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## PEER REVIEWED REFEREED RESEARCH JOURNAL

Dedicated to  
**Shiv K. Kumar**  
(16 Aug. 1921-28 Feb., 2017)

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## EDITORIAL

The recent development in the field of journals in India in the backdrop of the UGC's decision to document the journals published in different disciplines in India and abroad has created lots of confusion in the public domain and several questions are being raised about the basis of selection and rejection, the authenticity of this new directory, the legal binding on the universities or if it is to be taken as UGC's certificate of quality for articles/ papers published in the UGC listed journals. What about the papers published in anthologies and the journals which are not listed? The move to make the directory of journals official has raised concerns among the young faculty members looking for promotion or working for their API. It has also set in a race for indexing of journals, Impact Factor, declaring it as International, Global or may be universal. When ISSN directory is there, when each university constitutes an expert committee for screening of the quality of research papers and the journals in which they are published, what purpose it will serve is subject to speculation and introspection.

In the wake of all this and massive online marketing of literary journals which was quite new for me, at one point of time, I thought of dropping it. Having spent twenty years in the field of editing, I felt let down for a moment. I thought about contributors and readers of *Cyber Literature* who might feel more at loss, and hence, I resolved to continue with it till I find a worthy successor. I took a few steps like

developing its website, getting impact factor and indexing it. Fortunately it was included by the UGC in its list of journals that fulfilled the immediate desire of its readers, contributors and all those associated with it. Thanks to the UGC and the institutions which recommended it. The website [www.cyberliterature.in](http://www.cyberliterature.in) will make it more visible and accessible. *Cyber Literature* will now be uploaded on it in Pdf and the back issues from 2012 onwards are available in its archive. You are welcome to visit the site and give your feedback for its betterment. Wish you happy reading.

- C. L. Khatri

□

## ***In Tribute to Shiv K. Kumar***

### **“Let my epitaph be written on sand”: Shiv K. Kumar’s Quest for Life in *Where Have the Dead Gone ? & Other Poems***

**Sudhir K. Arora**

#### **Abstract :**

Shiv K. Kumar, whose first love poetry, is a poet of intuitions. He knows that nothing remains behind and, hence, expects his epitaph to be written on sand. He muses over the phenomenon of death and wonders where man goes after death. He worships love and has firm faith in the religion of art for art's sake though he never becomes blind to the happenings around him and the world. What he recommends is naturalness and innocence. He does not wish to give any message though the reader shows his interest in understanding life through his poems. Alas ! He has gone there where the dead have gone.

**Keywords :** Intuitions, death, memory, journey, art for art's sake.

“Give me a line or two / in some local paper / even in fine print” (*Trapfalls in the Sky* 31) is Shiv K. Kumar’s longing which came to be fulfilled on March 1 2017 when Death took him away to the other world.

Shiv K. Kumar (1921-2017), a recipient of the Padma Bhushan, distinguished Professor of English, critic of eminence, Bergsonian scholar and all rounder in creative writing – poet, novelist, short story writer, playwright, and translator— is an academic poet who won the Sahitya Akademi Award for his book of verse *Trapfalls in the Sky* in 1987. Symbols, myths, imagery, rhetoric, intuitions and feelings weave the texture of

his poetry collections, namely, *Articulate Silences* (1970), *Cobwebs in the Sun* (1974), *Subterfuges* (1975), *Woodpackers* (1979), *Trapfalls in the Sky* (1986), *Woolgathering* (1995), *Thus Spake the Buddha* (2002) , *Losing My Way* (2008), *Which of my Selves Do You Wish to Speak to ?* (2011) and *Where Have the Dead Gone ? & Other Poems* (2014). Poetry has been his first love though he has endeavoured his hands in short story, criticism and fiction.

Shiv K. Kumar, who begins his poetic journey with *Articulate Silences* (1970), consummates it mysteriously with *Where Have the Dead Gone ? and Other Poems* (2014). He makes up his mind to write on sand with his index finger. Like Shelley he wishes to be near the sea and hear the waves while writing on sand. He knows that nothing remains behind and, hence, expects his epitaph to be written on sand.

So I have chosen to write hereafter  
only on sand,  
while I hear the waves  
intoning mantras in my ears.  
Let my epitaph be written on sand. (*Where* 27)

*Where Have the Dead Gone ? & Other Poems*” (2014) is a collection of 67 poems which reveals Kumar’s maturity, imagination and intuitions. The review published in *World Literature Today* in May 2015 states:

The poetic journey begins with a quest—“Where have they gone?”—and ends “in the woods,” with the determination to “learn to speak the language of trees, bushes, snakes, and beasts” via memory lanes, recalling the dreamworld of youth. What is striking in this poetry collection is Kumar’s imaginative skill, which has not blurred over his career. In the evening of his life, he never forgets the other world where he has to go—and so the dead, funeral processions,

shadows, ghosts, tears, fire, hospital, sleepwalkers, time, pain, space, trains, sand, and all things associated with death remain flashing on the screen of his mind. He also often takes the reader to memory lanes from his childhood days—stars, hills, clouds, woods, river, the gardens of Chashme Shahi, flowers, along with the streets of Delhi” (121)

With the passage of time, Shiv K. Kumar has emerged from the ocean of complexity to the ground of simplicity by virtue of his understanding of life in its clearness. While following the confessional mode on purpose, he associates with the readers who feel and experience various emotions with him.

The theme of death along with the things associated with it registers its presence in most of the poems. The ghost of death remains with him like a shadow reminding him the other world where he has to go not to return. He muses over the phenomenon of death and wonders where man goes after death. It has been a mystery since time immemorial as no one returns after death to tell about his whereabouts. At midnight, while wondering about the departure of the dead to the unknown place, he hears the owl’s hoot which seems to be summoning all the ghosts to take charge from the living. He talks to his other ‘self’, which seems to be entering the dark world of the dead ones through a door of his imagination. No sooner does he enter than he realizes the dark labyrinth that makes him see the wailing and sighing spirits. He becomes perplexed, interrogates himself and wonders at the world beyond life. A voice rings in his ear stating that one who comes here never finds an exit for his departure. This thought makes him think that he is merely an insect which is in the tight grip of an octopus that never releases what it takes. Sample the excerpt

from the poem, ‘Where Have the Dead Gone?’ for the description of the dark labyrinth and the poet’s mental state which makes him feel like an insect:

Now you descend into a dark labyrinth  
with spirits wailing and sighing all around.

Is this the world beyond life, I wonder.

I hear a voice in the air, weird and alarming:

‘You’ve come here to stay. There is no exit for you now.

I feel like an insect entombed within the tentacles of an octopus. (Where 13)

The poet imagines that he will be a sparrow in the next life. He muses over the death of a sparrow when he does not find it on his window-sill where it used to chirp and peck at the window-pane. He remains confounded to find “a fistful of feathers” and “a lump of flesh” when he opens the window. Tears flow from his eyes. He reflects over its fate and interrogates himself asking whether it died a spinster or a divorcee. Then he thinks that it does not matter whether it died a spinster or a divorcee as it faced loneliness. No one cares for a poet when he is alive. His messages are known and studied with great care after his death. Mark the excerpt from the poem, ‘Death of a Sparrow’, which reveals the interchanged role that the poet dreams of:

In my next life, while I appear on the window sill  
as a little Red Indian, decked with feathers,

you will sit in my chair

scribbling away on a loose sheet of paper

some message that only posterity will fathom.

(Where 15)

The poet never misses a funeral procession as it reminds him the final goal of life. He always attends the funeral procession, which makes him ponder over

life and its mystery related to the question of the place where the dead go.

I have followed every funeral procession in town  
of friend, relative or stranger –  
for this is the moment of introspection.  
Where does one go from here? (Where 20)

'Innocence' and 'beauty' are the two words that the poet prefers to wickedness and profanity. His religion is to preserve the purity of beauty. He sees a white pigeon and thinks whether it is a visitant from some other planet. He guesses that it may be some virgin "bathed in liquid alabaster / who escaped being ravished / by a fallen angel / when the gods were napping" (Where 22). He considers it chaste and ponders over the concept of beauty, which for him is more a state of mind than of the body. What counts is the state of mind which makes a choice between two options. Here is an excerpt from the poem 'The White Pigeon', which conveys the poet's ponderings over the idea of chastity:

Chastity is not of the body alone – it is a state of  
mind  
that chooses  
between indulgence and abstinence,  
between prevarication and truth. (Where 22)

With the passage of time, Shiv K. Kumar has left his biting tone and replaced it with the tone of love. He hopes to count the stars but finds them inconstant as they seem to change their stances. Stars are not simply stars but are the human beings who continue to play the game of hide and seek in life. He sees the stars while entering each other's bodies and moving like pawns. Human beings love and, while loving, they are lost in each other's bodies for having consummation. Sometimes they seem to be moving

like pawns in the hands of the Supreme Power and sometimes they change their viewpoints from monism to dualism. Reflect over the excerpt from the poem, 'Counting the Stars' which makes the reader muse over the journey of human life:

I started counting the stars in a small cluster  
that hung over the left steeple of Shiva temple.  
But I had hardly gone midway  
when they started playing hide and seek –  
they even entered each other's bodies  
to savour consummation.  
They moved like pawns on the chessboard.  
Each star seemed to change its stance  
from monism to dualism. (Where 24)

The poet fails to count the stars because of their inconstant stances. But the next moment he thinks that when the moon cannot be constant as it changes its face "from scowl to smile", how he can expect stars to be constant, not variables.

The poet knows well how to use memory as technique for exploring his 'Self' as well as voicing his feelings that he experienced in the journey of life. He often recalls childhood and wonders why a human being cannot remain in this stage. He wishes to remain as he was at six. He recalls his school days. The scene of a butcher with a fowl in left hand and a carver in his right hand makes him so horrified that he closes his eyes. Now he sees Sheila while wearing a blue skirt and a red crimson blouse. Her eyes seem to be shining like a rabbit's. Very innocently he asks her to step out of her blouse. In the poem, 'Lost Childhood', he recalls her response to his question, which is:

'Why don't you step out of your blouse, Sheila?'  
'No. Mom says girls should not expose themselves.'  
'So exposure is only for boys.' (Where 68)

The poet loves and knows how to decipher its script. He understands when to approach the beloved and when to retreat. He wishes to breathe in the lavender blue of her ebony hair and “the musk of her body’s contours” and infers that her fragrance might have tempted the Serpent in the Garden. He loves all colours except red which is too loud for him. When he finds her red, he retreats from the battlefield. Mark the excerpt from the poem, ‘Red is too Loud for Me’, which reveals the poet’s leaving as soon as he finds her red with anger:

I find it easy to converse with gentle hues –  
the soft green of the sea’s crest, pallor white of  
the lily,  
and faded brown of an autumn leaf.  
But when your brows go arched  
like a bowstring, and your eyes look sanguine  
like the blazing copper of the sun,  
it’s time to retreat from the battlefield.  
Red is not for me – too loud. (Where 53)

The poet loves beauty in every form, particularly woman. He worships love and has firm faith in the religion of art for art’s sake though he never becomes blind to the happenings around him and the world. What he recommends is naturalness and innocence. No doubt the poet is in Cambridge and far away from his love. But his love for her has not lessened, rather it has grown in intensity. His love is so profound that he carries her within himself “all the time, everywhere.” He feels her presence in her absence to the extent that he sees her reflection falling on every page that he reads. ‘A Letter from Cambridge’ is a moving poem, which reveals the inner recesses of the mind of the poet who feels her even in her absence.

I carry you within myself

all the time, everywhere.

In the Anderson research room  
of the University Library, your reflection  
falls on every page. I read you  
between the lines, a sort of double vision.  
When the words on a page speak to me,  
your voice intervenes, like the Jamuna  
and the Ganga intermingling on the borderline.  
It’s only when I find a page gone wet,  
I ask myself, ‘Is it my tears?’ (Where 70)

What he writes is meant for her love. She is the copyright of every poem that comes from his pen. She is the fountain of his creativity. Though he is alone, he does not feel so because of her whom he carries within his heart. He frankly admits in the letter: “Take care, Sheila. Don’t forget you are / my copyright, like every poem I write” (Where 72).

Shiv K. Kumar is a poet of intuition. Intuition begins its journey where intellect ends. Reason fetters reason and the chain continues. Reason fails to fathom the depth of the mystery of life. It is intuition alone that peeps into the mystery and shows the way. Intuition makes the dream possible and water faith for its strengthening up. He knows that in life there are “more tears than similes” and certainly these tears will be “our legacy for our progeny.” He cries when he sees the death of every dream that he dreams for its realization. “Now I cry on the death of every dream / shattered by cold reason” (Where 73). He knows that he cannot lead a life of peace and happiness with the parameter of reason. What can give him solace and peace is intuition. Hence, he prefers intuition to reason or intellect. He loves darkness or night because it symbolizes intuition. But he does not reject the value of fire, which gives warmth and an understanding of darkness. Light and darkness

are associated with each other. He knows that fire, if it gives light, can also become a cause of darkness. It is also true that only one who knows the value of darkness can see the value of light. He gets warmth and solace from the fire which comes due to the log that burns and in the end turns into ashes. Hence intuitions mark his life but intellect gives ink to them. Mark the excerpt which reveals the philosophical concept of the association of fire and darkness.

From fire I have learnt  
that what illuminates may also darken,  
that only through darkness  
one may see light,  
that oblation is sacrifice.  
That log in the hearth  
has cremated itself to ashes  
to give me solace and warmth. (Where 77)

He remains in dilemma which leads him to have war within. He loves night—the night that gives darkness and wishes that it should not give place to dawn—the dawn that gives light for reason or logic which ultimately proves to be fetters in the life of innocence and naturalness. He does not wish for any possession. What he wishes to have is a few dreams though they prove to be butterflies. Reflect over the mental state of the poet who fights with himself:

I hold nothing in my hands —  
except a few fugitive dreams  
that flit about like butterflies  
playing hide and seek with me.  
I imagine this night will never break  
into dawn. Let me be.  
I am at war with myself. (Where 81)

The poet, who believes in following instincts, listens to his urge, leaves his bed at night, walks down

the streets and finally enters a forest—the forest where he sees the darkness. He loves darkness—the symbol of intuition and makes it his torch bearer. He hears a voice which says: “You know an owl alone can negotiate its way / out of a labyrinth. / It is wiser to let things happen than / plan like a sage with a scripture in hand” (Where 95). Plans fail and unplanned things occur. Hence, it is better to let the things pass as they are not in one’s control. The use of reason or intellect is of no use. Reason makes one fall at every step. What he recommends is to continue the journey. Choice is useless. It is better to depend on intuition than merely on intellect or reason. Reflect over the excerpt from the poem ‘He Walked All Night’, which offers the poet’s musings on life:

The best way to choose is not to choose  
but just press on.  
If you plan to return home,  
it may take you a lifetime,  
as reason stumbles at every step.  
So why don’t you rest through the day  
and voyage through the night?’ (Where 95)

The poet loves animals, birds, insects—be they dogs, eagles, pigeons, ants or any. He never offers any moral directly but the reader himself is so sensitive that he finds something to learn. He attempts to trace the genesis of the birth of pain which he does not find in the eviction of the first ancestors but in the first labour through which Eve passed. This labour pain in child birth became responsible for every “facet of trauma”—be it “separation, sickness and deception” (Where 58). Since then the body has felt pain from ankles to knees and the spinal cord. There has been a battle between body and soul. Who suffers more—body or soul? Here the poet makes the mind suffer more than the body. No doubt the body suffers but the mind

suffers more as it receives the signals from every pore of the body but remains helpless as it cannot do anything. Mark the excerpt from the poem 'Pain', which reveals the helplessness of the mind over the suffering of the body:

The body wrenching  
like an unbeliever punished at the inquisition.  
It is the mind that senses constantly,  
receives signals from every part of the body,  
but remains helpless. (Where 58)

The poet makes Eve reflect over the phenomenon of her pregnancy. Eve is not sure whether she is herself responsible or it is the fruit which is to be blamed. She also muses over the possibility of pre-determined will as well as free will. But she believes that "free will is but a gossamer / fluttering in an idle wind" (Where 92). Notwithstanding she admits that she made "the first move" and allowed him to go "on a voyage / all over the landscapes" (Where 92) of her body. This physical union results in her pregnancy. The creature inside her longs for deliverance. This deliverance, she knows, will be full of pain and pleasure. What she longs for within is the search for a portal to exit. She knows that she has committed the original sin but does not know whether its result will be a reward or punishment. Mark the excerpt from the poem 'Eve's Pregnancy', which reveals Eve's reflection over her pregnancy:

All deliverance is a blend of pain and pleasure,  
honey and hemlock.  
I feel like a woodpecker pecking for exit  
through a portal, anywhere.  
Will the new creature be a reward  
or a punishment for our original sin? (Where 92)

The poet is not a slave of an institution like

marriage for love. How can love become authentic only after marriage? Is love without marriage impure? He fails to understand how lust is turned into love in the bond of marriage. He sees the birds while mating in the tree's foliage which provide a cover for "the ritual of love." The other thing that he traces in birds mating is that they are detached and not bound with any bond for the whole life. One bird hops onto the other and after performing sex act it flies away without the possibility of reunion with the same one. The poet knows that attachment brings pain. When it brings pain, why does a man not seek freedom—freedom from the bond of living for life? He is against hypocrisy and double standard of the people who believe in the continuation of the bond despite the lack of faith and mutual understanding in love. Birds are better than human beings as they are not attached to their companions because they know that the attachment will result in pain, suffering and separation. Mark the excerpt from the poem 'Birds Mating', which exposes hypocrisy of the human beings in the name of love on one side and philosophy of detachment on other side though the way does not suit to Indian values and traditions:

As each bird flies away to its own hemisphere,  
there will be no reunion hereafter —  
never the same tree, nor the same pair.  
If attachment breeds pain,  
why not seek peace in freedom?  
If the same river flows into the same sea,  
the waters would turn turbid. (Where 86)

The poet does not miss any chance to learn. In the poem 'Rag Picker', like Wordsworth's leech gatherer, the poet's ideal is a rag picker. He imagines himself a rag picker who goes on pickings. He sees a bundle of love letters, an obituary on a rooster and

some pieces of a glass bottle, the bottle which might be thrown by the spouse. He also sees “an assortment of half-eaten loaves / of bread” that “could have fed an entire slum colony.” What shocks him one day is a foetus in a tiny carton. He finds it still throbbing. This is the foetus that could become a stallion rider. But alas it was thrown by someone in the carton. Then he generalizes when he states that a man is not known by what he has but by what he throws. Mark the excerpt from the poem ‘Rag Picker’, which reflects the truth of human beings who do not hesitate in throwing even an alive foetus:

But there was a rude shock for me as I picked up  
a foetus still throbbing in a tiny carton,  
someone who might have grown into a stallion  
rider,  
flying over ditches and turnstiles,  
to win a trophy.  
A man is known  
by what he discards,  
not by what he holds in his hands. (Where 65)

A poet is more a gifted person than an ordinary one. Man finds it difficult to control his mind which becomes a monkey that cannot stay at one place. He wonders if a prophet can control it. The moment man feels his victory it slips through the fingers like a mackerel. He finds easier to break the sound barrier than to keep it under control. He shares frankly that even when he chants the Gayatri Mantra his mind starts roaming to “a pair of cats mating behind a bush.” There is one who can do this miracle. He is a poet who can focus on its focal point and succeed in taming it with the image of his thought or emotion. Mark the excerpt from the poem ‘Mind Monkey’, which reveals the magic that a poet performs in keeping mind, i.e.,

the genie under control with his imagination:

It’s only a poet, who in the midst  
of his wool-gathering, can bring it  
to the central pattern of his vision,  
and tame it to the single image  
of a thought or emotion. (Where 51)

By virtue of his technical talent, a poet succeeds in having concentration on a single emotion or idea and binding it in chains of images and figures. Shiv K. Kumar is an extraordinary poet who knows how to employ the technical configurations in order to make a poem visualize before the reader. His poetry is rich enough to evoke the fusion of idea and feeling. He employs almost all the technical ingredients that make a poem worth reading and satisfying. What makes him appealing is his confessional mode, which he uses to go into the hearts’ of his readers, who walk, talk and feel with him in his poetic world. What makes this collection different from his other collections is its simplicity in expression. He uses figures there where they seem to be indispensable and natural. Figures, like simile, metaphor and personification are used to magnify the ideas.

Here are some instances of the use of the figure ‘Simile’:

memories keep erupting  
like pustules on a fair face. (Where 16)

My brain is split into two hemispheres,  
each striking against the other  
like a pair of cymbals. (Where 28)

The following are some instances of the figure ‘Metaphor’:

Dreams are the stuff  
that a bride’s girdle is made of

or a spider's cobweb. (Where 23)

The future is a granite wall,  
impregnable even to a laser beam. (Where 26)

He breathes into abstracts and lifeless objects to make them alive. Here are some instances of the figure 'Personification':

the flames swaying their hips. (Where 76)

dreams unfurl their wings and fly away (Where 23)

Silence descended from the sky all over the earth (Where 48)

and the moon has retreated behind an ebony cloud. (Where 80)

Here are the instances of the fusion of the figures 'Simile' and 'Personification':

the flowers swing and dance –  
roses, lilies, tulips, jasmines and pansies  
sway their hips and legs, like ballerinas. (Where 50)

The famished earth relishes sipping

Benedictine like a monk in his solitary cell. (Where 79)

When the poet presents a scene, he makes a collage, which offers various layers that open image after image. Picturesqueness is the right word for his images mixed with figures. Here are the two instances, which offer the flavour of his images fused with figures.

Love here is a migratory bird  
like birds from Siberia converging  
on the Laksher lake in Ajmer. (Where 71)

The spring was

a sheet of crystal glass  
through which one could see  
the birth and death of time. (Where 43)

In comparison of his earlier poetry collections, he uses simple words and natural images in his phrases to make them easily imagined and understood by the reader. "Rickety wooden benches" (Where 18), "labyrinth with no exit" (Where 28), "carving of memories" (Where 41), "a palmful of water" (Where 43), "landscape of time" (Where 43), "the elixir of life" (Where 48), "ominous silence" (Where 50) and "sanctum sanctorum" (Where 62) etc., are the instances of his phrases. The other technique that he uses for making the reader interested in the poem is his questioning method. The reader's curiosity to know and go deep continues till the end. He inserts images even in his questions which flash on the mind's screen. Here is a question concerning hunger and the image of 'dry river bed' and 'dry twigs':

Isn't your hunger like a dry river bed  
with intestines shrunk into a handful of dry twigs?  
(Where 21)

While sitting on a peak of the hill the poet feels that he cannot tell a lie because the air that blows there is pure. Here is a chain of questions concerning his survey of the hills and valleys before him:

Who designed this layout?  
Who was the landscapist?  
Who the architect ?  
What's rising at this dawnbreak  
from that valley, down there?  
Is it mist rising from  
some cauldron in the valley?  
Or some concoction  
brewing for the gods? (Where 31)

He tries to generalize the experiences that he has gained during the course of life. He takes a particular thing first and then its generalization comes naturally from his pen. Here are some instances of his generalization:

Will man ever realize that the only way to pray  
is to create, not kill?  
That the way to salvation  
is through love and compassion,  
not violence? (Where 50)

But the past never dies –  
It returns in many guises. (Where 52)

*Where Have the Dead Gone? and Other Poems* remains a mystery like its title. The poet in Shiv K. Kumar attempts to decipher the unwritten script and listen to the unheard melodies of this other world, the hangover of which dominates in the evening of his life. He wishes to remain calm and at ease while having a positive attitude in life. He lives intuitively and finds that “The way to equipose / is to sleepwalk through life” (Where 35). He has lost the teeth of irony, contrast and paradox with which he used to bite. What he has now are memories, which make him wander in the memory lanes. He loves words, which come out from his pen naturally and softly with meaning, music and intensity. He does not wish to give any message through his poetry though the reader himself becomes aware and shows his interest in understanding life through his poems—the poems which speak of the experiences in life.

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# The Diasporic Poetry of G.S.Sharat Chandra

Basavaraj Naikar

## Abstract :

G.S. Sharat Chandra hailed from Karnataka. He studied Law but practised poetry and opted it for a profession and joined the University of Missouri, U.S.A. as a Professor of creative writing. He earned his laurels as a poet, novelist and short story writer of Indian Diaspora in America. The paper is an effort to understand the major themes articulated in his two poetry collections namely *Heirloom* and *Once or Twice* out of his five poetry books. It also examines Chandra's diasporic sensibility in his nostalgic reflections of his homely experiences, his migration and his longing for home while living in America. That's why 'family' remains a dominant metaphor in his poems giving an autobiographical shades to some of his poems particularly to the epistolary series of poems "Letters from My Father."

**Keywords :** Diaspora, family, east-west encounter nostalgia.

G.S. Sharat Chandra (1945-2000) was a poet of Indian Diaspora living in America. He has published five collections of poetry namely, *April in Nanjangud* (1971), *Once or Twice* (1974), *Heirloom* (1978) *Immigrants of Loss* (1993) and *Family of Mirrors* (1993). Recently he has also published a short story collection entitled *Sari of the Gods* (1998). He hails from Nanjangud in Mysore district of Karnataka State, India. After his education in Law at Pune (India) he went to Canada and received another law degree from Osgoode Law School in Toronto. There he felt that "lawyers were pompous asses... There was racism in Canada then and no one would hire me. I left Canada and went to Iowa City." (Mackle : 1996) It was there that Chandra

began to realize an ambition cherished since his days as a teenager – to become a poet. This was his greatest achievement. Later he became a Professor of Creative Writing in the University of Missouri, Kansas State, USA and practised the genre of poetry, fiction, and short fiction. In the early seventies, he published interesting translations of a few vacanas of Sarvajna in *London Magazine*. A brief look at his career is enough to show how he was compelled by the contingencies of his life and quirks of fate to leave his motherland and settle in America in search of better material comforts and recognition. Obviously he was destined to be an expatriate poet who was to oscillate between two cultures i.e. native Hindu culture and American culture at least in the initial stage of his migration. In the later stage, he was slowly absorbed by the American culture, which diminished his attraction for the native culture and nostalgic attachment. As the poet's vista of experience grew wider, his perceptions of life grew sharper and his dilemmas also might have multiplied. A migratory bird has to keep on adjusting itself to ever-new atmosphere without losing its basic identity. "We are all, he seems to say, immigrants in the land of imagination." (Russ : 1993) He believes that "It is human to miss something that was there before – country, town, place, street, wives, husbands." (Mackle : 1996) Thus we may trace an evolution in Sharat Chandra's poetic career, which begins with native experience, passes through immigrant experience and ends up with American experience.

Sharat Chandra's early experience in his native land may be seen in his early collections of poetry. In his interview with Mary Vasudeva and Deepika Bahri, Sharat Chandra clarifies his views about his native place and childhood experience as follows: "No neglect or abandonment by family, as Bruce King erroneously speculates in his book *Modern Indian Poets in English*. I

had a wonderful childhood in a large family. But the sense of being lost is a quest for answers not simply for myself, but for understanding the conflicting psychological selves we possess.” (Mary & Bahri, 13)

In the present article an effort has been made to understand the major themes articulated in *Heirloom* and *Once or Twice*. The poems in this collection show not only his native and homely experience in India especially in Karnataka, but also his separation from his motherland and the consequent nostalgia. Like many globetrotting poets, Sharat Chandra also has the advantage of adopting a contrastive mode of perception i.e. east- west encounter. Familial relations happen to be the dominant themes in the poems in *Heirloom*. Family, therefore, becomes a dominant metaphor controlling the poetic perception of Sharat Chandra. While in India he prepares himself to go to America and while in America, he nostalgically remembers India and corresponds with his father and other relatives. “I feel terribly nostalgic and miss everything that was part of my life. But it is important that this sort of nostalgia shouldn’t overwhelm the sense of universal aesthetics. Poetry is art and art doesn’t accommodate sentimentality.” (Naikar, 116) “Chandra’s particular hell, like Dante’s, is centred in his sense of displacement...Dante himself, banished from his beloved city of Florence, demonstrated that one of the essential qualities of all damnation is homesickness. Chandra, in his updated way, knows exactly what he means.” (Russ : 1995)

Most of the poems in *Heirloom* and *Once or Twice* deal with Indian, especially South Indian, more especially South Karnatakian life -- like painting, sculpture, beggary, bureaucracy, funerals, holy shrines, fishermen, farmers and other details of cultural environment. Family or familial relationships happen to be the dominant metaphors in his Indian

poems. The relationship between father and son in its various manifestations is an important motif in some of his poems.

In "Poems for My Father", the poet recounts the last moments of his father and his attachment with the latter and the former’s expectations about the latter. The first stanza describes the illness of his father and how the entire family is silently worried about it:

In the kitchen my father  
squats as usual,  
the family gathers around  
to discuss his last illness,  
my father looks well,  
he scoops up the rice and curry  
eats it calmly,  
he too is talking of his illness.

Then he describes how his father's disease was not diagnosed properly, how it was malaria and not cancer, which enervated him and how he appeared to be recovering. The poems, obviously, articulates the poet's nostalgic memory about his father, the concern of the members of his family for the father's health and their anxiety about his imminent death. The poet, who has been living in America thousands of miles away from his motherland, feels a special bondage to his family and the head of the family i.e. father. What is admirable in the poet is that in spite of being in America and enjoying a very comfortable life there, he cannot afford to forget his father as the Indians, especially Hindus attach a great deal of importance to the father because father and mother happen to be gods for the children.

But when the poet goes away from India to America he receives a letter from his mother that the father has started bleeding. The poet is unable to reconcile himself to the harsh reality and has a wishful

dream. He suffers from deep anxiety about his father.

Again the father appears to be temporarily better and wants to wait for the poet's publication of his book of poems named after his native place i.e. Nanjangud, for a hearing aid and a little port wine. But before the father's expectations are fulfilled he is overtaken by death. After his death in Mysore, he appears to the poet in America (i.e. Mount Pleasant) and seems to talk with him telepathically.

The expatriate or diasporic experience consists in one's going away from one's country and coming back to it nostalgically and to notice the change that has been brought about in the native country by Time. It is this experience, which has been recounted in the "Return" section of the poem. When the poet lands in India, perhaps at Bangalore or Bombay, he feels the torrid heat of the tropical country, which provides a sharp contrast to the cool climate of America:

At the airport  
The family Fiat  
crackles in the heat,  
the doors are hot  
as the underside  
of an electric iron.

The backwardness of the village, hence of the country stares hard in the poet's face:

The roads to home  
are scant bound as ever  
coolies move along the potholes  
with gravel pans on their head  
bullock carts trundle  
in and out the car's wheel-span.

The effect of Time on life may be felt conspicuously. His mother has become old and looks as frail as a sparrow. His father is dead and cremated according

to the customs of his caste:

My father  
cremated by the river's bend  
then transferred in a basket  
skull pelvis femur  
lies under the mango tree  
free of caste and skin.

Life continues and modernity has crept into the town. The rich have bought air-conditioners and the poor are reconciled to their lot. The poet plans to go for a pilgrimage. The mother is reconciled to her widowhood and loneliness. The idea of the father's death makes the poet aware of the possibility of reincarnation, which is part of Hindu faith.

In the poem entitled "Consistently Ignored," the poet shows the boy's curiosity, seriousness and the maternal humour and myth-making capacity. In the villages of Karnataka and also perhaps in India, the mothers tease their children by saying that they bought them from some beggar or caught them from the sky. It is this collective myth that the poet tries to deconstruct in the present poem:

Consistently ignored in a family of ten  
I asked mother, 'Am I your real son?'  
She paused from grinding spice,  
'No, I bought you from a beggar  
For a bushel of rice'  
From behind sisters giggled.

The boy (i.e. the poet) unable to distinguish between humorous myth and reality takes it very seriously and begins to search for the beggars from whom he might have been bought:

I matched features, spied on beggars  
Roamed the backyard thinking  
Of distant huts, certain

My mother sat busy in one  
Scheming to trade another son  
For fish to add to that bushel.

The boy's inability to understand the parental humour is itself quite humorous and throws light upon the working of a boy's psyche.

The metaphor of the family is conspicuous in "Brothers." The brothers, who are brought up together and grow together, are separated by the contingencies of life like marriage and jobs at different places. Perhaps the separation is part of one's growth in life. The poet deplors that:

My brothers come visiting less and less  
they come  
leaving their wives and children  
in sleep.

The poet wants to be close with them once again and longs for the bliss of childhood marked by fraternal affinity and cordiality:

I hold their hands  
we are children once again  
this is the dream I understand  
which takes me  
to places where I would stay  
places  
I would not want to leave.

The poet longs to recover the lost affinity and cordiality:

We should go on this way  
forever  
I tell them they listen they listen  
they promise to be closer.

In this poem Sharat Chandra obviously shows the universal experience of man in very simple terms. He

has shown how the process of growth in life involves the loss of childhood paradise and the distancing from the close relatives and how a sensitive soul longs for the recovery of that paradise. The poem remotely brings to our mind the poems of similar themes by Wordsworth.

In *Heirloom*, there are a few poems, which are autobiographical in nature and give expression to his thoughts about his personal predicament and dilemmas. In "My Thirty Third Morning" Sharat Chandra offers an autobiographical picture about himself. He turns thirty-three on a grey morning and dreams of a song, of a crow, of ducks with silent squawks and thrushes with suspended whistles and imagines himself to be a crow being scared of squawking ducks. His thirty-third birthday is marked by a sort of fear and mechanical living without any grand or colourful dimension to it:

The crow crows at the break of light  
Who would say it has inclinations  
Scares easily of squawking ducks  
Head-on thrush collisions,  
It's none of these but myself  
Turning thirty-three on a grey morning.

"My Thirty-Fifth Birthday" is a nostalgic evocation of the poet's childhood in Karnataka, India and also shows a contrast between the Indian past and the American present. He, for example, remembers his vernacular medium of instruction and his slips in the recitation of Sanskrit hymns from the Veda for which he is disliked by his High School teacher. Likewise, he remembers his chaste aunt, who used to sniff a brand of snuff named after a goddess. Similarly he remembers the old gramophone records of military hotels blaring their sound and chasing his car. He also remembers Mahatma Gandhi, who taught him

the lesson of native life:

Inside a touring talkies  
Gandhi himself pointed  
his fingers at me from a slide  
which read  
'Be worthy of your mother country.'

The irony may be in the contrast between the past days spent in India and the present stay of the poet in America:

All this  
just because  
until late in the night  
in this American town  
I drank scotch  
and cursed in English.

In "Buckled to My Waist," Sharat Chandra recounts his close relationship with his father and the importance of paternal advice. He seems to request his seven-year dead father to forgive his mistakes as well as his longing for perfection. He confesses that it took him fifteen years to realize the truth of his father's advice:

It has taken me fifteen years to learn  
the wisdom of your last whisper,  
fifteen years of dragging a makeshift  
bridge of words buckled to my waist.

The poet seems to be disillusioned with poetry, which has become a commercial affair, 'a chase of ordeals without hoof.' Although the eyes travel freely, the mind cannot do so as it is anchored to its bone. Similarly, the poet may be engaged in the free exercise of his imagination, but he cannot soar in the sky, as he is earth-bound. The over-all vision of the poems seems to be the striking contrast between the harsh reality and the unshackled play of imagination.

In the epistolary series of poems entitled "Letters from My Father" Sharat Chandra offers details of his family background in Nanjangud, the Government of Karnataka, their problems and concerns and socio-religious problems etc. In the first letter, the father writes about the three ministers or politicians, who wear the Gandhi-cap and control the Government and debate over the use of English language. Then he writes about his poverty:

Today we had no rice  
so we ate green beans and curd  
the milkman is out looking for a patch of grass,  
it has not rained since 1973

Then the father writes to the son about the failure of rains in Karnataka and the effort of the Government to get some artificial rains with the American help:

our government has proclaimed  
they'll make rain  
the eldest son of our chief  
is already in America  
to ask the President for some clouds.

The ironical contrast between the scientific method of attracting the clouds and the religious especially superstitious method of conducting some ritual to attract the rains is suggested in a very subtle fashion by the poet. The hunger of the people is described in a very ironical tone by the nephew of the poet:

Your nephew says  
if the government cordoned off  
the hungry millions together  
over a parched field of wheat  
they'd cry enough to make bread.

In the second letter, the father informs the son about the effect of political life upon the civilian life.

The poet's doctor-sister is transferred to some other place simply because she made the Deputy Minister's wife wait for some time.

In the third letter, the father informs the son about the geographical and social changes, which have affected them adversely. The heat is terrible hence 'sacrificial.' The effect of Time on human age is described by the father:

This afternoon my skin hangs heavy on my back.

The economic poverty has brought about a lot of change, almost degeneration in the society of Karnataka. It is indirectly described by the poet:

The washerman's donkey hops  
round and round in the alley  
it isn't convinced  
the garbage pail is empty of dinner leaves.

This description is followed by an ironical one:

No one eats with leaves any more  
it's faster from hand to mouth  
if there's enough to hand  
to mouth...

The fourth letter recounts the father's mystic experience so common in old age among the Hindus:

I have a strange feeling  
someone sits in the front-room  
fanning the heat from his face:  
do you think it is Him?  
Perhaps he took a shortcut by draught...

The mystic experience is accompanied by a philosophical reflection in a Hindu's life. The father asks such a philosophical question:

Isn't the body a wrap within a wrap  
folds of goatskin

hiding the dark it hides from  
the dark it'll accompany?

In the fifth and last letter, the father writes about the poet's mother. It easily shows the mother's religiosity, concern and affection for the son:

Your mother sends dried camphor  
from the feet of the Lord:  
her eyes still light up at your letters  
though she fails on her feet.

The father further advises him to go to the third country for better prospects and nobler ways of living. The last section looks like an anti-climax on account of its note of practical suggestion:

If you don't hear from me  
do not be pensive  
it only means  
I've run out of ink...

The lengthy epistolary poem, thus, offers a varied picture of the Hindu family, socio-political, financial and mystical aspects of life. All these details are part of the poet's diasporic nostalgia for his motherland and his desire to keep in touch with his roots lest he should forget or lose them as he is overwhelmed by the American culture.

"The Black Deity" depicts the superstitions of the Hindus in an objective fashion. When the poet watches the black idol of a goddess on the Mylapur hill of Madras, he notices the hot afternoon and the drying trees. The horrid summer of India creates the problem of water and food for the natives. The villagers, who cannot understand the irregularities of Nature, blindly attribute them to the wrath of a goddess in accordance with their anthropomorphic religious belief:

At the village men whispered  
Of the black deity's wrath -

Pestilences or death in the family.  
The priest counselling sacrifice  
Kept glancing at the tree  
Where the batu-birds stilt-walked.

The poet, who understands the superstitious belief of the Indians, tries to visualize the scene of people getting ready to offer the sacrifice:

Now, miles away from the tree,  
I have a vision of a posse  
With lanterns and axes  
Creeping up the hill.

"Vendor of Fish" offers a beautiful picture of the life of a fisherman marked by hard labour and hope of security and comfort so essential for human happiness. The poet describes his diary of hard work in the first stanza:

All night he waits at the harbour  
his eyes the colour of sea  
the sea the colour of trawlers  
he grabs the finest wipes them  
on his shawl his shawl  
the colour of blood.

One may easily see the unifying bond between the fisherman, the boat, the sea and the fish in the stanza. There is almost a religious devotion in the fisherman for the whole phenomenon of his profession.

The fish that the fisherman catches has a practical, especially a commercial value for him. It is inevitable for his survival i.e. for his food:

Fish the colour of rupees  
he thinks of the meal he'll buy  
the meal of chapatis and kurma  
the fish in the smell of kurma  
he packs them in the basket with ice  
his hands the colour of fire.

It is the dream of a better life that galvanizes him and quickens his movements. The dream also enhances his aesthetic sensibility thereby enabling him to appreciate the beauty of the fish. His joy of life expresses itself in the form of a song:

He leaps on the tar road faster  
than sweat can print his feet  
the distance is the colour of dreams  
the fish in the basket shine  
sawdust daubs their fins  
he sings in praise of their colour.

In "Self-Portrait" Sharat Chandra offers an autobiographical picture. He claims that he has no belief in astrology and does not have a clear picture of his future life:

There are scars instead  
of lines on my palm  
I've no biography  
only remembrance.

He is aware that he life is marked by a sense of emptiness:

I say  
leaves have a habit  
of giving in to emptiness  
like oysters with pearls  
missing...

When he encounters an astrologer in a nameless street, who holds a horoscope to his face, he bares his shirt and shows them his bony body and walks away from them.

"Relatives" (*Once or Twice*, P.11) happens to be an imaginary picture about the poet's own future life. When he writes his last poem, his relatives come to him and ransack his body for the last poem and try to

arbitrate over his art. The poet seems to be satirizing the possessiveness and the greed of the relatives, who want to derive some profit or even reputation from the poet, but alas, without trying to understand his heart:

His manuscripts fly around  
like feathers of a shot bird  
his love spreading  
her long dress her hair.

They try to understand some hidden message in his tears and examine his cheeks. They seem to be in a hurry to understand him:

he examines the cheeks as he wipes them  
he stomps his boot with urgency

When they cannot understand the meaning of the live poems, they believe in the afterlife of the same and therefore, seal them in transparent wrappers and send them to lawyers:

He believes in the afterlife of the poem  
as silverfish eggs of moth  
he seals them in cellophane  
he sends them to his lawyers.

Finally when they cannot understand the meaning of the poem in their lifetime, they leave it to their children to pursue it:

We'll bequeath our search  
to our children they say  
owning the last poem  
will be its own reward they say.

But they feel proud of the physical possession of the poem, though they can never enter its semantic heart.

In "Tirumalai" (*Once or Twice*, P.18), the poet highlights the contrast between religious faith and the harsh and ugly reality in the Hindu context.

Venkateswara happens to be the Lord of Seven Hills and attracts thousands of devotees every day. The poet also being a Hindu is naturally inspired to visit the deity:

Lord Vishnu's place  
Also known as Lord Venkateswara  
He turned stone on the seventh hill  
While visiting earth on a curse  
He ran into woman trouble.

After explaining the mythical background of Lord Venkateswara's descent to the earth, the poet describes various aspects of the deity's role. He is known as a rich-god in South India:

Since then he's grown famous  
As arbiter of disputes  
Bribed with rubies and emeralds  
By those who can afford such bribes.  
Politicians speak well of him too  
So do government servants  
Wanting promotion or increment  
Women wanting child or husband.  
Some visit incognito  
Others with bare hands  
Or faceful of tears.

Thus people have pitched their faith in the Lord of Seven Hills for various reasons. The poet also is made by the circumstances to believe in it:

I, when I was four,  
Gave the Lord my head of hair  
I was told that would make me rich  
My hair prosperous.

But the irony is that the poet's faith is totally nullified by the harsh reality of his experience:

The father who said that is dead.  
My mother who held me to the barber

Ails with age and despair  
The hills have changed hands  
I have grown bald  
And owe two payments  
On the alimony.

The brief examination of the Indian themes in Sharat Chandra's poems shows how the opposite pulls of longing (for India) and belonging (to America) control his emotions and perception and how he has to strike a balance between physically going away from the native country and emotionally coming home repeatedly. This paradoxical experience of going and coming happens to be an important aspect of diasporic experience.

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## A Theme in Forster's *A Passage to India*

Dr. Stephen Gill

#### Abstract :

*A Passage to India* is regarded as E.M. Forster's masterpiece. It shows his wide knowledge of India and its people. It also explores the race relations and the possibility of friendship between an Indian and a Britan through the characters Fielding and Aziz. In the given circumstances there is no such possibility but personal relation surely is. The Anglo-Indians feel that they are in India to rule the country. There is also intra-racial discord for example between Hindus and Muslims. In the midst of all such differences Mrs. Moore is an angel of love and peace.

**Keywords :** Native, corrective, unveil, damage, utburst.

E.M. Forster went to India around 1912- 1913 and came back after the war. In 1921, he went again, but this time as Secretary to the Maharaja of Dewas State Senior. The result of his both trips was *A Passage to India*, which came out in 1924. The novel shows Forster's wide knowledge of India and can be considered "as admirable corrective to Kipling," though the title is misleading because nothing happens during the travel. Most actions take place in India.

The novel is acclaimed as the masterpiece of E.M. Forster. He borrowed the title from a poem "Passage to India" by Walt Whitman, published in 1871. Whitman wrote this poem to commemorate the completion of the Suez Canal and the Pacific Railroad. The poet anticipates further progress, prosperity and unity. In the fifth section, he affirms his faith that "Nature and

Man shall be disjoined and diffused no more. The true son of God shall absolutely fuse them. The same message of hope and love, Forster conveys in this novel.

In the beginning of the second chapter, Dr. Aziz while dining with his friends discusses the possibility of having friendship with English. The impossibility is exhibited through the changing relations between Fielding and Aziz. It seems to be the apparent theme of the novel. But behind the association between both the friends or Indians and English, there is something else that Forster wishes his readers to know. The novelist likes neither Indians nor Anglo-Indians. There is no marked difference in his attitude towards the rulers and the ruled. His chief objective, perhaps, is to point out that both the parties are pursuing the same path of no purpose; they are without any serious goal to arrive at. He tries to unveil the frivolities and the vanities of human race. These are not only Indians who are divided among themselves even English are divided and it is equally applicable to any nation. Individuals are separated politically, economically and socially, and the reasonable solution is 'only connect', an epithet of *Howards End*.

This is the central message of the poem by Walt Whitman, whose title Forster borrowed. In the poem love is shown as the possible connective—capable of resolving the differences. In the novel it is portrayed through the incident that occurs in the last chapter at the Krishna Festival.

Fielding and Stella sail in a boat which collide in the darkness with that of the Aziz and Ralph. At that time, a servitor casts an image on the water which is the denotation of God. All the four outsiders are united

in the water; they experience a sort of baptismal ceremony. Alan Wilde comments:

Strange, inexplicable powers have succeeded where Fielding's reasonable attitudes failed. But the accident is different from the one that brought Ronny and Adels together. Here there is not a spurious unity but, Forster would have us believe, a spirit of genuine love: the forcible meeting of the occupants of the boats engenders a triumph of understanding and affection, and indeed the whole festival builds up to a reassertion of the possibility of personal relations. Aziz, Fielding, Ralph and Stella themselves undergo a baptism by water. Like the Hindus, they are purged of suspicion, hatred, and pettiness; the reconciliation are genuine. (Wilde, 155)

Another incident which is equally significant is that when Dr. Aziz denounces the friendship of Fielding and informs him that as long as English rule India, their friendship will remain an impossibility:

But the horse didn't want it—they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file; the temples, the tanks, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath; they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices. 'No, not yet,' and the sky said, 'No, not there. (Forster, 336)

Aziz cries that their friendship cannot be formed on the earth. Even the sky says 'not yet'. Forster suggests that is possible only in the realm of heart which is the seat of God who is all—love.

Mrs. Moore is the embodiment of love; she believes that God is love and is omnipresent. But the Anglo-Indians feel that they are in India to rule. Being cold

and indifferent, they help in widening the gulf in human relations. Mrs. Moore tries to convince her son that God is love, but she fails. Professor Godbole and Dr. Aziz cannot understand each other. The Bridge Party to fill the gap between the natives and the English proves a failure. Even Fielding and Dr. Aziz have difficulties in communication. There is animosity and distrust between the Hindus and Muslims. The most serious and disappointing break-down is in the relations of Adele and Ronny. Adele comes to India to marry him, but finds no love between them. She informs Ronny that they cannot marry. Later on, she takes her words back and are engaged. It does not take long for the truth to dawn upon her. She decides not to marry a person who is so indifferent, practical and is devoid of any spark of love. This was her hallucination, in other words, a revelation in the caves. She was not assaulted by anyone. Actually, it was the realization of the reality of her marriage. She was occupied with that thought in the train and the same idea was hidden in her subconscious before entering into the caves. She asked Aziz about his marriage. Without doubt, the marriage had turned into a kind of obsession for her. A loveless marriage was not less than a rape and it tormented her in the horrible darkness of the caves. She reveals it later on to Fielding:

I am certainly in that state when I saw the caves, and you suggest that I had an hallucination there, the sort of thing—though in awful form—that makes some women think they've had an offer of marriage when none was made. (Forster, 108)

In the world of clashes, conflicts, bickering and mistrusts, Mrs. Moore acts as an angel of love and peace. She finds no problem in communication. She along with Adele makes sincere efforts to contact the

natives. She respects the faith of Dr. Aziz. Moreover

"Mrs. Wilcox and Mrs. Moore have rightly been seen as a pair of Universal Aunts whose love—like Marianne Thornton's for Forster himself—can pursue people beyond the grave. And the metaphysical implications of the Marabar Caves are too demonstrable to be denied." (Wall, 87)

Mrs. Moore dies long before the novel finishes, but her presence is felt till the end. After her demise, she is associated with an Indian goddess. Her name causes Aziz to renounce his claims of damage from Adele. He drops the idea of demanding the compensation for he felt it was Mrs. Moore's wish that he should spare the woman who was about to marry her son, that it was the only honour he could pay her, and he renounced with a passionate and beautiful outburst the whole of the compensation money, claiming only costs. (Forster, 227)

Mrs. Moore is neither intellect nor mechanical advancement of the present age. She is a spirit that speaks for divinity. Another woman, Mrs. Wilcox could not stand the sophisticated talks. As spiritual heritage of England, she illustrates the capacity of a person to love. Only through her reconciliation is possible. It is Mrs. Moore's name that made Adele Quested to withdraw her false charges. At the Bridge Party on one side of the lawn are English women and their husbands who feel uncomfortable in the presence of many Indians. On the other side, stand the natives, embarrassed and some of them contemptuous of the English. It is Fielding who mixes up with Indians and Mrs. Moore along with Adele try to connect both the groups. But a time comes when she is plunged into a mood of utter despair. She turns a pessimist after entering into the caves. She loses her faith in marriage

and thinks that “the human race would have become a single person centuries ago if marriage was any use.” To her the caves represent nothingness that she sees everywhere. Mrs. Moore says “Pathos, piety, courage—they exist, but are identical, and so is faith. Everything exists, nothing has value.”

*A Passage to India* also illustrates that suspicion is a sickness that destroys the beauty of friendship not only between the English and the Indians, but also among Indians themselves.

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Dr. Stephen Gill, a noted Indo-Canadian poet, short story writer and novelist. Besides several awards he got in the past, he was honored with SDGC Canada 150 Service Award on July 1, 2017.

## Creation and Criticism: Indo-English Theories of Fiction

Dr. Vinita Jha

### Astract :

Indian English fiction has no established rules or principles till date. Different writers have voiced their own views. Raja Rao holds that Indians write about their life and spirit in an alien language. English is the language of our intellectual make-up but not of our emotional make-up. Again he says that he writes to satisfy himself. R.K. Narayan is mainly concerned with his characters, their oddities and eccentricities. Similarly Manohar Malgonkar is more interested in incidents, in improbabilities, in unexpected twists. His forte is narrative art and claims to belong to the tradition of romantic novels. He believes that the Indian artist must be true to the Indian ethos and milieu. Kamla Das is frankly in favour of Indianized English.

**Keywords :** Peddler, erotic, interminable, ethos, ambience.

The moment we speak of Indo-English theories of fiction, it is presumed, and it ought to be presumed, that the writing of Indian fiction in English has been and continues to be guided, conditioned, or moulded by a distinct and established set of concerned principles and theories. The unflattering truth is that there are no such viable exercises to fall back upon. The reasons for the absence of an articulate, systematic and integrated body of critical theories or principles relating to Indian literature in English in general and Indian fiction in English in particular are neither difficult nor far to seek. In the first place, the Indian creative writer, opting for English as the medium

of their expression, as well as the concerned critics have received their formal education on the western model, and their critical orientation or re-orientation allows them no scope and perhaps leaves with no necessity either for the formulation of critical theories or principles.

Secondly, nothing, almost nothing, worth the name has been done in the field of Indo-English theory of fiction for the reason that a number of creative writers themselves have written a good deal about their own views on the function or purpose of art or literature and the use of English in their works. This kind of critical exercise, creation and criticism going together, is in practice also in the west, but the scene is different there for the western critics lean as much on Plato, Aristotle, Longinus and Horace as a Dryden, Dr. Johnson, Coleridge and Arnold. Not unexpectedly, all that we can do in the present Indo-English literary scenario is to record and analyze the views of concerned writers on (i) art or literature, and (ii) the medium of their creative expression, in a clear, cogent and systematic manner. We propose to take up for consideration the views of Raja Rao, to be followed by those of other major writers of Indo-English fiction.

In the Foreword to his first published novel, *Kanthapura*, (1938), Raja Rao says that the 'telling of the story has not been easy' (Rao 5) because of the use of English as the medium of expression in this novel. He says; One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought - movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I used the word 'alien' yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up-like Sanskrit or Persian was

before-but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. (Rao 6)

He goes on to say that in respect of style the 'tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression, even as the tempo of American or Irish life has gone into the making of theirs'. (Rao 6) In our epics and Puranas, as he puts it, episode 'follows episode, and when our thoughts stop our breath stops, and we move on to another thought. This was and still is the ordinary style of story - telling'. And in *Kanthapura* he states: 'I have tried to follow it myself in this story'.

In one of his essays entitled 'The Writer and the Word', dealing with the problem of communication, Raja Rao says:

Triple are the constituents of a book-the word, the author, the reader. The word which says what the author has to indicate, and the reader has to apprehend, seems to be the one element we seem to neglect, as if it were something we know so well that we may not investigate its nature, its function, its end. (Naik 3)

According to him, unless 'word becomes Mantra no writer is a writer, and no reader is a reader' and so for 'the right reader-to-be, the writer has... to become an *Upasaka* of the word'. (Naik- 5)

In the course of an interview Raja Rao speaks of his 'peculiar style' (D.S. 123), and answers questions put to him by Ranavir Rangra:

Rangra : we often hear that one can express better in one's mother-tongue rather than in any other language. But you chose to adopt English as

the medium of expression for your creative writing. What was it that led you to make this choice?

Raja Rao : I would have liked to express myself in Sanskrit. It is the richest language in the world. It is a most sophisticated language. You can use it, play with it in the way you like. But I am afraid, my Sanskrit is not good enough. Though my mother-tongue was Kannada, I was brought up in Hyderabad. So my Kannada was not good either. I did not think it sufficient for my intellectual perversities. So I needed some language that I knew better than Kannada and that was English. (DS 123)

In answer to another question Raja Rao says: 'I have no readers in view at all. I write for myself'. And he continues in the same vein when he says: 'I take writing as a Sadhana, a spiritual Sadhana. That is why, I write so little and take a long time to complete my text'. (DS 114) In answer to yet another question he states : 'I don't care a damn for the readers when I write. I try to say something for myself and if that is interesting to me, it would be interesting to the public. I don't think of the public as such. May be that is why I write difficult books'. Raja Rao further says: 'communication for me is that which gets communicated to me. That's all'. (DS 118) The interviewer asks him a very significant question relating to a writer's commitment:

Rangra: It is often said that every author must be a committed writer. Do you also subscribe to this view? If so, whom do you think the writer should be committed to?

Raja Rao : I cannot say about others. But I am committed to Advait Vendanta. I am a Sadhaka. (DS 118)

And on being asked if he at all wrote poetry at any point of time, he says that he did never write

poetry and that people regard his prose as 'poetic'. (DS 119)

As a writer R.K. Narayan was always sceptical of the usefulness of literary enquiries and interviews; he shunned publicity, and yet, from time to time he gave interviews, and spoke and wrote about himself and his art, about the use of English in his books, and about other related issues. He says:

They always try to read meaning into my books, trace a theme, relate this character to that, make a connection between hero and hero. I wish they would leave me and my books alone. (DS 121)

Narayan wishes to be left alone along with his books, and yet in a brief note captioned 'The Critical Faculty' he speaks of an ego, operating behind every artistic effort, that does not and cannot accept any kind of adverse criticism,. He observes:

Any artistic effort has a lot of ego behind it and can never admit criticism. The only two categories that a writer or a musician recognizes those that admire and those that do not have the wits to understand a palpitating heart. (Mehta- 150-51)

And he goes on to observe: 'if the review is all praise, then the author feels that the reviewer is a clever fellow full of subtle understanding, but if it is adverse he cries 'These fellows lack elementary intelligence and discrimination'. (Narayan 88) Much though Narayan may say about his being left alone as a writer, no author can afford to be above praise or censure, for the relationship between creation and criticism is deep, vital and indissoluble.

In the course of an interview R.K. Narayan spoke to Ved Mehta that 'to be a good writer anywhere ... one must have roots-both in religion and in family. I

have these things'. (Narayan 88) Similarly, in an interview with William Welsh he says:

My main concern is with human character – a central character from whose point of view the world is seen, and who tries to get over a difficult situation, or succumbs to it, or fights it in his own setting'. (Mehta 148)

Explaining his view of the comic as a gap between being and becoming, Narayan goes on to say: 'A man may think he is frivolous or dishonest, but without realizing it he achieves something serious. This always happens. A man thinks he wants to do something and it may turn out as something else'. (Lakshmi- 124) It is this view that explains Narayan's comic or ironic vision of life. Irony in his case, we find, is not just a verbal tool, but also an instrument of 'moral discovery'. In the course of yet another interview Narayan says: 'I value human relationship very much, very intensely. It makes one's existence worthwhile – human relationship in any and every form, whether at home or outside. I think I have expressed this philosophy in my work successfully'. (Naik 77) However, he is not interested in social or political relationships, for he works mainly on individual characters, their oddities and eccentricities.

R.K. Narayan has no taste for the tragic or the amorous. In this connection he observes: Particularly after D. H. Lawrence, no writer can have anything original or fresh to say about lovers ... when a couple, even if they are characters in my own novel, want privacy, I leave the room'. (ILR- 6)

As for the use of English as the medium of expression in his own fiction and in that of other Indian writers, R. K. Narayan speaks clearly, and in a

forthright manner. He says:

...'Indian English' is often mentioned with some amount of contempt and patronage, but is a legitimate development and needs no apology. We have fostered the language for over a century and we are entitled to bring it in line with our own habits of thought and idiom. (EL-10)

Without being apologetic about the use of English as the medium of expression in Indian fiction, Narayan asserts that English is not at all an alien language. In 'Fifteen Years' Narayan imagines a trial scene in which he makes English language defend itself against the charge that since it is the language of colonial rulers, it must leave independent India and go back to its own country'. (Narayan- 197) In 'To a Hindi Enthusiast' Narayan declares: 'For me, at any rate, English is an absolutely Swedish language. English of course, in a remote horoscopic sense, is a native of England, but it enjoys, by virtue of its uncanny adaptability, citizenship in every country of the world. It has sojourned in India longer than you and I and is entitled to be treated with respect. It is my hope that English will soon be classified as a non-regional Indian language' (Narayan 15) In 'English in India: The process of transmutation', once again, Narayan speaks about the nativization or Indianization of English language. In essay after essay, paper after paper, Narayan pleads for the Indianization of English language.

It is true, as V.A. Shahane says in his paper entitled 'Khushwant Singh: An Artist in Realism' that in 'his triple role as short story writer, novelist and social and religious historian, Khushwant Singh has established himself as a distinguished Indian writer with an individual status in modern Indo-Anglian literature' (Naik- 22) and that 'the fundamental quality

of Khushwant Singh's Creative Faculty is the comic' (Naik, Desai, et.al, 331). However, he does not say much about his own art of fiction. Since he was born and brought up as a child in one of the Punjab Villages of undivided India, his 'roots are in the dunghill of a tiny Indian village', (Ibid, 331) but because he received his school education in Lahore and Delhi, he grew up in the Indo-Anglican atmosphere of New Delhi', later, he went to England for higher education there, and that is why he says: I am the product of both the east and the west, I am, if I may coin the word, an orio – occidental'. (Dhawan, 35) Moreover, he observes: whatever its limitations, whatever its frustrations, love is the greatest the most exhilarating experience of life', (TLS, 966) and perhaps it is love about which he writes mostly in his novels.

Khushwant Singh points out that at least in his own case, if not in the case of others, the 'decision to write comes at the same time as when one has found something compelling to write about'. (DBAW, ?) He comes out only with a few generalizations about his own comparisons as a writer, and though he makes a regular use of Indianisms in his creative writing, he does not tell us anything specific about the appropriateness of Indian or Indianized English.

Manohar Malgonkar is yet another well-known Indo-English writer whose views on the nature and art of fiction have to be considered with due seriousness. He says:

... I do strive deliberately and hard to tell a story well, and I revel in incident, in improbabilities, in unexpected twists. I feel a special allegiance to the particular subcaste among those whose caste-mark I have affected, the entertainers, the tellers of stories. (Ellsworth, American ?)

Malgonkar is of the view that the narrative art should be a novelist's first concern. He is opposed to the experimental novels of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, and claims that he belongs to the tradition of 'romantic' novels.

I often think myself as belonging to the advance guard in the swing back of the romantic novel. The peddlers of erotic and drug dreams may churn out best sellers, but these are not novels, and the interminable ramblings about the day in the life of someone or other are like counting the veins in every leaf of cabbage.

Malgonkar believes that in order to be authentic an Indian writer in English has to be true to the Indian ethos and milieu:

I keep writing of Indian ... because I feel no author should write outside his own living circumstances. If he does, it is phoney. To write of our own society and to be accepted by the English and American reading public we must be better than average writers. (Ellsworth American)

That is why, he frankly admits that because of his upbringing and social ambience he just cannot write about the poor or the downtrodden:

The social life of millions of Indians centers round the dustbins of great cities. Granted. But mine doesn't, and for me to write about it would be as insincere as a white man writing about a Negro riot. (TLS, 491)

Malgonkar claims that a writer has to be correct and accurate about the details:

Though some would criticize my style, they don't criticize my historical veracity. I take great pains to be absolutely accurate. (Gokak, Qtd. 239-40)

Malgonkar does write his novels and short stories in English, and yet he is acutely conscious of the incongruity of the whole situation: 'I have often wondered whether there is any Indian writer writing in English who does not at times feel a bit of a fake, as though going about with a false cast-mark, for he writes in a language not his own'. (Jain, 14)

Kamala Das is a distinguished Indo-English poet, and what she says about the use of English by Indian writers as the medium of their creative writing is indeed highly suggestive:

The language I speak become mine, its distortions, its queernesses, All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest, it is as human as I am human, don't you see? (Ibid, 115)

This passage from her poem entitled 'Introduction' sums up the nature of Indianized English, and in her view it is absolutely honest for an Indian writer to opt for English as the medium of his or her creative writing.

Anita Desai is a writer of fiction whose novels and short stories, being psychological in nature, are different in spirit and form from the fiction of other Indian writers in English. Her protagonists are lonely and introspective individuals, and she employs flashbacks and interior monologues in her novels as Jams Joyce and Virginia Woolf use them in theirs. 'It is depth', says she, in her reply to a question, 'which is interesting, delving deeper and deeper in a character or scene, rather than going roundabout it'. (Ibid, 11-12) In her reply to yet another question, she says, 'I don't think anybody's exile from society can solve any problem. I think basically the problem is how to exist in society and yet maintain one's individuality rather

than suffering from a lack of society and a lack of belonging, that is why exile has never been my theme. (Dhawan : 1982 : 223) She stakes further: 'I think all human relationships are inadequate. I have never worked this out. Basically everyone is solitary. I think involvement in human relationships in this world invariably leads to disaster'. ((Jain, 1987 : 8) It is because of the treatment of a particular kind of theme that the structure of her novels is different from that of other Indian writers' novels. As for the use of English as the medium of her creative writing, Anita Desai observes: 'According to the rules laid down by critics, I ought to be writing half of my work in Bengali, the other half in German. As it happens I have never written a word in either language'. (Rao, 81-82) She knows German and Bengali, because while her mother was a German, her father was a Bengali. She further informs us:

Why it came so fluently to me, I should think because I did most of my reading in it. I still find, although I do read German, and Bengali and Hindi I do it with more effort, whereas English requires no effort whatsoever. (Rao, 85)

Anita Desai has been resolving her artistic problems in her own distinctive manner.

Nayantara Sahgal is yet another distinguished Indo-English writer, who has to say something very useful about her own fictional art. In the course of 'Meet the Author' programme, conducted by Sahitya Akademi, she says that 'amid countless interruptions and emotional upheavals ... who in her right mind how chose to be a writer? And the answer is that one doesn't choose it. It is not something one decides to do. It is an itch that has got to be scratched, and it grows the more you scratch it'. (Rao, 85) She further

says that in her novels 'alongside the personal story there is a picture of political erosion, degradation and decay'. (Rao, 88) As for her characters, she states " '... characters can't be told what to do. Once they are on the page they have a life of their own. They speak and act as they want to. The writer is literally a witness'. Paying tribute to her mother's brother, Jawaherlal Nehru, she observes:

... his passion for India I have tried to keep alive through my fiction and journalism, in the hope that justice and dignity will one day be realities for all our countrymen and women. (Markandaya, 107)

With all her elitism and aristocratic upbringing, she expresses her desire to bring about an egalitarian society.

Although Kamala Markandaya has written a large number of novels, yet so far she has said precious little about her fiction. She was so much interested in writing that for its sake she did not pursue university education and could not obtain any degree from Madras University. Ruth Montgomery says:

In 1940 (Miss Markandaya was born in 1924), Miss Markandaya attended Madras University, but was deterred from her intention to get a degree in history by an increasingly strong interest in writing. (Mallik 36)

As an expatriate or even otherwise, she writes generally on India's poverty or backwardness and the East - West encounter as the themes of her novels. In her novel, *Possession*, she says:

Undilute East had always been too much for the West; and soulful East always came Lap-dog fashion to the West, mutely asking to be not too little and not too much, but just right. (Naik, Desai, et.al, 328)

And in this regard, in his essay entitled 'East and West in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya', K.R. Chandrasekharan says.

The implied message in Kamala Markandaya's novels is that India should confidently pursue her own path holding fast to her traditional values and using methods appropriate to her culture.

And though Iyengar speaks of 'the sufficiency and suggestiveness of her prose' (Iyengar 328) he has to say the following in his comments on her novel, *Possession*:

... the real theme of the novel is not economics, politics or even spirituality, but art - what is the 'soul' of art, what is the 'Clan' that makes art possible ?

Kamala Markandaya looks upon art and life as entities inseparable from each other.

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## Bharthari-The Dialogue of Chhattisgarh

Dr G A Ghanashyam

### Abstract

Art forms are one of the best paradigms of cultural representation. Originating in the socio-cultural milieu of the artist it is imbued in the richness of its ethos. Folk art forms are more genuine in this representation of society and culture as they are more close to the native roots and are largely untouched by alien influences.

Chhattisgarh is a state that has a rich tribal cultural heritage. Tribal art forms in the form of paintings, mural art, songs, folk theatre, dance, sculpture, etc portray the native ethos and culture of Chhattisgarh in all their vividness and exuberant beauty. Bharthari is one such art form that echoes with the spirit and soul of the region. Life, culture, society, faith and devotion of the people are vocalized through these beautiful musical renditions that reveal the local customs, tradition and beliefs.

Bharthari as a cultural paradigm not only preserves the heritage of Chhattisgarh but is also an important cultural signifier that represents the region's ethos and identity.

**Keywords :** Folk, orality, identity, culture.

Art is a form of expression that reflects the socio-cultural nuances of the people and times through various mediums. Representing the contemporary life and culture, art also provides an alternative voice to the people positioned in the periphery. Folk arts in particular are closely linked to the native roots of the people and represent their life, thoughts and custom vividly. Rich and exuberant, folk arts are the socio-cultural signifiers of the people and community. In fact works of art "like words, are literally pregnant with meaning" (Dewey, 1934: 123); that renders the

joys, sorrows, hopes, frustrations, failures, triumphs, struggle and laments audible and expressible.

Vygotsky, a Soviet psychologist stressed that:

Art is the social within... Art is the social technique of emotion, a tool of society which brings the most intimate and personal aspects of our being into the circle of social life. It would be more correct to say that emotion becomes personal when every one of us experiences a work of art; it becomes personal without ceasing to be social. (Vygotsky, 1971: 249)

Chhattisgarh is a state rich in folk art and cultural heritage that represents the ethos of the region in particular and the nation as a whole. Folk art can be defined as something that “often implies rural life, community, simplicity, tradition, and authenticity, provides a powerful image on which to build community” (Fine, 2004: 29). In other words folk art can be termed as a form of collective self expression of a community, race or tribe.

Visual art forms such as Gond paintings, bell metal statues and artefacts, Dokra art; performing arts like Pandvani, Bharthari, Sua, Karma, Panthi, etc are all important artistic representations that reveal the customs, tradition and ethos of the Chhattisgarhi people and their culture. Attuned closely to nature the folk art and culture of the region depict the changing seasons and occasions in the life of the people. For every occasion of life there are specific folk songs that reveal their varying hues and shades in many different tunes and rhythms; sometimes revelling in joy and sometimes lamenting in sorrow.

Folk songs are intrinsically songs of the people as they go about their life working, celebrating a marriage, a birth, a festival or mourning the loss of a loved one. Drawing a true picture of contemporary life

and society, folk songs are also a medium of instruction that mentors the young generation in the traditions, customs and morals of the community.

Folk songs, literature and lore belong to the oral tradition and are usually handed down to generations through the word of mouth. Like most myths and legends these folklores express the life, customs, traditions and ethos of the people. The folklores in the words of D. P. Patnaik, express the life values and offers a shared understanding of life apart from preserving the past. Disseminated and preserved through the oral tradition, they link the present to the shared collective consciousness and knowledge of the past through tales, songs, myths and proverbs.

Orality is intertwined in the human society and reflects the people’s way of living, food habits, mannerisms, ethics, attitudes to name a few. It is an expression of various multi-faceted feelings and emotions about any simple or complex issue and brings meaning to life. It is a colourful expression with multiple versions and is not static but involves change. (Nonglait, 2013)

The oral tradition of these folklore and literature travel far and wide, and are subject to variations owing to the changing socio-cultural milieu and times.

A distinctive aspect of Indian folk art, specifically songs, dances and stories is that they transcend regional borders and are essentially national in character and spirit. Bhartari and Dhola-Maru are some of the songs, which outsource their stories from other regions and are yet as much an integral part of Chhattisgarh as of the region from where they are originally sourced. Taking on a regional colour they sometimes deviate from the original story and include regional nuances of customs, traditions and characters. Bhartari is one such art form that is rooted

in the culture and society of the region. The story of King Bhartari along with that of his nephew, Gopi Chand is sung in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Punjab and Haryana. A legendary figure, his story is appropriated to complement the regional socio-cultural milieu of Chhattisgarh.

Historically Bhartari was the King of Ujjain the 1st century BC, and the brother of the legendary ruler of Ujjain, King Vikramaditya. Abdicating his kingship in the favour of his brother. King Bhartari chose the path of renunciation and spiritualism under the tutelage of saint Gorakhnath. Various stories related to the renunciation of King Bhartari are prevalent in various regions of India. The killing of the deer, the condition put forth by Saint Gorakhnath, his marriage with Samdai, his renunciation, begging for alms from his wife is some of the stories prevalent in Chhattisgarh. The story of King Bhartari is similar irrespective of the region where they are widespread. However in every region where the folk song form is found, regional variations make it distinct and different from the others. The story of Bhartari mostly sung in Chhattisgarh is about the childless royal couple - King Bhartari and Queen Pingla.

The story of King Bhartari is invariably linked with the Nath sampraday. King Bhartari's spiritual mentor, Guru Gorakhnath is one of the most prominent Gurus in the lineage Gurus belonging to the Nath sampraday.

The Naths, living widely throughout the northern portions of India, are seen by anthropologists as representing both a social group or caste and a spiritual lineage or sampraday. Because the Naths are found everywhere in the north, their oral narratives and legends are sung and discussed from Punjab and Rajasthan in the west to Bengal and Orissa in the

east. Although a semi-codified system of esoteric beliefs heavily steeped in tantric and yogic practices relating to austerity and perfection of the body, connect the disparate Nath communities of North India in theory and ritual, a great deal of variation exists in local contexts.

The central theme in the narrative of King Bhartari is the conflict between the life of the householder and that of the renunciant. This is reflected in the song. That is, although the textual ideal of the Nath practitioner as a celibate ascetic still remains a vital part of the tradition, many Nath live normal married lives. Though this contradiction in their way of life confused many westerners, it is however not so alien to the Indian thought and philosophy. Gold points out "that there are many kinds of renouncers, many degrees of asceticism, and many transitions, both gross and subtle, between those degrees." (47). However, the tension between the polar extremes exists in everyday life and is reflected in the life of King Bhartari also who chooses the path of asceticism while his queen urges him to live the life of a householder.

The songs of King Bhartari, thus express the conflict between materialistic life and the spiritual life travelled far and wide across India: from the north to the west and from the east to central India.

In his book, Dr. R. N. Dhurve has done an extensive study of the folk art form of Bhartari prevalent in Chhattisgarh. According to him the genre is distinguished by various distinctive characteristics that clearly portray and represent the socio-cultural milieu of the region; its way of life, customs and rituals.

In Chhattisgarh various rituals are followed celebrating the various milestones in life; right from birth. The birth of the son in the tenth month was

considered auspicious traditionally. King Bhartari was also born in the tenth month.

Eke mahina wo, dusraiya na  
Lage panch ke chahe, mor das eke chaav  
Godi m balak khelat ye o  
Khelat ye o, bhai jai hari

R. Dhurve, 2010: 128)

'Chatti' on the sixth day or 'Barhi' on the twelfth day are rituals that are celebrated after the birth of a child. Songs related to this ritual can be evidenced in the folk song, Bhartari, wherein the ritual of washing the mother's head with 'mitti' or soil on the twelfth day is described.

Chatti ke din nikrgey  
Ye de barhi ke aaj  
Shyamdei didi  
Mudi-misey naa  
Beithe palang maa  
Bhartari laa  
Leika dekhawat hey,  
Dekhawat hey, bhaai jai hari.  
(Dhurve, 2010: 129)

A similar custom of the region is associated with the marriage which begins with the responsibility being placed squarely on the shoulders of the barber, 'naai'.

Aeise fulwa sochike  
Soon le maharaj  
Ka to naau la balaawat hey  
Keina khoje bar na  
Likh paati bhejey  
Khoj ke aava giyaa.  
(Dhurve, 2010: 131)

Child marriage was prevalent earlier in Chhattisgarh, and the bride was sent to her in-laws home only after she attained maturity, which is known as 'Gavna'. There is a description of this Chhattisgarhi

tradition in Bhartari.

Ghar m laanat he na  
Gavna l karay  
Mor rangmahal ma giya  
Hira-sanhi didi  
Duno dikhat hai n  
(Dhurve, 2010: 131-2)

A distinguishing feature of Chhattisgarhi culture and society is its belief in superstitions, magic and sorcery. This salient feature of the region finds an expression in the story of King Bhartari that is sung in Chhattisgarh. There is mention of Kumari Naina, the girl from Kaamrup who holds King Bhartari captive under a magic spell she casts with the help of a 'sugga' (parrot).

Kaamrup kumar naina rani  
Nain ka maaray  
Ka to maaray he ram  
Sua ke jadu l maarat he  
(Dhurve, 2010: 140)

Samdai and Rupdai go the forests of Kaamrup and gradually destroy the magic of Naina rani, parrot, cat, deer and so on.

Naina ke baan l toray  
Suva maarat he n  
Suva ke jadu l nei chalan dey  
Bilaai maarat he na  
Bilaai ke jadu l torat he  
Mirga-jadu ye ram  
Haathi-ghoda kar jadu ye  
Kukur-bichchi ke re  
Jadu l torat he ram  
Dekh to tetka ao mechka ke  
Machchar-maachi ke n  
Jammo jadu l beiri torat he  
Samdai ao rupdai ye o,  
Jaun l dekhat he bhartari, rama ye de ji.

(Dhurve, 2010: 141)

Though the story sung in Chhattisgarh is about a King and his journey on the path of asceticism and renunciation, yet the way the characters and situations are described makes it a true voice of the common man and woman, thereby representing the thoughts, ideas and perspectives of the common people. Dr. Dhurve says that the one characteristic that distinguishes the folklore of Bhartari is its affinity to the life and ethos of the people of the region; wherein the queen is not a queen but a common village woman whose pain and suffering find an expression in the pain and suffering of the queen.

Ghoda rowaya ghod saar m  
Ghodsaaar m o  
Haathi rowaya haathi saar m  
Mor rani ye o, mahlo m rowaya  
Mor raja rowaya darbare o,  
Darbare o, bhai ye de ji  
(Dhurve, 2010: 132)

Pain and suffering is the same for man and animals, and this is what the folklore represents. Though the place of each is different, yet in their pain and suffering of being childless are akin to each other. The intensity of a woman's pain on being childless is poignantly portrayed in Bhartari.

Another unique feature of the Chhattisgarhi ethos is the presence of faith, beliefs and superstitions. Dr. Dhurve quotes several stanzas of verses, highlighting the various aspects and characteristics of the genre, including the presence of the various forms of 'Rasa' types like shaant, shringaar, karunaa and raaudra. Words like 'Satnaam' that is closely associated with the followers of Guru Ghasidas can be found in Bhartari - "*Taihar le le beti, satnam le o*" (Dhurve, 2010: 186).

The culture of Chhattisgarh is richly imbued with religious philosophy; the folk art form of Bhartari also resonates with this flavour that lays importance on the development of the soul. Spiritual leanings are emphasized in the Hindu way of life. In Bhartari, the King's renunciation of worldly luxuries and power for the sake of spiritual enlightenment stress this very important characteristic of our society and ethos. When King Bhartari realizes the truth of existence and decides to walk on the path shown by his Guru, he sees the manifestation of the divine mother even in his wife. The folklore not only conveys the eternal truth of life always integral to the Indian ethos but also reiterates it in today's time when everyone is obsessed with materialistic achievements and possessions.

A tale originating in the choice of an individual; a King's choice to let go of all materialistic and emotional attachments in favour of a life of spiritual enlightenment and renunciation reveals the essential socio-cultural ethos of the region that is enfolded within the community and family; social customs and rituals. Content in their simple life, the people of the region are religious in their approach and still cherish a close affinity and link with nature. The issues like childlessness, belief in black magic and superstitions, rebirth and reincarnation; 'lokaachaar' or community's customs, mannerisms, behaviour and celebrations form an integral part of Bhartari. In fact it can be said that Bhartari is more than a musical rendition of the life and story of a legendary figure: it is a saga of exploration of the regional identity and way of life.

Folk literature in Chhattisgarh has been preserved through generations in the form of oral tradition. It is a simple representation of the life of people and a reflection of their traditions. In the tradition of folk literature of Chhattisgarh can be found

the 'lok nayak' (hero) and local characters. Whatever form of folk literature or lore it might be, it takes on the regional characteristics wherever it goes. Many of the folk lores and literature prevalent in Chhattisgarh have originated in other regions. Dhola-Maru or Chandaini for instance are from Rajasthan, Lorikayan from Uttar Pradesh, etc. The story of Bhartari is also from Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh. It is thus said that, "Folklores and legends walk without feet and fly without wings and get imbued in the local colour of the specific region where it goes." (Dhurve, 2010: 181).

The folklore of Bhartari on which the specific style of singing is based is one of the prominent folk art forms of Chhattisgarh. Rendered in the local language of the region, Bhartari has stood the test of time due to its assimilation in the local ethos and culture. It is richly imbued in the native way of life, philosophy, imagination, faith and values. Another dimension of folk literature is the presence of customs and behaviour of the people that is clearly evidenced in the portrayal of local customs, rituals, traditions and faith of Chhattisgarh in Bhartari. Though originating in the Nath sampradaya, the art form has undergone a transformation in the region owing to the influence of Satnam, a belief and philosophy propounded by Guru Ghasidas.

Bhartari is still sung in Chhattisgarh but instead of rendering the complete character of King Bhartari, it is performed incompletely. Often a single episode of the story is repeated by the singers. However the art form is a beautiful amalgamation of ancient history and imagination, and a genuine representation of the region, its society and its culture.

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# Classical Elements in Matthew Arnold's Poetry

Dr. A.M. Tiwari

## Abstract :

The word classical originates from the Latin 'classicus' which means the best or of the highest order. After Renaissance the term came to be used for the literature of Greece and Rome. Matthew Arnold followed the classical pattern in his poetry. He liked traditional values in life and literature. His poems like *The Strayed Reveller* and Empedocles on Etna testify to it. His *Sohrab and Rustum* is another example of his classical predilection. Arnold's reputation rests chiefly on his *Dover Beach*. It is classical as regard its metrical structure and thematic approach. Philomela shows Parnassian classicism in that it shows the poet's dissociation from the past. In thought Arnold was akin to his master Sophocles.

**Keywords :** Objectify, phoenician, cosmic, cradle, chorus.

The word classical is originated from the Latin word the 'classicus' which means the best or the highest type of literature. After the Renaissance, the term referred to the literature of Greek and Rome. Then it meant, literature written in imitation of the Greco-Roman. The use of Greek and Latin idioms in another language signifies classical style in literature and art. In brief, the term classical refers to literature which possesses the characteristics of nobility, simplicity, sense of form and unity and quiet grandeur.

Matthew Arnold followed the classical pattern in his poetry and criticism. By using the theory of Touchstone Method, he showed his faith in the great

model of the past. The Greek poets, Homer, Sophocles and Epictetus influenced him.

His poetry undoubtedly reveals some romantic elements but major portion of his poems is based on the poetry of ancient Greek poets. He has attempted to reveal his thoughts in the classical way. Hugh Walker commented on Arnold's classicism:

As regards his poetical method, Arnold is essentially classical not romantic. (Gupta Qtd., 7)

Arnold does not like materialism and divided mission of the contemporary world. He prefers traditional values in life and literature and wishes to restore them in the Victorian Era. He never prefers natural landscape like romantic poets. He turned to classical literature for inspiration and guidance in both these respects. The quoted examples of Homer and Sophocles lie behind much of Matthew Arnold's criticism as they do behind some of his poetry, and so we should add the examples of Dante and Milton.

In 1849, *The Strayed Reveller* and other poems of Arnold, revealed a poet who acknowledged his classical training but was not sure what role it ought to play. Arnold, undoubtedly at once sets him apart from 18th century writers. Unlike Pope, Johnson, he did not turn unhesitatingly to a Horace or Juvenal. His lyricism owes nothing to the "Pindaric Odes" developed by earlier poets. "The Strayed Reveller" proves uncommonly rewarding to anyone concerned with Matthew Arnold's place in the classical tradition. It shows him working out the possible relevance of the tradition, not merely to poetry in general but specifically to his own situation as poet. Through this poem, Arnold came closer than at any other time in the whole of his life to the possibility of possession by the classical at

the height of its power. The last poem of 1849 edition "Fragment of an Antigone" reveals the idea of classical tradition.

One of the four lyric poems which employ classical themes freely reworked to catch and intensify the reverberations of personal emotion and which employ mythological allusion for symbolic rather than merely for decorative purpose. (Anderson Qtd. 31)

Bonneroe Considers it:

The poem "Empedocles on Etna" indicates Calicles' songs regularly follow and are related to the speeches of Empedocles. The first conversation between Calicles and Pausanias is recalled, the purpose of Pindaric-Vignette begins to appear. Empedocles, personal bitterness has distorted his views of the world and he realizes this idea clearly during his introspections.

The sources of this poem are taken from Horace, Epictetus, the historical Empedocles and possibly Apollonius Rhodium. Arnold did not borrow anything from anywhere but a name and a collection of miscellaneous bio-graphical details. Regarding the Empedoclean Leitmotiv of a cosmic struggle between love and strife, he has nothing to say: yet in a sense, this may be the master symbol of the entire poem. When Pausanias complain that-

We feel day and night  
The burden of our selves,

Empedocles answers:-

Well then, the wiser wight  
In his own bosom delves

And ask, what ail him so and gets what cure he can. (Lines 129-131)

Once read they own breast right,  
And thou hast done with fears,  
Man gets no other light,  
Search him a thousand years.

Sink in thyself ! There ask what ail thee at that shrine! (Line 142-146) (The Works of Maithew Arnold, 103)

These attitudes belong to the world of Hellenistic and Roman thought. Greece was indeed their place of origin, but the great names most frequently associated with Roman as Lucretius, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius. There is no doubt the applied term in this poem is either classical or to its ethical beliefs. For Arnold the classical was the Hellenic. In one of his letters, Arnold says:

"He feels like a Roman not a Greek who has been in the uninigorating times of later empire". (Anderson Qtd., 123)

The Display piece of the 1853 edition "Sohrab and Rustum" presents the classical approach of Arnold. This poem has the sub title "An Episode" In Greek drama the episodian was the action between choric songs. The same idea, we find in this poem. The famous description of the Oxus has reminded more than one commentator of a tragic chorus and the poem opens with a reference to the river. As quoted lines below arrest our attention :

And the first grey of morning filled the east,  
And the fog rose out of the Oxus Stream.  
But all the Tartar camp along the stream  
was hushed and still the men were plunged in sleep. (Lines 1-4) (Sohrab and Rustom, 103)

Oxus is the chief river of central Asia which separated Turan from Iran. It is called Oxus by Greeks

and Romans. The introduction of the tranquil scenes of Oxus is found both at the beginning and the closing of the poem as we find:

The shorn and parcel's Oxus stain along  
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles  
Oxus forgetting the bright speed he had  
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere  
(Lines 884-887) (Ibid, 219)

Both Sohrab and Rustum, Son and Father, display their pride and fierceness that belong as much to the Iliad as the Shah-Nameh. We find the parallel ends of the father and son who have been joined in single combat by an unforeseen, unforeseeable turn of fate. Their relationship becomes known only in the last moments of Sohrab's life, a deeply affecting scene. This epic shows the Homeric and Hellenic approach in the classical manner.

His poem 'Philomela' provides a more instructive example of the Parnassian classicism that marked Arnold's way of thought after 1852. This poem is the work of one who has succeeded in dissociating this past from any immediate concern. His first composing had contained no reference to the singer as "a wonderer from a Gracian shore" and "the Thracian wild" none to "the sweet tranquil Thames" or the "English grass" Through these landscapes, the poet wants to fix the boundary between the two worlds as promptly as possible in his Lyric. 'Philomela' also reveals classical attitude. The Greek maiden's "hot cheeks and seared eyes" contrast pathetically with the cool peacefully of an English summer night. At last, when the poet thinks the Song of the Nightingale to her as "eternal passion! Eternal pain" we hear again the Shepherd in Ciris place:

These things Ulysses  
The wise bards also  
Behold and sing,  
But oh, what labour!  
O prince, what pain!  
(Lines 207-211) (The Strayed Reveller, 46)

The above quoted lines from "The Strayed Reveller" are rooted in a serious concern with the meaning of classical experience and derive strength from it. When the same thought recurs in 'Philomela'. There is no rootedness. The poem characteristically strikes an attitude, seek an effect.

'The Scholar Gipsy' and Thyrisis are composed in the Greek collection of pastoral poetry as written by Theocritus, Bion and Moschus. The quoted lines below remind us of Homeric similes:

They fly our greetings fly our speech and smiles;  
As some grave Tyrian trader from the sea  
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow  
Lifting the cool haired creepers stealthy,  
The fringes of a southward facing brow  
Among the Aegean isles:  
(Lines 231-236) (The Scholar Gipsy, 236)

Arnold asks the Scholar to fly away from greetings speech and smiles of the light hearted Victorian. The Scholar Gipsy is compared with a grave Phoenician trader, who avoided the merry coasting vessel of a Greek trader when he saw the Greek ship loaded with various perishable goods like grapes, fish, fig, and china-wine, emerging noiselessly among the Islands in the Greeks when he regarded them as intruders into his trade-dominion on the sea. Instead of waiting for their arrival near him or welcoming them, he sailed off swiftly.

The descriptive grandeur of similes, composed in

the epic manner of Homer, is beyond dispute. We must, however, remember that the proper nouns introduced in the simile have a magical charm of their own and remind us of those used by Milton in *Paradise lost*.

The classical restraint is one of the sources of the appeal of his poetry. Like Greek poets, Arnold's poetry imparts an attic grandeur such as we find in *Thyrsis*. As quoted below:

O' easy access to the hearer's grace  
When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine!  
For She herself had trod cicilian fields.  
She knew the Dorian's water gush divine.  
She knew each lily white which Enna yields  
Each rose with blushing face.  
(Lines 91-96) (*Thyrsis*, 368)

Here the poet contrasts his songs with those of Moschus, a poet of Sicily who pleased Proserpine with songs because she belonged to Moschus's country and being familiar with their language, could understand their poetic requests and prayers. She was familiar with the Dorian streams and roses blossoming in the Enna garden. But she is not familiar with England, the Cumner hills or the river Thames because she was never been here. It would be therefore, utterly useless for Arnold to appeal to Proserpine to permit Clough to come back to the land of living.

Here the poet expresses his inability to please the ancient Goddess and brings back his dead friend to life unlike Orpheus or the Caecilian shepherds. This poem is modelled on that of *The Orcritus*, a Greek poet.

Of the works, first published in 1867, none has become more celebrated than "Dover Beach". Arnold's reputation rests chiefly on this poem. The poem suggests that the first 28 lines of 'Dover Beach' belong

to the middle period of Arnold's poetic development. He has objectified his relationship to classical thought and feeling. As we find in these lines:

Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Aegean and it brought.  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow of human  
misery. (Lines 15-20) (*Dover Beach*, 402)

Arnold's master was Sophocles and they had a similarity of ideas. Sophocles also heard the eternal note of sadness in the movement of the waves.

While the Victorians in general, rejoiced at the material prosperity of England, Arnold struck a discordant note. He found the emptiness and horror of things amidst public fanfare and loud acclamations.

None of Arnold's work with the classics has had so widespread and continuing of effect as his lectures 'On Translating Homer'.

Homer is rapid in movement plain alike in words and style, simple in ideas, and noble in manner. These judgments are the heart of Matthew Arnold's position. In one way or another, everything that he has to say is an elaboration of them. For Arnold, there were three Homers. First, is the literary exemplar a sure foundation for criticism. Second, the realist "clearest soul'd of men", whose message holds strength as well as bleakness. At last, one thing can be said without hesitation. The Homer of Matthew Arnold is no remote academic portrait, but a living force.

Whenever Arnold pretends to scholarship or attempts the kind of judgment which is inadequate without it, we must apply the standards of art. The classical world that he brings before us, is the only one that could have had truth for him because it is created in his image.

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## Archetypes of Myths in Girish Karnad's Play *Yayati*

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### Abstract :

A myth is a story in a mythology travelling down the generations through oral medium. If the protagonist in the story is a man rather than a supernatural being, such a story is called a legend. But if the story contains supernatural beings, it is usually classified as a folktale. Myths are unhistorical. Girish Karnad has profusely used myths in his plays. Through myths he visions the welfare of people and harmony in the society. In *Yayati* he has interpreted the theme in the context of modern relationships and responsibilities. He also makes some changes in the traditional story to make it more relevant and meaningful.

**Keywords :** Dilemma, virtue, agonizing, legend, filial.

The word ‘myth’ is derived from the Greek term ‘mythos’ meaning story or plot. This story can either be realistic or imaginary. So myth is a story in a mythology, a collection of hereditary stories travelling down the generations through oral medium. Close to it are the other terms like legend and folktale. M.H. Abrams while defining myth differentiates among them in these words :

“In its central modern significance, a myth is one story in a mythology – a system of hereditary stories which were once believed to be true by a particular group, and served to explain in terms of the intentions and actions of supernatural beings, why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, and to establish the rationale for social customs and observances and the sanctions for the rules by which men conduct their lives. Most myths involve rituals - prescribed forms of sacred ceremonials- but social anthropologists disagree as to whether rituals

generated myths or myths generated rituals. If the protagonist is a man rather a supernatural being, the story is usually not called myth but legend; if the story concerns supernatural beings, but is not part of a systematic mythology, it is usually classified as a folktale.” (Abrams, 102)

Myths are unhistorical as they are details and their development is not chronological; the factual authenticity of the characters and details is also questionable. However, in myths human wishes find expression and fulfilment. They may be born out of human fears, desires or their unknown experiences why they could not relate to the physical world. Nevertheless the “unhistoricality” of myths finds affinity with the human mind which according to Jung is also unhistorical as far as his racial memory is concerned. However this does not mean that they are rootless and irrelevant to either historical or contemporary sensibilities.

Since the subject of study is Girish Karnad , an Indian playwright, it is pertinent to examine briefly myth in the Indian context. In India myth is an integral part of human ethos and consciousness. The Indians , particularly the Hindus believe in myths and they have myth making qualities . In India myths are called Puranas in Sanskrit which means ‘Pura api navam’ (though old, ever new) or ‘Pura navam bhavati iti’ (old becomes new). The Puranas are the ancient narratives about the supreme and sacred souls and deal with the matters related to old world stories and legends . The Puranas deal with kings and their subjects , astronomy superstitions, omens, portents, unfavourable planets, dynasty of monarchs, coronation and duties of kings, their politics, science of war, use of arms, dancing, agriculture, construction of images of deities, description of the doctrines of knowledge, theological and philosophical doctrines ; values of

tolerance, adaptability of worthy social system; and nobler ideas on social, political, economic and religious problems.

For the Indians mythical protagonists in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* remain always as ideal figures in collective , consciousness. Myths not only make the Indians bound to their family, linguistic community, faith community and ethnic community but connect them to past for moral values, and emotional and social security from it. They become the examples for the common people and directly influence them in their everyday actions. Contextualising myth as a serious subject in his plays Girish Karnad dramatizes a few mythical stories of his choice with contemporary relevance. He recreates them with universal overtones and operates them in almost all spheres of life. In the dramatisation of myths he purposefully initiates virtues in life. Through myths he visions the welfare of the human beings and harmony in the society. (Nayak 25-26)

Girish Karnad is the first modern Indian English Playwright to make brilliant use of myths as in some of his plays to express contemporary realities and personal dilemma. Like history and folktales mythology is an important source for stories in plays like *Yayati* (1961), his first play, *Ma Nishad* (1964), *The Fire and the Rain and Bali: the Sacrifice*. There have been many representations of myths in literature but a Story from the Mahabharata or the Ramayana immediately establishes a communication / rapports with the readers as they are familiar with the characters and the narrative. It reflects the values and socio-cultural qualities of our predecessors and is amenable to multiple readings and intertextuality.

Karnad wrote *Yayati* in Kannad with juvenile enthusiasm when he was in a personal dilemma over

the question 'to be or not to be' . He was torn between his choice to pursue higher studies in England and his responsibility towards his parents that expected him to stay back. The play was translated into English by Priya Adarkar and published in Enact in 1961. It was translated in many languages. After fortyseven years of gap Karnad decided to translate it himself as the English translation was not available. So his translation incorporated the feedbacks he received from the professionals who staged it. He writes in its Preface:

“Confronting the play again, the temptation to tinker with it has been irresistible. But it would be not just silly but disastrous to tackle at the age of sixtynine a play I had written at twenty two. I would have to rewrite it entirely. On the other hand, when I wrote it, I had no experience of theatre, and over the years I have been fortunate to have received comments from the professionals who have actually staged it, such as Satyadev Dubey, Dr. Shreeram Lagoo and C.R. Sinha . It would have been unfair not to incorporate their insights into the text before making it available to a new public. But these suggested revisions, small as they were , were scattered through the play. So instead of bothering Adarkar again, I decided to translate the revised text myself.” (Preface, *Yayati*, vii-viii) Hence, this study is based on Karnad’s translation of *Yayati*.

Karnad reinterprets the story on the theme of responsibility and invents some new relationships applicable to modern sensibilities . In the original story Yayati is a mighty , invincible hero, descendent of the Kuru dynasty . He marries Devyani, the daughter of the sage Shukracharya and also takes Sharmistha (a Kshatriya) as his wife under certain obligations of rites ‘Dharma’. Devyani on being enraged by his action reports to her father, Shukracharya who curses Yayati to become old. However, with a saving clause, that if

he desired anybody else could bear that curse for Yayati. But none other than his own son Puru willingly offers his youth as filial duty and devotion. Yayati enjoys youth for a thousand years. But Chित्रalekha cherishes an earnest wish in her heart to bear a child as such she offers herself to Yayati. Yayati declines her proposal. Consequently she commits suicide in desperation. It brings sense to Yayati who having realised his fault abandons the kingdom and takes back the curse.

Karnad brings back some changes in the traditional story to make it more meaningful to the contemporary situation. Yayati’s attachment to physical life and sensual pleasure and his filial renunciation in the original story are retained . But even the renunciation does not finish his carnal desire. However, in Karnad’s version of the take Yayati realises the dreadfulness and futility of his own life and assumes his moral responsibility . He says, “Take back your youth, Pooru. Rule well . Let me go and face my destiny in the wilds.” (Yayati, 69) The play not only articulates the internal conflict of Karnad the theme of responsibility but also suggests the “modern man too suffers because he too often seeks his identity in sensual pleasures.” (Kosta, 40) Kosta rightly sums up the play :

“Thus influenced by existentialist drama, his first play *Yayati* explores the complexities of responsibility and expectations within the Indian family . By introducing the character Chandralekha , Pooru’s wife , which was absent in the original Karnad has given a new twist in terms of responsibility. It is she who reveals the truth to her husband Pooru. Karnad through her explores that modern women have broken the traditional norms set up by the patriarchal society and are now realizing the responsible behaviour of men towards them as natural and just.” (Kosta , 41)

Karnad revives the puranic story of Yayati and brings home several issues the contemporary Indian society is confronted with . Indian myth helps the Indian readers or viewers easily identify with the story by reviving the emotional and cultural bond. Besides this it makes the play highly readable and enjoyable . This deviation in the story like introduction of Chित्रलेखा and dialogic manipulation bring in intellectual stimulation and ironic twist. Sutradhar's concluding comment seems to me ironic questioning the basic precept of the old myth :

“So perhaps Pooru at least finds courage to ask a question . But was it really a meaningful question or was it a cry of despair that he could hope for no meaning ? Well , conventions of Sanskrit drama require that a play may have a happy ending. So let us assume that this question led to many more and that finally Pooru found the question he was seeking.” (Karnad, *Yayati*, 70)

Another important aspect of the play is the question of identity . Chित्रलेखा makes a very radical point that she had married not Puru but the Youth in him and discovers that identity in Yayati and offers herself to that identity. G. S. Amur opines :

“The theme of disillusionment and alienation which Karnad works out in the person and career of the central character of the play finds another effective symbol in Puru, who is transformed from a symbol of the virtue of filial obedience into the embodiment of the modern wasteland experience. His agonizing search for identity and its frustration offer a striking contrast of the perfect integration of values in Sharmistha”. (Amur,18)

It is observed that his plays on myths are rooted in the ancient Indian dramatic tradition as set in Bharata's Natyashastra and Abhinavagupta's concept, the highest goal of drama is to realise the

Purusharthas, namely Dharma ( relating to the spiritual sphere) , Artha ( political and economic power ) , Kama (sexual or aesthetic gratification ) and Moksha (release or final liberation from human bondage).

In the mythic imagination of his plays he revives this ancient dramatic tradition in the celebration of the human and humane. Presenting myths in human condition he links the present with the eternal and contemporary with the archetypal. D. Maya rightly remarks :

“Karnad links the past and the present , the archetype and the real. Issues of the present world find their parallels in the myths and fables of the past which lend new meanings and insights through analogy, reinforcing the theme. By transcending the limits of time and space, myths provide flashes of insight into life and its mystery . They form an integral part of the culture consciousness of the land, with their associative layers of meaning, their timelessness and relevance to contemporary issues.” (Maya, 68)

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## Spiritualism in R. K. Narayan's Novel, *The English Teacher*

Pratima Tiwari

### Abstract :

R.K. Narayan as a novelist was very much influenced by Indian epics, shastras, purans and mythology. He also believed in spiritual power which was reinforced by the spiritual presence of his dead wife Sushila. He practises psychic identity with the dead Sushila of the timeless, and becomes aware of the meaning of life and death. He asserts that there is no spiritual world separate from the material world. *The English Teacher* confirms R.K. Narayan's belief in the spirit.

**Keywords :** Puranas, psychic, mythology.

"The English teacher attempts to look steadily at death and see if there is anything beyond".  
(Sundaram,194)

R.K. Narayan is one of the musketeers of the Indo-Anglian novel, the others two being M.R. Anand and Raja Rao. They are different in their tastes and temperaments in their create writings.

R.K. Narayan as a creative writer was influenced very much by ancient Indian epics, 'shastras', 'puranas', myths and mythologies in addition to other Indian concepts. His three novels *Swami and Friends* (1935) *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) and *The English Teacher* (1946) form a volume of trilogy. "If *Swami* and *Chandran* signify the first stage of life, namely the student-celibate, "observes Shantha Krishnaswami, Krishnan epitomizes the second stage or 'Ashrama' of the house holder,"(Shanta 103). Though chronologically the *Dark Room* (1938) is the third novel of novelist, *The English Teacher* shows the continuity with the first two novels. It completes the horizon of Narayan's bifocal vision marking the turning point in the novelist's line of

thinking. "*The English Teacher....* is a sequel to *The Bachelor of Arts* largely because of the persistence of the reminiscent mood ending the personal phase in Narayan's writing career. It carries forward the possibilities of introspection started in the second half of *The Bachelor of Arts* for the maturing of character."(Narasimhaiah, 143) Logically it appears that Krishnan in *The English Teacher* starts his life from where Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts* has left.

The first half of the novel, *The English Teacher* continues the story of the newly married Chandran with the difference that here the protagonist is not an executive agent but a college teacher. His wife's name is the same viz Sushila. Krishnan is married Chandran of *The Bachelor of Arts*. Here in this novel the novelist describes 'the short happy married life of Krishnan and Sushila a delightful idyll centred round the Angel 'in the house' bringing out both the daily routine when youth and love preside over a little middle class home'. This novel deals with the life of Krishnan as a teacher of English in Albert Mission College but it centres round the unalloyed love between Krishnan and his wife, Sushila. They are full of smiles and follies of married life. After sometime they have a daughter, named Leela. Three years later they go to inspect a house. Unfortunately, Sushila falls ill and suddenly dies of typhoid leaving behind Leela. Krishnan now concentrates himself on bringing up his daughter.

Then the second half of the novel takes a mystic and spiritual turn. Krishnan starts receiving messages from a man who has communicated with the spirit of the dead Sushila. The man who works as a medium is a cheerful man of philosophical outlook. Every week he goes to him for sittings and receives minute information and instructions about the things of the house. This convinces him that these can come only from his wife's spirit. Later on, he attempts to communicate with her directly. After some months

he agrees to send Leela to his parents, Thereafter, he decides to join Leela's nursery school as he does not want to teach college students. In the end Krishnan resigns his job as a lecturer in English. He comes home after his last day in the college. That very night he talks directly to, and sees the spirit of sushila, his dead wife and thus he has a distant vision of his dead wife in his home itself. Then he practises psychic identity successfully with the dead Sushila of the timeless, and becomes aware of the meaning of life and death.

The action of the novel is circular expressing the cyclical view of the world and of life lived in it. The happy conjugal life of Krishnan is disturbed by the sudden death of his wife and peace is restored by his reunion with her spirit. He gets out of his bed and garlands his wife who, he feels, is smiling, standing before him. He says, "I picked up the garland from the nail and returned to bed. I held it to her.... for you forever. I somehow feared you (Sushila) wouldn't take it.... She received it with a smile cut off a piece of it and stuck it in a curve on the back of her head and she turned her head and asked, is this all right?" (Narayan, 228) He says further "we stood at the window gazing on a slender red streak over the eastern rim of the earth... It was a moment of rare immutable joy- a moment for which one feels grateful to life and death." (Narayan) This shows what human life is a like. In this context it is most appropriate to quote the statement of Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavat Gita*. He says;

"This individual soul or spirit is unbreakable and insoluble and can be neither burnt nor dried. It is everlasting, present everywhere, unchangeable, immovable and eternally the same." (Gita- 24)

Before liberation from the material contamination the soul or the spirit may remain a spiritual spark and wander hither and thither. This is mentioned in

the *Garurpurana* also.

M. R. Anand is opposed to R.K. Narayan. Anand is a Marxist- Humanist who does not believe in religion, 'Puranas' and rituals. He says :

"There are not two worlds, heaven above and the earth below, there is no spiritual world separate from the material world. The soul is the body and the body is soul." (Anand, 553)

Anand is right in his own way. Nothing can be said about what he says except that he was influenced very much by Karl Marx and some western thinkers. But it is not acceptable to common human beings living in India. It is found in our country that after the death of a human being, rituals are performed for the peace, appeasement and 'moksha' of his or her spirit or the soul. Indian life is saturated with spiritualism. So whatever happens to Krishnan in this novel appears to be a truth and we can't disbelieve it. Even in Shakespearean drama, *Macbeth*, the ghost or spirit of murdered Banquo appears before Macbeth in his royal supper party, at the table. Also in *The Tempest* we get reference to good spirits that are found imprisoned in the hollows of trees. There are several instances which prove the existence of ghosts and spirits in Indian 'Puranas' to support the possibility of meeting of Krishnan and the spirit of dead Sushila. Whatever the statements are it is, however, clear that the spirit - the good and kind spirit of dead Sushila draws Krishnan out of the dark well of sorrow caused by her sudden and unexpected death. The spirit talks to him, gives him joy and happiness as if Sushila were alive and thus her spirit gives him a new lease of life. It is the purity and genuineness of her love in life and her affection for her daughter, Leela that urge and compel her spirit, after her death to see and meet her husband.

A close study of the description of this spiritual experiment of Krishnan reveals that it is based on

Narayan's personal experience. Narayan himself says in his autobiography, *My days*, that he had succeeded, like Krishnan, in establishing contact with his dead wife, Rajam through a medium and says :

"After some time.... dependence on the medium became unnecessary. I felt able to manage myself independently since psychic experience seemed to have become a part of my normal life and thought.... I practised psychic contacts regularly for some years almost every night. I found it possible to abstract myself from my physical body and experienced a strange sense of deliverance. And then gradually the interest diminished when I began to feel satisfied that I had attained an understanding of life and death." (Anand, 147)

Krishnan, in this novel, has established spiritual contact with his dead wife through her spirit. He sits up at nights faithfully following her instructions, keeping his mind open. His nightly contact with her spirit gives him peace and consolation so much. He feels himself in her company at a fixed time for many days and feels her presence, though he cannot see her physically. Under her directions he writes several things, records many pieces of information on the paper. He writes very fast. Under her influences he is strangely able to write about twenty four hundred words within thirty minutes. Thus he attains receptivity and clarity of mind step by step. Under her profound effect, as he feels, his outlook is completely changed. His realization of the concept of life and death relieves him of the pain at heart. In answer to his question, how she spends her time, the spirit of dead Sushila replies;

"Time in your sense does not exist for us.... our life is one of thought and experience.... our greatest ecstasy is in feeling the divine light flooding up.... who have no physical bodies.... things here are for more intense than on earth; - that means our efforts are far more efficient than yours." (Narayan, 158)

The spiritual contact of Krishnan and the spirit of his wife sublimates their beings. They experience strange spiritual love that is expressed in Sushila's (Spirit's) words which flow from the pen of Krishnan : "When I think of you or you of me I am at your side." (Narayan, 160)

While describing her life after death the spirit says further that the change that takes place when one comes here is so great and the vision is so clear that even she is essentially the same person so far as he (Krishnan) and her daughter Leela are concerned. The only difference is that she has no physical body. In the spiritual world there is no interval between thought and fulfilment. She looks like the same person as on earth but free from cares and anxieties, pains and ailments.

Thus the novelist describes through the spirit, the difference between life on this earth and that in the other world (in Heaven) and presents the existence of life, in some form or other, even after death. Also we come to know the meaning of life and death. Through this the novelist is, however, able to simplify the baffling question of life and death.

"if you have to accept life," says the novelist. "You are inevitably committed to the notion of death also. And yet one cannot stop living.... personality may have other structures and other planes of existence, and the decay of physical body through disease.... may mean nothing more than a change of vehicle." This is what lord Krishna says in the *Gita* also. The novelist says further, "This outlook may be unscientific but it helped me survive the death of my wife though I missed her so badly.

.....I could somehow manage to live after her death and eventually, also attain a philosophical understanding." (Narayan, 135)

After a deep study of this novel it is found that it

has two parts. The first part deals with the domestic life whereas the second deals with spiritualism. Though the readers appreciate the first part, many of them dislike the second, saying that this part of the novel is not convincing in this scientific age. It amounts to something impossible and unrealistic. This is only because they have no interest in spiritualism and spiritual beings. Besides, they have no faith in life after death or in the other world, different from this world of living beings. Personally I support the concept of spiritualism expressed by the novelist, directly or indirectly, in the novel, *The English Teacher*. This is Indian in thought and spirit and hence it is very appreciable and praiseworthy.

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## **POETRY**

### **Stephenean Love Sonnet 56**

I garden to offer fresh roses to you.  
As I rightfully water  
their fragrant spell radiates me and  
the obvious appearance of their  
unrivalled beauty brightens me.  
I grab sticking thorns becoming their  
fallen petals living and dying for you.  
The dignity of their soothing hue  
is my mastering mania and their  
sweet sight illumines when I write.  
They make me sing and cry.  
To humble my pride  
their energizing gaze  
enters into animated dialogue  
as a saint or a sage.  
In my pagoda of truth and faith  
they are the bounty of the bride  
at best, blessed and benign.

### **Stephenean Love Sonnet 55**

Crazed creatures of dark delights  
have chased our dove to a distant land  
where they choke her songs  
by the strings of paralyzing fear  
in the wilderness of their illusive sphere.  
On their sand  
the blind brutes write macabre laws  
whose spectre stalks here.  
Its teeth have mangled  
the serene sparrow of my higher self.  
Let us pass this evening  
listening to a nocturnal crescendo

from the bird not afar.  
In the silken cocoon of your touch  
my innate flair shall easily thrive.  
Our love shall become the pulse  
of my new rhythm in the night  
as it silently dies.

### **Stephenean Love Sonnet 47**

Night knocks noisily at the door  
when I hear the rattle of volcanic fury  
from the traders of terror.  
They shape with inhuman creeds  
strangely structured maniac beings  
while our seraphs securely sleep  
on the roofs of snobbish breed.  
Sweetest is the bread that tastes  
the days of the comforting peace.  
With the hunger  
that nourishes sincerity in love  
I wait for your return  
on a stallion to address my concerns.  
Because of the frightening beast  
I shall swap the days of my ease  
singing simple psalms for you  
from the memory's stormless retreat.  
You own all that I need.

### **Stephenean Love Sonnet 45**

I walk with no special thoughts  
along Saint Lawrence River  
where I hear stunning coos  
which remind mystically of you.  
I sleep peacefully on the moon  
with my sight on stars.  
They are not vague though afar.

When they go  
I will see them once more  
like you, I know.  
They are camps in the hive  
that give reasons to be alive  
as I do for you.  
You stay in the nest of my safest hope  
that I keep in the cave of my passion  
and trust.  
It energizes my open approach  
to see you even with my eyes closed.

#### **About the poet :**

**Stephen Gill**, a multiple award winning self-exiled Indo/Canadian poet, fiction-writer and essayist, has authored more than thirty books. He is the subject of doctoral dissertations, and research papers. Thirteen books of critical studies have been released by book publishers on his works and more are on the way. The focus of his writing is love and peace. His poetry and prose have appeared in about one thousand publications. Sites: [www.stephengill.ca](http://www.stephengill.ca) and [stephengillcriticism.info](http://stephengillcriticism.info)

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## Four POEMS of R.K. Singh

1

### Angelic Magic

Luck awaits me  
if I could buy it from  
her miracles stores

she gives me three dates  
for her call to reach  
the higher cosmic forces

she dreams me stand  
in the middle of a  
tree-lined park

against saffron flowers  
flashes of light focus  
on my serene face

the shower of gold tempts  
a being of light descends  
I'm offered a new life

divine abundance  
defeat of enemies  
and stream of love

if I could pay  
for her rituals of  
angelic magic

2

### Nemesis

The deities are dumb  
so they speak  
louder and louder

vie with each other  
for godhood

descend from mosquetop  
to Supreme Court

now await  
resurrection

3

### I Do Not Question

I do not question the sun  
adding wings to wounded giants  
or depressing them to crouch down  
the memory's lanes or erect  
new walls with odors of hate  
and love cagily crumpling  
the shades between earth and sky

I do not question the moon  
skirting the cherished wishes  
on dreamy edges of winter  
unforcing climax with sticky  
fingers splintering sensations  
or skittish little riddles  
frosting the heart at fifty

I love light without ashes  
of wood or fuming desires  
in the morass of frustration  
I sing psalms people understand  
through lines on palms or relics  
of private rains after lunch  
I live time shaking sun and moon

4  
**My Goddess And I**

Is it the love for ritual  
or the ritual waste:  
every year they steal light  
to illumine puja pandals  
and blare non-stop nasty songs  
the whole night disturb peace  
show power at its lowest  
but the goddess keeps mum  
perhaps self-loathingly  
sleeps for demons to write histories  
not fit for the light of day  
or for me. Self-pity  
is no wisdom when I yield  
to pressure and visit  
places I hate  
I'm sorry my goddess and I  
stare in two directions:  
who cares for the burning  
in my heart now  
night frustrates like day  
with the ashes of insight  
I create verses  
and learn to rest restlessly  
coughing, sitting or  
sniffing her crotch like a dog  
but nothing ceases  
in the air only wounded  
senses and high decibel  
noise nobody feels  
I touch her and yet  
she doesn't respond to my need

**Prof. Ram Krishna Singh, Dhanbad**

□

**Ma Chintpurni Devi**

Hail the dispeller of worries, Ma Chintpurni Devi!  
You are personified in the skied canopy,  
of vast wild void blue over us.

Echoed in the universe silencing the murmuring of  
ego,  
A complete surrender in moments of euphoria divine,  
A complete satisfaction in ecstatic state of mind.

On earth, OMa, you provide us invisible red umbrella,  
Replicated as your dupatta to contain rising passions,  
In your strides lies the demon of low-ebb base emo-  
tions.

As one walks in life holding one's head high,  
But with folded hands before the pristine deity,  
Staring straight at the matriarchal eternity,  
With resolve to dissolve all worldly fears in one go.

Wreathed in offerings of flowers,  
Overwhelmed with synergy of earthen lamps,  
Meeting the effulgence eternal outside and writhing,  
Imbued spirit jumps with self-spilling out in a vigour.

To catch the glimpse of a point of salvation,  
Energized in legends by euphoric trillions,  
Chanting hymns bowling bouts of sacred sound,  
Reverberate in the dark void of human heart.

**Dr. Poonam Dwivedi, Asst. Professor, Dept. of  
English, Baba Balraj, Panjab University,  
Constituent College, Balachaur, Punjab**

□

## Defeating defeatism

They are fools who sit through life  
fearing ill-luck or misfortune,  
they are phobic. I like the fox  
that befriended an elephant  
to reach grapes than the one  
that returned defeated  
calling it sour.

I admire the fox that chews its toe  
to free from trap,  
the crab that grows a new legs  
if one is cut off.

World museum has many avenues  
to try your luck than feeling  
frustrated or committing suicide  
if things go wrong. Gulliver risked  
his life and became a legend,  
I like the frogs that retire  
into hibernation after season  
to frisk and frolic in yellow frocks  
with first rain. Phoenix rises  
from ashes, rivers rejuvenate,  
and warriors retreat to hit back,  
knock out life-s tournaments,  
you never know from which corner  
'Tomorrow is my b'day, come to break  
the egg to cook omelette', said she  
smilingly and walked leisurely  
leaving me staring at the stately  
ship sailing away from me and flaunting  
maidenly anxiety.

**Prof O N Gupta**, 26/1002, Rajatlab, Raipur (C G).

□

## Meltdown Music

Fining down to the rib cage  
I sift the meltdown ore  
on the reed-nib-font base  
of the history of the flesh  
under a dripping olive tree  
with soaked shadows of the Cross  
that try to sign the wind still  
over a shaky shuffling slouching mob  
in a crammed crossover

Eyelashes, wings, pages flutter  
in the labyrinthine gut of infinity  
Those who mutter moan and gasp  
for breath parrying the blows  
of the gutterpress in the highhung gallery  
not immune to the glamorous stink  
of the gutter

Afterall, why so long and broken a bridge  
was built on the mouldy river map  
with gashes gaping for bricks  
and slabs to drop for all manner  
of construction ?

The house to live in shakes and shrieks  
a tower on fire, raining babies  
or children to land on the running water  
of life-hands, arms and laps, if there  
beyond the burning flaying ritual

Comfort, however hard and ill-formed  
for the pounded round hole  
from the fiery mortar plunge into the brickbound  
boned blood pool  
launches a once-over drive  
to swill it clean

The fact remains that it passes  
everytime  
off like a grim weathergun report  
away like a pedlar whose craft  
cracks and crumbles  
as his wares do  
and raises habitable mounds  
on a rental and terminal round

**Amarendra Kumar**, Nakhas, Hajipur, Bihar

□

### Seeding the Sand

Grandpa is angry  
Gudda is gay,  
Seeding the sand  
Not Master's way.  
    Lone man has the seed.  
    Seed without soil  
    Beating the water  
    Needs a pot to breed.

Nature's fault is fit to blame,  
Neither sex imperfect frame  
Bizarre body shameful name  
Perfect man's double shame.  
    Potent man, man virile  
    Made for creation  
    Rather fake joy  
    Why choose life sterile ?

Old Adam, fullman  
Carry on the line  
Beware hollow hell  
You've life divine.

— **Ram Bhagwan Singh**

□

## Book Review

**Basavaraj Naikar, *Bird in the Sky*, Bengaluru: CVG Books. 2015. Pp.198. Rs. 295.**

Dr. Basavaraj Naikar, an eminent scholar, a renowned teacher, an internationally reputed creative writer and highly decorated for his enviable accomplishments in richly varied and vast areas in literatures and translations, is a writer of this religio-spiritual novel, a rarely attempted genre, *Bird in the Sky*. I was scared and dumb-pale when I was asked to write a review of this hagiographical novel but it was after initial hiccups that I agreed. I received a copy of the novel and began to meet the challenge.

I read the astonishing biographical details of the Professor-writer of this novel and, then, the brilliantly informative and scholarly Preface to the novel. It made me more serious and I was enraptured by the intellectual, spiritual and miraculous ventures and performances of His Holiness Sri Siddharudha Swami born to Devamallamma and Gurushantappa belonging to the Lingayat business family of Chalakapur near Bidar. I have been very fond of reading biographies and autobiographies of great men from all fields since my student days but this biography sustained my unflagging interest till the miserable tragic end of His Holiness and aftermath who lived only to enlighten the densely dark paths of the masses around him and did all that he could to disseminate the fragrances of the Divine joy and happiness among them only to be trapped and preyed upon by the machinations of these life-long beneficiaries.

Even the childhood pranks of Sri Siddharudha astounded his friends, the villagers and his parents and shocked them all out of wits. He stunned the school teacher with his spiritual knowledge and never

wanted to be at school for formal learning. After having his last meals with his parents, he renounced the world and his friends, Soma and Bhima, accompanied Siddha in his quest for the Supreme Guru. This was an adventure the difficulties and strains of which his friends could not endure and they were sent back to the village. His encounter with a Pontiff at Gowalkonda, after his meditation in a cave where he had a divine flash of wisdom, astonished the pontiff by his six qualifications for the seeker of a guru. As we move on to read a series of miracles one after the other, it purifies and chastises us in its own way.

The novel reads like a fascinating account of the unbelievable actions and performances of a highly gifted and enlightened personality sent hither by the Divine Himself to guide and direct the course of ignorant masses steeped in blind belief and superstition. There used to be a gathering, congregation of his followers and disciples from all religions and faiths, Hindus, Parsis, Christians, Muslims and Sikhs at the monastery for the discourses, discussions and religious festivals. Some of HH Siddharudha's disciples like Sayyed Amin, later Kabiradasa, one of the best disciples of Sri Siddharudha, make an interesting tale of their own. The profundity, immensity and intensity of the setting and the sermons and the message to the godless humanity in the terrible grip of spiritual draught troubled me a lot. I realized that the world belongs to the worldly only. Those who try to wean away the world from the world are welcome only for the worldly gains; once these gains begin to slip away, these men or messengers of God meet the fate of Swami Siddharudha. The fact is that this hagiographical novel has intellectuality, spirituality and religiosity with its unbounded potentialities latent therein.

HH Sri Siddharudha had been preaching

renunciation and conquering desires and greed, lust and pride and exercise self-control to achieve true happiness, realize the meaning of life and fulfill the joy of living. He also humbled the scholars who showed arrogance. They would all listen calmly, nod their heads with a sense of resignation and show themselves to absorb and assimilate the teachings and sermons of their God Himself "who can protect, destroy and create the world," the real God, their Lord Nagabhushana Himself, they found it "impossible to describe the greatness of Master Siddha," revered and idolized him as he performed miracle after miracle to alleviate their sufferings and pains and fulfill their wishes and desires.

Master Siddha's spiritual discourses and discussions, his divine knowledge of the working of life, his stunning ability to understand and respond to the issues enraptured everybody wherever he went and with whomever he was. His followers, his disciples and the general public crowded his place. However, the way the highly Rev. Swami Siddharudha was involved in litigation, interrogated and examined in the court and later, forced to drink poison as a cure for all ailments by his very own, reveal that the world, if it gives bouquets today, the same world shall welcome you with brickbats. The Swami accepted all this with utmost humility as the Will of the Supreme Guru. Perhaps everything and everybody, the mighty and the meek, the Divine and the earthy, the learned and the ignorant are all bound to the wheel of Time. However, life beyond life is not meant for all. WE know how the world has treated its benefactors, be he Socrates or Buddha or Christ... or Swami Siddharudha.

An inimitable forte of this hagiographical novel is that its reading is very meaningful and faithful both for the ordinary and simple reader and the serious scholar of great literature who will certainly be

fascinated at the extension of the boundaries of his knowledge when he reads Dr. Basavaraj Naikar's brilliant and illuminating capsule history of religious literature only to end up elevated and enthralled.

Not only the title, but its print out in the dark background, symbolic of the darkness till infinity enveloping our world brightened with the name of the novel on the top with the name of the writer at the bottom within which is sandwiched soul in flight – all eclipsing the darkness leaving no room for doubt about the Truth!

The style of narration is truly marked by simplicity, sonority and spontaneity as is the unconscious necessity of such an attempt.

I am sure that the novel will enrich and elevate and enchant readers of all shades and hues.

--**R.K.Bhushan**, Retd. Professor of  
English, Poet and Critic

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**Smita Das's (edited), Ramesh K. Srivastava: Man and his Work—A Collection of Critical Essays. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2016. 347 pp. Rs 995.00 HB. ISBN 978-93-5207-147-0**

Creative writing in English is a welcome phenomenon in this country when the standards of English are deteriorating fast and to have a critical book on a creative writer is double welcome. Ramesh K. Srivastava has been a long-standing Professor of English who has carved out an important place for himself among eminent academics by contributing a large number of critical and creative writings in English.

The book under review is Smita Das edited Ramesh K. Srivastava: *Man and his Work—A Collection*

*of Critical Essays*. The collection has twenty three essays and interviews. The book is neatly divided into four sections: Introductory, Short Stories, Novels and Interviews. The first section is introductory, having three essays. It begins with a long critical introduction going into fifty seven pages by the editor Smita Das, writing about the life and works of Ramesh K. Srivastava. It tells about his early life and upbringing, his education both in India and abroad as also his writing career and academic activities in Guru Nanak Dev University, Bundelkhand University and S. R. Group of Institutions, Jhansi. It analyzes Srivastava's views on the short story and how far he has succeeded in putting them into practice. Three themes which are very common in Srivastava's works are: man-woman relationship, East-West encounter and rural and urban life. Das elaborates and illustrates these themes from the writer's works. Other topics which Das has discussed in the introduction are symbolism, imagery, form, technique and style. The second essay is by Srivastava himself who elaborately gives his views on the nature of his short story. The third essay is by Atma Ram Sharma in which he praises the simplicity of life and work of the author, concluding that Srivastava's fiction is characterized "by pace, passion and intensity" and above all it has, what Poe prescribed for a successful story, "the unity of impact or impression" (81).

The second section has seven critical essays on Srivastava's short stories and begins with Neeta Maini's essay in which she discusses the themes and techniques in the three early volumes of his short stories. She writes on his use of symbols, images, humour, irony and satire. In many of his short stories, Srivastava creates a dramatic situation with reversal of fortunes at the end. Considering irony as Srivastava's strong point, Maini considers his comic powers

“comparable to R. K. Narayan’s” (97). Lata Mishra analyzes twelve short stories collected in his anthology *Under the Lamp* and comments on the language of the narrative. Smita Das studies the short story “Games They Play” in which the two activities of construction and destruction during pre-and-post-independence periods have been juxtaposed. For her, the games of ancient kings and modern political leaders in the story “are a microcosm of cosmic power games” (140). Usha Bande highlights the strong character of Karmaibai as a woman in “Under the Lamp” and points out that the author neither deifies nor defiles her but simply paints her as “she appears in her innumerable garbs in a social, familial and cultural functions” (155). Manisha Sharma discusses the story “Cooperative Colony” in which Srivastava, with his irony, humour and satire, has “castrated the entire society of various professions since people in the name of cooperation show their utter selfishness and inhumanity” (164).

The third section has eleven essays which discuss Srivastava’s two novels—*Neema* and *Coils of the Serpent* from various viewpoints. Swati Srivastava is of the opinion that Srivastava has done a great job in introducing comic vein in his works, thereby “making them eminently entertaining, easily readable and wonderfully delightful without sacrificing their literary values” (163). Barinder K. Sharma writes of various symbols in Srivastava’s *Neema*, including even the names of characters like *Neema*, *Jeewan Jyoti*, *Beram Singh* and *Sundar Lal*. For him, the novel “willingly yields a fantastic harvest of rich images and symbols which add to the richness of the novel” (196). Smita Das writes about Srivastava’s use of variegated images in the same novel, used particularly for characterization both external and internal. She feels that he has given life-like representation of most of

his characters “through phantasmagoria of sparkling images . . . weaving a colorful tapestry of the Indian society” (210). Pashupati Jha gives a detailed critique of Srivastava’s novel *Coils of the Serpent* in which he discusses various aspects of the novel and finds that in “exact expression, Prof. Srivastava is superb, particularly in describing the rural scenes of India” (234). Elaborating the archetypal theme of good and evil in his works, he also praises Srivastava’s characterization and compares it with those of Charles Dickens and Jane Austen. Smita Das compares *Najama* alias *Nagina* as a serpent because she executes her vindictive plans which bring about the deaths and total ruin of both *Nawab Hashmi* and *Chandan Mohan*.

The fourth section consists of three interviews of Srivastava taken by Atma Ram Sharma, M. L. Mehta and Y. Joy. All of them seek clarification from Srivastava on those points which do not come directly in critical works, such as, the author’s background, influences of writers on him, his ways of working on the stories and novels, the themes he selects and so on. When asked about his philosophy of life, Srivastava said, “A man should do his best irrespective of the difficulties and obstacles that confront him” and considers each obstacle “a blessing in disguise” (306). Man-woman relationship, Srivastava told M. L. Mehta, depends on “mutual understanding, trust and accommodation, not leaving out sex as well” (309). In interviewing Srivastava, Y. Joy asked most of the questions on the nature of short stories, his experimentation in them and the writer’s emphasis on form as also the reasons of his popularity among the readers.

On the whole, it is an excellently-produced volume with good bibliography including primary and secondary sources for further study of the author. The essays in the anthology are quite scholarly and have been contributed by teachers who have good reputation as

scholars in the country. Smita Das deserves full-throated praise for taking tremendous pains and care not only in close-studying all the works of Srivastava but in writing such an exhaustive but scholarly Introduction encompassing important aspects of the author as also in compiling systematically the critical articles on his works. The book has an impressive jacket cover, a fine design and error-free printing on good paper. For those who wish to pursue research work in Indian writing in English, particularly on the works of Srivastava, the anthology would serve as an excellent handbook.

**Dr Shipra G. Vashishtha,**  
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**Happenspace: Poems by Amarendra Kumar. Patna: Novelty & Co., 2016. 148pp. Paperback. Price Rs150. ISBN 978-81-926732-8-8.**

Professor Amarendra Kumar's eighth collection of verse is a pleasure to handle because of the excellent book production. I did not find a single printing error, and the layout is very pleasant.

The poems in *Happenspace* are philosophical reflections on contemporary life. The images are quite original, and memorable. Many of the poems use alliteration very effectively. The overall tone is quite sombre. Take the poem "Lamplight" for instance: Safe tread on wet land may keep the bog away though one going down and sinking could engender a new species of frogs leap-and-croak free (p.44)

The idea of engendering new life by sinking into a bog is thought-provoking, but the new life is only a "species of frogs". The concluding stanza has striking imagery: "Morning and evening the sun whets its rays like a knife to shed bloodred wine for light to

disambiguate the horror of death in lamplight from one in utter dark". (p.44)

The play on the two meanings of 'shed' - shedding rays/shedding blood - makes the reader think about the twin functions of the sun, giving life and destroying through excessive heat.

Many of the poems are distinguished by their play upon words. "Saint to be, Maybe" ends: But is there any way to be a saint even by a rockbottom sale of the soul to the devil? (p.11) The lines make us think of Faust and his pact with the devil; we also think of popular "rockbottom sales" which are very often fraudulent - the price is hiked up, and then a fantastic discount, "rockbottom price", is offered.

"Menu Tang" offers linked images. In many poems, the images reveal how opposites coexist. Here is a stanza from the opening poem, "Happening": Mountain torrents' sounding call in gorges, ravines and valleys on green terraced slopes and level land

Small streams catch the echoes splitting, winding rivers flow, overflow their banks soft, sweet and menacing yet unheard (pp.1-2)

The rivers are life-giving, yet at the same time "menacing" when they "overflow their banks".

The poet makes good use of alliteration in most of the poems, as in this stanza from "Solar Plant", with the repeated "s" and "k" consonant sounds: Senses roll up cigarettes to suck and shape the burning tip also cast curls of smoke with confounding care (p.8)

"Widow's Wail" is a poignant comment on how crime affects women in India, where a widow cannot remarry or make a new beginning in life, once her husband dies. The murder of a man kills not just an individual, but the hopes and ambitions of the family:

Crushing bodyblow batters his young wife half dead  
weird horror of a living death Deeper wonder and terror  
in her child's uncomprehending, uncomforted,  
unsmothered cry choking time past, present and future.  
(p.95)

Unusual words like "unsmothered" and "uncomforted, add to the impact of the poems. The poet coins many "portmanteau" words like "happenspace", "toothdig" (p.32) and "footdragging", "ashstone", "stairkit" (p.60).. Sometime the meaning is obscure, as in these lines from the poem "Thy Will": "to peer into Shiva's third eye/ electric fire blaze-ashstone stairkit".

Many of the poems begin well, but the tempo is not sustained. The poem "Koel Killed" begins: Dog killing a koel on a sudden sound shift from 'coo' to 'Who?'(p.32)

Later stanzas are just a bunch of images: Toothdig bore in every pore in the stony lull of the magic flow silence a weird howl and a wild screech (pp.32-33)

What does the "magic flow" refer to? Why is this "lull" stony?

"Roosting" is another poem with striking opening lines: "I have many words to play with/one multi-shaded numbs me/almost strikes me dead". But it is not sustained. Though exclamation marks and question marks are used occasionally, the poet never uses a full stop-perhaps he wants to suggest that life is always in flux, there are no full stops!

**Shyamala A. Narayan**

a noted Literary historian and critic, Retd. Professor of English, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi.

□

**Dr. Manas Bakshi's *Dance of Satan and Other Poems*, Access (the Imprint of Authorspress) New Delhi, 2017 Pp. 127 Rs. 295/-**

The autobiographical portrayal of the poet comes forth in the poem entitled "Not Beyond Contemplation" in which the poet describes himself as 'an ecstatic bird' and seems to be alone in flight and sometimes swoops down to touch the river waters. The river of life is not fathomed and its depth is limitless like the void of sky. The poet has been successful in presenting a scenic account of the flying bird inside and outside by taking help of a beautiful metaphorical narration of the emptiness in contemplation and the bird of imagination touching the heights of fancy and fantasy.

"An ecstatic bird  
Lone in flight  
Swoops sometimes  
To touch  
The river water...  
The depth unknown  
Like the endlessness  
Of the sky...(Not Beyond Contemplation p.18)

Loneliness becomes more acute in the poem 'Absolutely Own' where it is two times the opening lines assert "Everyone has/ An Absolutely own loneliness/ Own dark corridor..." (p.49) The climax comes when the poem 'After Separation' must have been written. The painful moaning is evident in the stanzas. Every line of the poem is full of love, hatred, disgust, agony, remorse, and nostalgic pleasure, momentary bliss indescribable and unspeakable. It is pertinent to note that the anthology ends with 'in the absence of love' which is significant to denote that the dry and dreary desert of poet's fantasy looks to the dark clouds in the sky which are not seeded with water and the poet looks within which is also parched and is unable to nurture the foliage of love. Still Dr. Manas

Bakshi has used a few suggestive metaphors.

“Of the first night’s close whisper  
That was glued to our body language  
Against words decipherable yet.” (p.69)

The visionary poet longs for ushering in the beauty of the mind, spring of poetry beyond the savage nudity of the past. The poet yearns for the technological advancement coupled with the imagination and fantasy of the poets and not the sordid and damned world of ‘a call girl returns with scars/on her body from a murky world.’ The plunder and prostitute are the twin aphorisms often used by the poet to depict the deprived underdogs of the society who are exploited for their depravity and hailing from a downtrodden class. However, a rainbow comes out as is witnessed in his first and the foremost poem. “To be swept by the resplendence Of a silent iris smile.”( Rainbow P. 11) Again Dr. Manas Bakshi writes a full length poem on ‘21st Century Love’ with sarcasm, fondness and imaginative fears, but the lovely input of fantasy comes in when he says-

“It’s 21st century  
Full of neo-liberal thirst,  
Fond of bustling with Wi-Fi buzz.” (p.43)

Democracy has been questioned in these poems and ‘secularism- an eye wash’ seems to be ridiculed by the poet and he says “Whom do we swindle?” (p.15) Analogical comparison of Dance of Democracy and Dance of Satan - values of life cherished since childhood evaporate in smoke of harsh realities but the reader is perplexed at the thesis to be built by the poet that this is all due to democracy’s let loose attitude and recalcitrant behaviour and action that the culprits go scot free and justice is not meted to the satanic perpetrators of crime. (Dance of Satan p.12) The poet is hurt deeply by the horrendous incident of

rape committed at New Delhi and publicized as ‘Nirbhaya’ the victim had died after a torturous ordeal as in the poem ‘Lalgarh’ penned on carnage in West Bengal’s Midnapur. He has written ‘On The Death of Nirbhaya’ a long poem and the victim’s pseudo name appears in his other poems also like ‘Dance of Satan’ :

The state of mind of a lonely man and forlorn lover occasionally flashes back in the poems and the words like “The lone sufferer everywhere”/ “Tracing love in deceitful eyes”/ Only perverted sex to survive alone!” are the aphorisms coined by the poet which are essentially born out of his agonized experience.(p.85) Balcony of brothel housing ‘sexless concubinage,’ surrogate mother, Ode to Diwali begins with ‘Clouds’ portrayal of Madonna’s hair’ and ends with annihilation let loose by Goddess Kali. Three Women has the same tone and tenor of poet’s hearty recollection of the days of his childhood, middle age and sun setting in the evening of life.

The reminiscences and memorabilia are painful and not blessed and blissful except the love and affection showered in infancy by the mother. The dividing line between the two extremes is also visible in the poem ‘Riddle’ where the poet is juxtaposed as “A dividing line between/Faith in man and a craze for crime!” (p.84). In the same breath, the poet has written a poem ‘Intramural’ where man-woman relationship has been intimately described with metaphoric iconography. The poet says:

“Man-woman intramural relationship too  
Sometimes livid as river  
Sometimes vapid as desert----(p.92)

A long poem has been devoted to the current events like ‘After the Economic Meltdown’ and its phases have been recorded. The poem bounces like waves of an ocean with rise and fall of the words and

thoughts from spirituality to the hard economic conditions. The situational poems give graphics like 'Mega shopping mall/for the affluent/And/ Crumbs for the downtrodden. (p75)

Finally the champion of compromises has to win in the current scenario. An apt recalling of the events like 'August in Assam 2012 commemorates the sojourn of the poet to the gruesome and poignant exodus in the wake of the communal rioting and dreadful fall outs of massacres. 'Ancestral View' is nostalgic poem recalling 'His father's faith, fear and fatigue' / 'A troika of abstraction' which is awesome and pithy in its brevity to describe all the traits, values, and environ given by a father to his child. Similarly in the long poem 'Surpassing the Abrasive Blues' mythological references find mention to depict the modern life's abysmal state and the lofty ideals of the divine.

"A God with an altruistic vista  
Or, A Satan with maneuvering tricks— (p48).

Message contained in the anthology is to contemplate within and be true to yourself. The dedication to Dr. D.C. Chambial, the Editor of 'Poetcrit' and Anil K. Sharma, the Editor of 'Contemporary Vibes' is multidimensional in interpretation as both the legendary editors are inspirational in character as poets of extraordinary calibre. Inner-self and self-realization occurs invariably in poems which speak loudly about the urgent utmost urge of the poet to douse the flames within ignited by the relations and environs.

**Dr. Poonam Dwivedi**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Baba Balraj Panjab University Constituent College, Balachaur-144521, Punjab.  
Email: poonam.dwivedi83@gmail.com

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***Faiter & Fall (Poems) by Vivekanand Jha, Authorspress, New Delhi, 2017, Pp. 87, Rs. 250/-***

Vivekanand Jha is a popular name among Indian English poets as a poet, anthologist and editor of Verbal Art and Phenomenal Literature. The book under review *Faiter & Fall* is his debut poetry collection with fiftyone poems on myriad subjects ranging from love, nature, death to environmental and social issues like "global warming", "Honour Killing", cruelty against animals and the like. But what is more significant is his deconstruction of human attitudes and taking lesson from there. And in doing so, he tries to "give a touch of eternity" to them. So very often he begins his poems in a complaining mode as if in a victim position and ends with a gem of thought proved by the test of time. Take for example his first poem "An Elegy on the Poem". He begins with a complaint that 'poetry editors' reject poetry submission on grounds which are not fair and hence poems "fall victim to the predators". He enumerates several readymade rejection replies of editors but comes up in the end with a common wisdom "poets do poetry irrespective of the results." It is a common experience of poets and they can readily share with it. In the next poem he is even more direct in his complaint "A helping hand, no body lends/ in scaling the ladder of success but many to dislodge its rungs". Bitten by such vampires, the poet turns to his father for wise counsel and quotes his words:

"Give up the life, have a tinge of tussle,  
draw a line, parallel but longer one  
to the one your rival has drawn"

"Ashes of Al'ar" also takes recourse of parental wisdom and makes a tribute to his father. Elsewhere, he turns to "Bhagavad Gita" for seeking "Manual for mankind, road to redemption". He displays his penchant for message in a direct manner in "Believe Me or Not."

Sense of loss pervades in his poetry making it what Matthew Arnold calls criticism of life. "A Vanished Tree" which is a sequel to "A Banyan Tree" conveys the mood of general loss of community living and communication with nature. Both these poems display his masterly handling of symbols and images. The Banyan tree at one level is the symbol of his father but at another it represents age old pristine values of Indian life and culture. His poem "Disposal" is his prayer to God built on a pattern of binary oppositions of what he seeks and what he gets.

I beseeched the Lord serenity;  
he granted me the solitude of sadness"

At the end he comes to realise the teachings of the Gita when he says, "I decided to leave all to the Lord".

Vivekanand Jha's favourite poetic device is irony that is directed towards one and all objectively without malice or sentimentality. In "An Elegy to Animal" he takes a dig at this human history of bloodshed and professes:

They are now parched  
for want of each other's blood.  
Soon you'd witness them chewing,  
devouring flesh of each other  
like a horde of hyenas".

Similarly he shows his sympathy for the bleak condition of widow in "Flogging Dead Horse" or turns his ire against movies in "Killing of Innocence" or laughs at open romance of love birds often turning into public nuisance in "Loveria" equating it with malaria. However, in his poem "Love" he redeems the glory of love:

"Is there any fruit as sweet  
as I wish you, you wish me  
and your womb bears our love ?"

Vivekanand Jha in this collection comes out triumphantly as a poet of protest, poet of deep social and human concern born out of his personal lived experiences. He offers solutions as well which poets seldom do. Simplicity and expressiveness are the hallmarks of his language. I enjoyed reading it and call it a value addition to the corpus of poetry.

— C. L. Khatri

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**The Enduring Art of Anita Desai by Jai Ram Jha and Suravi Gohain Duwarah Aadi Publications, F-11, S.S. Tower, Choura Rasta, Jaipur, 2015, Pp. 220, Rs. 995/-**

Anita Desai is one of the most prominent Indian women novelists writing in English. Though there are several research works on her novels, the present one offers a new insight into her works by exploring "Desai's oeuvre that has explored the lives of outsiders within Indian society and more recently, also within the west." The duo writers approach her novels through her identifiable characters like Nanda Kaul in *Fire on The Mountain*, Bim in *Clear Light of the Day* or Uma in *Fasting Feasting* and comprehensively deal with her recurrent themes like feminism, man-woman relationship, alienation, Quest for identity and female psyche.

The book comprises five chapters namely "An Introduction to Major works of Anita Desai.", "Women's Fight for Liberation in Anita Desai's Novels", "Men and Women Relationship", "Psychology of Women in Anita Desai's Novels and an exclusive interpretation of her novel *In Custody* followed by a bibliography and an Index.

Chapter one discusses at length the recurrent themes in her novels rather than introducing

individual novels. One of the themes discussed here is "Family Pressure" as one finds in *Fasting, Feasting, The Village by the Sea* or in *Fire on the Mountain*. The authors discover a parent's pattern in her novels that "The parents in Desai's books are not really prepared to be good parents". But they don't delve into the question 'why'. The other themes are "Failure of Marriage", "Subverted Homes", "Alienation and Isolation", "Problem of Communication", "Space", "Time", "Rebellion", "Death" and "Quest for identity". It also includes an in-depth assessment of her art of characterization. They conclude that her female characters are in eternal quest for meaningful life.

The second chapter exhaustively deals with marriage as an institution in a patriarchal society, marital relationship, marital discord, separation and its impact on children and women either succumbing to the pressure or revolting against the hegemonic system as visualized in Anita Desai's novels. They rightly observe that "In Desai's women we find a constant search of a landscape to accommodate their need for their refusal of the patriarchal society."

The third chapter is in a way a sequel to the second one. It covers the entire gamut of men-women relationship with focus on relationship in love and marriage. They observe that "All the marriages in Anita Desai are business transactions". So the basic bonds of marriage are missing. The root cause of their behavioural pattern lies in their strange upbringing and childhood. Jha and Duwarah's observation is worth quoting:

"A close study of Anita Desai's works reveals her struggle for female autonomy, played out against the backdrop of the patriarchal cultural pattern. At the outset, it seems that she is asking a new and different

question. Her writings can be viewed as a self-conscious reaction to overwhelming masculinity of privileged dominant gender. We can identify in her characters a defiant tone of voice in asserting the personal and the subjective."(107)

No study of Anita Desai can be meaningful without a study of her psychological perspective. She is chiefly concerned with psychological issues rather than sociological ones and "feminine psyche constitutes a major part of Anita Desai's fictional material." The authors have perceptively analyzed Desai's deeper understanding of various facets of women psychology, split personality and psychic dilemma and the working of unconscious and subconscious mind of her women in the background of psycho analytical theories.

It is followed by an exhaustive study of Desai's novel "In Custody" that seems as an appendix in the overall design of the book. The authors have brilliantly explored 'existential duality', the mental conflict zone of female characters in the novel. The polarities operate at the level of choice, semantics, semiotics and space and time. Both temporal and spatial experiences of the characters in the novel are effectively explored and analyzed in a theoretic frame work.

One feels the need of a conclusion as commonly found in a research work. On the whole, it is a commendable research work on Anita Desai with copious textual and critical references. The book is elegantly brought out with impressive cover design that gives aesthetic look to it.

- C. L. Khatri

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**Messiah: A Selection of Poems by Sumirasko  
Cybeint.net, HIG45, Kaushambi Kung, Allahabad-  
2110119 (2017) Price Rs. 350/-**

Sumirasko from Bihar is a wonder poet of all times. The literary world knows little about his poetry written during his short but amazingly creative life of just 22 years. His poetry is mainly mystic and esoteric. His parents fail to explain how Sumirasko wrote thousands of poems disproportionate to his age and length of life. They just called him 'Buddha'. Had he lived longer, he would have become one in his poetic outpourings.

The present book *Messiah A Selection of Poems* presents a garland of poems of different hues and aroma. This book is different from other volumes in the selection of poems. Here the poems seem to have been selected with an eye on the general reader. Naturally there are some simple poems easy to read and understand. The poem 'The young man of Twenty' reads like a personalised account of the poet. The young man is highly reserved, knows none except love, alien as ancient literature, dreaming strange dreams and finally drowning and 'sleeping six feet below / resting peacefully/without that devilish harrow/ unknown to sorrow' (55). The young man of twenty will always remain a young man surely in nature's memory and nature's diary.

Sumirasko believes in God and prays to Him for absorbing the sins of mankind. He acknowledges the divine power and man's limitations. He is humble, he begs for pity. The poet realises that the outside world is full of deception and fraud. But there is also a world within in every man, every being, pure and peaceful.(13) *Mother's Myth* is an example of Sumirasko's anti-conventional ideas. He calls it a shame to perpetuate the myth about mother. He says,

don't glorify her – my mother at least  
don't versify her – let this be the end.  
Oh! purely Earthy / raw lusty passion  
trying to possess her sons  
fulfilling her ends  
he is just a means.(20)

Also his views about woman are down to earth, realistic. To quote,

We possess her, we are possessed  
we undrape her, we are undraped  
her tears fire our anger  
he tears cool our senses....  
women are witches  
not only fairies  
let it be whatever it is... (Woman 35-36)  
Here he sounds Lawrentian.

In another poem he speaks of spiritual purity and fulfilment. Though he declares, 'I am no Proust / no Nitezsche, no Blake / none and all at once / this is wild pleasure / infinite sublime pleasure... oh ! spirit is eternal delight.(24)

About man he has similar views. To him each man is a summation of good and evil, divine and dust, love and lust, he is both a creator and destroyer. In *Messiah* the poet has developed the same idea. One who finds good and evil in his own self, he becomes divine, different from the general humanity. Therefore, 'I proclaim the human doctrine, be a man, not sage'. (72) To quote,

I come here with a new philosa  
accept your man a flockman  
accept your weaknesses and find yourselves  
for each in you, a messiah dwells.

On first looking into Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karmazov* the poet feels that the book satiated his

soul as none else. It saved him from suicide. However, he does not explain how.

The book contains as many as 117 poems. They are rather simple. The selection is really wise to reach Sumirasko to wider readership. A little bit editing could make it thoroughly presentable. Even in its present avatar I immensely enjoyed it.

— **Ram Bhagwan Singh**

□

***The Being A Long Poem* by R.M. Prabhulinga Shastry, Prakash Book Depot Bareilly pp. 40 (2017) Price Rs. 150/-**

The Being A long Poem is the latest poetic creation of R.M. Prabhulinga Shastry. Already he has published one and a half dozen books in English and Telugu. Shastry being a versatile writer has written poetry, stories, a novel, a drama and a few essay books. As a poet he is better than his other creative writings.

The present poem is composed in the Upanishadian style. A series of questions is raised by the inquisitive soul and the learned and enlightened self provides the answers. Here Being means any living being other than human being. The questions are about the creation and the creator, the created being, the purpose of creation, meaning of existence, purpose of life and some ethical questions. The basic promise is that life is meant for noble deeds, sin destroys life and that suffering comes from ignorance. Hence, there are all types of questions, fears, apprehensions and confusion in one's mind. One has to find out the answers oneself.

The poet asks multiple questions about a thing— what it is, what it was, what it would be. Again he asks, whether it existed before, whether it has changed, or will it last or lose its existence and how

and why and when. These are all metaphysical questions beyond the purview of physical science. The soul or 'atman' can be seen as God. The same soul lives in all living beings— human and non-human.

The fact is, today the world is too much with us. Earning and spending is the summon and bonum of life. Our soul lies dormant, so we don't care about our conscience. Spirituality is virtually banished from our day to day life. The poems in this book are meant to awaken our sensibility and make us conscious of this lapse. Today we don't have enlightened gurus and saints in our midst to enlighten us and answer our spiritual enquiries. It sounds very simple both the relation between a parent and a child as well as the separation between the two. So, 'how could a lineage from the Great Grand Parent to the Child go on?'(13) Such are the questions that boggle our mind. Shastry does not play the sage or the guru. He is subject himself asking questions inviting the reader to join him. He will himself obtain the answers from within as will his readers.

The book is a good exercise on spiritual quest to understand the living being, its existential scheme only visible through the prism of the soul. It has been called a long poem which demands chosen intellectual readers. It provides adult reading, religious reading. A long poem of its own kind! An Upanishadic leaf as it were !

- **Ram Bhagwan Singh**

□

***Collage of Life* by P.C.K. Prem, AuthorsPress, New Delhi- 110016 (2016) pp. 96 Price Rs. 195/-**

Poetry is no longer a turning loose of emotions, it is ideas encapsulated in chosen words. It is a collage of ideas and thoughts in terms of language. Today

sense has replaced sensation, sweet liquid beauty has been divorced for hard metallic beauty.

PCK Prem's latest collection of poems Collage of Life presents a collage of man's agonies and aspirations, hopes and dilemmas. Again, the age denies generalisation, things are person and class specific. In this light I go through the poems in Collage of Life. The book has two parts, "Collage of Life" containing 14 poems and "In Lanes of past" having 11 poems. The poet has voiced his disillusionment with modernity, with cyber culture, with raining desert. To him, "to locate men in animals/is a modern curiosity and truth/as thirst and hunger, pain and sorrow." And more,

It is poison in software celebrating cyber culture,  
in a world of cultured men  
of disfigured faces, almost ghouls.(12)

The poet is deeply distressed to see that man has colonized space and jammed it with his scientific luggage. His predatory craze is a constant threat to humanity. Hence, he says in "It is Nothing"

Another age of calamity and wreckages visits,  
controls the moon and the sun without telling  
if a man digs and devours it is quiet.  
if he strangles and wipes out, the age is silent.(13)

He goes to the extent of saying "This century writes the end of man" (17) That is, by no means a prophecy but a palpable threat that keeps ringing in the conscious ears. The poet as a conscience keeper cautions those in power to avert the impending catastrophe. This being the major strain I find it recurring in some more poems. The situation becomes more alarming "when gods in stones shut eyes at night", not to speak of "a priest at a church work (ing) as a thief in hard times."(23) The priest is a hypocrite, an impostor. Without making bones Prem says,

He burns incense, rings bells  
and tastes marijuana and chants mantras  
in a yajna but refuses entry to deities.

In the second part "In Lanes of Past" again he sounds the same realist notes with some nostalgia and an element of contrast with the present. The current problem is spiritual skepticism, the problem of spiritual bankruptcy. In such a state death "seems the glory of life." Therefore, "a piqued intellect" laments for perfection of life. There is failure and failure, the anguished soul finds it impossible to escape and is ready to surrender. The poet laments the state of politics miserably lost in moral liquidation. Hollowness, shame and ugly defections prompt leaders to amass the "riches of thousand tears". The poet is, no doubt, in search of salvation but "no sage will appear to grant salvation through a son."(39) He feels sorry to note,

Earth fails and groans for peace that lands  
on moon savagely dampening the spirit of man.(60)

The poem 'Mother' is an obeisance to mother, the son was not born in the image of God but in the image of his mother. He calls mother a born incarnation of life divine. Thus,

Your image they revered  
Worshipped in temples ancient  
in books  
but I consider you a living flesh  
giving pleasure and pain.

The individual mother becomes the mother of a coming age and a woman ripped of its sanctity. This is the new mother, the modern woman shorn of age-old image of a deity, an icon of love, selflessness and sacrifice. Then the poet outlines mother of the future as 'a bit of flesh/responding to passionate caresses with eyes closed/sitting in the womb of reality.(82)

The son has also changed, brothers too. Today brothers will banish Ram, the wife will elope with someone, Jatayu will be the witness of the new pattern of life. And no God will descend from above to salvage the burning train of humanity. So the poet rationalises,

There is nothing wrong with this age  
age past was ennobling  
it is all what time makes  
a merciless enemy and a kind friend  
that age was fire, past was glorious.(84)  
....today is yester, yester is today....  
yester today and tomorrow are tiny streams  
of eternity flowing constantly  
reviving death and birth, birth and death.(86)

The poet concludes, 'I am modern of no pretence'.(88)

The formal beauty of Prem's poems compels our attention. In Romance he calls the immature idea of love 'a sea of waterless thoughts' and 'clear like the sky without a sun'. The evening is 'like an empty glass of wine'. In Mother he feels the sufferings of human beings are brought back on the sterilized impotent rock of life'.(81) His images like 'fossilized sounds', 'a bunch of memoirs', 'brothel of money' are strikingly new.

I find the poems in this book are adult poems meant for intellectual appreciation.

- Ram Bhagwan Singh

□

**Exploring Folk Literature by Manoj Kumar, Yking Books, G-13, SS Tower, Dhamani Street, Chaura Rasta, Jaipur- 302003, 2016, pp. 174, Rs. 825/-**

In the post-colonial era, Folk literature, Subaltern and Tribal literature have gained currency in the academic discourse particularly of English literature.

Each nation has a rich reservoir of folk literature. It is heartening to see that faculties of English across the world are taking keen interest in exploring and analyzing folk literature irrespective of its source language. The theoretical implication is that the boundary of literary studies is fast evolving and expanding. The present book Exploring Folk Literature by Manoj Kumar, a young enthusiastic Lecturer in Amity University, Rajasthan, is a comprehensive work on Rajasthani Folk ballads. It begins with a general introduction to Rajasthan in the Manner of 'Padharo Mare Desh' followed by a synoptic chapter on Folklore comprising its historical background, its genres like. songs of various occasions theatre, dance, music, riddles, stories, proverbs, tongue twisters, arts and crafts, games, costumes, medicine, beliefs, etc. Chapter three outlines the whole gamut of Ballad- native and the western with sumptuous references and quotes. He comes from general to particular and presents a detailed contour of Rajasthani Ballads. He traces its origin from Rigveda and records that 'Remi' and 'Narashanshi' ballads were very popular in Vedic period. He discusses all the nine theories about origin of Ballads and different forms of Ballads in practice there. Interestingly he brings in debate some books on Ballads of Rajasthan written by foreign writers and raises a question mark on their understanding of alien culture.

In Ballads village folk celebrate different festivals, rituals, different social and cultural practices- Teej, Raksha Bandhan, Ekadashi, Gangaur, Holi, wedding etc. Ballads have been a source of cultural solidarity, identity and of community life. So the Ballads present the whole spectrum of Rajasthani traditional life.

The study ends with a brief disturbing matter of fact comment on the present status of the Ballads in which he rues the fact that "Though, there are some

efforts going on to save the endangered oral traditions. Ballads are not as popular in contemporary time as they used to be. The community of bards seems to have adopted different professions rather than singing...If someone wants to listen to 'Dhola-Maru' ballad, it will be difficult to trace a singer for the ballad." (161)

Manoj Kumar has done well to make ample use of graphs, pictures and matter of fact data to make the book highly informative and enlivening. It is a must read for anyone who wants to peep into the folk world of Rajasthan. Kudos to Kumar !

- C. L. Khatri

□

***Yayati Returns and Ohter Poems* by PCK Prem, Published by The Poetry Society of India, Gurgaon, 2017, pp. 79, Rs. 200/-**

The symbolically potent title 'Yayati' takes us to the world of the Mahabharata in which king Yayati aspires youth at a cursed old age and exchanged his old age with the youth of his youngest son Pooru. So powerful was the carnal desire that it forced a father to rob the prime life of his newly wedded son. So Yayati symbolizes sensual, sexual pleasure, greed, over ambition, consumerism, hedonism and an insatiable desire to achieve anything at any cost, where end justifies the means. In fact Yayati syndrome has been with us all through effulgent or subdued and it reverberates in the poems of the first section "Yayati & Life".

In the first poem for example "Guards in Frames" the Yayati syndrome is echoed through various concrete images of men and animals of prey. 'The man in eagle frame' or 'The crook' throwing glances at a damsel, or Pundit winking or an 'owl' standing near a

leader/ 'as a cat pounces at milk and jumps over the empty priests' skull' conjure up "a luscious snap/ of a figure digging up moon". The disfigurement of man is the fall out of Yayati syndrome. This has led to the scrapping of old values for 'modern ethos,/built up on the power of public,/duped and stripped naked at last/ by those who profess to serve". You can find both Yayati and Pooru in these lines. It has all pervasive effect as we see in these lines of "Men of Today".

Enlarging the horizon requires effort  
in an age of devouring back holes,  
of flatness in tedium  
of modern ethos,  
built up on the power of public,  
duped and stripped naked at last  
by those, who profess to serve.

It is both men's making and men's predicament "rotting and wasting life". The poet being exposed to all weathers for long years rues this misplaced priority in life. "... deciphering meaning of life,/ in dusky rays when media panders/ to cheap tang,/ living on sex, wealth and fecundity/ boasting of a purpose in living." (Painting, 4)

The sense of loss takes him to the border of pessimism and the poet bursts out in a direct mode to have strong and pinching appeal.

"Ethos of life demented,  
hinges on cryptic civilization  
distributing blood and hunger..."  
(Sometime in life, 6)

In such a situation every Romantic poet discovers an outlet. So does Prem in "grave heads and deep rumination". And the present collection is an output of that negotiation with the time and with himself with an admission that "Anarchy is nature testimony

to maturity". The poem very often gives his 'ruminations a philosophic touch not just by referring to mythical figures or classics but through keen perception, penetrating observation of life and linguistic felicity:

A wrong belief within burns,  
soggy and fusty it is inside  
in such a confluence,  
warm bond could take birth  
if faith unclear instills hopes  
not lost in baroque intensity.

He is concerned about preserving this world in a form worth living for future generation as shown in "My Tale". The world we live in is not the world visualized by Rabindranath Tagore 'where the world is not fragmented by narrow domestic walls' and the same is presented by PCK Prem through dichotomy:

"To exist means to build iron walls and safeguards".

"Yayati" is the best and longest poem of this collection by virtue of its emotional depth, intellectual width, poetic craftsmanship and ingenious word play, "Yayati in android", "yuyutsu", in retelling the old tale and in presenting his vision of life:

Yayati goes past the image  
and a man lives  
as a fossilized being,  
and in a flitting life profile  
Yayati struggles  
to reinvent destiny,  
beyond seizing life as God envisioned  
in the beginning of the world,  
of profound confusion in fostering  
of identity  
a mystical puzzle it is  
Amen!

"In Regions of Hope" comprises twenty poems while the first section consists of twenty five poems on the seamy side of life. In the latter poems the poet builds on the hypothetical hope he regained and adds up to it without totally shaking off the old baggage. Like a wise old man he clearly underlines the given symptoms of violence, corruption, crumbling edifice of culture as "imminent confusion/that disturbs cosmic design." Man has only two options either to "retune" or to face "nature's wrath". He clearly enumerates the present sordid state in one after another poem by calling the world "a mayhem", "life is a deadpan"(51). He reminds us of the past heritage and appeals to rediscover ourselves and reinvent the meaning of life. He is neither retrogressive nor pessimistic but hard core realist who wants to fight back life. He is neither Yayati nor Pooru of the Mahabharata but in a sense he gives voice to the angst of Chitrlekha, the wife of Pooru (Karnad's Yayati) and the self realisation of Yayati that sensual desire is never quenched by indulgence. One can achieve peace only by mental poise that goes beyond likes and dislikes. In "Home and Hymns" the poet tries to relocate ourselves in our age old culture through the images of 'Ma', 'Village deity', 'guru', 'Mountain', river and by restoring home as heritage. He wonderfully recreates landscape of idyllic scenic beauty and pastoral life that allows a reader to roam in and continue to be under its lingering effect.

On the whole, PCK Prem's poems are remarkable for existential quest, blend of mythical, biblical and nature imagery, colloquial and poetic diction, and deep thematic concerns with the socio-political and cultural incongruities and aberrations and a futuristic vision of life.

**C. L. Khatri**

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## PUBLICATIONS OF DR. C. L. KHATRI

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