Along with Jay David Bolter and John B. Smith, Michael Joyce was one of the founding designers of the hypertext authoring tool known as *Storyspace,* later developed and distributed by Mark Bernstein of Eastgate Systems. This software comes with certain inbuilt capabilities which can be used by writers to create their works of fiction. To use this software, one does not have to be familiar with computer programming. Robert Coover hailed it as "the software of choice among fiction writers in this country" (Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort 706). There was a time when most of the works of hypertext fiction were authored using this software. Hypertext fiction was one of the first experimental genres of a new field of literary writing which emerged during the 1980s. This kind of fiction is characterized by "linking structures" (Hayles 6). The classics of hypertext fiction include Michael Joyce's *afternoon: a story*, Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden* and Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*. All of these fictions were authored by using Storyspace and published by Eastgate Systems. Later more experimental genres came on to the scene, which made use of many of the functionalities offered by different kind of technologies for the art of literary writing. All these are now placed in the category of electronic/digital writing.

Twelve Blue (2006) by Michael Joyce is an HTML[1] (Hypertext Markup Language) hypertext fiction. It was authored using *Storyspace. Twelve Blue* was Joyce's first attempt to create a 'web hypertext' fiction. It is called an HTML or web based hypertext because it was specially created for publication and distribution on the internet. It was also meant to be read online. Many of the significant works of electronic literature, including *Twelve Blue*, have recently been made available on a CD-ROM in a new collection published by ELO because of "...a long tradition in the literary community of cherishing the book as a physical object" (Hayles ix). *Twelve Blue* is quite different from Joyce's previous hypertext fictions. Its increased visuality and different platform makes it fundamentally different. In the introduction to *Twelve Blue,* Joyce writes that there are two hundred and sixty nine (269) links here among ninety six (96) spaces. He ends the introduction with the following remark: "*Twelve Blue* isn't anything. Think of lilacs when they are gone". This remark is about memory, the sense of forgetting, and the desire to recollect and relive the past in memory.

For Marie Ryan, it "unlocked of some of [her] favourite childhood memories", whereas for Gregory Ulmer, the remark took him to the backyard of his childhood home where lilacs grew (Ryan 240). He recalls "the very scarcity of flowering bushes in Montana making their brief but fragrant appearance all the more impressive" (Ulmer, "A Response", par. 2). Obviously, the words are evocative of readers' past experiences.

The front-page of *Twelve Blue* published by ELO includes the section titled "Author description", which is as follows:

> A drowning, a murder, a friendship, three or four love affairs, a boy and a girl, two girls and their mothers, two mothers and their lovers, a daughter and her father, a father and his lover, seven women, three men, twelve months, twelve threads, eight hours, eight waves, one river, a quilt, a song, twelve interwoven stories, a thousand memories, *Twelve Blue* explores the way our lives — like the web itself or a year, a day, a memory, or a river — form patterns of interlocking, multiple, and recurrent surfaces.

These words orient the reader towards what she/he will be dealing with. This paragraph is more like a brief summary which highlights certain elements of the work but one still needs to experience the work oneself to stitch together these bits of information. The title of the work and the epigraph to the work foreground the intertextual relationship the work shares with William H. Gass's *On Being Blue* right at the start. Gass's work is a philosophical mediation on man's perception of the colour 'blue' and its symbolic, emotional and erotic associations. Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva's notion of intertextuality is implicit in hypertext, but it becomes more explicit and clear in a hypertext fiction like *Twelve Blue*. In fact, intertextuality has long been there in the print medium(T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is an example), but in electronic writing it becomes very prominent.

As the reader presses the button BEGIN, the first page of the work opens. The layout of the work includes dark blue

background with light blue text on it. It contains an image map[2] with twelve threads spread spatially and horizontally from the top to the bottom. All the threads are shades of blue with two of different colours. Some threads interweave and intersect. Below the image map there are eight underlined bars numbered 1 to 8. The underlined bars show the presence of a link or pathway which leads into the work. The reader can also click on the image map to enter the work. As a result, there are eight different beginnings or entrances to the work. So the beginning is determined by the choice of the reader. By clicking on the bar, a new page opens with the text on it. On the left side of page there is an image-map showing the pattern of threads into which the reader has entered. At the bottom of the page, the URL of each of these lexias indicates the bar and the thread (for example, 4_10) where the reader happens to be in that particular pattern. The lexias are titled like "How she knew", "Follow Me", "Blue room moon flowers" and "touching" etc. There are spaces between the paragraphs in lexias which have hidden links. As the reader clicks on this blank space, the text appears for a brief moment and the next lexia opens. The reader can follow these links as a guiding path, but this does not lead anywhere as there comes a lexia without any internal links. Sometimes these links end in a recursive loop, as a result of which the reader keeps encountering the same fragment again and again. The reader is stuck in both cases. Just below the numbered bars there is a quotation from Gass' *On Being Blue* which goes like this: "So a random set of meanings has softly gathered around the word the way lint collects. The mind does that". We can see that the meaning is not given in the text; rather the mind needs to create and collect it from the relationships and associations she/he is able to form among the lexias she encounters in her/his reading process.

There is no single narrative pattern in *Twelve Blue*. Rather it weaves together different story-worlds with different characters, situations and events into a network like structure, all coming together and forming a web. Any kind of relationship which these characters, events, and situations form is purely incidental, circumstantial and contingent. There is no underlying thread which somehow connects everything in the work. In other words, we can say that there are many narrative worlds which crisscross and intersect. The effect of such interweaving of narratives is that the

reader can never finish the work in a single reading. In fact, one never ends reading *Twelve Blue*. The sense of closure which has become so natural for us is completely disrupted. We can even say that the sense of closure is directly related to the reader's choice. She/he can stop at any point of time. In fact, one can never say that she/he has finished reading *Twelve Blue* because it demands re-reading as the narrative unfolds differently each time the reader enters the text. In Jorge Luis Borges's famous detective story *The Garden of Forking Paths*, the character Stephen Albert narrates the story of Ts'ui Pen's attempt to write a book in which "...in the third chapter the hero dies, in the fourth he is alive" (32). Reading *Twelve Blue* creates the possibility of this kind of reading because of the structuring of the text. If in one lexia, the character dies, in the next she or he may be alive. The reader has to read many of the lexias again and again but each time its meaning will vary as the context varies because of the different traversal paths chosen by the reader in that particular reading. Moreover, the reader is never able to see the complete text of *Twelve Blue*. She/he always finds herself into this network of lexias but never above or outside it. Paul Ricoeur's statement that "the text as a whole and as a singular whole may be compared to an object, which may be viewed from several sides, but never from all sides", becomes literally true in the case of such a hypertext fiction, as the reader is never able to view it all at once (Ricoeur 77). Each reading will open up a new reading both at the physical and the semantic level.

Moreover, there is no thematic unity in the work although our reading habits tempt us to locate some kind of thematic unity among the lexias. One thing that connects the lexias is the recurrence of the word 'blue'. However, as soon as the reader begins to weave any kind of thematic relationships, she/he is frustrated, often intentionally by the writer, especially when s/he encounters a lexia which completely moves her/him into a new situation. It does not mean that *Twelve Blue* has no theme. There are several themes, involving love affairs, failed marriages, death and illicit sexual relations etc. In his response to Twelve Blue, Gregory Ulmer has remarked that such writing can be defined as "writing with choral words" (Ulmer, "A Response", par. 2). There is no plot. The experiments with the disruption of plot have been made in print literature for a long time. Many postmodern novels

consciously break away with the notion of plot. In fact, there are, as we noted above, multiple beginnings but no end. When it comes to characters, there are characters but there is no "development" of the characters in traditional sense. The concept of socio-cultural and political formation of characters stands nullified as the reader encounters characters with 'inherent' characteristics. Some of the characters which I have been able to identify in my reading of *Twelve Blue* are Javier, Samantha, Lisle, Lisa, Ed Stanko and Aurelie. Reading *Twelve Blue*, it becomes really difficult to identify characters and their relationships. Samantha is Lisle's daughter. Lisle is making a quilt in one of the lexias which suggests the patchwork structure of the hypertext. Javier is a cardiovascular surgeon. He was married to Aurelie but they got divorced. Javier then falls in love with Lisle, a Canadian virologist. Gradually, as the reader settles down, s/he realizes the tentative formation of a pattern, some relationships forming, something emerging on the horizon. The front-page of the work, as the comment on ELO site puts it, tells "a complex and enigmatic story of memory, desire, lust, truth, and consequences". As far as my reading is concerned, I have not been able to find a conventional kind of story in it, with a certain coherence and closure. There are narratives of lust, desire, and memory etc. but no story as such other than some fleeting patterns.

There are passages of excellent lyrical power in the work. The imagery of water has been used in several places in the work. Water symbolizes the flow of life and the fluid nature of the work itself. It also symbolizes the fleeting nature of any reading experience which will never be captured again in its singularity. The reader flows through the universe woven by the web of lexias which are composed into a pattern by the reader. Katherine Hayles aptly remarks that "like sensual lovemaking, the richness of *Twelve Blue* takes time to develop and cannot be rushed" (64). The reader is unable to rush through the work; s/he is forced to let the work find its own pace; the work and the reader are joined by a thread so slowly and tenderly that as soon as the reader tries to hold on to the work and pull it towards her/himself, the thread snaps. The work thus foregrounds the process of reading itself. Another predominant image used in the work is that of drowning. Many of the characters

encounter the image of drowning in one way or another. It suggests the experience of submergence, of being overwhelmed, of disorientation- the experience typical of entering a web like work.

Reading *Twelve Blue* is exciting. It is a different reading experience as a compared to the experience of reading a printed work. As the field of electronic/digital writing develops, we may expect significant literary works of electronic fiction. One of the significant problems with the hypertext, as Marie Ryan says, is the creation of "reader communities similar to those that built the reputation of the classics of print literature" because the reader is never able to share her/his experience of the hypertext since that experience is not "common" (Ryan 225). Hypertext fiction thus certainly raises important questions for literary studies. The question of the role of the medium, of the nature of its physicality, of its functionalities, and other emerging materiality and its practices, which have somehow been ignored or overlooked in literary studies are, now becoming increasingly important with the arrival of the hypertext fiction. As the computer becomes the dominant medium of cultural and artistic expression, it forces us to rethink our conceptions of the practice and future of literary writing. The predominance of the visual in contemporary society indicates the importance of 'image'. The etymological root of the word "write" is to "scribe or draw the figure of" (Wikipedia). Writing has always had a visual dimension. Gradually, however it came to be understood as the recording of speech or spoken language. Sybille Kramer notes that the "phonographic doctrine of writing [has repressed] a fundamentally visual-iconographic dimension of writing" (MLN 519). It is thus usually supposed to be secondary to speech. It is only with Derrida's serious engagement with "the science of writing" (Grammatology) that we have come to realize its significance as an independent medium of signification. As Joseph Tabbi argues in his essay "Towards a Semantic Literary Web", we should approach the advent of electronic/digital writing as an "emerging cultural form" implicated in our contemporary digital and networked culture. The emergence of new writing practices remediates our understandings of writing, reading and 'the literary'. The question is not whether new media writings are literary or not, the question is what kind of literariness do they embody with reference to the cultural matrix from which they emerge? The coming of such writing

practices may also force us to rethink the visual dimension of literature.

Literature is usually understood as a verbal art. It is supposed to be only about words, their combination and mutual relationships, irrespective of the medium on which words are materialized. On the other hand, we are also aware that the idea of literature emerged only after the coming of printing press (Widdowson 8). Our current understanding of literature has been shaped by five centuries of print. The medium has been overlooked in most instances of sustained critical analysis. There is still a lot to be done to show how the medium shapes our perceptions and conceptions of literature. The real question is not whether the book will be dead or not; it is to dwell on the "possibility of understanding how deeply literary theory and criticism have been imbued with assumptions specific to print" (Hayles 33). Moreover, in our attempt to engage with electronic/digital writing critically, we may come to a "renewed appreciation for the specificity of print" (Hayles 33).

Notes

1. HTML is a computer language which is primarily used to create structured documents and files which can be posted on the internet. *Markup language* is system "for annotating a text in a way which is syntactically distinguishable from that text" (Wikipedia).

2. "The easiest explanation of an **image map** is that it is an image or graphics file created for the purpose of navigation from the image to a different *URL* or to content or to pages that are part of the website through the use of a hyperlink" (http://www.basictips.com/what-is-image-map.shtml- Accessed 31 Jan 2010).

WORKS CITED

Aarseth, Espen J. "Nonlinearity and Literary Theory." Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort 761-780. Print.

Bolter, D. Jay. *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext and the Remediation of Print.* 2nd ed. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001. Print.

Borges, Jorge Louis. "The Garden of Forking Paths." Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort 30-34. Print.

Bush, Vannevar. "As We May Think." Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort 35-47. Print.

Coover, Robert. "The End of Books." Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort 705-709. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology.* Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1976. Print.

Gass, William. *On Being Blue*. Boston: David Godine, 1976. Print.

Hayles, N. Katherine. *Writing Machines.* Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002. Print.

—. *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008. Print.

Joyce, Michael. *Twelve Blue.* Electronic Text. Electronic Literature Organization. 2006. Web. 1 Feb. 2010.

—. "Nonce Upon Some Times: Rereading Hypertext Fiction". MFS 43.3 (1997) 579-597. Print.

Koskimaa, Raine. "Digital Literature - From Text to Hypertext and Beyond." Diss. University of Jyväskylä, 2000. Web. 5 February 2010.

Krammer, Sybille and Anita McChesney. "Writing, Notational Iconicity, Calculus: On Writing as a Cultural Technique." MLN 118.3 (2003): 518-537. Print.

Landow, George P. *Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology.* Baltimore: The JH University Press, 1992. Print.

Nelson, Ted. *Literary Machines.* California: Mindful Press, 1981. Print.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*. Boston, 1976. Google book Search. Web. 15 February 2010.

Ryan, Marie Laure. *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*. Baltimore: The JH University Press, 2003. Print.

Tabbi, Joseph. *Towards a Semantic Literary Web: Setting a Direction for the Electronic Literature Organization's Directory. Electronic Literature Organization*. V1.0. January 29, 2007. Web. 2 May 2010.

Ulmer, Gregory. "A Response to *Twelve Blue* by Michael Joyce." *Postmodern Culture* 8.1 (1997). n. pag. Web. 1 Janurary 2010.

Wardrip-Fruin, Noah, and Nick Montfort, eds. *The New Media Reader*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2003. Print.

Widdowson, P. *Literature*. London: Routledge, 1999. Print.

——*——

Tipping the Scales
Transgressive Depiction of Gender on Screen

(with reference to *All About My Mother*, *Daayraa* and *Navarasa*)

Nipun Kalia

There is probably no area of social life today that is more volatile than sexuality and sexual identity. Every day seems to churn out new questions – questions about sexual behavior which is not normative, questions about the debate centering on perversion and choices, and questions about the meaning and place of sexuality in shaping human lives. Michel Foucault postulates:

> Sexuality must not be thought of as kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check...It is the name given to a historical construct...a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies,...the incitement of discourse, the formation of special knowledge, the strengthening of controls and resistances are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power (Foucault 105).

What Foucault posits in the aforesaid comment is applicable to the concept of gender as well. This paper examines the ways in which sexuality and gender politics is depicted, explored and investigated in the proposed films, namely, *Navarasa* (Dir: Santosh Sivan), *Daayraa* (Dir: Amol Palekar) and *All About My Mother* (Dir: Pedro Almodovar). The focus will be on the problematization (and possible destabilization) of basic notions such as gender (in-) equality, masculinity, femininity and sexual norms, although differing from one set of opuses to the next. In this particular set of films, Cinema might be seen as a powerful subversive art form which challenges the perceived notions, institutions, mores and taboos by breaking new grounds in the subjects, themes and visual/aural language. Since its inception, the cinematic medium has been considered a realist medium because its mechanical reproduction appears to capture the reality truthfully and convincingly. This ability of Cinema

is exploited by the filmmakers to investigate various concerns of human struggle and strife.

All About My Mother does not only establish Pedro Almodovar's status as an auteur director, but also marks his maturity in discussing stability and disorders in sex and gender. In the film, Almodovar talks about love and desire of male-to-female transsexuals. Amol Palekar in *Daayraa* and Santosh Sivan in *Navarasa* have also called into question the playfulness, construction and artificiality of gender identity with the portrayal of numerous sexually deviant characters. Traditional insistence and construction of heterogeneous sexes – male and female – and the two corresponding genders – masculine and feminine has led to division in the sensibilities towards sexuality itself. Here the role of gendering process by social construction of taboos and convention should be pertinently mentioned as often this consciousness itself shapes up the gender-ed behaviour of humans rather than being guided by natural instincts. Generally speaking, sex often refers to physical attributes and is anatomically and physiologically determined, while gender could be understood as a culturally constructed representation of sex. Proceeding from this viewpoint, it is well established that human beings are categorized into a binary structure drawing a line between men and women, masculine and feminine. One's gender is developed on the basis of the sex one is born into. Furthermore, cultural and situational factors are vital in shaping gender identity. In cultural products like cinema, all the plots, the relationships between characters and the personalities of those characters are written within a few dominant ideologies. For example, male characters are always the subjects of the narrative. Comparatively, women merely serve as the (sexual) object or a submissive, passive and docile being of their male counterpart. But directors of the proposed films have attempted to subvert or reverse the dominant ideology of gender construction in their films.

In contemporary times, there is greater recognition that the concepts of sex and gender do overlap in reality. Men can be feminine, women can be masculine and most people do not conform entirely to, either designation. Nonetheless, our expectation that men should be masculine and women feminine often obscures the

variation that occurs in nature and limits our collective ability to recognize and imagine alternative possibilities. The terms homosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer and heterosexual all refer to categories of sexual identity. Not surprisingly, these are also contested terms. Each has a different meaning, historical connotation and political implication. Some people argue that sexual identity is a fixed feature of human personality and others maintain that it is more fluid and changeable. Exploring the connections between sexual identity and gender identity is central to the premises of this paper. Cinematic medium calls into question our habitual ways of seeing sexuality and perception of gender roles through careful *mise-én-scéne*". and unconventional narrative.

Set in Orissa, a part of India where it is common for men to play the part of women in street theatre, Amol Palekar's *Daayraa*, as the name suggests, signifies boundaries - in this case social codes of behaviour. The story centres around one such man, whose profession has become almost obsolete and he still crossdresses and lives as a woman. During one of his travels he comes across a young bride-to-be who had been kidnapped and subsequently raped by some louts targeting her for work in a brothel. He takes her under his wing and persuades her to dress as a man. And hence begins the dramatic account of these two people, living lives that they are not supposed to but the ones that they choose to live – whether out of will or compulsion, to be what one feels like being or to protect the entity that one is endowed with - the girl now acting as the man and the man now as a woman. This journey is their own that transcends the ordinariness and the superficiality of mundane societal values. They ultimately arrive at finding and owning their own selves in relation to each other as well as the world around them. While he trains her in his craft of entertaining the masses, the girl experiences the liberties that every man in a male chauvinistic society is born with. Ironically, it is in being a man that the girl's hitherto suppressed spirit finally breaks the fetters of traditional servility to soar to unknown heights.

On the road, they realise that their feelings for each other have grown. When they finally reach her village, she is spurned by her family and friends and driven out to be rescued by her transvestite friend. They realise that what they feel for each other

transcends issues of gender. And so the end of their journey sees them reverting to their original sexual identities to fulfill this love. But the journey that once begins might neither be necessarily destined for an end nor can the traveler return to be the person she/he once was. Her past rejects her and her future is now irretrievably entangled with her lover, come what may.

The story's simplicity and the more complex issues it draws upon render the film aglow with an eerie beauty. What does being a man or a woman finally come down to? The scriptwriter and the producer Timeri Murari very aptly comments on the love between the young girl and the transvestite being 'natural' while 'abnormal' is the malevolent, male-dominated, misogynistic society they inhabit. The film successfully crafts a pattern of empathy for the couple as the relationship between them, born out of a shared loneliness and a vacuum created by the haunting feeling of being unloved and unwanted, blooms into a supposedly odd but very convincing love. Amol Palekar's *Daayraa* is the first in a trilogy of films dealing with issues of sexuality and accepting people for what they are.

There have been very few serious films which have taken up the third gender as a subject and among them even fewer are the films which feature real people playing the roles themselves. *Navarasa* is one of the first few films that do not ridicule the third gender. Instead it tries to throw light on the mindset of such people, their agonies, and their ecstatic moments at Koovagam" (The Hindu Nov. 25 2005).[iii] *Navrarsa* deals with the story of a young girl Swetha, on the threshold of adulthood, and her coming to terms with the complex and amorphous sexuality of her uncle, Gautam (Khushboo). She comes to know that her uncle transforms himself into a woman every night to lead a totally different life. Upon being confronted by her, Gautam confesses his desire to run away and marry Aravan at a local festival, the Koovagam Festival. The festival is an annual affair and is a kind of a congregation of people belonging to the third gender, where they regularly meet to re-enact the story of Aravan, a character from the epic Mahabharata.

At one point in the Mahabharata war, a human sacrifice was required and a young warrior named Aravan (son of Arjuna and Nagakanniga) was chosen for it. But he had a desire to marry.

Since no woman was willing to be a widow just after marriage, Lord Krishna assumed the form of Mohini (the most beautiful woman) and married him. Hence, the third gender believes that they are reincarnates of Lord Krishna. That's the premise for the festival of Koovagam where thousands of the third gender gather and marry lord Aravan symbolically, and once the statue of Aravan is beheaded they break the bangles and wail dressed in white, the color of widows and the color of separation. It is a unique festival that commences in great joy and ends in sorrow.

When Swetha's parents are away for a wedding, Gautam leaves home to go to Koovagam. On her way to find her uncle and bring him back home, Swetha discovers a whole new culture in her friendship with the members of the third gender who she meets during her journey. Swetha's journey of terror and discovery is more intrinsic than political. *Navarasa* captures with timorous sensitivity the girl's responses to the entire process of sexual awakening. It's not coincidental for Swetha to attain puberty just when the reality of her timid, effeminate uncle's love to wear the family jewels, in the shadows, dawns upon her. Sivan skillfully maneuvers with the concepts of light and dark, shadow and sunlight to depict the ambiguities that underline human sexuality. Swetha's shocking disbelief at the idea of her beloved uncle being a woman in a man's body is a clever device to distance and familiarize the audience with the third sex. It is in Swetha's journey from repugnance to acceptance of her uncle's sexual ambivalence that the film's integrity and sensitivity comes forth in all its beauty. The narrative is a fascinating fusion of art and documentary in a partnership that's passionate and articulate. As Swetha travels to find and retrieve her gender-confused uncle, the narrative introduces us (through the eyes of Swetha,) to the various concerns of the third gender. "I'm a Hindu, my husband is a Christian and my mother-in-law follows Islam. We practise religious unity in every sense. Why are we treated as sub-human by others, insulted and discarded by the so-called mainstream?" asks a 'woman' in *Navarasa*. The truth about docu-portions in the narrative cannot mitigate the incisive look at a community that mournfully longs to be embraced by the mainstream of society, accepting them for what they are.

All About My Mother is an interesting, somewhat surreal and oftentimes bizarre journey of self-discovery that comes during the search of Manuela for her transsexual ex-husband, Lola. Manuela is a single mother who has raised her son, Esteban, to adulthood on her own and has come to emotionally depend on him. One night, Manuela and Esteban go to watch the dramatic rendition of *A Streetcar Named Desire*[iv]. After the show, Esteban is struck and killed by a passing motorist as he dashes into the street to get an autograph from Huma Rojo, who played Blanche. Emotionally devastated, Manuela relocates to Barcelona in hopes of finding her ex-husband (and Esteban's father), who is now a woman. Transsexuals featured in this movie are "incomplete transsexuals" - men who have received breast transplants but keep their male genitals intact. These half-operated transsexuals, namely Lola and Agrado, are artificially-made hermaphrodites as opposed to those naturally-born hermaphrodites. Almodovar has greatly shaken the binary understanding of sex and gender at an unprecedented level with the discussion on the sexual incompleteness of Lola and Agrado.

The film is significant in the sense that it marks a new era for 'the third space' of sex and gender – the undecidability of sexual identity and the inability of classifying one's sexual identity into established categories. Not only *All About My Mother*, but Almodovar's entire body of work deals with the subject of subversion of identity. All identities are created in a network of power. In his *History of Sexuality*, Foucault examines the construction and dynamics of various structures of power which affect the discourses surrounding sexuality focussing at one point on "the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations'. He includes two of the probable occurrences attributed apparently to the nineteenth-century which have a direct bearing on both the repression and the representation of homosexuality: what he calls the 'socialization of procreative behaviour' (154), which equates heterosexuality with moral responsibility, and the 'psychiatrization of perversions' (153), which separates healthy and pathological manifestations of sexuality. Together, they clearly impact on the reception of homosexuality in society, inscribing it as unproductive and unhealthy. More originally, Foucault claims that the nineteenth-

century discourse designed to subjugate homosexuals (as perverts) provided them with their own discourse of resistance, which he calls 'reverse discourse' (101).

> The suppression of sexuality and in particular, the political question of liberation among repressed minority sexualities – coming out of the closet – has...often been the only thematic treatment of gay storylines in the Anglo-Saxon narratives. Almodóvar's depiction of homosexuality is somewhat problematic, for such narratives cannot apply in his normally perceived universe...of absolute sexual licence, where acceptance of gay and lesbian characters is taken for granted. The closet is always inscribed as an individual rather than a social predicament. Almodóvar's characters have nothing to come out of but themselves.[v]

Almodóvar's contribution is significant in the normalization of gay characters in world cinema. Almodovar's pervasive dislike for labels leaves the viewer greatly disappointed, if the latter tries to find "identitarian sexual affirmation" in his films. The films represent sexuality in terms of what Kosofsky (90) calls 'universalizing' desire as a continuum of choice, rather than as the 'minoritizing' desire of inborn essential identity. In this manner, comprehending and analysing the Almodovarian world, which comprises of various choices or 'different ways of being', is possible through the processes of queer theory and politics.

In the 1990s, queer theory[vi] replaced essentialism (being born with a homosexual, gay or lesbian identity) with constructionism (a socially inscribed range of identities). The fluidity of sexual choices in Almodóvar upholds homosexual acts, not homosexual people... Almodóvar's major work as a 'gay'-coded director is 'his rejection of fixed positioning and earnest politicking in favour of a celebration of the "unnaturalness" and fluidity of all sexuality'. In this sense, 'queer' Almodóvar runs parallel to queer theory in both its benefits and its dangers[vii].

This not only includes establishing against heteronormativity[viii], and disrupting the boundaries of the normal

and the deviant ; but also an outright dismissal of the categories of 'lesbian'/'gay' and a vehement negation of the propensity for positive depictions to "compensate for decades of invisibility". The sex of a person, based on his anatomy, has all along been regarded as a given essence to human beings and is taken as the starting point for developing one's identity. Sexual categorization provides the fundamental basis for constructing one's identity. Thus, human beings always feel the need to categorize people into different categorizes - man and woman, western and non-western, and so forth. He says:

> The notion of "sex" made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle... (Foucault 154).

The films in question contain (both male and female) homosexual characters in lead or supporting roles. This is done by means of de-naturalisation of the sexual spectacle or generic collage and the dislocation of ideology from genre. The problematic works of the filmmakers constitute specifically cinematic interventions into wider contemporary cultural debates about the status of gender, sexuality and subject-hood at the turn of the twenty-first century. These films challenge the sexual and cinematic taboos; they scandalize and offend the mainly heterosexual audience and promote the pursuit of pleasure and freedom of expression. The proposed films interrogate the playful nature of the construction and fluid unreality of gender identity through the depiction of several sexually deviant characters, which indeed could be viewed as the embodiment of Judith Butler's concept of gender as performance in the cinema. As Judith Butler proposed in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*:

> ...perhaps this construct called 'sex' is culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was already always gender, with the consequences that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all (Butler 9).

By underlining the artificial, proscribed, and performative nature of gender identity, Butler seeks to trouble the definition of gender, challenging the status quo in order to fight for the rights of marginalized identities (especially gay and lesbian identity). Butler goes far as to argue that gender, as an objective natural thing, does not exist: "Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed" (Butler 77).

Moreover, these films do not stop at this emphasis on the falsehood behind sexuality by highlighting the performative aspect of gender identity but goes one step further by successfully shedding light on the truth of sexuality which is the 'undecidedness' and 'inbetweenness' of sex and gender identities. These films emphasize that the identity is never fixed or absolute, let alone binary. Rather, sex and gender identities always exist in a state of 'inbetweenness', transgression and instability that strongly echoes Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "carnival body" – a body of becoming rather than being[ix]. Moreover, the free-floating nature of sex and gender identities is precisely the starting point where people can be liberated from the restrictive and normative heterosexual framework.

Sex and identity both exist in the discourse of power. "Sex is placed by power in a binary system." (Foucault 83) People are forced to fit themselves into the categories of men or women. By historicizing sexuality, it becomes possible to argue that all the categories and assumptions that operate when we think about sex, sexual difference, gender and sexuality are the products of cultural discourses and thus social, rather than natural, artifacts. Adrienne Rich has extended Foucault's theories in an essay entitled "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" in which she claims that "heterosexuality [is] a beachhead of male dominance" and that "like motherhood, it needs to be recognized and studied as a political institution" (Rich 229). On similar lines, these cinematic texts do not buy into such a binary, restrictive and suffocating view on sex and gender. Rather, they twist around and shake the supposed stable, normative and heterosexual way of human existence. These films are polemical, taboo-breaking and transgressive and deal with sexual subversion. Transsexuals, feminized men, and masculinized people these films, which have gone much further in portraying the

sheer erotic joy of sexual variation. The subversion of identity is the key subject matter these films.

On one hand, these films have countered the notion of normative heterosexuality with the bold descriptions of social outcasts including transvestites, transsexuals, gays and lesbians. On the other hand, they demonstrate the fact that un-decidability and instability is precisely the truth and "norm" behind sexuality. Gender critics have used the very variety of possible sexual identifications and affiliations to challenge gender as we commonly think of *it*, to expose its insufficiency as a category. Many gender critics have explored the issues raised by variety of sexualities: homo-, hetero-, trans-, bi-, and to use the term now applied defiantly and proudly to forms of sexuality that do not serve reproductive heterosexuality – queer. Queer theorists emphasize that sexuality is not restricted to homo- and heterosexuality, which are usually seen as mutually exclusive, binary opposites. Thus, to conclude, it might be said that it is in fact the heterosexual desire, which is the subversive power that always attempts to challenge the originally unstable sex and gender and turn it into a stable entity.

Notes:

i. Auteur is French for Author; the term here implies a director whose creative influence on a film is so great as to be considered its author.

ii. Literally means "placing on stage", an expression that is used to describe the design/visual of a theater or film production.

iii. See Malathi Rangarajan's " Of Emotions Uncommon" featuring in The Hindu on 25th Nov. 2005.

iv. A 1947 play written by American playwright Tennessee Williams.

v. See Mark Allinson's *A Spanish Labyrinth : The Films of Pedro Almodovar*. pp. 99.

vi. The critical theory emerging out of the fields of LGBT studies and feminist studies; it expands its focus to encompass any kind of sexual activity or identity that falls into normative and deviant categories. See Peter Barry's *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory.* pp139-155

vii. See Mark Allinson's *A Spanish Labyrinth : The Films of Pedro Almodovar.* pp.108.

viii. The view that all human beings are either male or female, both in sex and in gender, and that sexual and romantic thoughts and relations are normal only when between people of different sexes.

ix. The grotesque or carnival body is a concept put forward by Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin. Carnivalesque refers to a literary mode that subverts and liberates the assumptions of the dominant style or atmosphere through humor and chaos.

Filmography

All About My Mother. Dir. Pedro Almodovar. 1990.
Daayraa. Dir. Amol Palekar. 1996.
Navarasa. Dir. Santosh Sivan. 2005.

Works Cited

Primary Sources:

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York: Routledge, 1999.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction.* Vol. 1. U.K: Penguin Books Ltd., 1998.

Sedgwick Kosofsky, Eve. *Epistemology of the Closet.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press., 1990.

Secondary Sources:

Allinson, Mark. *A Spanish Labyrinth: The Films of Pedro Almodovar.* New York: I.B.Tauris and Co. Ltd., 2001.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory.* Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2008.

Marsh, Steven. "Pedro Almodóvar." *Senses of Cinema.* May 2006. Web. 30 Aug. 2008

<http:// www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/06/almodovar.html>.

Phillips, John. *Transgender on Screen.* New York, Palgrave, McMillan, 2006. Print.

Rangarajan, Malathi. "Of Emotions Uncommon." *The Hindu.* Friday, 25 Nov. 2005. Web.17Dec.2009<http:// www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/fr/2005/11/25/stories/2005 112500500200.htm>.

Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *The Lesbian and Gay studies Reader.* Ed. Henry Abelove et al. New York: Routledge, 1993. 227-54.

——*——

Shopping Malls : The Postmodern Pilgrimage

Jasmine Anand

If you have no money but time to spend, go to mall.
If you want to get out of the rut and chaos of everyday life, go to mall.
If you want to do people watching, go to mall.
If you have whining kids, go to mall and get them involved in kid plazas.
To have a fantastic date and to beat the heat, too go to mall.
If you want to spend your day amidst world class brands under one roof, mall is the place for you.

Not even this, if you are dead tired and bored with your home space many First World country malls offer theme beds, choose any, cuddle yourself into an Igloo bed or a rustic truck bed full of straws and have a feel good factor.

So, now not for any pin to elephant but for a fantasy sleep too you could go to a mall. Malls have become a way of life for all of us now; they have their own living entity, an anthropomorphous existence. If you go to any of the websites of shopping malls they provide a brief one paragraph, self description titled "About Us" in which the following words and phrases are used "upscale", "lifestyle", "finest", "wealthiest", "plush", "fashion stopper", "creature comforts" , "dynamic" and "lush".

Image (i)
Flames Mall at Ludhiana

Shopping malls are an apt combination and development of picnic spots, romantic spots, public parks, shopping areas and leisure spaces. For kids X-Box is their world, reel but more real than the real. But for us shopping malls are our Culture-Box, the whole world under one roof.

Like nomads wandering from jungle to jungle, in this era of postmodernist retribalization we wander from one mall to another. "'Malls' in its original meaning refers to tracts for strolling. Now most of the malls are shopping malls, tracts to stroll while you shop and to shop while you stroll" (Bauman 27).

Zygmunt Bauman asserts strolling in shopping malls as an extension of ancient pilgrimage. George Ritzer calls shopping malls as "'Cathedrals of consumption' which are quasi-religious settings to which people make 'pilgrimages' in order to practice consumer religion" (as qtd. in Delaney 298). Shoppers can make these pilgrimages without money too. Purchasing items that one cannot afford is no obstacle to consumption as long as one has a credit card or one can even window shop too.

Image (ii) **Image (iii)**

Ansal Plaza and Flames Mall at Ludhiana.

In the agroliterate age 'lifestyle' indicated a community or a social group's way of life. Today there is no organic life and there are few such groups where individuals share a lifestyle and that also based on the use of particular commodities and services. Now there are no specific geographies but Anderson's *imagined communities* or Appadurai's *undefinable ethnoscapes* [emphasis added] based on consumption linkage and not on some class or caste affiliations. Thus all other social, community, ethnic identities

objects, consumers see themselves in them. In the manner of Lyotard, Bauman observes that consumption is no longer of objects but of consumptions.

The advent of mall culture has already affected the consumer behaviour in the Third World countries. For instance in India the consumer's tirade power of bargaining is gradually dwindling. The phenomenon of devoicing of customers begins when one journeys from *Rehri Market* or a local market to an elite mall. Instead discount has taken the place of bargaining. The sloganeering of 50% flat off has become cardinal to the free market of the global world.

Malls in India are about cosmopolitan fashion and brands. McDonald is one sure store in any mall. The ubiquitous American phenomenon of candy carts, hotdog and corn kiosks all find their place in every complex. Though a mall too is a public space but is privatized with the coming in of corporate bodies. The mall is concentrated with global brands like Spykar, Lee, Wrangler, John Players and native and local products are difficult to find. This globalization mechanism is a space of paradox where McDonald or Reebok offers Diwali specials, a token gesture of global firms at assimilating local cultures into their sales fabric. Indianization of global products and the globalization of an Indian festival is the central paradox of the shopping mall. Hence, this space can never be well defined according to Appadurai.

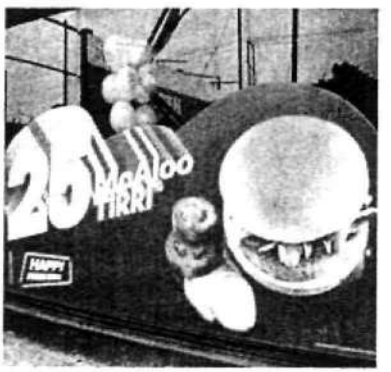

Image (iv) **Image (v)**

Glocalization: Indian aloo tikki in American burger and the various kiosks at mall.

are erased in a kind of democratization. In this consumer culture the terms national or citizen are replaced by the consumer citizen. In terms of Adorno and Horkheimer the paradox is that the culture looks individual but it is not. It is rather standardized and creates an impression of pseudo-individuality in the subject without his/her knowledge. Today the lifestyle is not a permanent thing. They are fluid and unstable. The 'many roles' tag line in Innova's advertisement is a precise description of contemporary lifestyles.

In Raymond William's terms we can say that there is only *alignment* but no *commitment*, people keep on changing loyalties, keep on switching from one brand to another and there is no *deep play* [emphasis added]. 'Brand loyalty' has become a thing of the past.

Not only this, but there has been huge impact on contiguity too. From a familiar *baniya* whom we addressed as '*tau*' or '*chacha*' the scene has shifted to a non-identitarian mall where there can be just fleeting encounters and no organic intimacy. From an extended family member you just become a number or a privileged consumer. Even Baudrillard in his essay entitled 'Consumer Society' traces the changes in human relationships and affirms that now the "principal relationships have become those with consumer objects and their associated messages rather than with other people" (as qtd. in Nixon 183).

There is so much mutation in the ecology of human species that mall culture has led to dehumanization of work and transformed human beings into robots. As everything is pre-packaged, pre-measured and automatically controlled, human beings are not required to think, just follow instructions and push a button periodically. Checkers at shopping malls just scan the barcode of the products being purchased. Ritzer adds, "that soon the day will come when the customers will scan their own products before making a payment; after all, they are already trained to stand in line and wait their turn" (as qtd. in Delaney 294). The advent of self-service shopping has created an intimate relationship between shopper and the merchandise. We can touch things, smell them and in Baudrillard's words "flirt with them." Now the merchandise has become an extension of us. Consumer goods are not simply

From "will to power and knowledge" we turn to "will to spectacle" where everything can and must be turned into an object for the gaze. In the mall the shopper gazes on a whole range of goods and products many of which he or she may not need. The mall thus is a staged spectacle that entices, holds attention and creates desire. It is a well organized tableau, a space of display where goods are arranged for maximum visual appeal, to instill a desire.

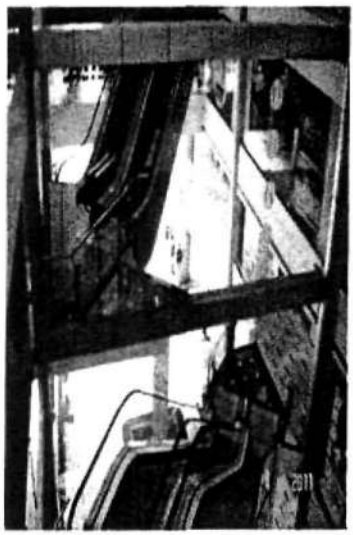

Image (vi) **Image (vii)**

Walkways, views and prospects in the mall.

The mall is a fantasy land or a dream factory where human beings and products stand on the same platform and are recycled without any literal creation. Here the term *disneyfication* [emphasis added] by Sharon Zukin takes a leap as we are not only moving or imagining in this fantasy land but are participating and immersing ourselves in full flesh and blood when we just go to the try-rooms for trying various clothes and accessories just to experiment with our looks for time being and have a feel good factor, redesigning ourselves. According to Nancy Baches, "in this postmodern world, it is a space where the individual 're-appropriates' in an effort to construct a self" (as qtd. in Rosales). In the shopping malls the young adolescents resemble each other so much that they all look like industrial products.

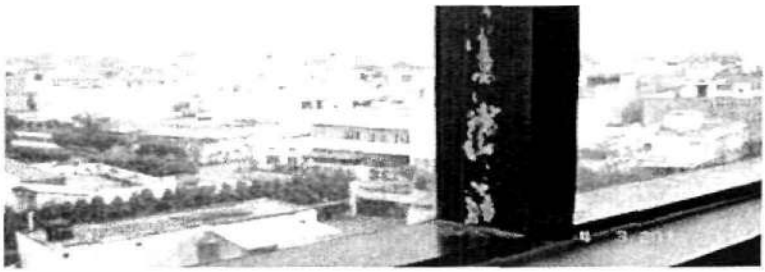

Image (viii)

A view of the residential buildings from Ansal Plaza at Ludhiana.

For some the shopping mall is an escape, a refuge. It is a stand alone space set apart from the city's chaos. That is why mall is a place for 'hang out'. The notion of escape in India is more exciting as the malls are constructed in the city centre whereas in the First world countries the malls are located outside and away from the main town.

Mall is an apt example of hyperreality. It is a creation through illusion. The shopping malls are modelled on the law of distraction where the paths do not lead to destinations but more to more paths and images. The paths do not lead to exits but to labyrinth of more signs and stores. The basic ingredients in the architecture of malls are glasses and mirrors which creates a sense of hyperreality with endless consumption prospects. The hyperreal is also accentuated by the fluid designs often adopted for walls and floors.

Image (ix) **Image (x)**

Hyperreal reflections inside the mall. The use of mirror adding visual field as well as depth.

Mall is a kind of utopia where time, seasons and weather does not matter as the lighting system and centrally air conditioned system creates a standard environment. Plastic, glass, P.V.C and fibre, synthetic wood and mass manufactured flowers in pristine settings render the space of the mall a garden that has just been invented. For instance the entrance of Ludhiana's Ansal Plaza is decorated with a facade guarded by enormous Egyptian statues to give an impression of entering an ancient Egyptian temple or for that matter the upcoming Boulevard mall in Ludhiana which has a water body in the whole complex with fishes to give an ambience of under-sea life.

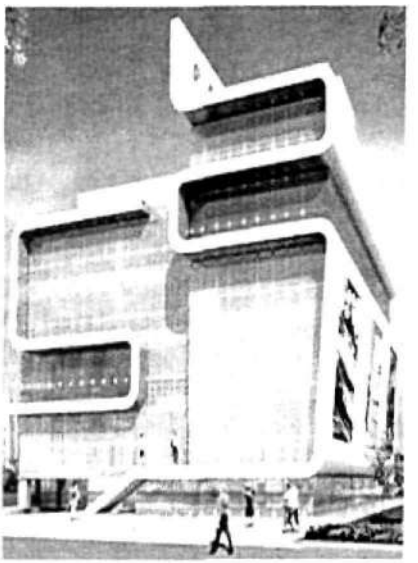

Image (xi)
Boulevard Mall - Aquariums on every floor replete with exotic fishes.

Image (xii)
Ansal Plaza back elevation of Egyptian statues.

Mall gives us a totally organizing experience. The floor plans and the markers highlight 'kids', 'women', 'food' for an easy option to select a particular area of your choice. The various instruction 'elevator', 'stairs', 'please pay here', 'restrooms' and 'conveniences' also highlight the systematized structure. But the mall while giving you the illusion of freedom does control the route of your movement.

Image (xiii) **Image (xiv)**

Floor maps and escalators guiding and controlling your way.

The fact is that we are all so hypnotized by this place that we don't see it's a prison too under its brightness and neatly wrapped up look. Bauman too opines:

> In these worlds, every stroller may imagine himself to be a director, though all strollers are the objects of direction. That direction is, as their own used to be, unobtrusive and invisible, so that baits feel like desires, pressures like intentions, seduction like decision making; in the shopping malls, in life as shopping-to-stroll and strolling-to-shop, dependence dissolves in freedom, and freedom seek dependence (27).

We are "neither independent minded individuals nor interdependent citizens but slavering dogs who are more busy shopping and too busy minded towards consuming to be bothered by the messy particulars of politics" (Blackshaw 125). The shopping malls have even captured our public sphere.

This story though is of First world countries but we do share some nuances of it. The time is not far when we will also religiously proclaim this republic of nowhereness like mass produced papier mache robots of placeness and elsewhereness. It is up to us, will be strollers or zombies?

Works Cited and Consulted

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1996.

Appadurai, Arjun. "Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology", *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: Univ.of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Bauman, Zygmunt. "From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity", *Questions of Cultural Identity*. eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay. London: Sage, 1996.

Blackshaw, Tony. *Zygmunt Bauman: Key Sociologists Series*. eds. Peter Hamilton. U.K.: Routledge, 2007.

Delaney, Tim. *Contemporary Social Theory*. India:Pearson, 2008.

Horkheimer, Max and Theodor Adorno, "The Cultural Identity: Enlightenment as Mass Deception", *The Culture Industry*. London: Verso, 1979.

Negus, Keith. "The Production of Culture" *Production of Culture/ Cultures of Production.* ed. Paul du Gay. London: Sage, 1997.

Nixon, Sean. "Circulating Culture" *Production of Culture/Cultures of Production*. ed. Paul du Gay. London: Sage, 1997.

Rosales, Mauricio. "Anything but Ordinary: Hegemony at Riverside Square Mall". Web.<http://euphrates.wpunj.edu/faculty/parrasj/Burningleaf/burning_files/essay_writing/essay_pg02.html>.

Pictures Inserted

Images (i),(iii),(vi),(ix),(x) and (xiii) my own click from Flames Mall, Ludhiana on 4th March 2011.

Image (ii),(iv),(v),(vii),(viii) and (xiv) my own click from Ansal Plaza, Ludhiana on 4th March 2011.

Image (xii) my own click from Ansal Plaza, Ludhiana on 7th june 2009.

Image (xi) of Boulevard Mall, Ludhiana. Web <http: indiapropertyexpert.com/the-boulevard-ludhiana-punjab.html>.

——*——

Our Contributors

Anand, Jasmine: Lecturer in English, Guru Nanak Khalsa College for Women, Ludhiana.

Chaudaha, Kapil: Teaches at Lovely Professional University, Phagwara.

Jain, Minakshi: Associate Professor in the Department of English at Mohan Lal Sukhadia University, Udaipur.

Kalia, Nipun: Research Scholar, Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh. Pursuing his Ph.D on transgressive depiction of gender on screen.

Nayar, Rana: Professor and Chairman, Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

Rekha: Professor of English at the Sir Cchotu Ram Technical University, Murthal, Sonepat (Haryana).

Sachdeva, Vivek: Associate Professor of English in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at GGS Indraprastha University, Delhi.

Sharma, Shruti: Research Scholar at Mohan Lal Sukhadia University, Udaipur.

Singh, Dharamjit: Pursuing his Ph.D. from the Department of English at Punjabi University, Patiala.

Singh, Sharanpal: Professor, Department of Distance Education, Punjabi University, Patiala.

Singh,Vijaya: Currently a Fellow at Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla. Teaches at Govt College for Men, Sector-11, Chandigarh.

Tiwana, Jaskaran: Teaches at Guru Gobind Singh Khalsa College, Chandigarh. Pursuing her Ph.D. on testimonies written by women.

Subscription Fee :

Rs. 250 per issue
or $ 25 per issue

Note for Contributors

Contributors are requested to follow the latest MLA Handbook.
Typescripts should be double-spaced. Two hard copies in MS Word along with a soft copy should be sent to

Professor Rana Nayar
The Chairperson
Department of English and Culture Studies
Panjab University
Chandigarh160 014
INDIA
Email : rananayar@gmail.com

DIALOG is an interdisciplinary journal which publishes scholary articles, reviews, essays, and polemical interventions.

Light

CONTENTS