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Posthuman Conceptions and their Consequences for Literature

-B.Tirupati Rao

Technological changes that occurred in the last four or five centuries have resulted in the erosion of the division between human and nonhuman to a large extent. There has been a paradigmatic shift in the very ways of thinking about human beings. The emergence of the new definitions of self-understanding, ethics, politics, sciences and life itself invalidated the traditional understanding of human beings. The binary that existed once between sciences and humanities is erased by the new developments in the field of science as well as humanities. The interaction between human beings and new smart machines and gadgets has defied the earlier understanding of what it means to be human. This new mode or method of understanding is called Posthumanism.

Posthumanism challenges many of the humanist assumptions of Western Philosophy, science and art. It brings onto the scene a view of human condition building on the findings of Quantum theory, Chaos theory, Cybernetics and technological developments. However, the Posthuman does not signal the end of humanity, rather it problematizes the very conception of the human. Robert Pepperell says:

Today the possibilities suggested by synthetic intelligence, organic computers and genetic modification are deeply challenging to that sense of human predominance. These developments awaken deep-rooted anxieties about the threat to human existence from technology we cannot control or understand. We know we are capable of creating entities that may equal and even surpass us, and

we must seriously face up to the possibility that attributes like human thought may be created in non-human forms. While this is one of our deepest fears it is also the holy grail of the computer sciences. Despite the enormous problems involved, the development of an artificially conscious entity may happen within our lifetimes. Would such an entity have human-like emotions; would it have a sense of its own being? 2003:2

The all pervasiveness of technology and its radical impact on everyday life has resulted in a Posthuman condition. This is a condition in which many of the belief systems based on the essential preeminence of human being are negated. Even a cursory reading of the human evolution from the agricultural era to the industrial era proves that it was accompanied by a cultural shift from theism to humanism. Radical changes are taking place in the socio-cultural spheres and they are affecting the way people think about themselves and their surroundings.

At present it seems that there is a convergence of biology and technology to the point where they are increasingly becoming indistinguishable, hence it may not be possible to think about human being in the same way as the earlier generations thought. In fact, organic computers and genetic engineering are subverting or challenging the human predominance in the universe and causing great anxieties about the very existence of human being. The anxiety will be enhanced if we know that attempts are going on to create entities that can surpass human beings. In this kind of situation, Posthumanism thinks that human beings are embodied in an extended technological world. The anthropocentric view may not be tenable any longer. The numerous technological inventions of human beings are going on. It is feared that our capacity which resulted in numerous technological inventions and

established us in a dominant position in the world may ultimately lead to 'The End of Man' as Foucault put it. Robert Pepperell's book *Posthuman Condition* is often substituted for the term Posthumanism. According to Pepperell:

Humans have imagined for a long time that the ability to develop and control technology was one of the defining characteristics of our condition, something that assured us of our superiority over other animals and our unique status in the world. Ironically, this sense of superiority and uniqueness is being challenged by the very technologies we are now seeking to create, and it seems the balance of dominance between human and machine is slowly shifting. It is a common fact of life that many manual and clerical workers' jobs are being automated on the grounds of efficiency; one might wonder when, or if, this process will stop or decelerate. 2003:2

In the view of Pepperell, reality is an energetic continuum in which humans are essentially indistinguishable from the environment. This view is different from the Humanist view, which sees humans as essentially distinct from, in opposition to, and Predominant within nature. The continuous view of human existence not only rejects the idea that humans are in opposition to nature, it also rejects the long-cherished belief that human thought is a unique case amongst natural phenomena - something that can never be replicated in any other medium.

The Posthuman thought and practices have already had a deep impact on the creative fields like art and literature. This impact is going to be much deeper. We are already observing, though in the so called first world countries, the theoretical prospect of 'Posthuman' machines with 'human - like' capacities

to create, innovate and invent. In the Science fiction, produced in recent times also, we find the speculations relating to a context in which the Posthuman machines are going to go beyond humans and dominate the entities on earth, including humans. The very act of creativity, which was earlier as a defining human product is going to be fully automatized. In Posthuman terms the subject of art is interesting not only because it is traditionally seen as a defining human product, but it also represents an area of activity in which the processes of invention, creation and aesthetic production are highly concentrated and visible. Examination of art also allows us to speculate about how these processes operate, especially in light of the model of human thought.

Posthumanism is sometimes used as a synonym for an ideology of technology known as Transhumanism because it affirms the possibility and desirability of achieving a Posthumanfuture, albeit in purely evolutionary terms. However, Posthumanists, in the humanities and the arts are critical of Transhumanism, in part, because they argue that it incorporates and extends many of the values of Enlightenment humanism and classical liberalism, namely scientism. Pepperell has included the following points in his *The Posthuman Manifest* :

1. It is now clear that humans are no longer the most important things in the universe. This is something the humanists have yet to accept.
2. All technological progress of human society is geared towards the transformation of the human species as we currently know it.
3. In the Posthuman era many beliefs become redundant Not least the belief in human beings.
4. Human beings, like gods, only exist inasmuch as

we believe them to exist.

5. The future never arrives.
6. All humans are not born equal, but it is too dangerous not to pretend that they are.
7. In the Posthuman era, machines will no longer be machines.
8. It is a deficiency of humans that they require others to tell them what they already know. It is only then they will believe it.
9. Posthumanists do not fall into the trap of imagining a society where everything works Well. Economics and political theories are as futile as long-range weather predictions.
10. Surf or die. You cannot control a wave, but you can ride it.
11. We now realize that human knowledge, creativity and intelligence are ultimately limited.
12. Complex machines are an emerging form of life.
13. A complex machine is a machine whose workings we do not fully understand or control.
14. As computers develop to be more like humans, so humans develop like computers more.
15. If we can think of machines then machines can think; if we can think of machines that think, then machines can think of us.

There is a need to study the consequences of these changes to literature and reformulate our views on culture in general and the literary phenomenon in specific.

Some writers of fiction are trying to rethink human identity by positioning human beings within a technologically mediated reality which displaces the

biological body and the spontaneity of human sensation. Some other writers are anticipating the effect of technologically mediated culture on the formation of Posthuman identity. In some novels the writers are juxtaposing the human beings and organically anthropomorphic androids. This kind of situation demands the critic to equip themselves with new heuristic tool to understand and analyze these new forms of literary representation.

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The Wounded Psyche: A Freudian Approach to the Poetry of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen

Mithlesh K. Pandey

Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen have been regarded as prominent poets in the history of Modern British War Poetry. In point of fact, war has always been a primary source of inspiration for the creation of artistic masterpieces. Furthermore, war offers an attention-grabbing ground for extra investigation of numerous kinds of literature. War has been treated as the theme of numerous diaries, novels, short stories and poems. It has drawn the attention of writers and researchers for a long time. All the way through history, war has had a brutalizing effect on the human condition and destiny, and the carnage has ostensibly become more horrific and horrendous over time. The influence of war on the human psyche is unavoidable and this human psyche—the outcome of the peculiarities of human existence—manifests itself in human behaviour.

The large-scale devastation of human lives and property in the wake of the First World War is part of history and the writers have responded to that peculiar situation in accordance with their training and accomplishments. However, what was going on in Europe between 1914 and 1918 was not just a story, it was among the darkest phases of human history which cannot be forgotten. Many poets have written about wars of which they have had no direct experience; it is the young combatants Siegfried and Wilfred who have the firsthand experience and actual knowledge of what war can do, both to the body and to the psyche. Nevertheless, in spite of the horrific war and extremity

of their bloody experience, the universal emotions and problems which have faced humanity throughout time have severely penetrated it. The Great War poets Sassoon and Owen were psychologically wounded due to the trench experiences; and the reaction of the civilians and non-combatants back home towards their sufferings and pains in the war reflected in their poems. Both these poets understood the violence of the trenches and the human cost of war, and they recognized the inability of civilians and entertainers to comprehend it from the safety of home. Facing a huge pressure of witnessing the human losses, fatalities and great pains and miseries of soldiers in frontlines, both of them were horrendously wounded. The present paper aims to explore the poetry of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen in the light of the Freudian Psychoanalytic theory to find the real meaning of the work of art through penetrating the truth out of the mind of the writer. In this context, Eric Fromm in his book *The Sane Society* (1955) perceptively remarks that:

The understanding of man's psyche must be based on the analysis of man's needs stemming from the conditions of his existence and the most powerful psychic forces motivating man's behaviour stem from the conditions of his existence, the human situation. (34)

The first World War had a huge impact on reconsidering Sigmund Freud's view of dreams in the light of traumatic events like shell-shock, suffering, mental pains where the patient recurred in his dreams to the very situation, distressing as it was, which had precipitated his neurosis. The selected poets, both Sassoon and Owen in particular, are the ones that have presented war and its impact on human life and destiny in significant ways in their poems. They had

to cope with the psychological wounds or physical injuries, apart from mental pressures, cruelty of the real life, loss of faith, emotional emptiness, ethical dilemmas, disillusionment, guilt, tests of courage, loss of friends, aggression, ambivalence, melancholia and mourning, nostalgia, fear of death, overwhelming alteration and even metamorphosis in spirituality and religious beliefs, and finally, bereavement and death itself and hence contemplate the essential meaning of life that might lead to existential questions in their poems.

During the First World War, there was a strong and persuasive propaganda, which portrayed the war as an opportunity for young men to defend their country and to prove their heroism. But once these men arrived at the battlefields and lived in the trenches, they opened their eyes to the ugly truth of war, its futility, horror, dehumanization, and losses. Among these disillusioned men were the poets Sassoon and Owen. The psychological wounds caused in the minds and souls of the survivors were unfathomable. As a result of the Great War a physical and metaphysical wasteland was created across Europe. This despair and desolation was increasingly reflected in Sassoon and Owen's poetry. They were the most talented to express perceptively the shocking experiences of those traumatic years. They wrote predominantly in response to painful personal experiences that affected both their imagination and poetic technique. Soldier poets such as Sassoon and Owen put their appalling trench experiences into poetry. They served as representatives of what could happen to all soldiers on daily basis through adding a strong influential voice to the public discourse. Freud defined a kind of instincts recognized as "Eros" and assumed that they were greatly in charge of human behaviour. Later, he

was convinced that "Eros", on its own, was not able to explain some of the behaviours. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud counts a comprehensive number of manners and behaviours that challenge and reject all efforts to explain them through sexual instincts. Without the life drive, the survival of the species and life of the inmate is impossible. In fact, "Libido" is the energy generated by the sexual drive.

Freud has delineated instinct as "an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things" (36). Suggesting that "the goal of all life is death" (44), once more, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he revises viewing sexuality as the most important drive in human psyche and defines "Thanatos", death instinct, as an additional drive and as the decisive desire. Freud states that after individuals face harrowing happenings such as war, they repeatedly renovate the shocking event. An unconscious desire to die is held by individuals which is mainly moderated by the sexual drive. Indeed, "Thanatos" and 'Eros" are in permanent conflict. As a matter of fact, "Thanatos" forces the organic life back to inorganic state. Thanatos is the drive that forces the living things internally and unconsciously in the direction of death, as there is no other likelihood to stay alive. It is obvious that Freud wanted to demonstrate that Death Drive is the manifestation of the inertia in organic life. "Thanatos" is "the instinct to return to the inanimate state' (38), that is death. Repetition, and aggression are among the themes of Thanatos that are discovered in Sassoon and Owen's poems. Due to their acrimonious personal experiences in the war, they became shell-shocked, aggressive, repetitive and destructive in their life as well as their poetry. Freudian theory of aggression is reflected in Sassoon and Owen's poetry in the form of their conflict with fate and the surrounding world as

well as their considerable emphasis on the use of monosyllabic words including Sassoon's poem "To My Brother" in which all words used are monosyllabic except words such as "brother, returning, soldiers, laurell'd, and victory" and the poem "The Chances' by Owen in which most of the used words are monosyllabic. Freudian repetition compulsion theory is also available in Sassoon and Owen's insistence on repeating sounds such as: "p", "s" and "ch" in the poem "Working Party" by Sassoon, and "m", "s" and "g" in the poem "Strange Meeting" by Owen; Part of Words, Complete Words, Phrases and Complete Sentences in Owen's poem "Impressionist":

Although his speech ran suavely as a valse/
His empty heart gave hollow echoes, false,

And the following lines in the poem "Asking for it" by Sassoon:

Lord God whose mercy guards the virgin jungle;
Lord God whose fields with dragon's teeth are farmed;
Lord God of blockheads, bombing-planes, and bungle

And also their insistence on repeating such themes as death, indifference of God and Nature, fruitlessness and meaninglessness, horror and pain in war in common with their repetition of images such as night, trench, blood, corpse and hell, ghosts and spirits, and finally mud, dirt and road which have their origins in their "Thanatos", have been examined thoroughly. However, I proved that such manifestations and a number of others that bear the traces of "Thanatos" are reflected in Sassoon and Owen's poetry.

Defining thanatophobia which is not a new theory, great scholars such as William Stekel, Stanley Hall, Otto Rank and Sigmund Freud, discussed the importance of death anxiety. Death Anxiety is another concept that was taken into consideration also by Freud

in his psychological works. He theorized that individuals feel thanatophobia, fear of death. Freud realized it as a mask for a profounder foundation of anxiety. As said by him, as nobody is certain of his/her own death, therefore, individuals, in point of fact, did not fear death. Because of the reality that the unconscious does not estimate the remaining amount of one's life, passage of time or negations are not dealt with by the unconscious. In addition, no one has ever died that is why he assumed that the thing that we fear is not death itself. According to Freud, sadism, masochism and melancholy are attached to one another, furthermore in melancholy, the ego is split to two components that detest and endanger each other, as a result, obligatorily, thanatophobia in particular and solicitude (anxiety) in general are connected with melancholia. Sigmund Freud asserts that individuals who show death anxiety, in fact are trying to come to terms with unsettled infantile skirmishes that they cannot deal with or show emotions towards. Based on his definition, anxiety is described as "the expression of a retreat from danger' (19:57). However, if a threat generated by the Id, the superego or even outside world, endangers the ego, this peril creates a sort of anxiety or thanatophobia. Freud likens the superego's role as the shielding one of the "the father', "providence' or "destiny" (58) towards the ego. Henceforth, if the superego abandons the ego, the ego sees itself in an extremely grave hazard so that it "lets itself die" (58). Relating it to Sassoon and Owen, as representatives of the so-called lost generation and as a result of their terrible trench experiences, and in connection with their life and poetry, it cannot be denied, as it is touched upon in the previous subchapters, that ambivalence, nostalgia, transience and impermanence, trauma and shell-

shock, the melancholic tone of loss and finally moral masochism and sadomasochism are the concepts which are reflected in their poems. These lines of the poem "Blighters" by Sassoon echo masochism and sadomasochism:

Love drove me to rebel.
Love drives me back to grope with them through hell;
And in their tortured eyes I stand forgiven.

During the First World War, it was claimed that the British people were a part of a "spiritual" and even "a holy war" and since they were virtuously defending both truth and Belgium, God was on their side. Most of the churches, the majority of party leaders, the so-called patriots of media and literature, and of course warlords and politicians were using spiritual and religion-oriented propaganda to encourage enrolment in the Great War. Trying to expose the carnages in the trenches, Sassoon and Owen composed many war poems condemning religion, spiritual and governmental ladder. Consequently, Owen accepted religion's influence on the common man, thus he deployed divinity and spirituality as a mediator for creating compassion and appreciation. However, Sassoon's war poems continued to be satirical even of the consumption of religious conviction. His Poetry and the Religion of the War focuses on how War had an enormous impact on his spiritual and religious beliefs, life as well as his poetry. Sassoon exposed the truth via satirical formulaic style and asked powerful questions about God and the Great War and condemned those in control and the religious propaganda prevalent in the early stages of the war in his poem "In the Pink". Sassoon demonstrates complete disdain for the religious leaders of the time, offering them no respect in his poetry. In the poem "How to Die" which creates an image of a dying soldier, the

imagery of morning and sunset imply a significant passing of time. His death is slow, but interestingly the poem makes it appear majestic. The poem, with its ironic finish, serves as a condemnation of those presenting messages of idealistic sacrifice and death.

The poem "A Wooden Cross (To S.G.H.)" cynically challenges the messages which connect service in the War to a calling by God. "Joy-Bells" exposes the clergy's hypocritical calls to action. The poem offers bells to symbolize the sounds issued from churches, and initially seems to have the bells speak of past days and peacefulness. In "Devotion to Duty" he uses, King David, to condemn the religious and political leaders during war. In another poem, "In the Church of St. Ouen", Sassoon connects death, sacrifice, and religion as craves for and search of God, but claims to be "lost to God." In "Reconciliation", he questions theology and even God Himself that takes sides satirically. Consequently, the image of God in "Christ and the Soldier" is paralyzed and unable to deal with war and has nothing to offer. As a result, Sassoon challenges the very nature of an omnipotent God and implies that the war has moved beyond His control. On the other hand war had a huge impact on Owen's religious beliefs, life and even his career as a poet, but, unlike Sassoon, Owen was always faithful to them as we find in his poems. Together with family, army language, and religious beliefs are main themes in his writing. Indeed, the influence of his spirituality had such an extraordinary importance in his poetry that he imagined himself as a liberator and even redeemer. Sarcasm can be seen overtly in some of his poems such as "Mental cases" to strongly condemn the Churchmen, the Government, and even the poets and authors too, including himself. Pitilessly presenting socking clashes of death and emotive misery, instead

of the religious language of sublimity, spirituality, and comradeship, in “Dulce et Decorum Est” Owen removes any magnificent depiction of fellowship. In the poem “The Last Laugh”, he inclines more to profanity and disrespect than prayer. He insults the *Bible* and God himself using frivolously Jesus Christ’s name for nothing to condemn religion itself rather than the churchmen. Questioning the dignity and magnificence of death through application of codes of Christianity to “highlight the mismatch between organized religion and the reality on the ground” (Cavill et al. 365), in a poem like “Anthem for Doomed Youth”, Owen questions theology itself. By depicting his frontline experiences, in the famous poem “Strange Meeting”, he tried to create harmony between Christianity and aestheticism, as a new way which is more than sheer satire and sarcasm as to emphasize the fact that Christ and Christianity are a link between the innocent soldiers and his readers.

As a matter of fact, Sassoon and Owen were different from their other contemporary poets for they were able to reveal professionally the sufferings and miseries of the soldiers on the frontlines. However, some critics such as Caesar find Sassoon’s poetry as “realistic, anti-war, anti-heroic, satirical, direct, angry, and by implication full of sorrows of war” (61) which directs the reader to neglect his technicality and deepness of his poetry, chiefly “the place of suffering in his world view” (61). Indeed, Sassoon’s perspective never matched Owen’s exactly. Sassoon remained the cynic, opting to continue his focus on the power structures behind the war, rather than those involved on the frontlines. Owen considered WWI as a very complicated and substantial event but for Sassoon it was only an interval. Sassoon thought that everything was fine ahead of the war and will be fine once again

after the war. In quest of trustworthiness and faithfulness, they refused totally post-war perfectionism promised by the Church and Government and showed the abuse of Jesus Christ’s spiritual philosophy.

By “Poetry is in the Pity”, Owen meant not compassion but rather the pity which is invoked in reading and comprehending a tragedy that encompasses his poery. Since he and Sassoon both had been army officers exposed to the brutality of the fighting fronts, their single agenda was to subvert the ideologies of militarism by being truthful about such sets of assumptions which underlay European society. Although their Great War experiences and even part of their poetic career was somehow alike but the way Sassoon and Owen reacted through war poems was not necessarily the same. Their war was not only with the Central Forces, external, but there was another tough internal one. War poetry and literature never loses its significance and still attracts the writers and critics positively, negatively or in a critical way and they have their own place in literature, religion and philosophy. And a negative state of mind further ruins the equilibrium between the body and mind leading to mental stress. If stress persists over a period of time, it ages us from within. As a consequence, the harsh experience of war will leave no one unchanged and its echoes and resonances are observable in all aspects of life. Regarding poetry, there are both negative and positive reactions towards war but in Sassoon and Owen’s case its impact can be pessimistic, irritating and distrustful which leads to destruction, aggression, anxiety and a wounded psyche far away from enlightenment.

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Language and Ideology in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

Dr. Lata Mishra

In the novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the protagonists are caught in a crossfire overwhelmed by external forces. Their inner lives are influenced by an often brutal and unforgiving outside world, and the decisions they make about their own lives are influenced by things over which they have no control. Among external forces are: revolutions, wars, extremism, and oppression, while the rest of exploitation takes place through patriarchal institution. Nana, Mariam, Laila and Aziza are the four generations suffering the same kind of injustices. Khaled Hosseini explores the relationship between parent and child, with all of its manifest complexities and contradictions. Mariam understands her mother only after her death. She dies as a woman with self-esteem and her daughter develops it in her. Laila realizes Mariam's pain when the same is inflicted on her. However, all the characters succeed in realizing real happiness through love and human connection. While Laila is saved by her childhood friend Tariq, Mariam channelizes her love to Aziza and gains motherly joy. Love, thus, manifests itself in diverse forms and strengthens each character of the narrative.

The paper attempts to explore how derogatory language functions to solidify the ideology of male dominance and preference. This paper argues that pejorative language has played a major role in the victimization of women since ages. It aims to analyze how the demeaning words are brought into play to justify man's brutality and callousness to women in Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

Subjection to a countless assortment of atrocities is the common plight of all women characters in this fiction. This is done through a comprehensive classification of degrading categories assigned to women such as, deficient human, subhuman, animal, parasite, inanimate object and waste product.

Mariam, lives in a small shack with her mother, Nana, outside of the city of Herat in Afghanistan in an impoverished seclusion. Nana had worked as a housemaid for the wealthy cinema owner Jalil, Mariam's father, but after she became pregnant, Jalil casts her out to the shack in the periphery of the city. Jalil has multiple legitimate wives and children, but Mariam is an illegitimate child, "harami". The persistence of disgraceful position of women with basic problems like forced marriage, child marriage, female child labour, sexual exploitation and prostitution is actually the reflection of the mindset of the society, the outcome of the deep-rooted institution of patriarchy, the manifestation of the very process of socialization where a woman is shaped into a 'woman' to bear all cruelties of life. Self esteem is understood as an individual's sense of his or her value or worth, or the extent to which a person values and appreciates her/himself. (Maslow,1968). Nana has had worst of experiences in her young age and hence her words with her own daughter constantly denigrate her sex leading Mariam to develop as a child of low self-esteem.

Instance 1: Nana is treated as a waste material by the society as well as her man. Nana who has always received injustice from her society is a woman of bitter nature and foul mouth. She constantly warns her daughter to beware of the world. Nana says to Mariam:

What's the sense schooling a girl like you? It's

like shinning a spittoon...There is only one, only one skill a woman like you and me needs in life...And it's this: tahamul. Endure"(18).

The ideology of male supremacy is so deeply ingrained in many societies and cultures that it cannot help but have a profound impact on how men view and therefore treat women. Modern men and their behaviour displeases Rasheed:

I have customers who bring their wives to my shop...They think nothing of the stranger (salesman) touching their wives' barefeet! They think they're being modern men, intellectuals, on account of their education. They don't see that they are spoiling their own nang and namoos, their honor and pride....It embarrasses me, frankly, to see a man who's lost control of his wife. "(69)

"But I'm a different breed of man, Mariam. Where I come from, one wrong look, one improper word, and blood is spilled. Where I come from, a woman's face is her husband's business only"(69).

Women are nothing more than deficient human beings in heavily coded patriarchal society of Afghanistan. The concept of patriarchy based on the notion of male superiority, accounts for the deplorable treatment of women. The depiction of women as immature, childish beings is another semantic device often invoked to support the doctrine of female inferiority. In private domain the violence and the horror prevalent in Kabul is understood through the brutal, male dominance overshadowing the house.

Instance 2 : Mariam is scared to death from the first day of her marriage when her husband, Rashid threateningly questions

"You're shaking. Maybe I scare you. Do I scare you? Are you frightened of me?" and she quickly

shook her head in what she recognized as her first lie in their marriage (60-61).

Mariam's mother Nana had tried to instill the quality of endurance in her daughter. For her a girl requires only one skill to survive the male cruelties 'And it's this: tahamul. endure.'"(18). Mariam tries to tolerate all the extremities of her husband until she bounds with Laila, his second wife.

Instance 3: Mariam wonders at the porn magazines hidden in her husband's room and ponders;

His needs differed from hers...He is a man. All those years without a woman. Could she (herself) fault him for being the way God has created him?(82).

When young Laila is orphaned Rasheed does not hesitate in proposing her. He convinces Mariam, 'I'm giving you help around the house and her a sanctuary. A home and a husband...I'd say this is downright charitable of me.' (210). Rasheed expects Laila to be a virgin. Preserving purity is made out to be the ground for getting females married before the onset of puberty. Most of Laila's friends expect themselves to be married off before completing their education. Afghani culture seems to be saturated with social conventions of what it means to be a woman, thus there is a constant pressure for women to conform to certain ideals.

Very often women are equated with pets and domestic animals in the novel. Mariam, a woman who is not provided education, not allowed to interact and is confined to her home only feels 'she was nothing but a house cat' (97) when Rasheed constantly rebukes her for her ignorance regarding political affairs of the nation. Demeaning animal metaphors comprise a staple of linguistic derision directed against women.

Instance 4: "You know nothing, do you? You're

like a child. Your brain is empty. There is no information in it."(97).

Patriarchal ideology often serves as a major source for the construction of oppressive images of women which lead to the implementation of oppressive actions against women. Rasheed believes that his status as a male actually entitles him to exploit the minds and bodies of his wives in any way he wishes. Talib Judge who hears Mariam's case also emphasizes on the inferior status of women:

"God has made us differently, you women and us men. Our brains are different. You are not able to think like we can. Western doctors and their science have proven this. This is why we require only one male witness but two female ones."(324).

Instance 5: Though Mariam has been tolerating beatings since her early days of marriage, she is given most inhuman treatment when handful of pebbles are forced into her mouth by Rasheed that breaks her two molars:

"Good. Now you know what your rice tastes like. Now you know what you've given me in this marriage. Bad food, and nothing else."(103).

As work is prohibited for women in society homeless and orphaned Laila at the age of fourteen as Rasheed says can find place only at brothel: Business is booming there, I hear. A beauty like her ought to bring in a small fortune, don't you think?"(209).

When Rasheed is put out of job, he becomes even more intolerable at home. His wives are no more than punching bag for him and on the slightest of provocation he "went on kicking, kicking...spittle flying from his mouth, eyes glittering with murderous intent."(298). Wife-beating in due course of time advances to wife-

torture, and then to maiming, and almost murder. The parade of horrors that Mariam and Laila have to go through has been virtually endless in the novel. The scope, ferocity and persistence of oppression against these women is a grim testimony of man's relentless inhumanity toward the female members of the human race. The author very strongly points out that a defective opportunity structure places Afghani women in an overly dependent position which makes them highly vulnerable to all kinds of exploitation. The lack of economic, legal, educational and social opportunities forces them to lead subhuman lives.

Instance 6: The labelling of women as parasitic creatures who cannot survive on their own represents a common method of denigration. Like the parasite, the woman is pictured as possessing an insatiable impulse to attach herself to a host (the man) in order to survive.

All abuses in patriarchal society directed at women. Child Laila had heard abusive words on streets that she releases when humiliated by Khadim: "Your mother eats cock" (117). Khadim's reply: "Atleast my father's not sissy!"(117).

In Kabul, Mariam finds Afghani women without burkha and with their make-up on streets. She 'even spotted one smoking'...they walked in high heels, and quickly...wore sunglasses'(74). Less constrained by Afghani sexual regulations and domesticity, the city women have more freedom to pursue their career, their individuality and sexual autonomy. They are no longer confined by the discourse of woman's nature to be in the domestic surroundings with a man whom she is dependent on economically. Rather, they are more sexually aware and frank with sexuality, concerning more with their subjectivity. Laila becomes pregnant

again and gives birth to a boy, Zalmai. Rasheed adores and spoils Zalmai, and Zalmai worships Rasheed. Rasheed's shop burns down, and the family goes further into debt. Rasheed searches for work elsewhere but has some trouble. The family comes close to starvation. Mariam tries to reach Jalil for help, but she finds that he is dead.

Hosseini describes the separate spheres for men and women in Afghanistan. Having returned home with son, from shop, Rasheed and Zalmai "grinned the way people who share a secret do, slyly, like they'd sat in that dim shop all day not making shoes at all but devising secret plots(289). The undomesticated spaces of the shop and market appeal to the masculine characters, while the settled and domestic realm appeals to the housewives, and 'effeminate' men like Bapi, Laila's father.

Rasheed makes Mariam feel guilty of all the abortions she suffers and refuses to participate in the funeral of the dead fetus. "She (Mariam) placed the suede coat that Rasheed had bought for the baby in the hole and shoveled dirt over it."(95). Hosseini explores the concept of "separate spheres" for women and men in his narrative. He depicts how women need each other to keep men in control. Both Mariam and Laila are aware that in one to one conflict between Rasheed and them, Rasheed would prove stronger but if they are together, they will have more chance of forcing him to discharge his domestic and paternal responsibilities. Also, when times are hard and his behaviour becomes entirely unreliable, the two women feel the need to unite strongly in order to stop their children starving and save their own lives. Thus, Mariam and Laila tolerate and endure the brutality of their husband as well as gender violence at the hands

of the patriarchal society, and gradually develop a sense of unity with one another. Mariam supports and comforts Laila during her pregnancy. Mariam's feeling does not convey a sense of vindication toward a rival. The endurance and the compassion serves a coping strategy by them. The study of life of these women explains how the traits of womanhood are slowly, constantly and continuously injected in them to become a typical 'woman' who in turn strengthens the institution of patriarchy. Strict control over women's sexuality, her fertility and labour is exercised to maintain the supremacy of men over women.

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Overtones of Fantasy Features in George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire Series*

**Dr. C. Isaac Jebastine &
M. X. Alphia Tracy**

Fantasy fiction became one of the popular genres in literature only during the early 20th century, though the fantastic elements were found in the earlier works of renowned writers such as Shakespeare and John Ruskin. A fiction is categorised as a fantasy genre when it has one or more of the following characteristics: a medieval setting with supernatural occurrences, a war between the good and the evil, a quest theme, the presence of mythical creatures and characters with magical powers. J. R. R. Tolkien is called the father of modern fantasy literature. Through Tolkien's first work, *The Hobbit* (1937), the popularity of this genre increased and his works continued to inspire many a fantasy writer. He introduced the concept of world-building in the fantasy genre but usually the worlds of high fantasy are with histories, religions, and cultures that are distinctly their own. The well-known fantasy writers of the late 20th century and the early 21st century such as Ursula K. Le Guin, David Eddings, Terry Brooks, Robert Jordan, Tad Williams, George R. R. Martin, and Christopher Paolini continued the legacy of Tolkien and were instrumental in increasing the popularity of fantasy genre in American literature. Fantasy is defined as the literature of impossible; as 'the polar opposite of reality'. Le Guin... states fantasy is a different approach to reality, an alternative technique for apprehending and coping with existence. It is not antirational but para-rational, not realistic but sur-realistic, super-realistic, a heightening of reality." (Krishnamurthy 2)

George Raymond Richard Martin is an American novelist. His well-known work, *A Song of Ice and Fire*

(1996-2011), is an epic series comprising five books: *A Game of Thrones* (1996), *A Clash of Kings* (1998), *A Storm of Swords* (2000), *A Feast for Crows* (2005), and *A Dance with Dragons* (2011). His other novels include *Dying of the Light* (1977), *Wind Haven* (1982), *Fevre Dream* (1982), *The Armadeggon Rag* (1983), *Dead Man's Hand* (1990), *Shadow Twin* (2005), *Hunter's Run* (2008), and *World of Ice and Fire* (2014). George R. R. Martin is a six-time winner of Locus Award, and he has also published several short stories, novellas, and novelettes which have won many honours such as Hugo Award, Nebula Award, and World Fantasy Award.

Although Martin's works are based on the influence of Tolkien's writing, he has digressed from general fantasy conventions. Like Tolkien, he has created an imaginary world with a medieval setting in which there is a conflict between the good and the evil, but what distinguishes Martin's writings from Tolkien's or other fantasy writers is that the battle between the good and the evil fought in an individual's heart, and it is the choice that he/she makes at the time of crisis that leads to conflict. In an interview, Martin says that the fight between the good and the evil does not take place between two persons but between the good and the evil present within one's self (Tiff).

Though magic is used in *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, the people of Westeros never believe in magic or supernatural beings; they think that they all have gone and they no more exist. However, at the very beginning of the first novel readers witness a supernatural being which is named as "The Other" which encounters the men of the Night's Watch. When Will from the Night's Watch prepares to strike, "The Other halted. Will saw its eyes; blue, deeper and bluer than any human eyes, a blue that burned like ice." (Martin 1996: 9) The Others in the novel have the ability to raise the dead to life and the dead person

is transformed into The Other. The Others' activities are associated with the winter. In the series, the seasons have an irregular pattern, that is, if there is a long summer, there will be a long winter. The entire story revolves around the phrase 'Winter is coming,' which means that the mankind in the kingdom of Westeros have to be prepared for the war against The Others in the winter.

Magical realism, a literary technique, is associated with fantasy literature. Martin's use of this literary technique makes the reader construct a sense of reality from the narrative rather than the text revealing the author's interpretation of reality to the reader. Magical realism relies heavily on realism. The use of magical realism in literary works lays emphasis on the normal, common, and everyday events of life which serve as a basis for the existence of supernatural or unusual events. Usually, critics are of the view that the salient features of magical realism include the interweaving of the magical and the ordinary, making it impossible to distinguish between reality and magic. Another feature is that the setting of the story is an ordinary world with well-known historical and cultural realities. The events of the story, however, cannot be explained in any logical manner. Magical realists' writings show the influence of oral traditions such as fables, myths, fairy-tales, and urban legends. One of the important features of magical realism is the way characters react to the unrealistic events and the way the magical elements enhance the viewpoint of each of the characters.

The use of mystical creatures also dominates the entire series. There is the presence of three dragon eggs that hatch while Daenerys Targaryen is sitting in the funeral pyre of her husband. The fire unburns Daenerys and the dragon eggs hatch though "the eons have turned them to stone" (Martin 1996: 99). This incident makes those people believe that once again

the magic powers have emerged in the world. Targaryens are said to be the “blood of the dragon” (97) and fire cannot kill them. Daenerys gains power and wins the confidence of her Khalasar people who hail her as the mother of dragons. Later, she gets victory over an entire army of the unsullied with her dragons; it gives her power and strength.

Black magic is also used in this fiction series to a certain extent. For instance, to save the life of Khal Drogo, a black magic is performed by a witch, Mirri Maz Duur who uses blood sacrifice and a song “to wake powers old and dark” (Martin 1996: 688). On the contrary, a black magic is used by the Red Priestess Melisandre to assassinate Lord Renly and through a shadow she gives birth.

Martin has endowed the characters with supernatural powers. For instance, when Bran, a seven-year old, is at his death-bed, he has an “ability, to see things far distant in his dreams... he sees his mother on a ship in the Bite, Sansa crying herself to sleep, and other things that he could not have otherwise known.” (Jacoby 137) And these are not mere dreams and Bran is gifted with supernatural power to see things through the eyes of birds, animals, and humans which is unnatural in a natural world.

Martin, in this series, introduces a religious society of assassins called the Faceless Men who have a faceless nature, that is, they can change faces whenever they want to. Arya meets a prisoner named Jaqen during her journey to the wall. Eventually, Arya frees him during the journey, and before he leaves Jaqen reveals his faceless nature, and Arya’s reaction to this revelation is as follows:

Jaqen passed a hand down his face from forehead to chin, and where it went he changed. His cheeks grew fuller, his eyes closer; his nose hooked, a scar appeared on his right cheek where no scar had been before. And when he shook his

head, his long straight hair, half red and half white, dissolved away to reveal a cap of tight black curls. (Martin 1998: 428)

Martins’ portrayal of the story is in a serious and natural narrative tone and it produces a magical realm where everything is possible and believable. Faris also has conveyed this very idea: “The narrative mode of magical realism often encompasses different cultural worlds, irrespective of its engagement with history, it frequently approximates a primitive aesthetic, attempting to represent elements of a vanishing or emergent culture, to speak, in part, in its voice” (145).

Based on the notion that there is no inherent division between the natural and the supernatural, magical realism juxtaposes a detailed description of the ordinary events with fantastical occurrences. Martin strives to capture the magic of everyday life in the world of the Westeros by bridging the gap between the natural and the supernatural, adhering to the conventions of fantasy fiction.

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The Importance of Nature in the Poetry of Robert Frost

Sushil Kumar Mishra

Robert Frost (1874-1963) was a leading modern American poet of nature and rural life. He found beauty and attraction in commonplace objects, such as a drooping birch tree, woods on a snowy evening and an old stone wall, and drew universal significance from the experiences of a farmer or a country boy. Most of his poems have a New England setting and deal with the theme of man's relationship with nature.

The influence of nature in Robert Frost's works creates a palette to paint a picture filled with symbolism for the reader to interpret. In the analysis of Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken", "Tree At My Window", "Two Tramps In The Mud Time" and "Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening" we can pick out specific examples to illustrate Frost's overall use of nature.

In the first stanza of Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" we find the speaker reflecting on the beauty of a wooded area with snow falling.

"Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow".

From "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"

One can feel the speaker's awe and reflective peace when looking at the woods that night. He doesn't know the owner of the land but is still drawn to the beauty of the scene. Nature poet Robert Frost gives a scene that is taken onto the reader and digested for a time in the speaker's mind. It shows us that it is all

right to take a minute out of a hurried hour and reflect upon what is around you, whether it is a snowy wood or a quiet room. The extreme fascination for and acute love of nature makes him a great poet of nature.

"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;"

From "The Roads Not Taken"

The speaker stands in the woods, considering a fork in the road. Both ways are equally worn and equally overlaid with un-trodden leaves. The speaker chooses one, telling himself that he will take the other another day. Yet he knows it is unlikely that he will have the opportunity to do so. And he admits that someday in the future he will recreate the scene with a slight twist. He will claim that he took the less-travelled road.

The reader can tell that Frost does love water. He also likes the power of it and expresses it through nature. He also brings up other points of nature, but it always has water. Water is always breaking down cliffs, beaches and boulders. Frost's poems are similar but are also very different, but they all have nature in them.

One point of view on which almost all the critics agree is Robert Frost's minute observation and accurate description of the different aspects of nature in his poems. Schneider says: "The descriptive power of Mr. Frost is to me the most wonderful thing in his poetry. A snowfall, a spring thaw, a bending tree, a valley mist, a brook, these are brought into the experience of the reader".

“The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep
And miles to go before I sleep”

-From “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”

These lines depict not only the beauty and the mystery of the snow filled woods which hold the poet almost spell-bound but also describe the helplessness of the poet who has no time because of his social commitments. Thus the beauty of Nature and obligations of human life are treated by Frost as two aspects of poet's one whole experience in these lines. On the surface, this poem is simplicity itself. The speaker is stopping by some woods on a snowy evening. He or she takes in the lovely scene in near-silence, is tempted to stay longer, but acknowledges the pull of obligations and the considerable distance yet to be travelled before he or she can rest for the night.

Although Frost's verse is lyrical, he is often considered a dramatic poet. One of his most admired poems, "The Mending Wall", describes the conflict that arises between the poem's narrator and his neighbour over rebuilding a wall that separates their farms. The neighbour holds the traditional opinion that "Good fences make good neighbours," but the narrator believes that walls are unnecessary and unnatural between people who should trust each other.

“Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it
And spills the upper boulders in the sun,
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.”

From “The Mending Wall”

A stone wall separates the speaker's property from his neighbour's. In spring, the two meet to walk the

wall and jointly make repairs. The speaker sees no reason for the wall to be kept—there are no cows to be contained, just apple and pine trees. He does not believe in walls for the sake of walls. The neighbour resorts to an old adage: “Good fences make good neighbours.” The speaker remains unconvinced and mischievously presses the neighbour to look beyond the old-fashioned folly of such reasoning. His neighbour will not be swayed. The speaker envisions his neighbour as a holdover from a justifiably outmoded era, a living example of a dark-age mentality. But the neighbour simply repeats the adage. He was charmed by natural beauty and attraction in object, such as a drooping birch tree:

“When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay
As ice-storms do. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust—
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.”

From “Birch”

When the speaker (the poet himself) sees the birches being bent to left and right sides in contrast to straight trees, he likes to think that some boys have been swinging them. He then realizes that it is not the boys, rather the ice storms that bend the birches. In winter morning, birches become covered with snow which displays multiple colours in sunlight. The

growing sunlight causes the snow to fall on the ground.

When the Truth again strikes the speaker, he still prefers his imagination of the boys swinging and bending the birches. In his imagination, the boy plays with the birches. The speaker says he also was a swinger of birches when he was a boy, and wishes to be so now. When he becomes weary of this world, and life becomes confused, he likes to go toward heaven by climbing a birch tree and then come back again because earth is the right place for love.

During his lifetime, Frost was the American equivalent of a poet laureate. In 1950, the United States Senate passed a resolution in honour of his 75th birthday, stating that his poems "have helped to guide American thought with humour and wisdom." At the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy in 1961, Frost read his poem, "The Gift Outright", about America's gaining of independence through its devotion to the land. Frost also composed "Dedication", but he was unable to deliver it. In 1962, President Kennedy presented Frost with the Congressional Medal. Frost's own love of the soil, his quiet humour, and his simple but moving language made him one of the most respected poets of his generation.

Nature is a dominant subject in the poetry of Robert Frost. In the epitaph that Robert Frost proposed for himself, he said that he had "a lover of quarrel with the world." This lover's quarrel is Frost's poetic subject, and throughout his poetry there are evidences of this view of man's existence in the natural world. His attitude towards Nature is one of armed and amicable truth and mutual respect. He recognizes and insists upon the boundaries which exist between individual man and the forces of Nature. "There is almost nothing of the mystic in Frost. He does not

seek in Nature either a sense of oneness with all created things or union with God. There is nothing Platonic in his view of life, because it is a foreshadowing of something else."

Robert Frost unlike William Wordsworth sees no pervading spirit in the natural, impersonal and nature unfeeling. Though Nature watches man, she takes no account of him. Robert Frost treats Nature both as a comfort and menace. As a critic says, "Frost does not formulate a theory of Nature or of man's relationship with Nature. However, it seems that Frost believes that man should live in harmony with Nature and not go against Nature or natural process." Like British poet Wordsworth, Robert Frost had true devotion and love for nature. He had real natural taste and temperament. Even the ordinary object of nature appealed to him too much. The two poets have different agendas, but they choose similar natural scenes with which to begin their poems. Nature and natural things support both poets. For Wordsworth the natural scene is a launching pad, from which he soars into associations and toward transcendent realities. For Frost the natural scene is sufficient and his ideas bloom from it, are rooted in it, are (ultimately) impossible without it. Wordsworth does not stay on the physical scene because the transcendent reality is his goal. Both poets do share this common starting point. Nature holds up both poets, and they hold it in their poetry. Frost holds it with reverence and with suitable boundaries, so he can appreciate its physical existence from a philosophical distance. Wordsworth holds nature and natural things in his gaze, from his physical distance so these objects will stimulate his ideas—begin the associative process—and philosophically to penetrate them and ultimately transcend all of the physical reality.

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Social Consciousness in the Poetry of K.V. Dominic

Dr. Sugandha Agarwal

K. V. Dominic is a prominent poet in the domain of Indian Poetry in English. In his three poetry collections, namely *Winged Reason*, *Write Son*, *Write* and *Multicultural Symphony*, he gives more importance to content than form. He himself admits the fact that: "my poems lack much imagery and other figures of speech . . . I adopt a conversational style in poetry, which again attracts the ordinary readers" (*Winged Reason* 12). He is a poet of common man and so writes for the common man.

The poet is a social realist. His poems are related to the social issues as he wants to bring awareness in the thinking of common man about various issues related to society. He establishes himself to be different from the others by his empathy and concern for others. His way of expressing ideas is really remarkable. He takes the people to a world where Love, Peace, Empathy, and Compassion are present. He has the power to ignite the flame of the sense of responsibility among the people through his poetry. He is the poet who pens down his emotions, his feelings, and his sentiments for the prevalent disturbances in the nation and in the world.

The poet is sad to see the social disorder in the country. He feels his own role as a poet and so at one place he writes: "It is the duty of the religious leaders, political leaders and the intelligentsia to inject the lost values to the masses and thus preserve this planet and the inhabitants from the imminent devastation. Instead, majority of these leaders become mafias and inject communal and corruptive venom to the minds of the masses. Corruption has become the hallmark of

these leaders... And who will save this society? My answer is: writers, particularly poets who are like prophets” (*Write Son, Write 8*).

The poet leaves no stone unturned to show the true picture of social, political and human life, dotted with inequality, poverty, corruption, pollution, greed, suffering and miserable plight of women. Corruption, which runs in the veins of the politicians and the government servants, pierces his heart like a thorn. His social feelings are true, real and immeasurable. Agony of any kind occurred either by destiny or people or animal makes his heart bleed. He shows the unpleasant atmosphere of Tsunami camps. He wails that the victims are not provided the basic amenities for their livelihood:

Where have gone the crores
collected for our relief?
We don't have sufficient food,
we don't have pure water (*Winged Reason 33*)

The poet pleads for the equal rights for woman as she is the person who serves her family as a daughter, sister, wife and mother. So she deserves all the joys of this world but it is a matter of agony that she is dishonoured at every step. He is a man with lofty views and remarkable approach as he interrogates the discrimination done against women. He talks about their rights. He respects women and says:

Woman is most venerable
for she is your mother
she is nurse and teacher
and above all
she is the lamp of house...
Why can't women be priests
in churches, mosques and temples?

Can't she enter and pray in her Heavenly Father's

abode? (*Multicultural Symphony 19*)

It is strange that on one hand people celebrate women's day while on the other hand, these same people do not feel any hesitation in exploiting them for their gains.

Woman is the game!
an instrument of lust
and hot-selling sex! (*Winged Reason 42*)

At another place, he reveals his anger when he finds people disrespecting women and showing discrimination against them :

Why such discrimination to women's sports?
Why such double standards to women's feats?

.....
Dear my brothers in India and abroad
let's appreciate and promote
our sisters' talents and skills
rather than looking at them
with vicious hungry eyes
(*Multicultural Symphony 73*)

The poet gives importance to labour as he knows its value. He draws attention of the readers towards the well-known truth that without labour nothing can be gained properly. The labourers are needed everywhere He writes:

Lal Salaam to Labour
the backbone of the country!
They sow the seed;
reap the corn;
and we eat and sleep.
Let us not be unjust
when we pay them wages

The poet is worried about child labour—a social evil which is spoiling the golden period of life of the

countless children. Whenever he reads any injustice regarding child labour, he gives voice to it. Here are the lines which the poet penned after reading a newspaper report that raised emotions in his heart for an innocent child:

Her hellish life from dawn to midnight
Her tender soft palms
smooth as petals of lilies
burnt, bruised, bled

.....
When children of her age
strolled gaily to their schools
tears ran like brooks

(Multicultural Symphony 35-36)

The poet laments at the heartlessness and cruelty of people towards other human beings. He is concerned about human life as he experiences brutal, unsympathetic and violent attitude of man towards nature and human beings. He is a true humanitarian. He loves the Almighty's creation. He truly loves birds, insects and every creature of this earth. He has deep faith in love, sympathy and non-violence. Today people blame, condemn, and even kill each other in the name of injustice. Today the biggest enemies are ignorance, poverty, ego, unemployment etc. The dreadful atomic and destructive weapons are made in the name of security, humanity and prosperity. The feelings of mercy and compassion for others are disappearing day by day. He expresses his feelings thus:

. . . teach my neighbors
and millions of my brothers and sisters
to show love and mercy
to all non-human beings *(Write Son, Write 52)*

His poetry is full of social realism. He is a poet with social consciousness. His poems often express

his impressions and views on social issues and problems. He shows his social concern in his poems which reflect his committed participation in social welfare. His poetry is an articulation of his sympathy for the downtrodden, suppressed and aged women. He criticizes corrupt and greedy politicians and government officials for their discrimination between rich and poor. He writes with a mission. He is inspired by God who asks him to write:

My son,
I have a mission
in your creation,
God spoke
to my ears.
Write, my son, write.
Write till
I say stop *(Write Son Write 21)*

The poet believes in honesty, truth, non violence, social welfare and kindness. So, he speaks about the sufferings of the poor. He also develops a desire within—the desire that a man should be curbed from misusing the national wealth. He pleads to eradicate hunger and destitution. His poems are soul-awakening for human beings. He innocently raises questions on the existence of poverty:

Isn't poverty the greatest enemy?
Why not fight against it
and wipe out destitution,
pointing guns, rifles and missiles
at the chest of the poor? *(Write Son, Write 66)*

His concern on the current issues of the society is clearly visible almost in all the pages of his poetry collections. He writes about the scarcity of water, and the problem of global warming, which is the cause of other major problems:

Water, the source of life;
Omnipresent and abundant
like its parent oxygen.
Free and 'insignificant'
for millions;
going to be more precious
than gold and diamond.
Absence of rains and trees,
enhanced by global warming (*Write Son, Write 91*)

The poet feels that poetry is the best medium for giving messages and inculcating values among the people. In this cyber age, which lacks human values, poetry can do miracle in moulding the so called civilized society. But the tragedy is that no one listens to the poets in the present scenario. Poetry is the oldest form of literature but the choice of the modern people has changed completely now. Today the people don't want to read or listen to the philosophical or serious themes. The addiction of internet has distracted people from reading habit and the plight of poetry is well-known. But even knowing the whole situation, the poet is not hopeless. He continuously tries to bring awareness in public for social reform. He is surely a poet of social issues. He finds that "It is an irony that the more one is intellectual and educated the more he is vicious and crooked. Illiterate, rural people are more innocent and graceful than educated urban people" (*Multicultural Symphony 8-9*). He dreams of one world where there may not be any boundary or border.

Dear my fellow beings
break away all fences and walls
Fences of your petty minds
Compound walls of your houses
Walls of your religions and castes
Boundaries of your native States
And ultimately borders of your nations

Let there be no India, Pakistan or China
America, Africa, Europe or Australia
But only one nation THE WORLD
where every being lives in perfect harmony
as one entity in multicultural world
(*Multicultural Symphony 22-23*)

Most of his poems reveal the real picture of the society. The main feature of his poetry is that he doesn't criticize nor tries to impose his opinion on his readers. He simply presents his thoughts and leaves the decision on readers to evaluate what is right and what is wrong. He often writes poems on social issues after reading the news in the newspapers which pierce him so deeply that he composes poems. Such poems are the reflections of his innermost feelings which gather after reading the heart-moving news and incidents in the daily newspaper.

Hunger is the worst disease with which India suffers. The problem is present in India where several people do not get even food to fill their stomach while on the other side the rich are wasting it in abundance:

Thousands of children
are famished
in our country
and other countries
day after day.
Leftovers of the
ten percent Haves
can sustain
ninety percent Have-nots
and make this hellish world
a blissful heaven (*Multicultural Symphony 49*)

The poet throws light on the drawbacks and shortcomings of the prevalent education system. The media also does not pay much attention in making

the people aware towards the moral ethics and moral values.

Where does our education
lead teenage minds to?

.....

Media, print and visual
forget ethics they are bound to follow
Instead of being a correcting force
to all subjects and other estates
filling minds with eternal noble values
they inject venoms of violence
communalism and superstitions (Multicultural
Symphony 57)

He stresses on the values and ethics, and condemns the blind following of the Western culture. He thinks that people should copy merits and humanity from others but unfortunately they imitate only dress, food and fashion. He writes:

My countrymen fail to imitate
noble qualities:
industry, perseverance,
enterprise, adventure,
equality, fraternity,
cleanliness, health
love of nature
and environment (Multicultural Symphony 47)

The poet pays a glowing tribute to Swami Vivekananda. He finds in Vivekananda a remarkable and memorable figure. He highlights on the accomplishments of Vivekananda and makes the readers aware:

India's greatest cultural ambassador to the West
taught his countrymen
how to master Western science

based on Indian spirituality
How to adapt Western humanism
to Indian life and culture (*Multicultural Symphony*
79)

Dominic becomes sensitive and feels pain when he sees inequality, dishonesty, violence, corruption, terrorism, and the miserable plight of women and aged people, the suffering of animals, birds and nature. The poet cries when he sees social evils prevalent in the society. He becomes socially conscious and this social consciousness is visible in his poetry. What he feels is the need of coexistence and the need of nurturing empathy for peaceful life among the people on the earth. He seeks God's grace and blessings through service to mankind. His poetry gives a message to the people and makes them conscious the socials of issues and evils prevalent in the society. His poetry not only diagnoses the social disease but prescribes its cure also.

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Individuals in Search of the Lost Identity in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

Kumari Rashmi Priyadarshni

The God of Small Things is the boldest and artistically adventurous novel written by the celebrated social activist and novelist Arundhati Roy, which bagged for her the prestigious Booker Award in London on 14 October, 1997. This brilliant feministic novel highlights the age-old sufferings of the untouchables, the everlasting agonies and suffocated selves of the womankind, the maltreatment of little innocent at the hands of grown-ups, inside and outside. Apart from the brutal injustices done to Ammu and Velutha, simply for their mutual love and care, the novel is replete with numerous instances of despicable exploitation, such as sexual abuse meted out to an innocent child Estha by the shrewd Orangedrink-Lemondrinkman; Pappachi's savage treatment of his wife Mammachi; Chacko's flirtations with needy women workers; leftist politics, Baby Kochamma and Mammachi's humiliating Vellya Paapen, helpless father of Velutha, and so on. Roy has dealt with quite challenging themes applying extremely apt and totally unique narrative styles and techniques. This novel is, in fact, a tale of those men and women who have been relegated to the margins of society and have to pay a heavy price for being born in an orthodox and stereotyped dominating society. All the individuals in this novel seem to be uprooted, forlorn, dismayed, anguished, and fighting against destiny just to prove their identity. They appear to be in search of their lost existence, though all of them remain failure in their attempts to prove their independent selves. This failure is either due to the quite unfavourable circumstances or rigid conventional

norms of patriarchal society. The basic problem for these characters is to exist in society, and yet maintain their individuality.

Ammu, the main female protagonist of this masterpiece work of Roy, emerges as a sad and much wronged character in the novel. She wants to have her own way of life but her forte to challenge the brutal societal set-up is mercilessly suppressed. She is the daughter of Bennon John Ipe, an entomologist. She represents a new generation which is exposed to new ideas against the former one. Ammu as a child was much exposed to the family violence. Pappachi used to explode into fits of temper on Mammachi and Ammu due to his frustration in his professional career. Ammu witnessed all the senseless maltreatments given to her mother Mammachi by Pappachi mutely. Pappachi was a sadist who took extreme delight in inflicting mental agonies on his wife. Ammu was a small girl when Mammachi received numerous beatings at the hands of schizophrenic Pappachi. He used to beat Ammu also with iron-topped riding crop that made her desperate and frustrated and her feministic heart started yearning for freedom:

“All day she dreamed of escaping from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother.” (Roy, 38-39)

When she grew eighteen she left her home against the wishes of the entire household, and married Baba out of her own choice. Soon after marriage, Ammu discovered that she had committed a blunder by tying herself in the nuptial knot with a mean and selfish person. Baba, her husband, whom she loved so much, proved to be an alcoholic and betrayer. He turns out to be so fallen and corrupt that he forced Ammu to satisfy the carnal desires of Mr. Hollick, his boss for ensuring

his promotion. Ammu didn't take this meanness of her husband meekly. She is far from the traditional idea of an ideal wife who worships her husband like a god and obeys him blindly despite all his blemishes. Roy's 'Ammu' is not ready to engulf such an abominable insult at the hand of her husband. She is not tolerant enough like "Aunt Jennifer" of feminist Adrienne Rich's poem 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers', that she will keep on bearing the heavy weight of her male-chauvinist husband's wedding ring on her finger despite so much unjust tortures and maltreatments at her husband's hand. She hits hard on her husband's head in a mad frenzy with a heavy book in order to escape from the home to save her honour. Attacking on Baba's head by Ammu with her umbrella is a symbolic manifestation of her own existence and chastity as well. Appalled and angered by this revelation of her husband's character Ammu divorces him and returns to her parent's home unwelcomed with her twins Estha and Rahel. For Ammu marriage proved to be nothing but male-domination over the opposite sex. Roy has unfolded the growing Jacobean or restoration traits in Modern, so called, Indian Elites. Ammu's frustration at her husband Baba's shameful betrayal would have been no less than Celia's in Ben Jonson's famous comedy of humour 'Volpone', whom her husband Corvino had sent to lecherous Volpone's house to sleep with him for one night in the greed of being the heir to the Volpone's property. Ammu would also be remembering God bemoaning like Celia:

"O God and his good angels! Whither, whither
Is shame fled human breasts, that with such ease
Men dare put off honours, and their own?
Is that, which ever was a cause of life?
Now placed beneath the basest circumstance,
And modesty an exile made, for money?" (Jonson, 227)

Ammu is equally defiant in her assessment of

her brother Chacko and dares express her views courageously. Chacko had been discarded by his wife for his lethargic, unproductive ways. But in Ayemenem, Chacko holds the reins of control being a male, and Ammu is at his mercy for her and her children's subsistence. She works in that Pickles factory which Chacko claims as, "my factory, my pineapples, my pickles". His indulgences with women workers are over-looked by the Ayemenem House women declaring it as 'Men's Needs.' It expresses the way sex becomes an expression of certain types of social power, ranging from baton-swinging police officer to a communist sympathizer like Chacko, and to an ordinary cold-drink seller. It silences the weak in a way no other physical exercise of power can do.

Ammu challenges the androcentric notions of society when she avoids surname after divorce. Motherhood is equated with mother earth; one who should surrender, serve and remain perpetually crushed. Motherhood gains strength; ideologically, from the elevated myth of Mother Goddess but in all practicality, it demands the sacrifice of all ambitions, liberty and identity for the sake of a happy family life. According to this view, Ammu must have tolerated all the injustices done to her by her husband silently and should have remained content with motherhood merely if she dared divorce her husband. Ammu, as a mother, loves her children very much but she doesn't remain satisfied as a mother only by losing her identity and aspirations as a woman. In Anita Desai's *Voices in the City* also, Nirode's mother comes before as a 'bad' mother who keeps her self-involvements above the interests of her children. Nirode's mother was emotionally dissatisfied and frustrated with her ugly, fat, incapacitated and uncaring husband and seeks amorous fulfilment in mild flirtations with Major Chaddha who visits her often in her hill resort. Desai

projects the wild, erotic and destructive aspects of womanhood that ultimately leads to the annihilation of her own children. Nirode develops hostile views about the institution of marriage and is obsessed by failure in achieving success in life that creates a void, a sense of emptiness and existential dilemma.

A divorcee lady has no place or respect in the traditional Indian family still Ammu didn't cease struggling for a better and happy life. She finds a ray of hope in Velutha, an untouchable, yet an attractive man, who treated her twin children affectionately. After being neglected by home and her own relatives Ammu gets warmth of companionship from Velutha and their mutual care and support developed into clandestine love-relation as one finds in Lawrence's most controversial novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, where Connie or Constance Chatterley couldn't stop herself from meeting her lover Mellors. In Connie's case, it may be said as a betrayal towards her though handicapped, yet loyal husband, but here Ammu didn't have any marital obligation towards her immoral husband. In order to safeguard her chastity and self-respect she took quite a right decision of divorcing her greedy immoral husband, and after detachment she was free to love and be loved by any other man. But the relationship between Ammu, a high caste divorcee lady, and Velutha, an untouchable was not digestible to Ayemenem House and the traditional Indian society. Velutha is killed in police custody for the false charge of attempting rape on Ammu, and Ammu is exiled from home for committing the sin of spoiling family honour, and ultimately she too dies defeated. It is ignoble death, she dies away from her family, and children with all her agonies and dreams. She is cremated in electric crematorium as the church also refuses to give her a burial. The punishment meted out to Ammu and Velutha is unjust. Their death is the result of social

tyranny and exploitative ways of patriarchy. What seems an illicit relationship between a divorcee touchable lady and an untouchable Paravan is actually, a union of two rebels who protest against hypocritical laws of society.

Arundhati Roy's women are the victims of social prejudices conditioned by society, and some of them identify themselves with the ideas and forces of oppression. Ammu is not psychic, submissive and yielding like that of Anita Desai's women characters Maya, Sita, Monisha, Anamika, Uma, or Nanda Kaul. She stands for those women who are aspiring for freedom and equality. This section of women is challenging traditional ideas and conventions. They are not social misfits but social rebels. The hopes for the future lie with section only. Arundhati Roy's woman characters are warriors, strugglers and rebellious in nature, who don't yield their wishes before the corrupt and dual norms of society meekly. That doesn't matter they get success or not in their rebellion, yet, they are not ready to compromise and live their lives like drudges. The author's feminine anger foregrounds society's well-oiled oppressive machinery that brings about this tragic heartrending doom to Ammu.

Velutha is a paravan and suffers enormous miseries at the hands of people whose attitudes are guided by age-old casteist prejudices. He has been entitled as the 'God of Small Things' but, in fact is treated as 'Dog' which is an inversion of the 'God'. He becomes an expert mechanic at the age of sixteen, completes high school and gets accomplished in carpentry. Mammachi uses to say about him that;

"If only he hadn't been a paravan, he might have become an engineer."(Roy, 75)

This shows that the stigma of untouchability doesn't spare lower caste people throughout their lives

and keeps on wounding their identity and self-respect. Velutha always lives on the margin of society and is of mild temperament, sober and submissive. He is also in search of his own individuality and for it he chooses a lonesome and deserted life far from the madding crowd. In such a dejected living he falls in love with Ammu, the woman whom he had known as a girl years ago, but who was a mother of twins now. They feel drawn to each other because both could silently share each other's hurt and humiliation. While spending the precious most time with Ammu he knows it was a fatal affiliation, a foredoomed love, but he embraces his destiny courageously.

“They knew that there was nowhere for them to go. They had nothing. No future. So they stuck to the small things”⁵. (Roy, 338)

Velutha is a transgressor of Love Laws; an untouchable cannot touch a touchable woman. Just for loving an upper-caste divorcee lady Velutha is mercilessly killed by the Kottayam police on the false charge of having attempted rape on Ammu and being an agent behind the drowning of Sophie Mol. He is cold-bloodedly crushed to death by the six police personals:

“His skull was fractured in three places. His nose and both his cheekbones were smashed, leaving his face pulpy, undefined.....Both his knee caps were shattered. Still they brought out the handcuffs”. (Roy, 310)

This soul-stirring bestiality meted out to Velutha, an untouchable at the hands of the people, police and politicians of his own country shows that the condition has not improved even after Independence rather it has become more aggravated. Velutha is a man of innocence and simplicity who never opposes openly. Though he tries to break the rules of the society by

loving Ammu, yet yields before the rigid patriarchal social set-up. No one comes to his help and he dies suffering silently. Had Velutha raised his voice boldly for his rights and freedom, he would have been in a different position and have not suffered so much. He could have made his identity, existence and position felt if he had not surrendered before the predicaments so easily. Velutha appears as an Immortal Dalit character, socially discarded, politically neglected and physically tormented, who sought to rise above his stature but was mercilessly pulled down; he was the iconic hero who truly loved Ammu and her children, a master craftsman, a man of loss, God of Loss', who is not helped by anyone yet his silent suffering is not less valuable than Mahatma Gandhi's Non-Violent Indian Freedom Struggle Movement. Velutha is:

“The God of Loss? The God of Small Things? The God of Goose Bumps and Sudden Smiles?” (Roy, 317)

Twinkle B. Manavar has rightly observed about Velutha:

“It was his desire to 'relive' as a touchable which resulted in the tragedy...His place is certainly nearer to a Shakespearean tragic hero”. (Roy, Amitabh 314)

Vellya Paapen, Velutha's father, in place of defending his son, offered to kill his son saying he is going, “to tear him limb from limb.” He was a picture of misery, a symbol of the utterly crushed soul of the untouchable, meek, submissive, cringing pathetic figure, born to serve the higher caste masters and to be suffered for them. He is blamed and humiliated for the misfortune that visits to Ayemenem family as it was his son Velutha who had developed illicit attachment with their daughter Ammu. Arundhati Roy creates smaller descriptions that touch the pathetic core of the caste relation and show how untouchables

couldn't get their self-respect and self-identity even after so many years of independence. It is interesting to note that Roy's portrayal of the plight of the untouchable "Velutha" is very close to that of Mulk Raj Anand's "Bakha". The basic difference between the two brilliant characters of Indo-Anglian Fictions is that Bakha is more rebellious and aggressive than Velutha. Velutha never believes in a frontal attack. He is a man of sober nature and mild behaviour. He never behaves like fuming and roaring tiger; never tries to hammer the age-old norms of society; never behaves like a rough and savage man- a man who has nothing to do with etiquette and manner, decorum and decency. He is a man of innocence and simplicity- the god of small things, the god of loss.

Estha and Rahel, two lamb-like twins are also tortured and humiliated at all levels in the so called civilized and advanced society. Estha and Rahel have to lead a very suffocated, isolated and conservative life in the Ayemenem House. As a result Estha, the more submissive of the two becomes isolated and frigid, far, far away from any dream of proving his existence and separate identity in the world. Estha faces many traumatic experiences also which haunt him throughout his life and which make him retire to his own shell keeping little concern with the outside world. The incident at Abhilash Talkies, where the Lemondrink Orangedrinkman prompts Estha for an extremely weird behaviour, is extremely abominable in itself. It had left that innocuous boy as an individual of disturbed psyche and lost identity throughout his life. Estha had been used by that corrupt man for his masturbating gratification. It had such a great psychological impact on Estha that his innocence and healthy individuality were damaged beyond repair and it bled inadvertently whenever he thought about it. He is claustrophobic and shrinks away from all that

surrounds him. How this experience leaves him shaken is described in these words:

"Estha convulsed, but nothing came. Just thoughts. And they floated out and floated back in. Ammu couldn't see them. They hovered like storm clouds over the Basin City..." (Roy, 108)

Rahel was the one who was more rebellious of the two, like her mother. As a child, her three silent reactions can be noted in her colliding against the other girls deliberately to see whether her breasts hurt or not; decorating a cow dung cake with fresh flowers; and burning the hair bun of her house mistress. All these symbolic protests show how much she was against the decaying dogmatic and conservative conditions around. Rahel is haunted all her life by the unfulfilled desire of life which she always craved for as a child. She was a child of a broken home and a single parent (her mother only) who though capable of giving love to her, is not able to, due to the cold and indifferent attitude of her family. She is a neglected child and throughout her life she hankers for love and affection which any child can demand from her grown-ups. Her dejected personality, therefore, leads her to grow up into a rebellious lady who does not conform to the threadbare orthodox rules of the society.

Pappachi used to be an Imperial Entomologist of Pusa Institute. Once, a moth accidentally fell into his drink that happened to be an unrecorded and unclassified new species of insect. He was excited at this unusual discovery and went to Delhi to inform it. His dismay was boundless when he was informed that the moth has been identified. He could not earn name and fame. But he got completely frustrated to know twelve years later that his moth was in fact a separate species and genus hitherto unknown to science.

Pappachi was greatly angered and fretted a lot for he had by then retired and was living in Ayemenem:

“His moth was named after the Acting Director of the Department of Entomology, a junior officer whom pappachi had always disliked”. (Roy, 49)

From then on he was a changed man, becoming cross, ill-tempered and difficult to adjust with. Pappachi couldn't prove his identity as a scientist that's why he gets a split personality:

“In his growing years, Ammu had watched her father weave his hideous web... He worked hard on his public profile as a sophisticated, generous moral man. But alone with his wife and children he turned into a monstrous, suspicious bully, with a streak of vicious cunning. They were beaten, humiliated and then made to suffer the envy of friends and relations for having such a wonderful husband and father.”(Roy, 180)

Mammachi is not only a passive sufferer of her husband's beating, but is a victim of his jealousy also. Yet, she is hard-working and deserves to be called better in business than her son Chacko. She, despite her suffering at the hand of a male chauvinist and sadist husband, keeps on looking after Paradise Pickles Factory. Economic independence for a woman is one of the important ways in which she can attain freedom if she wants to. Mammachi plays violin very nicely to sooth her agony of hellish marital relations, despite Pappachi's objections. She doesn't lose her charm as a woman. Simone de Beauvoir opines in *'The Second Sex'*:

“Today the woman who works is less neglectful of her femininity than formerly, and she does lose her sexual attractiveness. This success, though already indicating progress towards equilibrium, is not yet complete.” (Beauvoir, 695)

From the radical feministic point of view women should choose their own paths of purpose and fulfilment. Their identity is not simply as sex-toys, rather an identity that can be obtained outside home in the exteriority and vast canvas of life as well. Mammachi's sister-in-law Baby Kochamma's frustration in love for Father Mulligan and repressed libido made her a narcissist and eventually she goes to the extent of sadism. She is unkind to children, to the lower castes and classes, to Hindus in general and even to women. She herself couldn't get happiness in her life, remained unmarried throughout her life, and thus, in order to make her existence feel in the home and society she takes delight in torturing helpless individuals. Chandra Nisha Singh observes:

“Marriage depersonalizes individuals but persons outside marriages and without their customary roles, are further blanked out and face a nihilistic crisis of complete loss of identity.” (Singh, 103)

In fact, Baby Kochamma, by misbehaving with Ammu or her children or even Velutha gives outlet to her own suppressed aspiration for leading a life of her own choice and identity.

Roy is a feminist who probes into the depth of female-oriented problems, be it of a mother, a daughter, a sister, or a wife. She has shown quite realistically how in an orthodox patriarchal society a woman is considered inferior to man and how she struggles hard against male domination in order to keep her existence and self-identity alive. At the same time Roy also examines the psyche of all her characters and analyses their relationships with society at large. She has tried her best to champion the cause not only of womenfolk but of all weaker and subjugated sections of human society through her stupendous writings and practical

efforts. She has demonstrated that not only women's identity is repressed by men or they are reduced to being 'men's possession', mere 'objects'; but how the recognitions of all smaller things such as women, children, untouchable and even nature, are obliterated by bigger things. Obviously enough, *The God of Small Things* can be declared as a true saga of individuals who happened to have lost their identities and dignities some or other ways, and throughout their lives, kept on searching hard after them; though, they all remained frustratingly failure.

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Seance

Amarendra Kumar

It was still a little hot in the evening when his friends looked in, eager and anxious and also amused, as the sun glow faded to a mellower, softer and darker shade by a dissolving blush and dwindled gracefully to a toneless twilight. In his clouded, troubled mind there was now no pang of agony for an open-air sunset amid the huddle of houses in his locality, low and high, thatched and concrete. But of course he had often memory flashes of the play of light and colour at sunset and of the splendour and iridescence of sunrise seen from a high hilltop and a foamy, frilled or billowy beach. Grey and dim though they were, they stirred him fleetingly and vanished without leaving a gloomy trail. What now clawed and stung his smouldering tissues and nerves very often was how the sun rose and set and dipped down below the rim of the horizon with only a pale reflection in the eye but with no glow of fresh paint or gleam of a frayed patch on his low cobwebbed or cleaned ceiling.

Living in an ascetic projection of his house in his outer room, he felt he dwelt in his natural habitat as an animal with a ruminative mind, in the octopal grip of an impending catch, confinement and crucifixion. His friends called his old writing table a planchette for psionic communication.

Down here, seated around the same table, the four of them had a tough time perking him up with light raillery. But they finally got him involved in a political talk about the hideous degeneration of the present-day politics to a sordid game of power-grabbing by any means, even by a revolting appeasement,

disastrous to society and country. As expected, it generated some heat. A whole crop of the explosive terrors of the time rattled the sleepy air of the secluded place where the children came out of a natural curiosity or to serve tea with water glasses, often plates of fried beaten rice, slices of water melon, etc. Crossborder terrorism, extremism, communalism, caste-class divisive politics, multi-pronged reservationism, language 'racialism', savage rapes and murders, price-rise and inflation phenomena, etc. choked the evening air with their sooty flames.

Outside the domain of personal care and concern and family and friendly relationships the morbid mind's brooding on the terrors and traumas impinging on it from far and near didn't only intrigue the people who sought him and loved his company in spite of it but also made them anxious about how to heal his wound that had a built-in nail to dig it deeper and tear it wider every moment. In fact he found it hard to endure the chophouse's throat slit, blood flow and chopping and mincing. And all this happening at the human level, far more fiercely, was naturally a nightmare terror to grapple with. One could only imagine how he bore his deep torment after the recent monstrous carnage in a historic city by faceless mystery cats from across the borders or by treacherous crouching domestic ones as he was still haunted by the memory of the demoniac mayhem and murder of migrants in some parts of the country for their 'alien' language and roots much earlier. Besides the harrowing terror episodes in India and abroad, the deceptive, aggressive, dangerous designs of foreign powers also distressed him like unpredictable devastating natural calamities. At the moment all this gave a relieving vent to his pent-up ineffectual fury.

The talk trailed off to a momentary pause before a rude shocking key change to Rishi's flight of fancy to ancient Babylonia and Hammurabi's tough, pitiless laws to eliminate all crimes. He called upon the spirit of the mighty Babylonian wielder of tough justice to devise a tougher punitive code, to be clamped on the foul fiends here and elsewhere, all hellfirebrand aggressors and terrorists and extremists, or rapists and murderers, who, goaded by wild urges and nefarious designs, indulge in sabotage of territorial integrity and grab land by bloodbath and go on a shooting and beheading rampage to push their imperial frontier wider, consolidating their position. Outside the tunnel of the blood trail, though not less bloody, they set their glamorous prisoners free for a night-shift duty to whet and feed their insatiable appetite. Not doing so, such brutes here violate flesh and lynch it to wipe out the faintest trace, even throttle their tender victims in a necrophiliac rage to secure an unflattering yield of cold, dead limbs... Those who savagely raped and wounded a helpless girl in a moving bus, the demon who gored his raped victim open by incessant blows, and the damned one who raped and killed a nine year old girl nearby...all to be flayed alive by a law fresh and hot from a moblynching mould...the devil's brood, none to spare...

At the violence of his anguished outburst all others felt overwhelmed, with the fresh bleeding episode in mind, not knowing how a democracy could cope with it for the terrible nemesis deserved. He broke the gloomy silence by posing a question, 'What if I really invoke Hammurabi's spirit for an answer?' He said nothing about the labyrinthine lengthy legal process and an escape from it by swift execution- the toughest, cruellest imaginable. In response, an ambiguous nod

dropped as a hint by P-was a chill shock to him and to the solemn spiritual conjury to come off. But B-, though a bit elusive in tone, did all he could to encourage him: 'Why wait? Call forth the legendary iron sceptre from the cavern of time to reveal the brute in the act and to tear him to shreds with a lightning strike. After all that's what we are here for? to witness your supernatural powers in action, stunned, awed.' Then others also joined him in a chorus to give a go-ahead to the diffident conjuror except a good humoured note of caution in P-'s typical play of wit: 'Spin your airy web, not a cocoon to hide in as if it were a whorled tunnel.'

When he began he looked framed in an open-eye trance by gazing through the evening shadows at something incandescent, a weird luminous haze beyond human perception and intuition. At least that is what his impassive stare of incomprehension seemed to suggest before he had a vivid fiery glow of fury on his face with odd contortions. A frightful tremor shook him from head to foot, and in this convulsive fit he appeared to call upon the divine incarnations of vengeance to charge him with the savage fury of a primitive barbarous conqueror, squinching up his red hot eyes and flushed face. He grinned in an inscrutable frenzy verging on a disembodied delight in the transcendence of the physical order. Then, in the image of Kali's long, thick, flaming and blood-smearred tongue, thrust out in a livid blaze, he stuck out his tongue with divine wrath, gagging to bite, tear and devour.

In the absurd theatre of his antics his friends might have a hearty wild laugh at it all, but none did so, whatever they did to quell or choke the almost

irrepressible natural steam. Of course they felt much relieved as the violence of his inner seething declined a little like the bubbles of a boiling broth in a cauldron cooling bit by bit. With his eyes shut tight, he seemed to sit on the window ledge of eternity, hovering between vision and utterance. His lips twitched and quivered as the tapping on the table grew louder. His fingers drummed it automatically in an ascending scale varying in pitch, a nimble and vibrant play on the wood drum, sounding a paranormal rhythmical ripple and murmur of a wind in a clump of leafy trees.

The multitonal apocalyptic fit grew articulate after a suspenseful pause and first sounded like the whistling moan of boiling steam from a small hole. 'Mist melting,' said he, sweaty in face, 'clear as the cloudless sky is the saviour's slip. Fierce dogbite spared! But how, why?' 'What the hell...' blurted out P-. Till now absorbed, amused and curious, they were all alarmed at the bathetic, baffling collapse of the visionary trance. It seemed as if they would run away the next moment or call his brother and his son to get him a thorough checkup for his wandering morbid mind.

But in the nick of time Rishi recovered his composure and said in a quiet but firm tone: 'I mean if I were the dead girl's pet street dog she used to feed with a crumb, not eating it herself, I would have torn and sucked the devil's gullet dry of blood and breath before he tore her through and through and throttled her. How the stray dog ran off to save himself, nervy and slinky! Just to sleep in the scorching sun, driven from shade to shade to some cowshed hut or a hovel's eaves, or to a roadside broken drain, choked with stinking mud and dung and a jumbled mishmash of house refuse...The drain from which he drank by a

lapping rhythmical beat of tongue with a mark of glut, still wary, fearful and gloomy in eye and snout, knowing or not knowing that this free water supply won't bring him a grudging or angry blow from anyone...The dog would run away also to sleep under the pouring sky, denied access to a safe patch, curled up in a tight coiled lock of limbs. Might sleep under a dripping tree if not deemed a usurper by a breathless man soaked through and through, rushing ahead to chase him away. Of course he could drink from a flowing rain channel on the road if there were no wanton boys at play over there in the random summer shower breaking a long spell of earth-cracking drought... A drowned rat's drink to his heart's fill. But the runaway dog would also chew not only chopped and minced meat and bone left over at the chophouse but also dry soiled discoloured bone bits lying there or elsewhere by the crow's courier service, crackling them for the merest atom of marrow they have or haven't.

While they heard him 'rave' pouring out his bleeding heart's anguish in figure or trope they felt sick and giddy and appalled and horror struck. But they had no laugh or sob or cry of disgust to smother. They just felt struck dumb and numb at the brute shock of the rambling gush of his soul's deep gash that lay within a stifled moan or scream. They didn't really get any time to react, for after a slight pause he resumed his passionate ironic vein with the same intensity. 'I still miss the canine beauty of your features but you smell a stinking dog like me, don't you? And like me you also smell the poor little girl whose tender unformed flesh was battered by the fiend to pull out a rope of blood for our necks, if not to be a noose for his own gullet despite his gratuitous double play of rape and murder. Virgin ravaged soil's blood stream for the

fertility of the field full of hungry, half-fed, well-fed or well-kept dogs or hounds!'

In the strange hush of the deep shock and wonder the company rose to feet to leave the afflicted nerve to soothe itself to repose somehow. But they got stuck to their seats and in utter perplexity and desperation yelled for help and grew panicky to hear themselves bark and howl as though they were about to leap on the violator-killer rapt in a meditative trance in the middle of the table in a motley coat of many short and long and deadly 'arms' growing on and around him automatically as well as by being procured or rushed to him with magical sleights of hand.

Rishi had vanished in thin air-where? Above or beneath the table? Or was he lying in ambush somewhere near it to leap on the devil as soon as he took off his many-coloured coat for ease?

□ □

POEM**While at repose**

While at repose
 Something
 From somewhere
 Comes to the mind
 Unpremeditated
 The moment
 I try to incubate
 The idea slips
 The clue escapes
 And
 I grope for lost words
 Into
 The void of silence
 But find none
 Anon
 Some concatenations come
 Like sparks entwined
 Nay !
 Not the beauty
 The aesthetic
 The luminaries
 All obliterates
 Only
 The gross, the fitful
 Under subtle material veil
 Jars
 While at repose.

Dr.S.C.Pande

□ □

Ticklish Pranks

Blowing
 From neighbouring woods
 Midst of trees
 Wild mild wind
 Cluttering
 Fallen leaves
 Fluttering
 Tossing & Teetering
 Thy ticklish pranks
 Scent soaked soil
 Multihued flowers
 In maiden smile
 Hold due drops
 On petals
 Unfolding
 Shimmering scintillas
 In wee little glimmer
 Thy ticklish pranks !
 As if
 Morning Sun
 Like celestial gem
 Cut back
 From afar
 A light rellexion
 Beauty bewitched
 Art thou the presence
 Or a semblance ?
 Thy enticements
 Enchanting melodies
 Rhythmic reverberations
 Re-echo
 Through each passage
 Panoramas
 Wedded to nature's
 Unending plenty
 Thy ticklish pranks.!

Dr. S.C.Pande

□ □

All the world's a market

All the world's a market
Men, women and children
are precious goods and chattel
arrayed in a global basket.

A starving mother sells her girl
just for a loaf and not for pearl
The mod wife minds her figure
Buys a womb to escape the rigour.

A greedy father sells his son
just for dowry and not for bun.
Buy college degree at College Road
Have a job in that very mode.

A leader sells at voting hour
Money makes the judge to cower
The priest perjures to hide his shame
Sells his soul for sexual game.

Wealthy man sells his soul
Virtue a fig obstructs his goal
Money, power, post and ease
Dump the soul if you please.

Ram Bhagwan Singh

□ □

Tolerance

No one to help in scaling the ladder
but many to dislodge its rungs,
waiting in obsession
for its feet to slither on the ground
splashed with the grease of envy.

Unmindful of these vampires
nourished on the blood of brutality
my father - innocuous and euphemistic -
sermonizes only verse of tolerance,
adepts in the chemistry of words
and teaches me how to be a catalyst.

He hardly knows the geometry of words
like a satire, pun, irony, oblique, etc
but what he knows
potent enough outfoxing all
and his counsel me follow
like a suffocating man gasping for air:

“Give up the life tinged with tussle,
draw a line, parallel and longer,
by the one your rival draws.
Thus culminates the road to rivalry
delivered by the womb of jealousy.”

Vivekanand Jha

□ □

A Birthday Gift

A Lovely full blown Rose on your buttonhole,
Fragrance permeating the whole surrounding,
Smiles are nothing before the flowers,
Flowers are soothing and sacred and sincere for ever.
I put this on your ash coloured suit,
But your look of Demure ,makes me deter.

I took you to the dining ,Mahogany beckons
With a glimmer and warmth of
Dishes in china ware and Melarmine.
Eggless cake with a cup of coke
Would in certitude please you,
Me thought and joined you in cheers.

Polished sink and the towel
The white flowing water,
The foamy soap to wipe
Your hands and the reflecting
Mirror as if says: look! Something
Is wanting , he looks dissatisfied.

A soft, laminated book pops out
Of my NOT VANITY but multipurpose bag,

This is what I want!
This is what my passion.
A Book of Poems,
A Gift of All Times!

S.Radhamani Sarma

□ □

Art and the Artifice

How do I kiss you
when your lipstick intervenes
with a terrible chemical tang?

Love flourishes without the barriers
of clothes and thoughts;
so our ancestors,
hundreds of years ago,
might be mighty lovers;
the fulsome figures
on the cave-walls
are witness to it,
even the erosion of years
has not affected
their love-making.
They knew both
the simplicity and the sensuousness
of life in its utter nudity,
when the body was buxom
and the soul was bare.

How do I kiss you
when the lipstick has
coloured your conscience?
Shouldn't I prefer rather
the lips with fresh smell
of raw onion on them?
At least they are pure,
not perfumed !

Pashupati Jha

□ □

Memory

From a mountainous slope
he views the world
looking small yet beautiful---
People creeping like ants
Transports trotting like bullock carts
noises he so detested,
he craves again to be a part of which he is apart
on this dizzy height,
afraid he would die nameless
if he met a fall.

From a mountainous slope
he wishes to retreat
through the viewless wings
riding on the smooth wheels
to the world of sound and furies
of loss and gain, failures and success
being weighed on the fresh answer scripts
where pens run and ruin with their (ir)rational drives
where memory like a cluttered blackboard provides
a panacea to all problems solved by savant gurus.

Binod Mishra

□ □

Degeneration

When gods are out to teach me a lesson
where to go to pray or find relief?

my prophet friends predict each day good
and the future fulfilling, the palmists find
the sun, saturn, venus, and rahu hostile:

they seek money for rituals, stones or mantras
while God gives us the best in life gratis

I can't change man or nature, nor the karmas
now or tomorrow they all delude
in the maze of expediency and curse
stars, fate, destiny, or life before and after
degenerating the mind, body, thought, and divine

Ram Krishna Singh

□ □

BOOK REVIEW

Vijay Vishal. *Anger in Contemporary Indian English Poetry*. Jaipur: Vivek Publishing House, 2014. Pp328. Rs. 800/-

An old wise maxim goes, “when angry count up to ten; when very angry, count a hundred.” But on reading Vijay Vishal’s book under review *Anger in Contemporary Indian English Poetry*, one may contemplate saying, “When angry, take a pen and paper and start writing a poem.” Precisely because anger is a purging emotion and a poet’s righteous anger, never personal or subjective, is objective and hence corrective. Poetry is not “an intellectual luxury” avers Vishal; it is a purposeful activity conscious of the contemporary reality.

Dr Vishal’s work dwells on the emotion of ‘anger’ as employed by three contemporary poets – R.K Singh from Dhanbad, I.K.Sharma from Jaipur and P. Raja from Pondicherry (now Puducherry). These well-known poets represent a sizeable segment of the country from the North to the South and ‘anger’ which is a common human passion, has compelling representation in their poetry. Anger has the potential to become a catalyst of change by awakening “the social psyche”(Vishal, 15).

Each of these poets uses different stylistic devices and techniques to lodge his protest. For example, violence is a ‘common’ everyday occurrence to which we naturally react with anger, rage or anguish. Our mode of expression may vary and our targets may be different -- one may be angry at the administrative machinery; another, at the beasts in human garb; still others for the pain and suffering of victims, but the sentiments behind these experiences are comparable

R.K.Singh shares the pain of violence in Beirut and upbraids the “savage” instinct of “civilized man” who butchered children. He is perplexed at the apathy of Nature “the moon does not weep” and “The sun is indifferent there” (p 133). R.K.Singh also sees violence perpetuated on women protecting trees from being felled and laments “The blind axe falls/on bangled hands” (p.234). P. Raja in his poem “Reflection on a Bullet” envisages the bullets as agents of death and warns them “your mission is murderous/ but you too will be void” (p.279). Obviously, the three poets perceive a familiar social phenomenon from different angles, and use different techniques to express their reactions.

This is what Vijay Vishal dexterously does – he identifies the techniques and poetic devices used by the three poets that make each poem unique by itself. Vishal examines the tangible and the intangible expression of anger with dignified poise. He reads each poem closely, analyses it thematically and then plunges into the technicalities to discern its artistic beauty. For example, Vishal enjoys R.K. Singh’s sarcasm in “Gangu Teli”; as also P Raja’s light-hearted irony in “After the Interview”

“I played the pied-pier and
Led those mice to the sea
Just to put them in their places”(p.270).

Dr. Vishal, himself a poet, skillfully detects the various poetic devices like irony, metaphors, simile, myth, sarcasm, dramatics and aphorism through which the poets give vent to their anger. He uses thematic analysis to evaluate a poem’s social value through the artistic representation of anger. He further perceives how anger exposes the political, economic, religious

and human weaknesses and with what results. The situations that annoy the poets are: poverty, deprivation, hunger, discrimination, violence, anxiety, travails, hypocrisy and dishonesty and much more.

The book provides bio-sketches of the three poets along with extracts from their interviews. A good introductory chapter and a detailed survey of 'anger' in Indian English poetry are both helpful in clarifying the concept from different angles.

The cover page is differently designed with the synonyms of 'anger' right there in front of you even before you open the book. If you are curious to ask 'what is anger, after all', you know, it can be anything from irritation to annoyance to rage and fury, albeit, it is a psycho-social condition.

Vijay Vishal's main aim is to focus not so much on 'anger' as such but to reconsider its socio-cultural impact. The book is well-produced but the need for vigorous editing cannot be overlooked. Content-wise the work can prove valuable for the students of Indian English poetry.

Dr. Usha Bande

□ □

Prabhat K. Singh. *Indelible Impressions*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2015. ISBN: 978-93-5207-078-7. Pp. 69 Price: Rs, 195.

Indelible Impressions is a poetry collection of 41 poems from the pen of Prabhat K. Singh who, with the poetry tools like figures, images, and irony, weaves the fabric of his poetry. The Eliot impression becomes the striking feature of *Indelible Impression*, which is modern in approach towards the intricacies of life. Imagination hovers over the poet's head and showers the ideas, images and articulation.

The poet in Prabhat K. Singh feels at ease under both the skies—native and alien. He observes minutely all the things that come on his way, experiences them and gives an expression to the experienced experiences. No doubt these experiences are subjective but the poet has made them universal in appeal. Life seems to speak for itself from the pages of *Indelible Impressions*. It is the subjective pen that makes alien feel native and native in alien.

The poet takes the variety of themes for his poems. He observes the activities in a Kuber Temple where he finds that Kuber (the god of wealth) smiles only on the rich and remains cold towards the poor. The poor has no right to dream, which knows what waiting means in hard times. No doubt, love blossoms but has a prickly path, which offers an enigma in life that the brave heart only knows how to cope with it. He finds Eklavya in the university but this Eklavya is changed from what he was as now he has to study according to the set syllabus and perform all the things of a set system. He also visits the land of Kangaroos. The Yaara valley attracts him. The sight of Melbourne at night has its own charm. He hears the sound of Niagara Falls and enjoys the scenic beauty. As he is now a retired Professor, he begins to muse over life and its predicament. He presents the happenings that happen in a literary seminar, and with the passage of time, he begins to love prose and poetry which for him become *kavya*. He muses over the royalty of a writer and finds the map of his life fading. The only thing that he can do now is to sing songs of the New Year and the years to come. He fuses both smile and tears to make life worth living.

I stoically try to subsume
all sneers of grief in my humble smile. (23)

He sees “emptiness” which fills his “loneliness” that makes everything “muted.” He finds the past that “does not stop leaping / into the present” and seeks “the only remedy” in “forgetting.” He pays a glowing tribute to Swami Vivekananda, who gave “the vision of the Advaita” which became “the password to the secret of / truth and universal oneness.” He becomes spiritual even in his perception of the movie Nishabda, which gives him a clue to life that “slithers / into an interminable void echoing / nothing.” He observes the stage of nishabda and becomes “shunya” which “the spiritualists seek to attain.” The love of spiritual comes to a man when he attains maturity in his vision.

Eliot seems to have an indelible impression on the poetic art of the poet in Prabhat K. Singh. The following instances remind the reader of Eliot’s “Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and “The Waste Land”:

Etherized in bed for days together
For Time performed shirshashna
in the dialectical house of matter and spirit (20)

.....

The corpses they sowed long back,
have sprouted luxuriantly (62)

The image of Prufrock impresses the poet so deeply that he uses the very image of time again and again.

It’s time to count and confess my guilt...
Time to dust my books...
Time to review and reset perception... (54)

The poet uses juxtaposition to make his lines effective and packed with idea: “marshy lands where / hope slowly sinks into despair.” He shows knack in the use of phraseology which is innovative and unique. “Slices of myths”, “aura of holiness”, “hieroglyphs of

eternity”, “butterscotch thigh”, “yogic detachment” etc., are some instances of his phrases, which strike the reader with their uniqueness. He uses figures in a natural manner and avoids artificiality. Alliteration in the lines like “the sting of the studded smile”, “the Penguin parade with sea playing piano”, simile in the lines like “mist rises / like a feathered ghost in a snowy night” and “words glittering like gold skate / on the wheels of imagination” are a few instances that prove the poet’s skill in the application of poetic techniques.

Going through the poems in *Indelible Impressions* becomes a new experience for the reader who finds himself on the ground of reality though he soars on the wings of imagination with the poet. The Eliot touch somewhat creates friction, which hinders the reader’s flight. The poems, no doubt, are simple but the simplicity is deceptive. Meanings are packed in words, which can be deciphered only by a serious reader.

Sudhir K. Arora

□ □

***The Vacanas of Sarvajna*, Tr. Basavaraj Naikar, Delhi: Gnosis, Pp.82. 2010 Rs. 300.**

If ever a comprehensive history of Indian literatures in English is written, the name of Professor Basavaraj Naikar should be written in bold letters. During his teaching career he used both parts of his mind with equal efficiency: one part took care of literary criticism, another of translation. In the latter area he endeavoured to project the major works of leading religious figures of his linguistic region i.e. Karnataka.

The book under review attempts to project an all-

knowing figure – Sarvajna, a saint and a wandering poet, through his epigrams (vacanas). He is a very complex and dramatic character with no air of pretension all along his life. Thoroughly unconventional this sixteenth century versatile genius draped only in Godhead, barefoot, a distaff in hand, and a blanket thrown casually on the shoulder, was his own platform and the speaker. If inspired he would turn out vacanas effortlessly, each one a three line stanza – tripadi—in Kannada on the spur of the moment and people of the region collected these nuggets of gold for their self improvement or for understanding varied situations of life.

Till this day the present reviewer had known a poet named Jamboul, a 19th century Kazakh poet who had composed about half a million verses. But here is one who claims to have written ‘seven crore, seven lakh, seven thousand and seventy vacanas.’ Surely, an incredible feat! But how unfortunate it is that out of the huge stock only 1200 tripadis could be saved! Poets of the world beware! Ever mobile and embarrassingly frank, Sarvajna would mock at people’s smallness of outlook, ridicule the mask-wearing faces of common people, question the caste system and its superficial practices, laugh at the character of gold-loving civilization, especially women. By contrast, he would glorify the image of a yogi and define him as one ‘who has conquered his senses.’ A Sivayogi, who ‘burns himself/ To offer spiritual light to the world (p.43). (Persons of this mould, I guess, are their own incinerator, find the baggage of body ‘a fabric stitched on bone, and willingly dispense with false accoutrements of sense.’). Only such a liberated soul, in his view, is entitled to lead ‘The swan from the eight petals/ To the focal point of the lotus’ (P. 38).

Elsewhere he praises a devotee, a Sarana, who considers the Linga/ As his Husband and himself His wife, /Merges into the Formless Lord/ Without ever mating’ (P.26). With the same amount of fervor he praises the role of a Guru in the life of a seeker.

In the neighbourhood of such a person only Truth stays. Falsehood flies away. At present when violence is noticed in most parts of the world, his assertion gets extra weight and meaning. He says, “Religions preaching violence and bloodshed! /Throw them all into fire. / Lo. I would place on my head the Jaina religion forbidding violence of any kind’ (P.29). Denouncing divisions in religion, he punches hard: ‘One and only one is the Lord for the Universe. / One and only is the creator for the Cosmos./ Know you, fool, there are not two, / Sarvajna’ (P.47). About the street talk of Heaven his castigation deserves a mention:

Do you think you can go to Heaven,
Without controlling your senses,
Or mortifying your body?
Do you think
Heaven is ruled by a widow?
Sarvajna

In the modern age when all talk centres round bodily comfort and pleasure, persons of Sarvajna’s stature are the need of the hour. They are a walking light house; they travel light utterly indifferent to the views and comments of the deluded mankind. (How instructive it would be if his life and character is portrayed in the medium of a film!)

Credit should be given to Professor Basavaraj Naikar who resurrected this casket of jewels from the uncomplaining archives of Kannada literature. He

brought it on the surface, burnished it, and made it presentable through the medium of modern English. No glitches in his translation anywhere. With all the 303 tripadis in modern garb the translator has virtually opened a closed book for the non-Kannada readers. Honestly, he is conscious of the fact that the only way to send them further and far away from home is creative translation. And he has done that job with rare religious humility and conviction.

Dr. I.K.Sarma

□ □

R.K. Bhushan. *Nerves of the Verbal Art: Songs in Follywood*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2014. ISBN: 978-81-7273-885-3. Pp. 99 Price: Rs, 195.

R.K. Bhushan's *Nerves of the Verbal Art* contains 45 songs, sung in Follywood. In this poetry collection, the poet in R.K. Bhushan appears to be wiser under the garb of folly like Shakespeare's Fool than the poet of the earlier collections like *Sentinels of the Soul*, *Rustling Leaves*, *Melodies of the Broken Reed* and *The Invisible Visible*. Rob Harle in 'Foreword' finds his poems "activist in nature" and praises them for "inherent musicality" while Patricia Prime likes Bhushan's impressive craftsmanship, which makes his poems "always perceptive, often witty" and so considers him to be "a major poet."

'Songs of Follywood' is an invocation to 'Follywood' which becomes "a religious place." The poet continues his pilgrimage to the world of FOLLYWOOD where "folly follows folly", resulting in showering of "images of life" with which he builds "the castle of life." No doubt he is a poet but asks a question to himself:

Who am I
To create, compose and craft

Poetry? (44)

He observes life minutely and finds life worth living despite its thorny way. He humbly invokes Muse for not drying the springs of poetry in him. He finds life "an exciting race" which "must be run / at a steady and studied pace. (45)" He feels oneness in his heart for all hearts that seem to echo through his heart in the form of song.

Though he calls himself a fool, he is wise enough to have faith in "Powers above" who "decide, guide and govern / Life hither / And, of course, thither." The men of faith are the blessed ones while the men with ego "dwell with suspicion and selfishness." He sees the contemporary scene, dotted with "crowds of chaos", which cause "unhappy collusions and collisions." He finds the lion and the lamb in the reversed role. Here is a picture of honesty in the contemporary scenario:

Honesty is a whore
Of the wholesome cheat.
Machiavelli's mockery
Rules the Republic
To redesign ethics
For a fresh look
To turmoil. (41)

The poet in Bhushan becomes Hamlet who has "method in madness" and so prays to Almighty "to set right / His Order in disorder! (50)" He believes in poetic justice that keeps moving "the grinding stones / of Time and Destiny" and so asks the people to "relax and rejoice in His Will / The best for the best!" Mark the excerpt for his faith in God:

Who serves whose and which purpose,
Only HE—The Omniscient-knows,
How HE fulfills Himself,
Hopefully He does—

We shall wait, as ever we have waited! (27)

There is one poem, dedicated to Sai whom he asks for redemption. He wishes for detachment but finds himself a victim of “sensuous and sensual delights” which have “deeply entrenched” in his being. He knows that these obstacles cannot be overcome without His grace. He shares with Sai thus:

Take care, O SAI
of these obstacles
SO that I'm fulfilled! (61)

The mythology figures like Tiresias, Zeus, Aurora, Tithonus, and Oedipus etc., appear in his poems. Questionings: “What was the sin of Christ / that he was crucified? / What is the fate of Truth / revealed by Socrates? (89)” are the part of his strategy for having the desired effect. Figures, phrases, word play etc., seem to play with folly to offer the witty touches. Who can forget the phrases, infused with alliteration like “the monuments of stupidities” and the raped relationships” (69)? The poet plays with words and surprises the reader: “vultures of cultures / wolves of wealth”, “traders of teaching / saints of sycophancy” and the like.

The 45 songs in *follywood*, with the nerves of the verbal art, touch the nerves of the reader who observes the contemporary scenario, feels his own redemption and finally sees life while marching “on the flux of time” with the hope in his heart that feels: “the dawn peeps.” Hence, *Nerves of the Verbal Art* will be an interesting and illuminating reading for the lover of poetry.

Sudhir K. Arora

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Understanding Feminism : Philosophy, Waves and Achievements by Priya D Wanjari. Dattsons, Jawaharlal Nehru Marg, Sadar Nagpur- 440001 (M.S.), PP 234, Rs. 750/-

The book under review comes to me as a surprise read in the proliferated production of books on feminism. It won't be an exaggeration to call it a handbook of feminism that introduces us to all facets of feminism and its socio-political and literary movements and traces its historical development down the ages right from Proto-feminism to feminism and its different schools grown up across the world, its relationship with different disciplines like, ecology, Marxism, science, religion, ethics, etc. and differences among different schools of feminism. The study ranges from philosophy of feminism to its pragmatic achievements. It is not confined to one country, rather takes into account the feminist movements in different countries including least talked about Islamic feminism and the similar movement in Arabic countries.

The book is a painstaking research and a comprehensive study of the subject. It is divided into eight chapters namely "Introduction", "Understanding Femininity and Relevant Issues", "Feminism in Historical Perspective", "Different Waves of Feminism", "Philosophy and Theory", "Various Forms of Feminism", "Focus on Gender Equality", and "Focus on Feminist Economics" followed by an exhaustive "Bibliography". Dr. Priya D Wanjari in her exuberance expanded the scope of her research to make it all inclusive. Feminism of more than two dozen countries, numerous social, political, cultural organizations, legal battles related to feminist movement have been incorporated in this study. Thereby she makes it highly informative. But it goes beyond the ambit of the book to fully explore everything. For example she refers to Indian feminism in just one sentence. In the fourth chapter she gives

an account of the three phases of feminism starting from 19th century in the U.K. the USA, Canada, their struggle for suffrage through political outfits like AWSA and NWSA. In the second phase of feminism from 1960 to 1990 the focus shifted to sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights and official legal inequalities. This wave brought several victories like Equal Pay Act 1963, Civil Right Acts in the USA and some other legislative initiatives bringing women at par with men officially in several fields. In the third wave 'Gender violence' women studies occupied the centre stage. The feminist writers of this phase sought a prominent space for race related subject in feminist discourse. 'Timeline of Key Events' listing chronological events in the annals of feminist movement from 1953 to 1984 adds to its informative value.

The chapter "Various Forms of Feminism" that introduces us to movements like 'Marxist Feminism', 'Liberal Feminism', 'Radical Feminism', and 'Sex-positive Feminism' is the best part of the book. It not only introduces them but also gives a critical view on them.

The book truly justifies its title "Understanding Feminism" and is a handy one for students of criticism and literature at an affordable price with elegant production.

Dr. C. L. Khatri

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Sony Dalia, Hopping on Hope, Indialog Publications Pvt. Ltd. 0-22, Lajpat Nagar- II, New Delhi- 110024, 2015, pp. 79 Rs. 175

T. Sai Chandra Mouli who writes poetry under pseudonym Sony Dali is a translator, critic and editor of a reputed journal Virtuoso. The present one Hopping on Hope is his third poetry collection after Delightful Down and Graceful Green. It comprises sixty

short and crisp lyrical poems in free verse. It is a continuation of his preoccupation with his sensitive response to his time, place and milieu. Poetry for him is a 'Criticism of Life' (Mathew Arnold) and hence his critical poetic lens scans the world around him with an eye of a creator whose heart aches to see crucifixion of 'kind souls', poor plight of women in "Perverts Paradise" and "Ubiquitous Draupadi", scandals and vandals, primordial fear, everyday problem in commuting, politicization of academics in "Unwanted", rising noise pollution in city, soaring violence and crime as in "Depraved Demons", "Lament on Lambs" (a tribute to Col. M.N. Rai). His anger is best expressed in "Eunuchs":

When a child cries care not these,
When a woman dies care not these
.....
So inhuman, so spineless, so revolting
Brihannala, Sikhandi were so for a reason...
These disgusting, despicable eunuchs?
He questions our passivity.

But the poet, a mature academician, who has seen many winters and springs, is able to withstand the rough wind and lead us to positivity, beauty and strength of life. He neither loses heart nor lets us lose rather enthuses and recharges the low spirit with practical wisdom:

Life is a song, enjoy the melody
Life is a poem, savour the beauty
Life is a journey, admire the path
Life is a rainbow, respect the spectacle
Life is a compromise, accept to survive.

"Force of Life" and "Moon Light" are some of his motivating poems that celebrate the essential strength and vibrancy of life despite thorny reality:

Seasonal splendor seeps through
bird and bee; flower and bower

.....
Waning and waxing universal
draining and gaining quite normal.

In cultural beauty of the country Sony Dalia finds a source of invigoration and motivation: "Navroz / Ugadi / Gudipadva / Poila Baishak / Every day / Every new beginning / Celebrate / Creativity (Celebration Times)

The poet at times slips into philosophical and spiritual musings a time honoured practice of Indians as in "You Are Not a Body", "A Leaf", "Search". His philosophic quest wishes to end in "my image in your (God) eyes". This spiritual quest also strikes a chord with the real strength of humans.

The poet also puts forward his vision of India that is inclusive, serene, colourful and inspiring in his poem "My India". He takes it forward to restate the Indian spirit of 'Vasudheb Kutumbkam' in "Merry Christmas", when he says:

"Time to celebrate, glow and grow
Mercy sanctifies spirits, enlivens earthly life;
Universe, a family"

The last poem "Hopping on Hope" is a parody of Rabindranath Tagore's famous poem "Where the mind is without fear"; and it echoes somewhat similar wishful thinking running into a single sentence.

The poet gives ample proof of a conscious craftsman with an ear for musical cadence through alliteration and assonance and onomatopoeic use of words and a feel for form to achieve the symphony of sound, sense and wise sayings.

C L Khatri

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Absences, Bibhu Padhi, Authorspress, New Delhi-110016, (2014), pp. 266, Price Rs. 350/-

Bibhu Padhi is a well-known poet in English who has published eight books of poetry. Poetry is his first love. Now, he has ventured into fiction, novel writing and *Absences* is his maiden venture. Essentially a poet, Padhi prefers to write the title of the book like *Absences* perhaps to give it a poetic touch. In the like fashion the book begins with a prologue and ends with an Epilogue. The title of the novel which declares the subject matter is absences. Here I am reminded of the words of P.B. Shelley.

We look before and after
And pine for what is not,

The absence of our near and dear ones, the loss of certain possessions are sure to haunt us and obsess our mind. It is another matter that sometimes absence brings forth new leaves and flowers as the 'No cloud' becomes 'Yes cloud.' Likewise the absence of pain is undeclared pleasure.

The book tells us the story of an Oriya family, the protagonist being a child called Varun. His father's name is Navin who is referred to by the boy as Naan who is primarily a poet and professionally a college teacher. I am inclined to see Naan in the cast of the novelist himself. It is not strange that generally the first novel has the essential ingredients of the novelist himself. Here we find the writer himself like a puppeteer sets the tone and controls the movement of the story and marks the end. The story begins with a brief Prologue called Naan's Story. Naan is conscious of the absence of a series of objects and incidents. But whereas he has lost something he has gained a fund of experiences. He says, a strange fear of loss overtakes me' but he

rationalises in the same breath saying, 'Let me live with their absence'.... 'My possessions were suddenly absent. But they have stayed with me in their absence.' Such a plea blunts the edge of absences.

The story moves from cuttack to Puri-via Bhubaneswar. It is the story of Naan, his sons Vineet and Navin, Bob Bappa, Pravin uncle, Maa and others. The story is commonplace, plain, familiar, an even road, uneventful life, as such, the story demands patience on the part of the reader. The four-year old Varun may be fascinated to see the take off and landing of a plane but to read the every day routine of a family is too much of a chewing gum.

The novel is Indian in looks and character. It deals with Indian customs, Indian life-style, Indian space and environment. Every character is known by relationship and that in the local Oriya language, for example, Naan, Bhaan, Bappa, Mama, Bob Bapaa etc. One has to decipher their relationship in the context of the story. Though the leit-motif of the novel is said to be absence, no such character undergoes emotional mortification or obsessive depression. Nobody seems acutely conscious of the absence of any particular person or grievous loss. It is perhaps the poet's delicate and tender consciousness that spares the shock. The long Epilogue by way of justifying the abstract character of loss is an expendable appendage. No doubt, there are a few flashes of poetic similes like human heat', 'time's handicraft', 'delicate presence', 'barbarous finger' etc. as specimen of poetic prose. Too much simplicity and sloth hampers the compactness of the story. As the range of action is limited there could be better arrangements.

To me, the title of the novel 'absences' an abstract noun in the plural could have been justifiably and poetically fixed as characters in the novel. I wish the novelist good luck.

- Ram Bhagwan Singh

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The Novels of Chinua Achebe - Jai Ram Jha, Aadi Publications, Dhamani street, Chaura Rasta, Jaipur, (2013), pp. 111, Price Rs. 495.00

Dr. Jai Ram Jha's book *The Novels of Chinua Achebe A Colonial Encounter* is a critical study of the novelist's four novels- *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, *An Arrow of God* and *A Man of the People*. Chinua Achebe was the first African writer to 'spouse to help his society regain its belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and degradation.' He was acutely aware of the racial discrimination and exploitation of the Blacks by the British. and so he came forward to champion the cause of the African people to free them from slavish mentality and recognise and regain their faith in the native culture and tradition. His first novel *Things Fall Apart* has become part of the heritage of world literature. He is regarded as the common voice of the depressed and oppressed mankind. He has punctured the myth of superiority of the colonizer over the colonized.

Things Fall Apart presents a realistic picture of British colonial rule exploiting the natives and superimposing their own language, culture, religion and manners on them. They exploited the locals physically, materially, sexually, linguistically and even intellectually. In the novel the two local villages Umuofia and Mbants are destroyed by the encroachment of an alien civilization. Okonkwo and

his men fight the colonial rule to achieve their independent self.

No Longer at Ease is Achebe's second novel and in a way sequel to *Things Fall Apart*. It presents a juxtaposition of the native's superstition and the white man's hypocrisy which has been clearly demonstrated in the protagonist Obi's feeling of revolt against the church and his father's god. The ambivalence is a result of generational transformation. Obi is also critical of politicians whom he calls 'bloody hypocrite'. The novelist feels no longer at ease because he is dissatisfied with the wrongs prevailing in the Nigerian society as much as with the white man's hypocrisy. Achebe wants a judicious reform in his society.

In *An Arrow of God* the focus is on political and religious supremacy of the whites which denigrates the native's principles and practices. This is made possible as a result of divisions and dissensions among the local people themselves which again is the handiwork of the cunning colonizers. The novelist wants to warn the people against mutual differences and infightings as the stumbling block in their natural growth. *A Man of the People* has an anti-heroic protagonist Odili pitted against a Chief Nanga who is supposed to be a man of the people, a seasoned politician. The novel is a satire against a section of post-independence Nigerian society. Things are falling apart in yet another way and the people are still no longer at ease. The Prime Minister's assertion to guard against western-educated snobbish intellectual does not materialise as the system shows no change. The gains of independence are lost in the quagmire of corruption.

Dr. Jha's book is a brief but telling analysis of the novels of Chinua Achebe. It is a good addition to the

corpus of critical books on African writing. It has been written in a simple language. The book is very useful for those who want to have knowledge of Achebe's novels at a glance. The analysis is clear, cogent and systematic. The points have been well documented from the text. I recommend it for those interested in Nigerian fiction.

- Ram Bhagwan Singh

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***Rainbow Rhapsodies* Syeed Ameeruddin International Poets Academy, Chennai- 60014, (2014), pp 219. Price Rs. 500/-**

Love is a universal theme ever sought after more so in the so called 'waste land' populated by 'hollow men' and women. The poet Syeed Ameeruddin is a big bard of love and celebrates it in all its aspects, temporal and ethereal. He sings of the power of love, friendship, beauty and magic as an instrument of sensuous gratification and sublimated joy.

The book *Rainbow Rhapsodies* has five sections called five phases that constitute a bouquet of love, 'a bouquet for one's eyes and a symphony for one's ears.' Krishna Srinivas has rightly called the poems 'an accession towards love'. In phase I there are *bells of reminiscences, love strings, purple passion, fragrance of love, blooming love, dream girl* as well as *simmering loneliness, syllables of silence, broken whispers and shattered dreams* etc. The very titles suggest the real journey of love, its perpetual stream and convergence into metaphysical identity and mysticism and again 'churning sensual from spiritual'. In the poem *On one Evening* the poet presents as 'He looked into her eyes and visualised the subdued smile of submission-of-tumultuous Paravathi and she visualised the smile of

confidence of vivacious victor Shiva.

The book is an album of all shades of love-romantic, real, surreal, sensual, spiritual, metaphysical and mystical- a perfect whole. Shase-II is subtitled *Purple Meanderings* in which there are poems like *sleeping memories, fractured mirror, unsung song, my enchantress* etc. The poet feels

The honeyed memories/and petalled pleasures
Drifted to the shores/Like foamy waves....
I touched, smelt/all the secret wine waves of your body
And listened to the orchestral of sensual melody.

The lines themselves are scented, petalled and jingling, an embroidery with words, a filigree with metaphors. Memories may be sleeping but they never dissolve like shadows. This love is divine, keeps the soul attuned to the music hewn passions open vistas of spiritual union. Naturally when the beloved is no more he pines for her but he feels the everlasting presence of passionate union of both bodies and souls. So, he says 'I am alive again'.

Phase III celebrates the lover as a wanderer on the earthly planet. The separation being reality dawns on him, his true self the reality of life. However, the spiritual bond will sustain for ever, the lone traveller like the river will find the sea. The spiritual union is a mute rhapsody. The poet's symphonic sensibilities are again recollections of love beaming with unlimited charm in multiple shapes now attuned to the symphony of the divine. He also remembers the first unknown, mystic acquaintance and gradual unfolding of love petals down to its kernels, the sensual fire and flame.

And finally in phase V titled *resplendent retrospectives*, the lover is back again to the torrents of titillating times, to a vibrant trance and a new dawn.

He wants now to listen to the voice of the stars. The lover has come to terms with shadows to face storms and joys in equipoise. The poet feels happy to beat the drum of Dampatya which to him is 'divine splendour and cosmic communion a heaven on earth.

The formal beauty of *Rainbow Rhapsodies* beggars description. The poems are to be enjoyed, felt, realised in the poet's person a before submitting them to the critic's block. There again the poetic art is par excellence with enviable application of sonorous images and shining symphony. The poems create a mesmerising spell with metaphors all new and emotive correlatives, lexical equivalents of ideas. They are loving and intimate such as, rubikund eve, fractured night, silvery sands, genitals of earth, bouquet of stars, milk of light, autographs of silence, liquid moon, velvet stars, thirsty shores, snaky wriggles, simmering silence, virgin fancy, syllables of silence, fugitive moon, wine waves, pagan petals, volcanic agony, temple of soul, lotus of wisdom etc. The beauty and suggestiveness of the poems is enhanced by the pictures showing human moods and graphic background. Ameeruddin's poems are reverberating love tunes and leave an after glow of sweetness and light.

- Ram Bhagwan Singh

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***A Christmas Gift and Other Stories* by Ramesh K. Srivastava. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2015. Paperback, pp. 278. Rs. 395.00. ISBN: 978-81-7273-978-2**

Ramesh K. Srivastava has to his credit a dozen critical books, two novels—Neema and Coils of the Serpent—as also half-a-dozen anthologies of short

stories—all in English. The book under review *A Christmas Gift and Other Stories* by Ramesh K. Srivastava is a collection of his 28 short stories which present before us a phantasmagoria of flitting images from diverse areas—political, religious, social, economic, traditional or modern.

The title story “A Christmas Gift” is a magnificent story, creating suspense about the nature of Christmas gift, as to what kind would it really be! One naturally recollects another story on the same subject—O’Henry’s “The Gift of the Magi.” Both the stories, written by different writers of different continents in different centuries, have surprisingly a few common points. They have loving couples—Ankit and Suchitra in the former, and Jim and Della in the latter. Both deal with exceptionally precious Christmas gifts—of a child in the former and a comb and a bracelet in the latter. The gifts are entirely unexpected ones which startle the receivers in gratitude. Whereas Jim and Della in “The Gift of the Magi” sell their precious belongings—Jim, his watch and Della, her beautiful, long hair—Saloni, in “A Christmas Gift,” gives away her precious belonging—her own living child. It is a short vignette in which the characters of childless Suchitra and poverty-stricken Saloni have been beautifully yet sympathetically drawn.

“Maharshi Satyanand” is a topical story depicting the prevalence of fake swamis in India—the Asarams and the Rampals—who exploit the superstitious, gullible people of India and build up a vast empire of followers with the help of a series of so-called miracles. Such Indian swamis continue to have flourishing business all over the world. Maharshi Satyanand, originally a dacoit named Ranga, parades himself as a saint. His miracles, like getting a Polaroid colour film from the U.S. or breaking a rock into pieces, turn out

to be the manipulated ones. Here Srivastava exposes the superstitions and blind beliefs which breed and nourish such saints with whom we come across frequently in our daily life.

Srivastava has written a series of short stories highlighting the hidden potentialities of women to obtain concrete results. In “Lasting Victory,” Vimala Tiwari is a Lecturer in a college. When she foils the Principal’s attempt at her molestation, he harasses her through Gurmel Singh who threatens to burn the college bus to embarrass her as a Students’ Union Advisor. Rather than taking disciplinary action against him, she checkmates his act of burning the bus by boarding it herself, and at the same time disallows the police to arrest Gurmel Singh. This way she wins everyone’s heart and attains a lasting victory with no ill feelings around. Narayani in “A Matter of Pride” persuades the superstitious parents to have their daughters educated and proves that the education of girls, far from being ominous, is highly rewarding. By her exemplary work, she makes her educational activities for girls a matter of pride. “An Ugly Duckling” is obviously inspired by Hans Christian Anderson’s story having an identical title. Shyamali bears the same pain of being hated by her parents because of her ink-black complexion as does the ugly duckling in Anderson. As the latter is transformed into a beautiful swan, Shyamali becomes beautiful when she saves the life of her dying mother by quietly donating her kidney. Pratima as a devoted mother in “A Goddess in Hell” spends many years of her life in jail. She takes her son’s crime of accidentally killing a boy on her head without breathing a word of it to anybody in Bombay’s slum Dharavi and thereby becomes a goddess in the hellish slum. Other stories in the category are “A Short Work,” “Rescuers,” “Untold Story,” “Cross Connections” and “From Frying Pan.” In

the modern times, when the news of rape has become a daily occurrence, these stories provide a proverbial straw for the drowning woman.

Without being too complicated, puzzling or over-artistic, most of Srivastava's stories are interesting in themselves and naturally appeal to the common reader. That could be one reason why his stories were published by popular magazines like Caravan, Woman's Era and Eve's Weekly. Edgar Allen Poe, in one of his reviews, had emphasized the brevity of a short story so that it could be read in one sitting or roughly in half an hour, and that it must have a "totality of effect" towards which every word and sentence must contribute. Srivastava's stories seem to be tailored to the Poe's prescription. Believing in the principle of organic unity, Srivastava maintains that every character, incident and dialogue must contribute to the total impression of the story so as to form a compact organic whole leaving no place to add or take away anything.

Srivastava misses no opportunity of bringing in irony, wit and humour in descriptions, dialogues, narration, similes and metaphors to make his stories quite interesting. In "Cooperative Colony," the Minister of Education is ironically ill-educated and hence his inaugural speech abounds in howlers, creating abundance of humour. He calls the colony an experiment in cohabitation and uses incorrect words like liars for lawyers, transformer for transformation, physicist for physician, breastling for wrestling, cheater for teacher, coward for cowherd and so on. When he talks of schools, they are nursery for nurses, infantry for infants and adultery for adults (39). In "Friendship, Love and Marriage," Loveleen who gets all A's in geography considers India "a part of Bombay" (99).

Maharaja Kumar enjoys fooling her by telling that the students in India, in the absence of cars, go to the university or college on elephants and camels, that the stables are attached to each building, that in the absence of electricity "we cut the ears of these elephants and convert them into beautiful hand fans by attaching handles to them" (101).

Many of Srivastava's stories have reversal of fortunes. That could be one reason why the plots of his stories are well-rounded, unlike those of Henry James, who maintained that since life does not have a rounded or neat conclusion, a short story or a novel should have none and that the plot should hang in the air. Not so with Srivastava for whom the readers' interest is uppermost in his mind. His stories often leave the reader amazed by the stings they carry at the end. Like an innocent-looking common device, Srivastava's short story startles the reader when in the end it erupts into an unexpected explosion.

Smita Das

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