

Special Issue June 2014

South Asian Literature in English

Contributions are invited on any genre of literature from South Asian Countries in English or translation from their native languages into English by 30th April, 2014.

- Editor

Special Issue December 2014

Contributions are invited on different aspects of Indian English Fiction like Form, plot construction, characterisation, Narrative skill, Realism, Imagery, Prose-style etc excluding thematic aspects.

Please send your papers to the Editor in soft copies & hard copies by 30 October, 2014.

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I.I.T. Patna
mishra.binod@gmail.com

Estd. 1997

ISSN 0972-0901

CYBER LITERATURE

A BI-ANNUAL JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

(vol. xxxii, No.-II, December, 2013)

REFEREED RESEARCH JOURNAL

CYBER PUBLICATION HOUSE
CHHOTE LAL KHATRI

"Anandmath"

Harnichak, Anisabad, Patna- 800002
Bihar (India)

Mob. : 09934415964

E-mail : drclkhatri@rediffmail.com

www.englishcyberliterature.net

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Humanitarian Perspective in the Novels of George Orwell

Neeraj Kumar

[Eric Arthur Blair, better known by his pen name George Orwell is one of the luminaries of Bihar who was born on 25 June, 1903 in Motihari. His parents Richard Wellesley Blair and Ida Mabel Limonzin were members of the Indian Civil Service. *Burmese Day* published in 1934, was his first novel. His masterpiece, *Animal Farm*, in particular and other novels in general very well reflect his deep roots in Bihar. He died on 21 Jan., 1950].

George Orwell is an important post-World War novelist with deep and wide humanitarian awareness. His writings are a result of his complete disillusionment with all 'isms' and awakening to the worthiness of human life which was both beautiful and valuable. George Orwell is in the tradition of humanist writers. His approach to the socio-economic and political problems is basically humanitarian. Though Orwell, like G.B. Shaw did not claim his attachment with any formal group or doctrine, he was influenced by Ibsen, Tolstoy, Zola and many such authors. His humanitarian perspective has an inexhaustible sense of sympathy and deep-seated generosity for the oppressed. Universal brotherhood and restoration of fundamental human values are his basic concern. Such vision emanates from human suffering, poverty stricken-life, pretence, exploitation and from man's dehumanization.

George Orwell's most of the novels are an extended metaphor of the humanitarian perspective. He saw his age suffering from bewilderment, anxiety and anguish

in the thirties when the Second World War was menacing the existence of man. His novels present a cross section of the chaotic, muddled and sick world of the pre and post Second World War. He shows a mystical insight into the cross-currents of the contemporary life. As such his political and human consciousness gave him a much wider perspective, he liberated himself from the shackles of ideologies. He firmly believed in the human values as the supreme guiding force. Orwell desired to expose the dehumanizing and self-debasing lust for power represented by the state. This brought about a direct confrontation with the totalitarian powers. To him the development of science and technology strengthens the roots of totalitarian powers. He wanted to warn the common man of the inherent dangers of pacifism, disaster of war and totalitarianism which could deprive the common man of his fundamental human attributes, "Do not let it happen. It depends on You". (Crick, 152)

In *Nineteen Eightyfour* Orwell hints at the dehumanizing pattern of the world that could emerge soon. He writes "I think that, allowing for the book being after all a parody something like *Nineteen Eightyfour* could happen. This is the direction in which the world is going at the present time, and the trend lies up deep in the politician, social and economic foundations of the contemporary world situation". (Ibid, 153) He always remembers the creative function for he knows that "when a writer engages himself in politics he should do as a citizen, as a human being, but not as a writer". (Orwell, 469) His only commitment was to write about the plight of the common man. He tried to expose the lie and restore the dignity of man. It is this essential thrust of the writer in him which provided his literature with a humanitarian

perspective.

In *Animal Farm*, Orwell exposes power-hunger motif of the totalitarian powers. To say that all animals are equal but some are more equal than others is a betrayal of the socialistic belief. In fact, it shows that the ruler-ruled and rich-poor structures of misery and want could not be removed even by revolutions. The pigs walking on two legs like their human exploiters against whom they had revolted, show the pretence and failure of the revolutions. He exposes the inherent ghastliness and crookedness of man. The protagonist of *Nineteen Eightyfour*, Winston, works in the Ministry of Love. His job is also to 'manipulate' and 'liquidate' the past as if it has never happened in the true sense. Here, again, he shows the discrepancy between the ideal of socialism and its actual manifestation. He firmly believed that such totalitarianism and power-worship should be eradicated and man should be given an opportunity to live natural, worthy and human life unhindered by external dictates and control. As such there can be no rulers in the world view of Orwell.

Orwell came to perceive that the totalitarians and pacifists had no concept of irrational behaviour that could give them solace and real happiness or which could restrain them from violating the code of human behaviour. His vision of democratic socialism and common decency could be feasible against the totalitarianism, war, oppression and poverty. It was the only ray of hope which could bring man out of the abyss and chaos. Greenbelts concludes in a convincing way,

Orwell believed that a regime based on the principles of democratic socialism could enable men to live to tolerable, even mildly pleasant life, and that such a regime could isolate and destroy the

forces of violence, injustice and tyranny.
(Greenbelts, 40)

It shows Orwell's staunch faith in the resilience of human nature.

Orwell's novels show that man cannot know the absolute. He stands at the centre of the World and is, therefore, the measure of all things. Hence Orwell's world, man's dignity and viability are noteworthy. He wants to expose the hidden falsehood and treachery of the Pseudo-socialists. His idea of classless society is different from Marx's concept of socialism. H.R. Hammond writes rightly,

For Orwell, socialism was not an economic creed but a philosophy of life which meant that poverty, injustice and deprivation must be replaced with a fuller and richer way of living. His concept of socialism was clearly a deep humanitarian Undoctrianair.(Hammond, 124)

George Orwell's novels strip off the totalitarian world where it seems a vicious network of rebellion, torture, confession, pain and suffering. Winston is tortured and bullied in Room No. 101 till he surrenders before "Big Brother" and thus returns to the "Ministry of Love". This focuses man's misery before the nightmarish totalitarian world but Winston never betrays his beloved. He is united to her by strings of "feelings" which no state power can ever reach. If love is raised to the height of inner commitment and feeling then even the power of a totalitarian regime cannot touch it. And here was a ray of hope. Like Aldous Huxley, Orwell, too, believed that dehumanization of man is one of the consequences of advancement of science and technology. Orwell's protagonists feel their 'Self' threatened by the outer disorganized world. They are misfit in the chaotic society, therefore, they rebel

and try to escape from it in order to sustain their individuality and integrity.

Orwell's *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* deals with the politics of poverty and evils of commercialism which ensnare man in slums. His artistic and fictional efforts seem to ameliorate human suffering at large but he never seems to lose faith in the goodness of human nature. He cherishes the idea of 'common decency', 'democratic socialism' and tries to restore the 'religious attitude'. Again, he never seems to believe in life after death. Hence, he treats life as 'final'. This humanistic idea enables Orwell to struggle and to face the problems of the world with a note of optimism. He always opted for good and if he had compromised with bad it is always the lesser evil. In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, and *Homage to Catalonia* he unveils the politics of poverty. Even in the nightmarish world of *Nineteen Eightyfour*, Orwell highlights human values and individual integrity. As long as these remain, there is hope for mankind.

Burmese Days recalls to our mind E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. It unfolds the falsehood and abuse of imperialism. Both Orwell and E.M. Forster argue for the establishment of human values and personal relationships. Both realized the predicament of the common man and extended their sympathy for the oppressed. That is why, Orwell condemns and ridicules Kipling's concept of 'Burma Sahib'. Orwell never appreciated the snobbery of the British 'Raj'. To him it appears hollow and irresponsible. It enables Orwell to look into the whole of 'old fashioned' England. In his essays, 'Shooting an elephant' and 'Hanging', Orwell exposes the snobbery and falsehood of imperialism. He extends sympathy for the downtrodden natives for they are defenseless. The novel *Burmese Days* not only condemns the abuse of imperialism but also argues in

favour of multi-cultural harmony and it opens new horizon for 'old fashioned' England.

Orwell's *A Clergyman's Daughter* and *Coming up for Air* are novels which explore existential dimensions of modern man. In these novels Orwell raises the fundamental and valid question - 'who am I' ? Here he focuses on the anguish and anxiety of man bereft of spiritual meaning in life. In earlier novels, like *Burmese Days*, *Coming up for Air* and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, the writer has explored the process of dehumanization caused by imperialistic mechanizations and poverty, while in later novels, *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eightyfour* he exposes the abuse of power by the totalitarian state, intellectual's betrayal and further deepening of the process of dehumanization. All the protagonists of Orwell endeavour to come out of the abysmal state of disintegration. They are lonely and fragmented in the alien world. They fail to identify themselves with the crowd. They try to escape from the inhuman world to live according to the demands of human wisdom which seems to them the only viable means of survival. Orwell's protagonists face the adversities, political, social, economical and even spiritual boldly. They do not break because their faith in the essential goodness of man is firm. They learn to rehabilitate themselves in the war - torn society by finding a meaning in an otherwise meaningless world. Life, after all, is worth living.

Indeed, his realization that human life is good and that it must be given a change to achieve happiness gave him the essential literary commitment and direction. As such he has become a mid-century messiah of the common people all over the world. His humanitarian approach cuts across all boundaries and

tries to reach the very centre of human civilization in our century. Thus, he is an artist with complete artistic vision of happy, meaningful existence of man on this planet Earth. He belongs to the main-stream of British literary endeavour in which life has been considered beautiful and worthwhile. He has a deeper understanding and love for life.

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Dr. Neeraj Kumar, Associate Professor, P.G. Dept. of English, Magadh University, BodhGaya

**The Epistemology of Being and Becoming :
Globalization and Creativity in Shashi Tharoor's
*The Great Indian Novel***

Ms. A. Vanitha

As a linguistically and culturally plural country, India outshines any other nation in the incontrovertible antiquity of its scriptural texts. Despite being the proud heir of this antiquity, we were prone to division and subjection under the British Raj due to lack of political integrity. Nonetheless, the presence of English in India has wrought phenomenal changes in the Indian consciousness expanding its echelon of the cognition and construal of the scriptures of India, which go back to nearly fifty centuries. As it were, there has been a proliferation of interpretations of *The Mahabharata* by Indian and trans-Indian scholars, many evoking the richness of its antique culture, some likening it to Greek epics and a few presenting a revised version of the original.

The Great Indian Novel (1989) is the upshot of Shashi Tharoor's reflections on the relevance of *The Mahabharata*, the great political saga of India, to the contemporary political events. The novel owes its title to the great Indian epic *The Mahabharata* (Maha= great; Bharata=India). With startling perspectives, piquant wit, stunning ingenuity and acute sensitivity, Shashi Tharoor asserts his allegiance to his motherland and acknowledges its cultural supremacy, but at the same time, expresses his anxiety over the political anomalies of the times that inhibit its escalation into a higher plane of advancement in today's globalised landscape:

India is not, as people keep calling it, an underdeveloped country, but rather, in the context of its history and cultural heritage, a highly developed one in an advanced state of decay. (GIN 18)

Change is the catchword of globalization. This change will be superficial if it merely promotes a blind adherence to the network and the Macworld. The validity of globalization lies in its power to unleash all manacles, to flout all impasses and to discard everything that constrains individual thoughts and expressions. Shashi Tharoor banks on the principle that a novelist's task is two-fold – he has to entertain so as to edify. Deliberating on the onus of the writer in an emergent country like India in the globalizing world, in his speech on Globalization and Human Imagination, ILF, Berlin, he points out that the creative artist is obligated to voice the cultural identity- plural and indigenous- of the post-colonial society:

The vast majority of developing countries have emerged recently from the incubus of colonialism; both colonialism and globalization have in many ways fractured and distorted their cultural self-perceptions. Development will not occur without a reassertion of identity: that this is who we are, this is what we are proud of, and this is what we want to be. In this process, culture and development are fundamentally linked and inter-dependent. The task of the writer is to find new ways (and revive old ones) of expressing his culture, just as his society strives, in the midst of globalization, to find new ways of being and becoming. (qtd. in ILF Berlin)

This logicity of the individual and collective “being and becoming”, a shift from the static changelessness to the dynamic open-endedness, Shashi Tharoor believes strongly, will lead to the nation's evolution, which is possible if only its history and myths are interrogated and modified to suit the burning issues of the modern day India. With this objective, Shashi Tharoor has allegorized *The Mahabharata* in his novel *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) re-telling the epic and presenting it as analogous to the twentieth century India from the British days to

the present through the eyes of Ved Vyas, the narrator, who recounts his political memoir to Ganapathi, his scribe. It is told using alter egos of the categorically identifiable historical characters and thematically speaking, India's political landmarks of the century have been presented through its illustrious epic, which facilitate the readers to correlate them to the intensely inbuilt institutions that are ingrained in the Indian society. Tharoor has globalized and in fact universalized the greatest Indian epic through his deft approach of choosing the epic model of lore to bring about his interpretation of the characters that held sway over the fate of the nation in the pre-independent and post-independent India. *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) is the chronicle of India, with its grand epic and its great fight for independence and democracy afterwards, indissolubly interlocked and its success lies in its relevance to the space and time of the events recounted in the novel.

Tharoor's novel is an amazing fusion of Hindu myth and modern history. The characters and events have discernible equivalents in the factual life: the ideology driven Mahaguru Gangadutta (Gandhiji) and the ineffectual Lord Drewpad (Mountbatten) the massacre at Bibigarh Gardens, the Great Mango March against the British Mango Tax, and the birth of Indian democracy as a consequence of the ardent union of an unsighted Indian leader and a British Viceroy's wife. The way he portrays Draupadi Mokrasī (D.Mokrasī i.e. Democracy) as the soul of India is unequivocally relevant in the Indian political context as both are let down and failed by their own protectors.

The novel is a satire on the power politics prevalent in post-independent India, fishing out personae out of the epic, drapes them with the inimitable facets of contemporary Indian politicians. Gangaji (Gandhiji), loin clad, bald headed and bespectacled, is the parallel

of the resolute Bhishma, the father figure of the epic, on whose ideas and actions the destiny of the nation was written. The Oxford-educated and civil, Dhritarashtra, who leads the Kaurava Party (the Congress Party) is Gangaji's protégé and political successor and to surmise that his counterpart in modern India is Jawaharlal Nehru needs no effort. Indira Gandhi whose maiden name is Indira Priyadharshini Nehru, is represented by Priya Duryodhani who was born to Gandhari in ominous circumstances.

In the course of his unique humour infused mode of writing, Tharoor makes a revealing character study of selected personages who ruled the roost in the arena of the Indian politics. Mahatma Gandhi is recreated as Gangaji or the indomitable Bhishma of the *Mahabharata* and the character of Karna in the original epic is transcreated to that of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. The novel is full of biting humour and profound insights into human behaviour. It is also supplemented by an astute study of the political triumvirs of modern India-Gandhi, Nehru and Indira Gandhi. Though an accomplished bureaucrat, Nehru was drawn into the mesh of power politics though not under duress. As for Indira Gandhi, despite her diplomacy and administrative potential, she tarnished her image by reckoning herself as invincible and indispensable in the quagmire of the contemporary Indian political scene. Tharoor unveils the failings of these leaders and satirises their follies sometimes mildly and at times caustically.

Tharoor interrogates the trend of the customary over idolization of public figures in India since such an attitude may impede the critical eye of the public, thereby restricting it to look into the failings and foibles of the individuals concerned. In the novel, Tharoor is

not critical of Gandhiji's staunch faith in the power of truth but of his supposition that 'his truth' is universal. The writer lays bare the oddities and eccentricities of a person, who has been deified as Mahatma and also his lack of decisiveness to prevent the Indo-Pak separation, through which it is perceptible that he was not a leader extraordinaire but an Everyman with a unique foresight in resolving only specific issues through 'his dharma'. On reading the novel, we cannot but be skeptic about the efficacy of the epithet "Mahatma" to Gandhiji himself. Was it an honour or an impediment for his evolution? This leads us to think that M.K.Gandhi would have accomplished more if he had not been weighed down by the tag.

The writer has judiciously chosen to recount the political happenings of India through the greatest political saga of the nation, which laid the groundwork for the wrestle for power and command. Overtly speaking, *The Mahabharata*, is the narrative of the great war of Kurukshetra between the Pandavas and the Kauravas to claim the throne of Hasthinapur. However, the causal cord that lends connectivity to the story is the eternal conflict of Dharma against Adharma. The book concludes with a re-creation of Yudhishtir's conversation with Yama, the God of Death and a short note on the nature of Dharma. In this Tharoor's version, he ponders on the concept of Dharma and alleges that there is no one Dharma and, no one truth. Dharma is always in flux constantly evolving and relevant to the temporal and spatial dimensions. He also puts forward his perception that our values, ideals and ethics should not be derived from our past but from our present. Tharoor argues that there is no one method of looking at Dharma and that it is manifest in the way we live our lives. About this trope of containability he says: "For every tale I have told you, every perception I have conveyed, there are a hundred

equally valid alternatives I have omitted.” (GIN 373)

Though Tharoor’s novel is a typical satire abounding in humour and sarcasm, he has elevated his work above it, by providing space for philosophic speculations that are interspersed throughout the novel in the form of monologues by V.Vji. In one such expression, he deliberates on the fluidity and non-linearity of the story of life in which his role as a story teller and a participant is weighed up:

It is a contemporary conceit that life and art must be defined by conclusions, consummations... There is no end to the story of life. There are merely pauses. The end is the arbitrary invention of the teller. But there can be no finality about his choice. Today’s end is, after all, only tomorrow’s beginning... I am a chronicler and a participant in the events I describe, but I cannot afford equal weight to my two functions. In life one must forever choose between being one who tells stories and one about whom stories are told. My choice you know, and it was made for me. (162)

The most distinctive aspect of *The Mahabharata* is its emphasis on human conduct, ethics and its general philosophy. Tharoor’s re-creation of the epic does not fall short of it, the fact of which is manifested in V.Vji’s reflections on the force of destiny:

The world was not made by a tranquil wave of smooth occurrences but by accidents, emergencies and mishaps. The cosmos is moving from one crisis to the other and in the process is constantly being reshaped. The forces of destiny are unshaken and continue their course unheeding of the events that may occur around them. It may seem that the vehicle of life and politics has gone off-track but the site of the accident turns out to have been the intended destination.(45)

Tharoor has aired his belief in the arbitrariness

of truth through the raconteur, V.Vji and alleges that it is not permissible to modify truth with a possessive pronoun. He also admits that his truth is subjective denying the possibility of anything that is objective in his story:

It is my truth, Ganapathi, just as the crusade to drive out the British reflected Gangaji’s truth, and the fight to be rid of both the British and the Hindu was Karna’s truth.... This is my story of the India I know. With its biases, selections, omissions, distortions, all mine. But you cannot derive your cosmogyny from a single birth, Ganapathi. Every Indian must forever carry with him in his head and heart, his own history of India. (164)

Tharoor has employed various narrative styles encompassing an amusing poem reconstructing the death of Pandu (Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose) in an air raid. Surplus with myths, rhymes, tales of perfidy and insights of lore, he has packed the narrative with anecdotes of modern-day foolishness and heroism. The style he has adopted blends precisely with the content of the novel. An ingenious mix of inventiveness with erudition, the novel speaks of his expert stylistics to bring down to earth both historical and mythological figures. The period of British rule is for him a fitting target for both hilarious lampoons and impassioned frontal assaults.

India is a land wedded to its culture – its music, dance, art and oral traditions. This enriches our being and sustains and reassures us to muddle through the human predicament. Tharoor takes pride in the nation’s cultural pluralism and has cooked up a brilliant likeness of India’s "thali" (meals) to the American "melting pot":

If America is a melting pot, then to me India is a thali--a selection of sumptuous dishes in

different bowls. Each tastes different, and does not necessarily mix with the next, but they belong together on the same plate, and they complement each other in making the meal a satisfying repast. (ETCP 62)

India shines due to this cultural multiplicity and as fiscal progress alone does not make for globalization of any nation, its cultural reassertion is an imperative to expand and mature. To generate this, the creative and the imaginative potential of the creative artists should be unleashed, for freedom to create is something seminal for globalisation. Underlining the significance of literature in globalization, Tharoor articulates on the “globalization of human imagination”:

This is why, as a writer, I would argue that the specificities of literature are the best antidote to the globalization of the imagination. Not that literature implies a retreat from the globe: rather, it is the mind shaped by literature that understands the world and responds to its needs. Literature teaches us to empathise, to look beyond the obvious and beneath the surface, to bear in mind the smaller picture – of the ordinary human beings who are ultimately the objects of all public policy. And above all, to remember always that there is more than one side to a story, and more than one answer to a question. (qtd. in ILF Berlin)

Therefore, what is imperative in this globalised lattice is that, in any nation, inner evolution determines its outer expansion. This perception is central to globalization for the reason that the entirety of the gigantic strides of transformation happening throughout the world erases margins and is especially expressed in terms of human experience, imagination, attitudes and endeavours. In this regard, Tharoor seeks to reclaim the nation’s heritage, through his literary and cultural reassertion of imagination in The

Great Indian Novel (1989) in which he has expressed his pluralist and cosmopolitan stance, thus stressing that democracy in a nation is functional if only its cultural and imaginative freedom is preserved. In the throes of globalization, the contribution of Tharoor towards bringing creativity and the heterogeneous human imagination to the centre, thereby finding new ways of being and becoming and reallocating culture from a state of fixity to plurality, change and inventiveness, is something worthy of approbation and emulation.

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Ms. A. Vanitha, Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of English, Vellalar College for Women (Autonomous), Erode - 638012

Law and Literature with reference to Sonnets on Capital Punishment by Wordsworth.

Reena Mittal

With public recognition honouring his life time work as a poet and domestic anxieties disturbing him as a private man, Wordsworth might have fallen silent but he continued writing. Wordsworth's career from 1814 to 50 adds comparatively little. His sonnet sequences are his gems scattered here and there.

He increased his sermonising tendencies by this time and "Sonnets on Capital Punishment" seems to be a counter to this tendency. First published in 1840, this sonnet series grounds Wordsworth's argument for the political imperative of the death penalty. In 1839, he composed a number of sonnets on his tours to different places. Though several of his sonnets and short poems are gems but no new departure is perceptible. The days of original thought and spontaneous creation are over. But the poet is full of thoughts and ideas. Poetry, to him, is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. He became a stamp distributor in 1813 and remained so till his death in 1850. For this work, he came in close contact with the Government, their policies, law and many beneficial acts. In 1834, there started a debate on capital punishment or punishment as death. Many countries abandoned that punishment. In 1841, Parliament passed a Bill eliminating death penalty for 200 offences. Wordsworth then composed his sonnet series on Capital Punishment. These sonnets delve into the topic and meditate on God to approve of capital punishment. Unlike many other contemporary writers, he opposed total abolition of death penalty and provided a rare defence for his authority. His sonnets offer a literary doorway to other contemporary and modern

authors. Throughout the history, Capital Punishment is always there in almost all the countries. Only the custom and the way of punishment is different. Execution is performed by hanging, shooting, injecting and many other ways. Writers debate in their books over this sensitive issue here and there. Wordsworth thoroughly immersed and debated over this topic. He was never comfortable in writing prose so he turned towards poetry in raising this topic too.

In 1836, when Whigs were about to initiate criminal law reform and remove Capital Punishment from 200 offences, Wordsworth, did not oppose Whigs totally. But he was worried that government was closer to abolishing capital punishment altogether. He engaged in a debate for and against the issue and it is continuing till now. Many countries at present have abolished capital punishment and others use it in a less horrified way. Through the works of Wordsworth and many other writers and modern films we can discover insight and perspectives for debate over death penalty. Literature can also help the Law and relate a new chapter in debate over capital punishment. Sonnets of Wordsworth explore a variety of aspects surrounding capital punishment and often a valuable voice over the issue. Although he is criticised and condemned for this sonnet sequence yet he is really a path finder.

Wordsworth's 14 sonnets upon Punishment of Death are generally concerned with state's policy of carrying execution of punishment. These 14 sonnets can be divided into 5 categories and by these five categories we can understand him better.

1. The last walk - Sonnet I, XII - describes the condition of a person who is about to be executed.

2. The Death Penalty and Execution - Sonnet II and III - reflect that it is natural to have sympathy

with the victim of death penalty.

While the poet mainly explores personal aspects of death penalty and its impact on the individual, he also discusses if it is against the wish of God. If we start with Sonnet I, it gives a landscape and description of culprits who were announced death penalty and they were gathered in a haunted castle :

THIS Spot--at once unfolding sight so fair
Of sea and land, with yon grey towers that still
Rise up as if to lord it over air--
Might soothe in human breasts the sense of ill,
Or charm it out of memory; yea, might fill
The heart with joy and gratitude to God
For all his bounties upon man bestowed:
Why bears it then the name of "Weeping Hill"?
(Sonnet No I)

Sonnet II discusses the argument that the guilty should not be shown mercy :

But oh, restrain compassion, if its course,
As oft befalls, prevent or turn aside
Judgments and aims and acts whose higher source
Is sympathy with the unforewarned,
(Sonnet No II)

In Sonnet III description of a Roman counsel is given, who sacrificed his own son for betraying the country :

THE Roman Consul doomed his sons to die
Who had betrayed their country. The stern word
Afforded (may it through all time afford)
A theme for praise and admiration high.
(Sonnet No III)

Sonnet IV justifies that Death penalty is mandatory in some cases :

IS 'Death', when evil against good has fought
With such fell mastery that a man may dare
By deeds the blackest purpose to lay bare?
Is Death, for one to that condition brought,

For him, or any one, the thing that ought
To be 'most' dreaded?
(Sonnet No IV)

Sonnet V also says that culprit should be given fear of punishment otherwise everybody will take law in his hand :

His Spirit, when most severe, is oft most kind;
As all Authority in earth depends
On Love and Fear, their several powers he blends,
Copying with awe the one Paternal mind.
(Sonnet No V)

Sonnet VI, VII, VIII reflect the argument in favour of punishment because it is mandatory to some extent as it forbades one to do crime :

But lamentably do they err who strain
His mandates, given rash impulse to control
And keep vindictive thirstings from the soul,
So far that, if consistent in their scheme,
They must forbid the State to inflict a pain,
Making of social order a mere dream.
Sonnet No VII

Sonnet IX and X define the state and provide the argument that a common man has no right to abolish this punishment :

Speaking through Law's dispassionate voice the State
Endues her conscience with external life
And being, to preclude or quell the strife
Of individual will, to elevate
The grovelling mind, the erring to recall,
And fortify the moral sense of all.
Sonnet No IX

He gives the suggestion of forfeiture of property and life imprisonment in Sonnet XI and XII. To him, death penalty can be a weapon to seek and elevate morality :

And, should a less unnatural doom confide
In life-long exile on a savage coast,

Soon the relapsing penitent may boast
Of yet more heinous guilt, with fiercer pride.
Sonnet No. XI

Then mark him, him who could so long rebel,
The crime confessed, a kneeling Penitent
Before the Altar, where the Sacrament
Softens his heart, till from his eyes outwell
Tears of salvation.
Sonnet No. XII

In the end, he concludes the series by giving the idea of wisdom and patience. The law of Universal truth is also suggested. It deals with the issue which is debatable in the modern days also. Wordsworth represents truth and reality before us. To him, abolition of death penalty will take all of us world of purity and sanctity as God would never want to punish anyone so brutally.

YES, though He well may tremble at the sound
Of his own voice, who from the judgment-seat
Sends the pale Convict to his last retreat
In death; though Listeners shudder all around,
They know the dread requital's source profound;
Nor is, they feel, its wisdom obsolete--
(Would that it were!)the sacrifice unmeet
For Christian Faith. But hopeful signs abound;
The social rights of man breathe purer air,
Religion deepens her preventive care;
Then, moved by needless fear of past abuse,
Strike not from Law's firm hand that awful rod,
But leave it thence to drop for lack of use:
Oh, speed the blessed hour, Almighty God!
Sonnet No XIII

The 18th century was a rough and disorderly age. Crime, violence, riots, and other hold-ups were at their best. To control all this, a new form of force was organised in 1829 which controlled all situations strictly and more ruthlessly. They made bold and disciplined law. The sonnet series is a grotesque

simplification of Wordsworth's thought and belief over the abolition of death penalty.

In his sonnets, Wordsworth articulates the necessity of death penalty to preserve morality and to deter crime. Man is fearsome by birth and it is the fear of death which always forbade human beings to do wrong. He argues that forbidding capital punishment may make social security a dream. Wordsworth recommends that inner psychological human nature is to live in fear. So, he carries forward the theme of preserving the use of death punishment as it would effectively work in preventing the worst crimes. Wordsworth depends on the tradition of execution in severe crimes, unlike modern writers who do not believe in death penalty. Although in Wordsworth's times, these death penalties were given in public. Dickens rejected it outright for the first time in literature.

Wordsworth's sonnets illustrate the need for society to punish and execute the convicted. He opines that God is also in favour of this death penalty. He says that Old Testament of the Bible also quotes "If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to death." Although New Testament disapproves this but despite religious contradiction and arguments; the power of execution has a central role for society and state.

Capital punishment or the death penalty is a legal process whereby a person is put to death by the state as punishment for a crime. The judicial decree that someone be punished in this manner is a death sentence, while the actual process of killing the person is an execution. Crimes that can result in death penalty are known as capital crimes or capital offences. The term capital originates from the Latin capitalis, literally "regarding the head" (referring to execution

by beheading).

Capital punishment has, in the past, been practised by most societies. Currently 58 nations actively practise it, 97 countries have abolished it de jure for all crimes, 8 have abolished it for ordinary crimes only (maintain it for special circumstances such as war crimes), and 35 have abolished it de facto (have not used it for at least ten years and/or are under moratorium). Amnesty International considers most countries abolitionist; overall, the organisation considers 140 countries to be abolitionist in law or practice.

There are several dangers in the process in which life is taken but it is necessary in some instances also. The roads to the capital punishment might go with some good intentions as law cannot be so cruel on the matter of life and death.

As far as his poetry is concerned, the sonnet series on "The Capital Punishment" is as valuable as other poems of Wordsworth. He offers the literary counterpart to the abolition of punishment. Where Camus, Victor Hugo and many others were against capital punishment, he reminds us that it is essential because 'fear factor' always works and maintains calm in the society. Wordsworth believes that capital punishment is necessary to prevent 'wild revenges' from the society. When he wrote this sonnet sequence, there was a great outcry of critics against him but his plea was also recommendable. He knew from the beginning that it is a controversial topic and will not be accepted easily. But through literature, we can also explore aspects of this sensitive issue which cannot be discussed elsewhere. Wordsworth, in this series of 14 sonnets, offers a great literary contribution and helps

us in discussing appropriateness and morality of capital punishment.

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Dr.Reena Mittal, M.A. (Eng.) Ph.D., M.B.A, Reader and Head,
Deptt. Of English, DAK Degree College, Moradabad.

Dalit Characters and their Predicament in Indian English-Fiction

**Ramchandra Pd. Yadav
Navaneet Kumar**

Portrayal of Dalit characters seems to have become a passion for a host of Indian writers writing in English and in other regional languages. Dr. Mulk Raj Anand is one of them. He is a committed novelist and is internationally known as a prolific writer. He has to his credit dozens of novels and stories. His commitment is chiefly to the Dalit particularly the poor one. His involvement and his sense of identification with the poor can't be refuted as he himself has confirmed his wretched financial position in the following words:

“O's Casey and I come from poor homes and the cruelty of the world couldn't be pointed out if we didn't shout from the house tops.” (Yadav Qtd. 148)

So Anand begins his career as a novelist with an untouchable boy Bakha whom he knows closely. About his close affinity with these Dalits and the poor people he declares; “They were flesh of my flesh and blood of my blood.” (Ibid, 148) That is why Anand's identification and his deep sense of sympathy with the poor should not be questioned. A close study of his first novel *Untouchable* (1935) would reveal the genuineness of his anti-hero Bakha who stands for suffering and sacrifice in a caste-ridden Hindu society. In his confessional novels like *Seven Summers* (1951), *Morning Face* (1968) and *Confession Of A Lover* (1976) he shows how he was associated with this sweeper boy Bakha-the central character of his first novel *Untouchable*. In *Seven Summers*, he is shown playing with him in the

playground without the least sense of ‘pollution complex’. That is why when Anand interpretes the life of Bakha it is not without the ring of sincerity. Bakha, the full blooded boy of eighteen and the son of Lakha, appears before us carrying with him a broom stick and a basket.

He intimates us that he has to clean the latrines used by the white Sahebs and the men of the small town of Bulandshahar in the North-West Punjab. The action takes place here and it takes the whole day.

When his work of cleaning the latrines is over, he moves towards the town to clean the town streets. On the way he touches the high caste merchant unconsciously. In return he gets a slap on his face. He begs for apology but is never forgiven. Rather, he is made to believe that he has defiled the merchant's body.

After the slap episode Bakha goes towards a nearby temple to clean the temple courtyard. Out of curiosity he moves towards the temple steps but is stopped by the temple priest shouting posh-posh the dirty boy is coming. To his utter surprise he finds his young sister Mohini by his side to tell him another story while cleaning his house Mohini is said to have been sexually assaulted by the priest but fortunately she runs away from his house and thus could save herself any way from the clutches of the priest.

After this episode comes the moment of self realization and self questioning. Bakha begins to question himself why was he called an untouchable? Why was he slapped? Why was he not allowed to enter the temple? Why was he called dirty when he used to clean the dirt of these Babus, “I clear their dirt and they call me dirty, he said to himself.” Why could he

not retaliate or revolt against such unbearable humiliation heaped on him for centuries by the caste Hindus?

Bakha got his answer to all his questions from within his heart. He realizes at last that it so happened with him because he was a dalit, an untouchable, an outcaste perhaps not an essential part of Indian society. Hence, he was enjoying a 'separate' and 'unequal position' in his own motherland which branded him dirty by all means. How to get rid of his present predicament of his wretched social condition was his next question.

The author explains to Bakha, the sweeper boy, that for all his hapless plight none but the four-fold caste system is responsible. It may be wiped out with the help of the machine if not by Christianity or by the Mahatma. Bakha, on his way back home hopes that 'a Change is at hand' and he may enjoy the better life in future converting himself into a superb specimen of human being.

For a parallel of Bakha one looks forward to 'the Princes' by Manohar Malgonkar. Here Kanakchand, the untouchable, is shown whipped by the father of the young prince of Abhay Raj;

'Then he raised the riding crop high and brought it down on Kankchand's back. I saw Kankchand fall down, more in fear than in pain, trying to ward off the lash of the whip.' (Yadav, Qtd. 86)

Bakha suffers the insult and surrenders out of fear, where as Kanakchand never fears to attack the prince. He boldly declares; "I want revenge. I want to wash away the insult of poverty; the shame of untouchability." (Yadav Qtd. 86)

Thus, Bakha lacks Kanakchand's intellectual richness, courage and fiercely revengeful attitude, while Kankchand is devoid of Bakha's inborn qualities like innocence and 'wisdom of the heart.'

In many ways 'Untouchable' bears some resemblances to Maxim Gorky's 'Lower Depth'. One may seek identification of Bakha with Lukha whose philosophy of life seems to be one of compromise. But whereas Gorky's hero feels that protest is more useful than despair, Anand's Bakha realizes that in the end rebellion will lead nowhere. Bakha is perfectly an Indian variety. What makes him different either from Manohar Malgonkar's Kanakchand or from Gorky's 'Kleshch' is his silent protest on emotional plane.' (Yadav, 88) It is this odd compulsion in one's emotional life that a superbly beautiful creation of Anand emerges in the image of Bakha. When we come down to the discussion of *The God Of Small Things*' (1997) by Arundhati Roy, a social activist, we find that she presents the tragic plight of several characters being exploited at the hands of various exploiters. The novel tells the story of an intense, but doomed love affair between a high caste Shyrian Christian Ammu and an untouchable Parawan Belutha. The hero doesn't get support in his crisis either from his family or from the police or from the society. And he fails to get out of his present predicament. He dies in police custody. Ammu also dies later on. Here the author shows that even today after decades of Independence the caste system hardly allows a woman to select the husband of her own choice. Here in the struggle between good and evil, evil turns out to be victorious, hence the defeat of Belutha. Towards the end of the novel, Roy seems to plead; "Never to forget about the small things

in life, the insects and the flowers, wind and water, the outcaste and the depised". (Mishra, 218)

But in the modern world terribly influenced by the capitalistic system encouraging the dichotomy between big things and small things shamelessly, who cares for such sermons for equality and fraternity? Who is prepared to respect the havenots or untouchables in return for their service to the entire globe.

Kancha Ilaiah's *Untouchable God* (2013) published recently tells us about Paraiah, the central character in this novel. He is beaten to death by the high caste Hindus for his only crime that he begins to think about God and also about equality. The author makes his hero ask the upper caste-Hindus to answer his question; "Why are you beating me? What wrong did I do? Whom did I harm?" (Ilaiah, 9)

Decidedly the untouchables haven't harmed anybody in the world still they receive contempt and hatred. To be free from such narrow mindedness what we need today is "collective consciousness" To live happily together without malice to none and love for all. Such magnanimity will enable both the touchable and the untouchable to come out of the present predicament. For the untouchable the world inhabited by the touchable is powerless to embrace them. Hence they will need a new world full of dignity and love for all. Evils like 'high' and 'low' will have no place here- nothing of the sort of caste, class and gender hegemony. In fact, this new world will move towards a more egalitarian society.

To sum up it must be admitted that Indian English novelists are successful in the portrayal of dalit

characters through whom the foibles and hypocrisies of high caste people have been artistically exposed.

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Dr. Ramchandra Pd. Yadav, Ex. H.O.D. English, B.N.M.U, Madhipura (Bihar), Dr. Navaneet Kumar, T.G.T. English, Kendriya Vidhyalaya, Katihar.

A Few Reflections on the Poetry of O.N. Gupta

P. C. K. Prem

Even a casual journey to the rich poetic field of O.N. Gupta, from *Lilacs in Lab* to *Mosaic of Love* and *Legends* to *Prism of Poetry* provides unique feeling of satisfaction and inner joy. *Lilacs* speaks of softness, rhythm and music in life with bits of joys and pains. Optimism fills a reader with hope and he feels revitalized to live life meaningfully. Socially conscious, the poet is authentic and confirmatory. *Mosaic* is a determined flight to experiences of life and then, it connects itself to past to find cogency and relevance. In fact, it is a visit to present while past and future intermingle to give purpose where history and legends weave elegiac structure. Poets have a queer inclination to go back, wander about, return to present, stay and see around and then, to escape to lands unseen and unmeasured after killing ennui. When the poets consider poetry 'a sacred and selfless service' it elevates and purifies even a sinful soul, the poet believes. The poet in Gupta is aware of the contemporary agony, violence and selfishness of people around who rejoice in a life of excessive love for material comforts and nauseating richness.

He begins his poetic voyage from personal problems -emotional and material, and then deliberates seriously over the predicament of humanity and thereby, he writes about nature, man and society, its life of frigidly warm love, chilly passions, unethical politics, of humanity past and present and its history, culture and heritage with a painful heart. The plight of man in abundance and scarcity shocks him, for he

witnesses an appalling fall of morals and human feelings.

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As he moves ahead, with each passing year, one observes that the poet is growing more impatient and empathetic towards suffering man feeling the sting of immorality in disgusting material radiance but refuses to diagnose it and that sums up the tragedy of modern times the poet avers. His verses are document on contemporary times and whenever, he is upset, he tries to seek relief in the dead past as he is not strong enough to fight against forces inimical to modern man lost in the splendeur of bright squalor and hunger insatiable.

His latest collection of more than twenty-five verses speaks of the modern man's difficult living conditions where he is uncomfortable. These verses tersely speak about relationship, ego, pride, politics, victory, materialistic thirst, callousness and crudities of emotions and thoughts, ravenousness of netas and babus wasting public money and thus teaching, spreading and strengthening philosophy of dishonesty, corruption, violence, greed, untruth, unrighteousness and hatred.

The 'ego' of a big man stands devastated and humbled the moment he begins humiliating the small and the nondescript. He philosophically bemoans the current attitude of the powerful and rich men damaging and destroying the system. Symbolically, he hints at the fast spreading virus of ego a man harbours. The poet quite rationally analyzes superstitious nature of man and ridicules deceitful behaviour of man when he talks of 'omens', good or bad.

The poet invokes ancient characters to justify a hypothesis that a man achieves victory and wealth by

inequitable and unprincipled methods. Myths of splendour have potholes causing loss and destruction. He deliberates over the rot and says that netas and babus of *Kaliyuga* indulge in fraud and deception and act as naked and lecherous 'appendixes' of unethical life. His deliberation on the future of man disturbs him like any other genuine person.

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'Recruitment' reveals indictment of official investigation agencies used to harass opposition but exonerates tainted netas eating up public money. An incisive peep into the minds of modern politicians it is.

A current of irony, ridicule, total disillusionment and melancholic temper is visible in 'Diagnosis.' Politicians have corrupted and crippled the system filling it with dirt where ethics and truth are absent and thus, the people suffocate and die in the hope of a new system. He wants people who work for humanity. He tries to throw light on the real face of politicians when he talks of managed rallies wasting public money. They do nothing worthwhile for the people he says and perhaps, he is worried about the total collapse of the system where modern netas do no good and publicity of developmental works is just another way of wasting people's money.

Elsewhere, he speaks of people's funds being wasted on the upkeep and comforts of *netas* while ordinary men live in perpetual miseries. To know the poetic mind one might love to read verses like 'Reckless rally', 'Development' and 'Interview'. If there is development, one is shocked at the ingratitude of people who show little honour towards those who sacrifice life for the wellbeing of the people. Perhaps, people should be considerate to people like Gandhi, Caesar,

and Christ...who really worked for the people. In fact, politics has brought total chaos and contamination around and thus, the poet feels tortured within. Verses like 'There all the honour lies', 'If aliens came', 'Aloud speakers', 'Time has changed', 'Filling the Void' contain curt and harsh observations on politics and its operators. It is unfortunate to notice that in politics immature minds even if educated outside the country are considered wise and sagacious against those who think legitimately of the nation, as dwarfs apparently claim wisdom and seem to stand tall.

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Human relations are complex with a current of selfishness. Bodily pleasures enslave men and women equally. As warmth and passions subside, coldness engulfs relations if there are no ulterior motives, for one should know that self-interest reigns supreme and determines the conduct of man despite hypocritical claims to the contrary. If that is what 'Hiccups' tells us, 'My brand new car' underlines disgusting behaviour of men in authority, mostly unsympathetic and callous to the agonies of ordinary men. The poet reflects on human relations in many verses.

He is a disillusioned man when he witnesses loss of warmth as relations are at a discount and a material world fascinates everyone while men in power show off privileges and powers and look at relations with political eyes and remain pathetically cold to the pains of public. They ignore the real duties of guiding, protecting and governing. It is self-service they believe in, the poet believes. 'Swan Song', 'Encounter with a doctor' and 'Intimacy' examine relations from other aspects where one learns that one is worried about his pains only and doctor and other people are not an exception. In intimate relations also, a man nurtures

'enormous egotism' and that pollutes relations and stultifies growth of warmth.

The poet is deeply worried about the falling quality of love, affection and genuineness in human conduct and sincerity and at this moment, he warns a contemporary man of the disease, and indirectly asks him to find solutions. Only then, there shall be real 'Home Coming' and if it is not, then a man will die as a lonely and deserted man overwhelmed by moroseness, the consequence of untrue relations, and a kind of 'nuclear living' will push the man to perennial consternation and depression. 'Krishna's Curse' gives a vivid life-sketch of Lord Krishna from birth to death and indirectly, one visits a grand past where created beings and sage are rewarded and punished depending upon *karmas* irrespective of the status. Here, the poet tells tersely that if a modern man looks around, he would find that purported great men and political leaders enjoy power and wealth for a long time belonging to people but ultimately die an ignoble death. The poet speaks of truth that nothing is immortal and particularly those living unclean lives meet tragic end.

He is realistic and philosophic as well, and talks of transitory existence. On the other hand, he is passionate about ancient heritage and culture, speaks about the Trinity and its great virtues, symbols of creation, preservation and destruction when he dwells on 'Pyrrhic victory' of man on earth. Again, his thoughts go back to Christ, Buddha and Mohammad and Lord Indra and the words smell of terrific paradox, spoof and derision.

O.N. Gupta has travelled a long distance in poetry. From sublimity and genuineness in human relations and system largely, he now appears a disheartened

and disturbed man as morals and ethics lie down buried before him while a barefaced pageant of virtues and honesty continues to tell people around that dreamland of love, joy and prosperity is just very near. Here, relations are chilly, values smack of surfeit of richness and lust and the system awaits an unceremonious death.

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A trilingual author of more than forty books in English and Hindi, P C K Prem taught English in various colleges of Punjab and Himachal before shifting to civil services. He is a poet, novelist, short story writer, essayist and critic in English from Himachal Pradesh.

Universal Angst of Modern Marriage : A Critique of Manju Kapur's *Custody*

Dr. Darkhasha Azhar

Marriage in Brahminical culture is considered a pious ritual which not only incorporates in its fold two families but also closely binds two souls, diversified in views and tastes into death. Manju Kapur's novel unfolds unbelievable uncertainties of matrimony in today's modern society. It highlights clearly the wife's sense of suffocation, the husband's fear of abandonment and the pendulum shifting of children from one home to the other, with painstaking sincerity.

It should not surprise us that the novel ends with the sentence: "In the meantime victory lay with the possessor" (415). Custody seems to lay emphasis on the concept of 'possessing'-a symbolic metaphor on which the Indian family has subtly laid its foundations. "To possess" simply means to own; but it also refers to gaining dominance, influence and control over people's bodies and minds. The possessor has, in turn, to vigilantly guard that which is confined in custody. In this particular story of custody Kapur deals with marriages that collapse, social hypocrisies and battle for children that transform into a politics of possessiveness and unequal power relations in male dominant families.

Since the emergence of the patriarchal family the role of 'humans' has been to manipulate, exploit, abuse, and submit through a complex network of norms, conventions and institutions. Round the world women's studies and feminist theory agree that the hegemonic patriarchal family is the centre of gender based discrimination. Kapur's novel is founded on the same theory.

Throughout history and different cultures we find multiple examples of family types. In India the multiplicity is not only in the past but also in contemporary times, what has happened is that the northern Indian family that arises as domineering has actually marginalized "the kinship patterns of non-Hindu and tribal communities, following principles of matrilineal or bilateral descent, and of groups for whom the joint family is neither the cultural ideal nor an empirical preference"(Uberoi 2005). Some of these models of families are more democratic and respectful. The roots of all the tensions, problems, abuses and conflicts that take place in Kapur's novel are typical of this model of family which is unfortunately widespread. Its structure is similar to a building in which the load of its foundations is unequally distributed to the pillars leading to a sure tumble and collapse. And this collapse or break up of the family, which is followed by the ugly process of formal divorce and the custody of the children, "Should not be ascribed to the frivolity and hollowness of 'modern' life and 'modern' marriage with its burden of individualism" (Banerji the *Guardian*).

Manju Kapur's *Custody* is mainly set in the throbbing upper middle class society of Delhi in the mid 90's. The subject of *Custody*, set against the back drop of uprising foreign enchantments, is a marriage fractured and mutilated by socially unacceptable norms. It captures matrimony at its extremely intolerable form followed by the emotional fall-out of a break up on one Delhi family.

We are introduced to the central couple just as their problems gear up. Raman and Shagun, a seemingly happy couple with two children, Eight year old Arjun and three year old Roohi, enjoy a privileged life. Soon Shagun meets Ashok Khanna, Raman's charismatic Boss at the Brand, and they immediately

fall in love bringing their not so convincing married life to a shattering and shuddering end. A spate of events occur after this infatuation which converts Raman into a vengeful person. This affair sparks a furious and insane momentum dragging them through the tough ordeal of separation, divorce, re- marriage and a crescendo of custody battle in all its legal deception and psychological ugliness. Badly trapped in the web, Shagun, the beautiful wife of Raman, finds herself struggling to define her roles as wife, mother and lover. In another part of Delhi, just in contrast, is a colony governed by conventional bonds, where Ishita, whose marriage collapses because she cannot have children of her own, strives to find satisfaction in independence and social work.

In search of contentment and familial fulfilment, she is drawn to Raman. Their union aggravates the bitter battle for the custody of children amid the demands and hysterics of the four grown-ups. In this tale of dilapidated marriages, the children remain in the backdrop quietly nursing the injuries. It is then that we begin to comprehend and visualize the disastrous and deadly side effects of the legal fight for custody, the cruelty of relations and their trauma, spilt amidst two homes.

Kapur places her polygamists in the context of the 1990's. Raman, the husband spends long hours working for reputed and successful company that manufactures soft drinks. It is the beginning of globalizabon; and rising Indian companies are competing to project their business on the international platform. Raman is a hard working man, who won a stunningly beautiful bride for his perseverance and skillfulness.

In the initial stage of their life we see him in his traditional role of father and husband, who goes out

to the world to make money and who has to be looked after when he returns home, but also who, typically, does not care much for his own wife and children. He seems to be married to his profession reflecting certain important liabilities that fall under his domain, utterly blinded to his wife's demand and children's progress.

A traditional mind like Raman's would never trace any fellow in this behaviour or raise a question. In this typical Indian family system which has based its models in the great epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, the household functions as a producing and reproducing unit. Chakravarh argues:

“The domestic ideology outlined here encapsulates within itself codes of duties and responsibilities ... but the hierarch of power of exclusion is quite clear. The central figure in the structure of the household is the young householder, a male, who inherits the land, contracts a suitable marriage, delegates authority to the wife and buys things for her(258)”.

Some women like Ishita, brought up and domesticated traditionally may be fully satisfied being guardians of their family but Shagun's spirit is different. She has never been able to guide her own life as the reins were in the hands of her parents and cultural customs :

“She had wanted to be a model, but her mother was strongly opposed to a career that would allow all kinds of lechery near her lovely daughter. ‘ Do what you like after you marry, ‘she had said, but after marriage there had been a child, then the claims of husband, family and friends made a career hard to justify, especially since money was not an issue(Kapur,11)”.

From the beginning one can smell that a marriage like this is bound to fall. Shagun's flirtations are not tolerated by the sophisticated Indian society. Had it

been Raman, the Brahminical Puritan norms would have consented and justified his conduct. But as it is the female who walks out of an oppressive marriage and finds love in a relationship that is more equal and democratic, her honest deed and implicit interrogation of principles seem to require a violent reaction by the dishonoured man who, consequently, causes more unnecessary pain to the lives of the members involved-Shagun and children.

Thus, deeply humiliated and insulted Raman's male chauvinist instincts cannot allow this public affront. He instantaneously rejects Shagun's request for divorce or any amiable negotiation to solve matters. Owing to his childish attitude and his wounded male ego, he lacks the goodwill to solve disputes rationally and avoid the suffering of the children, proving his tall oath of love and concern for family. In this way he performs the role of the 'dispossessed' male of the great Indian epics *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana*. To uphold this argument Uma Chakravarti writes:

“(The *Ramayana*) becomes the hegemonic text par excellence, and far outweighed the *Mahabharata* in terms of constructing normative codes for all sectors of society but especially for women.... In sum, *The Ramayana* constructs the normative family, suggests dangers to its material and affective interests from women, the lower orders and outsiders (266 & 271).”

Therefore, Raman (Ram) has to initiate his journey and bring Shagun (Sita) back to his side, for she now lies in the arms of the demon, Ashok (Ravana). But as Shagun does not want to sacrifice her life and happiness now that she has become a satisfied career woman and has built her own space in a new more democratic family, Raman makes her pay for this offence by using the children. The children are his

instrumental weapons to battle Shagun for her outrageous immoral act.

The crushed moral values and codes of conduct also affect Ishita who follows the hegemonic Indo-Aryan codes for morality. Palriwala observes : “Marriage continues to have material, social and symbolic meanings and consequences which are asymmetrical in terms of their implications for females and males in at least three significant ways. Firstly, selfhood, respectability and status are tied to wifehood and motherhood in more exacting ways than they are to being a husband and/ or father. A single man or a man without children is seen as unfortunate, but a woman in a similar situation is inauspicious, possibly dangerous (400-401).”

Ishita has an arranged marriage but as soon as her husband and in-laws discover that she cannot conceive, despite the innumerable painful and tedious medical treatments, she is filled with a sense of shame and insignificance and the family abandons her. We find her psychologically stunted and distorted: “Smaller than the ants on the ground, smaller than the motes of the dust in the sunlit air, smaller than the drops of dew caught between blades of grass in the morning was Ishita as she sat in the gynecologist's office. (Kapur, 65)”. The negotiations and terms of marriage are so asymmetrical in these families that even Ishita's mother says : “For us money is not as important as family. But beta, it is essential that Suryakanta have a child. As the only son, he has to make sure that the bloodline of his forefather's continues (69).”

And further we read: “She could not conceive whereupon SK had decided he could not love her (127)”. Here we are reminded of Kunti, the leading lady of *Mahabharata*, who had surrendered to the desire of having sons who would inherit the father's legacy and

name and would secure the family's interest.

Kapur reflects these gender- discriminating norms quite vividly. We have another example that confirms oppression over possession with Ishita's in- laws: "For us the girl's qualities were everything. You know we asked for no dowry? (69)." The resultant reaction is that if the woman does not have 'the right qualities' to produce descendents, the proceedings for mutual-consent split must begin and a cash arrangement has to be agreed. But Ishita, symbolically a lame parasite, does not seem to learn much from her traumatic and humiliating experience: "The mother began to call her shameless, the sisters refused to talk to her, the father and SK avoided her (72)." She stays frigid and unreactionary to all the taunts and abuses, refusing to take lessons of advancement from her past experiences. Like Draupadi, she is humiliated by society for being a 'Contra-natura.'

If Draupadi challenges social norms by having five husbands Ishita does it by not having children. However, whereas Draupadi, accepts the challenge, we find Ishita a weak victim who is scared of facing turmoils. She proves an epitome of weak and feeble woman when she misses the golden opportunity of survival through adoption. She unnecessarily hates herself and her sexuality: "If only she could tear out her whole reproductive system and throw it on the road. She hated her body, hated it. Everybody in the building must know why she had come back. Return to sender (127)." This violent servile discourse that accuses her of being a failure of the feminine capabilities reaches its climax when she turns into a revolutionary like Shagun who dares to transgress the unjust codes, to honestly follow her own spirit. Ishita's marriage to Raman retrieves her lost status "so rudely snatched from her (303)".

As is customary, her marriage elevates her to her husband's social position. Chakravarty writes: "It has been argued that all the women in the epic 'had one thing' in common: Their work is defined and mediated through a man's worth (268)". Similarly, Ishita's union to Raman empowers her and provides her stamina to fight for the common thought: the custody of his children.

The story takes a tumultuous sweep here. The children become the family's 'material stakes'. The Kauravas violate the norms of dharma and Ishita manipulates events and invents lies. She exercises power over the small child to eventually win the custody of the little girl. Raman and their lawyer prove mere puppets to her wishes. This unscrupulous behaviour undoubtedly manifests that the more the members of a brahminical family confine themselves to its social and internal structures to maintain and contract power the more they transgress ethics and democratic laws.

But the burning fact that underlies the whole situation is that despite Ishita using corrupt modes and methods, to a certain extent the readers feel compassion for the barren woman who, with no fault of hers, is badly wounded and abandoned by all and sundry. Still she suffers from the reminiscences of her past frustrations and social ostracisms, the shadows of which have been constantly hovering over her entire being. As she is under society's constant suppression, she needs to demonstrate that she is a loving mother for the girl child. Put under vigilant watchful scanner, entrapped in suffocation and choking family web, her egoistic love compels her to break the set democratically ethical agreement of the society.

Consequently, as a victim of the norms of the so called sophisticated Brahminical households, Ishita turns into a worst oppressor. In the deepest of her

soul she envies Shagun's strong will and individual success;" How could New York tolerate the presence of such a woman? How come its forces hadn't combined to kill her? (379)." It is at this juncture that we understand the significance of Roohi's custody to Ishita, a last chance to cure her past frustrations and be acceptable to those who dictate or abide by stringent socio-cultural norms. I am reminded of Bina Agarwal's words: "The family in India has not been a cradle for nurturing democratic values....The need for a democratic family structure is a major challenge for the families and not just for women" (459).

Kapur suggests other models of family too and points out the flexibility of gender roles. Mrs. Hingorani, in my opinion, is a suitable example. Ashok and Shagun is another exemplary family unit that is more responsible, supportive and democratic in approach, where every individual has right to equality, where responsibilities are shared and where laws are equally enacted. Kapur's style of tackling adverse situations articulately is her forte. The battle which seemed so aggravated and aggressive could have made for an exhausting, car-crash drama had it not been for Kapur's carefully balanced tone. The pain and loneliness of all the characters is set against Kapur's gentle satire. The tragedy of divorce and custody is tempered by her keenly-perceived soap opera of bourgeois Indian society of the 1990's. Shagun's feeling has a touch of French farce where as Raman is the classic cuckold intent on a life of mediocrity. The breakups and divorce relate to princess Diana's wrecked marriage. Through the two kids, Kapur gives an effective glimmer of insight into their sensitive, confused minds. Kapur is adept at dealing with this complicated family reconfiguration, and the insecurity it harbingeres. The concept of family shame and social propriety is firmly rooted. Perhaps this lack of social

judgement stems from the 1990s when India was entering the world economy on a more ambitious footing and the idea of family was over-ridden by individualism.

India has just joined the fast paced world and changes are rapidly happening. All sets of Indian society have responsibility to dismantle hegemonic model of the Brahminical family and to reinforce democratic values that annihilate the 'culture of science' when there is violence, that deconstructs democratic values that sensitize the legal machinery; that promote educational programmes to raise awareness. The changing social situation of India must create families that recognize democratic values on which human dignity, justice and peace can find a comfortable abode.

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Dr. Darkhasha Azhar, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Govt. P.G. College, Bisalpur (Pilibhit).

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