

Conifers Call
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India, My Love

Paul Garza Jr. (USA)

Is the moon held in early
summer evening's sky
The same moon, the very same moon
I viewed from the magic streets
of Simla?
Same moon that hung in
November's sky,
Seemed painted, colors vivid,
white, gray, tinted yellow
Was full, clear, terribly close.
The same moon five years removed,
Seen how many thousand miles away?

India, when I first saw you--
Swarming masses at Bombay's airport,
Farmers, workers, huts surrounding the
fields,
Misty-clouded monsoonal rains
Pouring, halting, hanging
In the air--
I was bathed in joy.
Filled with excitement,
I met your bustling masses,
Crowded customs, money-changing
hawkers,
Poor peons selling cokes
to earn five paise.
I was happy then--
The airport was drab, disgusting,
But my eyes saw only an
unknown beauty, mystery,
Of unknown strangers, endless
new sensations.
On the flight to Delhi I
saw from the skies
Your vast Gujarat, Maharashtra states.
The wind swirled the small craft
so badly
I thought I would die--
I accepted it in a moment,
My death sure to cause

my soul
To be reborn your native son
I remember the nights,
Nights of summer, nights of fall,
Night chilled to freezing,
Nights overheated to exasperation.
The journeys through the darkness to
Simla, to Bhopal, to Dehra Dun,
To my soul.

You do not treat your visitors well, India.
You give them no luxury, no dearth
of endless red-tape, rules,
questions.
But I was fixated by you,
In love with you.
And, like a fascinated courter,
Tolerance was unneeded,
Each foolish quirk, each
strange incident
Only bound me to your
ever deepening spell.

The faces of your children
still come to me in the night,
call to me to return.
The simple joy of friendship,
generous affection,
Ease of companionship,
Rapture of hospitality--
The perfection of my country's
never learned art.
My dreams never tire of returning me
in search of
Five year staled friendships--
And the agony of separation
Grips at my heart,
Pulls me into melancholic states.

How I long to touch your soil,
Let the dust settle on my skin.
How, to see your mornings, twilights,
nights.
Long to be with friends,
Travel to unheard places,
Feel your breeze,

Caress your thighs,
Sleep at your bosom.

You are the magic lover,
Seduced, ingested, then spit me out
Only for my love to grow,
The separation engulf any
thought of happiness
Without your ground
beneath my feet.

Oh, India!
India, my love,
When shall I see you?
When shall I touch you once more?

More Schemes Please

Rajiv Khandelwal (Agra, India)

The Supreme Court ordered
Plantation of saplings
To combat growing menace
Of pollution

In deference
One third of the designated quantity
Bought at thrice the price
Two thirds planted
In safe deposit lockers

On file all holes were dug
Throughout the city limits
Appropriate payoff made

One third saplings
Were planted with some
Very rare paper publicity
Officially
Two thirds perished within the month
Due to adverse conditions
The venal group, satisfied
Wished the Supreme Court
Would drum up
Some more zealous schemes

Conversation Overheard at the Employment Exchange

Man! Are you trying to tell me
That you are jobless
In a country that is going to be
The reckoning power in the world

Are you trying to tell me
You have yet not landed a job
While our ministers are doling out
Freebies without kickbacks

I will have to be blunt man
You look to me a little crazy
Otherwise why haven't you
Obtained jobs with the goons
Vandalising the cinema halls
Or digging up the pitches
Or demolishing places of worship
Or attacking specific communities
Or at least participating in the
Second quit India movement

Why haven't you joined
Those permanently employed
With the job of inciting hatred

Do you realise the gravity
Of your incompetence
You have obtained no job
While million job opportunities
Are floating around
For crumbling the system
Are you nuts? After all
What job are you looking for
You think we are going to
Custom design one for you

Phoey
You are crazier than a coon

Nature and Environment

Zacharoula Gaitanaki, (Greece)

We destroyed the nature,
we were ungrateful,
we turned it against us
and we didn't sense
the coming danger
for all of us on the Earth.

We set fire to the forests,
concrete is "springing up" everywhere,
we buried the environment
and the death encircled us.
Wilderness is coming
and we'll flee.

Scientists shout to awaken
the people's interest,
the Poets write verses awaken them
to sense of responsibility.
Nature can't bear anymore,
it's time to make a change.

Leave your cars,
go on foot,
recycle appliances,
make your verandahs green.

The Game of Joy

To find the pleasure
in everything, everywhere,
to be happy with all the things.
Even an unimportant thing
has something to give you.
If you are overcome with joy,
if you are not in the grip of low feelings,
then you will be always the winner.
Because there are not losers
in the game of joy.

Power/Knowledge Axis: A Foucauldian Interpretation

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Sandeep Kumar Sharma

Michel Foucault (1926-1984), A French intellectual, has rekindled an interest in cultures largely by thinking about power as no one quite had before him. Foucault in a number of his writings is concerned to establish the interconnectedness of power and knowledge. From Foucault came the notion that power is a whole complex of forces; it is that which produces what happens. A tyrannical aristocrat does not just independently wield power but is empowered by discourses, accepted ways of thinking, writing and speaking and practices that embody, exercise and amount to power. Foucault seeks to expose the way power was at work in the seemingly 'objective vocabularies' of budding human sciences as these emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Foucault constructs power as effective and creative because it creates human being's subjectivity. Power is exerted on the subject directly when the discourse of human sciences is practically applied on the subject through social institutions and practices. Knowledge is created under the gaze of surveillance. At all levels there is surveillance and this creates knowledge which becomes power. Foucault outlines a series of external social forces. These are processes of control, selection, organization and distribution that govern the production, and implementation of discourse. Discourse maintains asymmetrical social relations. All relations are relation of power. The subject is created under the power of discourse. Foucault is predominantly concerned with the role of power in human life. He sees power as positive. Power produces its own resistance and activates us towards pursuing techniques of self-control, self-mastery and self-knowledge. Power inspires us in an art of living. The defining difference of power is resistance and in Foucault's view as a subject we should use power positively. It is the micro

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politics of positive power—the positive unconscious. Human sciences form a moral base for exertion of power. Will to truth is politics of power because the power of these human sciences rests on their claims to knowledge. Every prescriptive systems as Economics and language are governed by discourse of truth.

Foucault believes that power is a religion of struggle. In the nineteenth century, the struggle has conditioned through practices of exclusion and inclusion. He argues that power is imminent in all social relations and that all social relations, are relations of power, whether in family or in the layers of government and other social institutions. Foucault's influential book, *Madness and Civilization* demonstrates that the physical confinement and repression that occurred in the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth centuries left a greater power to madness than modern methods of treatment; which aims at changing the consciousness of the insane. Foucault believes that knowledge is an expression of the 'will to power'. He adds that power has the character of a network and its threads extend everywhere, thus in a way, rejects the Marxist view, which holds that there is conflict between the ruling class and the subordinate classes. Foucault advocates on active engagement with the politics of knowledge and refuses to draw any time between text and various discourses of power, truth and representation. Such discourses are produced by and within the real world of power. Power is gained through struggle.

The state maintains its control by the power of discursive practices. Derrida says that power is constituted in a through language and not outside it. Foucault equates knowledge with power and regards all “enlightened” forms as signs of sophisticated instruments in the applied technology of social control. Foucault says such power is maintained through the state prisons, the medical profession, legislation, etc.

Power, like colonialism has different manifestations –political power, muscle power, money power, literary power

and the power of discourse etc. For Foucault, the Panopticon stands for the modern world in which we, its citizens are the bearers of our own figurative, mental imprisonment. Foucault attributes this to power because it clearly has much in common with Althusser's 'ideology' and Gramsci's 'hegemony' as it rules by consent. Foucault's power just like 'ideology' or 'hegemony' derives its strength from the fact that we deeply believe what it tells us. It gives us a sense of belonging and contributes to our well being.

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be bought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs throughout the whole social body?

(Foucault 1980: 119)

We obey power, are loyal to it. Even to the point of policing and repressing ourselves, because it makes us feel what we are. What is unclear is the extent to which we can resist power. Although Foucault argues that power brings about resistance yet he opines that resistance is the means by which power strengthens itself.

Power works through discourses and discursive formations. In its policing of abnormal behaviour, the power of the human sciences derives from what they claimed to be knowledge. Such a cluster of claims to knowledge is what Foucault calls a 'discourse'. Discourse produces claims to knowledge and it is these claims which we accept that give it power. There is an intimate relationship between knowledge and power. Knowledge is a way to define and categorize others. It leads to surveillance and discipline. Knowledge is for Foucault

the product of a certain discourse which has enabled it to be formulated and has no validity outside it. Foucault's scenario knowledge is produced by power, by the means that a discourse has its disposal to establish its credibility. Power and knowledge mutually benefit from each other in constant interaction 'Big Nurse' derives her power the discourse of psychological normality and abnormality which she commands far more thoroughly than her 'patients' and which they have moreover, thoroughly internalized.

Foucault's focus is on the set of rules, the discursive formation that governs a discourse and holds it together. He operates on the dividing line between structuralism and post structuralism. He is interested in underlying principles, in the rules and the conditions that make it possible for 'proposition' to acquire that status of knowledge. The idea of discourses as vehicles for power has been immensely productive in literary studies. Foucault locates power firmly in language is the business of literary studies.

Foucault in discussing the role of discourse, does not think of individuals who abuse certain discourses to gain personal power and he is also not thinking of a central source of power—the state for instance, that uses discourses cynically to manipulate us and keep us under control. The state's servant believes in such discourse just as much as we do. Discourses organize the way we see the world for us. We live and breathe discourses and function unknowingly as links in many power chains. Deconstruction is certainly not blind to the fact that language is tied up with power. Its dismantling of binary oppositions testifies to that. Foucault, however, places language in the centre of 'social' power rather than textual power and of social practices.

For Michel Foucault, power is less a property than a strategy and is widely distributed in cultural discourses and their settings. For Anthony Giddens, the agency and settings of power cannot be conceptualized separately, nor can the emergence of modernity be understood apart from the changing reach and geographical configuration of power. For Michael Mann, a history of social power turns necessarily on an analysis of power's networks, logistics and spatial contours. Such ideas

about power and modernity emphasize the importance of a historical geography that is both immersed in data and sensitive to general literature. Foucault says that madness lost its power to signify the limits of social order and to point to the truths and was silenced by reason.

Foucault writes that modern society exercises its controlling system of power and knowledge, terms which Foucault believed to be so fundamentally connected that he often combined them in a single hyphenated concept, *Power/Knowledge*. Increasing visibility leads to power located on an increasingly individualized level shown by the possibility for institutions to track individuals through their lives. Foucault suggests that a *Carceral Continuum* runs through modern society, from the maximum security prison, through secure accommodation, probation, social workers, police and teachers, to our everyday working and domestic lives. All are connected by the supervision of some humans by others.

From Foucault the notion of power is a whole complex of forces, it is that which produces what happens. A tyrannical aristocrat does not first independently wield power but is empowered by discourse accepted ways of thinking, writing, speaking and practices that embody, exercise and amount to power. Foucault's 'genealogy' of topics include many things excluded by traditional historians from architectural blueprints, from prisons to memoirs of deviants. Foucault says that power to do something, not merely domination over something, or coercion but it also brings with it ethical responsibility, and there is a gap between power to do and ethical responsibility and several theories of politics can flounder on the edge, or fall into the gap.

For Foucault, history was not the working out of 'universal' ideas; because we cannot know the governing ideas of the past or the present, we should not imagine that we even have a 'center' for mapping the 'real'. History is a form of social oppression and must be integrated into succeeding cultures by the episteme of power and knowledge. Foucauldian post structuralism has its focus on power on the discourse that serve as vehicles for power, on the construction of identity. Foucault in his assumption says that social relations are intrinsically, the

relations of power. In Foucauldian context, power works through discourses, and like ideology, gives the subject the impression that to comply with its dictates is the natural thing to do and thus a free autonomous decision. Foucault's views of power and its effectiveness suggest a deep pessimism regarding the possibility of resistance. He wants 'struggle' rather than submission, but he does not very clearly say why. For him, 'power' seems to be a kind of electrical force, an inevitable accompaniment to all human activity, like gravity. Although he is a classical 'resister'; he does little more than recommend.

Greenblatt echoes Foucault's pessimistic strain. Power needs subversion and activity produces it. Subversion is the very product of that power and further it ends. In Foucault's work, power is first of all a force that serves itself. It works through us and not for us. We are functions within networks of power. Foucault visualizes state as 'panoptic' (all being) and an all pervasive power, and talks about social structures in terms of power and the discursive practices that circulate ideology through all layers of the body politic. The Panoptic state, maintains its surveillance not by physical force and intimidation, but by the power of its 'discursive practices'. Foucault's work looks at the institutions which enable this power to be maintained, such as state punishment, prisons and legislation about sexuality.

The focus of Foucault's investigation is "power." It is his conviction that power is the principle of development and integration within our society. "A society without power relations can only be an abstraction" (Dreyfus and Rabinov 222). If this assertion is accepted as a general rule, then power as a practical principle must also apply as a principle for a theoretical system of knowledge. In fact power and knowledge are the main themes of Foucault's major work. He draws a relationship between the two and identifies them as objects of a fundamental principle of the will. "It is hard to see where, either on the right or the left, this problem of power could then have been posed. On the Right, it was posed only in terms of constitution, sovereignty, etc., and on the Marxist side, it was posed only in terms of the state apparatus" (Foucault 59). The way power was exercised—concretely and in detail—with its specificity, its

techniques and tactics was something that no one attempted to ascertain; they contented themselves with denouncing it in a global fashion as it existed among the others, in the adversary camp. Where Soviet socialist power was in question, its opponents called it totalitarianism, power in western capitalism was denounced by the Marxists as class domination, but the mechanics of power in themselves were never analyzed. This task could only begin after 1968, that is to say, on the basis of daily struggles at grass roots level, among those whose fight was located in the fine meshes of the web of power. This was where the concrete nature of power became visible, along with the prospect that these analyses of power would prove fruitful in accordance with all that had hitherto remained outside the field of political analysis. "Power relations are not localized in confrontations between social classes or between citizens and the state; rather they are conceptualized as existing at the most elemental level of the social domain and might be said to constitute it"(Smart 87).

In defining the effects of power as repression, one adopts a purely juridical conception of such power. One identifies power with a law which says, no power is taken above all as carrying the force of prohibition. This is a wholly negative, narrow, skeletal conception of power, never anything but repressive. "What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted is simply the fact that it does not only weigh on us as a force that says no but that traverses and produces things. It induces pleasure, forms knowledge, and produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than a negative instance whose function is repression"(Foucault 119).

It is the goal of power to control the threatening powers and dangers of discourse, to tame and exorcise its unpredictable sensational side and to circumvent its materiality. Out of fear power wants to tame, diminish, control and organize discourse. Foucault lists a number of practices to control discourse: exclusion, prohibition, banning of themes, ritualization of speeches, legal incapacitation of the insane, establishing boundaries between what is true and false. Now, Foucault opines that the first type of power is exclusion. Exclusion also implies

abandonment. Examples of this are, the banishment, in the Renaissance of the insane, who were simply sent away, and the lepers in the Middle Ages, who were abandoned in leper colonies on the edge of the town. And finally, exclusion means internment or confinement as was practised in the case of the Plague victims, who were placed under isolated and carefully supervised and guarded. This last strategy for the implementation of power proved later to be most effective because it did not require a massive power of organization for the exercise of absolutistic punitive measures. "Power demands obedience. Power, ultimately, is repression; repression, ultimately is the imposition of the law, the law, ultimately demands submission" (Boyne 125).

The second type of power principle is the "inner confinement" of normative integration. One can perhaps comprehend it as the transforming continuation of the most effective methods of the first power principle. It is no longer merely a concern of exclusion and confinement, but rather of a defined integration for those presently isolated. It was possible to change them through treatment or education and to reintegrate them into the social system. Further, Foucault says that in the modern society, vagrancy and thievery counted among the worst offenses against the ethics. The police and the judicial officers were supplied with a more comprehensive and effective means of power than any of the other methods that the non-economic authorities of absolutism had at their disposal.

The new insights of Foucault's power theory translate power not only as repression in the form of exclusion but as a negative, suppressive force. Even the second type of power equally pursues a positive and productive purpose of social integration which Foucault, of course, did not immediately evaluate, and if he did, he probably did so rather negatively in keeping with Nietzschean thought. The third type of power is productive discipline, the political economy of the body, which is ultimately positively characterized by productivity. The third type of power combines the effects of power from the first and

second types, namely, exclusion and transforming integration.

Now Foucault defines the sovereign power and disciplinary power. In the past, the people were subjected to sovereign power of monarch but in modern society disciplinary power has spread its roots everywhere. This disciplinary power uses various social institutions to act as tool to reach an end of surveillance. There are certain individuals who do not want to toe the line of authority and want to shape their own future according to their own light but such individuals are not appreciated and are considered to have a deviant behaviour; they are termed as rebels. Some strong individuals come out to be successful whereas others are smothered by the social pressures and forces. The conflict between the forces of the society and the true self splits as under the genuine self. The modern social life with unrelenting tensions and conflicting demands causes division or fragmentation of conscience in which the true, original self gets lost. The individual gets baffled and is unable to understand what he should do. If he follows the norms set up by the society and its institutions, he loses his entity and becomes a cog in a machine, and if he asserts himself, he is considered to be an outlaw.

Foucault argues, particularly in *The History of Sexuality, Vol.1*, that even at their most constraining, oppressive measures are in fact productive, giving rise to new forms of behaviour rather than simply closing down or censoring certain forms of behaviour. Power is often conceptualized as the capacity of powerful agents to realize and dominate their will over the will of powerless people, and the ability to force them to do the things which they do not wish to do. Power is conceptualized as a chain or as a net, which is a system of relations prevalent throughout the society, rather than simply as a set of relations between the oppressed and the oppressor. Foucault states that “where there is power, resistance is bound to be there” (Foucault, 40). It is productive in that it allows us to

consider the relationship between those in struggle over power as not simply reducible to a master—slave relation, or an oppressor—victim relationship. In order for there to be a relation where power is exercised, there has to be someone who resists it.

Foucault holds, where there are imbalances of power relations between institutions, there will be a production of knowledge. In nutshell, we can say that Foucault's analysis of Power/Knowledge has set in motion an entirely new way of examining power relations in societies, focusing more on resistance and productivity rather than simple passive oppression.

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Theorising Selfhood: A Reading of Shashi Deshpande's *In the Country of Deceit*

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Roshan Lal Sharma

This paper has two parts. The first part seeks to briefly theorise the notion of selfhood in the light of theories propounded by Jung, Maslow, Kohut and others alongside working out its poststructuralist and postmodern implication. The second part of the paper will deal with analysis of Shashi Deshpande's novel *In the Country of Deceit* (2008) in the light of the theorisation done in the first part. Interestingly, this novel is markedly different from Deshpande's previous novels and portrays Devayani who is unmarried and enters into the country of deceit via having an affair with Ashok Chinappa who is married and eventually moving out of it of her own volition.

I

The modernist perception of self as an autonomous construct (which is in consonance with its humanist understanding) has been subjected to rigorous scrutiny by poststructuralists and postmodernists. Rather than attributing essentialist qualities such as coherence, unity, rationality and consistence to the notion of self (as is wont with humanists and modernists), theorists like Foucault underscored its interaction with political institutions, culture and society at large thereby viewing it as discourse. Derrida also challenged and deconstructed the essentialist/ absolutist ring attached to the conceptual construct called self and argued that language of all kinds may be viewed in terms of binaries that have political, historical as well as socio-cultural ramifications. Derridean and Foucauldian intervention resulted in decentring of the self as absolute construct and imparted it a fluid character.

The term 'selfhood' literally signifies the state of having a distinct identity and also individuality. It is also taken to mean the fully developed self in terms of an accomplished personality.

Dr. Roshanlal Sharma, Associate Professor, Department of English, Government Degree College, Rajgarh, District, Sirmour Himachal Pardesh.

Jung has viewed selfhood in terms of psychological wholeness technically called individuation which stands for the evolution, organization, development and establishment of one's individuality. Robert A. Segal (a Jungian scholar) explains individuation as an "ideal psychological state" which is indivisible, whole, and complete in itself (Segal 261). Jung states, "I use the term 'individuation' to denote the process by which a person becomes a psychological 'in-dividual,' that is a separate, indivisible unity or whole" (Jung 275). In order to attain this state of psychological wholeness, one has to overpower the opposing forces (complexes) of the personal unconscious as well as to counterbalance the power and role of various archetypes of the collective unconscious. This simply means that on his way to psychological wholeness (individuation or realization of the self), an individual may encounter various archetypes: of persons (or mask that stands between an individual's reality and society at large, or a means that makes one acceptable in the outer world); of anima-animus (the male and female principle, anima representing feminine component in a male psyche, and animus being representative masculine component in a female psyche); of the wise old man (a personification of intelligence, wisdom, superior knowledge, etc. and the embodiment of the guru in Indian culture); and of the "self" (symbolic of wholeness, totality of being, and also analogous to the archetypes of 'meaning' and 'wholeness').

Thus, the process of individuation primarily aims at unfolding and understanding the personal unconscious and its superficial layers consisting of complexes. As such, after transcending the sphere of ego, a larger consciousness is encountered which is an inseparable part of the individual psyche. During the individuation process, both the conscious and the unconscious parts of the psyche are freely allowed to have their way because if either is blocked, it may hinder the process of individuation. The racial memory, or the collective spirit of the ages and of time immemorial which constitute the ingredients of the collective unconscious, comes to a person through various archetypes of the collective unconscious. However, this is not the end, psychological individuation is possible only if the 'uniqueness' of an individual and the

collective unconscious are interfused. This element of 'uniqueness' remains absent in the Eastern concept of self-realisation, or the Vedantic attainment of pure consciousness in which the individual (*jiva*) merges completely with the Absolute Brahman.

Jung equates individuation with a *process of differentiation*, which, however, aims at the “development of the individual personality” (Jung 1946; 561). By *differentiation*, Jung means “the development of differences, the separation of parts from a whole” (539). Jung is quite logical in this regard. For him “individual standpoint” may be “differently oriented” but is certainly not “*antagonistic* to the collective norm.” Moreover, this leap into the process of individuation may at best be construed as beginning of the realisation of the Self, which is cosmic as well as collective in character. To quote Jung: “Since the individual is not only a single, separate being but, by his very existence, also presupposes a collective relationship, the process of individuation must clearly lead to a more intensive and universal collective solidarity, and not to mere *isolation*” (562-63).

Thus the individuation process may be understood as a quest or a seeking for 'selfhood' or individual wholeness. This individuation process involves four major stages: catharsis, elucidation, education and transformation. Catharsis is characterized by the complete and total purgation through self-expression, which may be an outcome of one's harsh and bitter experiences. It may result in one's liberation from his parental images, his family, so that he may grow freely to explore the world at large. Elucidation is marked by sorting out various psychological intricacies, conflicts and shadow-complexes via a medium (person), or, following a model (in most cases the model is one's inner potential self). But it must be remembered that elucidation mostly is in the service of the better reconstruction of one's personality. In this very stage, one may also start questioning and examining things on one's own if guidance from parents or guides is not available. The third stage, i.e. education, is that of assimilation of what is sorted out in the second leg of the individuation process. After the discovery of the defects in the personality, new attitudes develop. This realization may dawn upon the individual through the encounter with the archetype of

the wise old man who may appear in any form teacher, doctor, or anyone possessing authority. At this stage, which is of course the most crucial one, a definite way is paved for a seeker as he gets the right direction to pursue life. The last stage is that of transformation, in which the total personality changes; the psychic energy (which can be utilized for constructive purposes) is released and one is established in the 'self' thereby becoming a psychological whole. As such individuation process is

“a psychological “growing up” the process of discovering those aspects of one's self that make one an individual different from other members of his species. It is essentially a process of recognition that is, as he matures, the individual must consciously recognize the various aspects, unfavourable as well as favourable, of his total self. The self recognition requires extraordinary courage and honesty but is absolutely essential if one is to become a well-balanced individual.” (Guerin et al. 137)

Thus, Jungian self comprises several archetypes and is best represented by the wise old man who is a well-integrated and individuated being. Another psychologist, Abraham Maslow observed in his book *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1968) that human psychology has two facets—healthy and sick. He took it upon himself to talk about the hitherto neglected healthy part compared to the sick which was analysed rigorously by Freud. Maslow also talked about essential human needs along with the way these needs are fulfilled via establishing meaningful relationships with people and the society at large. He opined that every person has a strong desire to realize his/her full potential to reach a level of “self-actualization”—a term coined by Kurt Goldstein in 1939. To prove that humans are not simply blindly reacting to situations, but trying to accomplish something greater, Maslow studied mentally healthy individuals instead of people with serious psychological problems. According to him, an individual who is in harmony with himself and his surroundings has “peak experiences” in life that are characterised by profound moments of love, understanding and happiness during which a person feels more alive, self-sufficient and yet a part of the world. In Maslow's view, self-actualized people can have many peak experiences throughout a day while

others have those experiences less frequently.

Maslow's theory of "Hierarchy of Needs" is important vis-à-vis our understanding of the notion of selfhood. It shows a pyramid depicting the levels of human needs—both psychological and physical. As one ascends the steps of the pyramid, s/he reaches self-actualization. At the bottom of the pyramid are the basic/physiological needs of a human being of food, water and sex. The safety needs comprise security, order and safety. These concern the physical survival of the person. Since individuals tend to aspire for more, next level is that of the need for love and belonging. At the fourth level, an individual feels sense of self-esteem as s/he is happy with her/his accomplishments. The need for self-actualization, however, stands at the summit of the pyramid of Maslowian hierarchy of needs and is characterised by a state of harmony and understanding (Maslow 15-22). Self-actualisation refers to "people's desire for self-fulfilment, namely the tendency for them to become actualized in what they are potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one idiosyncratically is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (Maslow 22). As such, Maslowian understanding of the self may be placed in the 'becoming' locale. What is important, however, is its idiosyncratic character as it intersects Jungian notion of *differentiation* as discussed above. The whole idea of the individual standpoint as differently oriented and still being a part of the whole seems to Maslow's whole point in underscoring individual's potential of attaining self-actualization.

Heinz Kohut, an Austrian-born American psychoanalyst rejected traditional Freudian psychoanalysis that focuses on drives (instinctual motivations of sex and aggression), internal conflicts, and fantasies, and postulated the theory of "psychology of the self," which preferred to analyse self in terms of its relational and dynamic mode. In his seminal work *The Restoration of the Self*, he challenged "the limits of classical analytic theory" and Freudian orthodoxy. Kohut also demonstrated his interest in how we develop our 'sense of self' using narcissism as a model. Narcissism is not always negative; it may be positive as it may enable a person to overcome feelings of low self-esteem. Kohut's concept of the bipolar self

comprises two components namely the system of ambitions known as the narcissistic/grandiose self, and the system of ideals termed as idealized parental imago.

The classical understanding of self posits a unified subject in the form of a doer, or an agent. This is in concord with the humanist perception of self as 'I'/ subject or an individual obviously having a mind and free will and is the locus of any kind of meaning making activity and also truth. The structuralist thought, however, dislodged the individual subject and privileged language via bringing linguistic structure to the fore. Now the humanist subject or the individual becomes the product of a linguistic system. In other words, language becomes the very basis of any kind of understanding of the self/ meaning. As such, every single 'I' (self) represents a particular system of language where from diverse range of meanings may emanate. This paved the way for poststructuralist thought wherein the assumption of a “center” was relentlessly questioned as it signifies a point where from everything comes and to which everything returns. The “center” could be viewed as God (as in Western metaphysics), self, or mind (represented by Freudian unconscious), and also as “transcendental signified.” In fact, Derrida took off from where Saussure and Levi Struass left and exploded the myth of the central/original/ transcendental signified by viewing it as “discourse” thereby keeping it within the domain of language, which is a “system of differences” characterised by free play of signifiers (Derrida91).

In response to the question as to whether 'self' exists in reality or not, Dan Zahavi in argues in his book *Subjectivity and Selfhood* that the “notion of self is crucial for a proper understanding of consciousness, and consequently it is indispensable to a variety of disciplines such as philosophy of mind, social philosophy, psychiatry, developmental psychology, and cognitive neuroscience” (Zahavi 1). He argues that notions of experience, self-awareness, and selfhood are interrelated and despite that the first-person perspective becomes all the more important along with the articulation of various levels of self-awareness.

On the other hand, M. K. Smith has suggested four ways of approaching selfhood. Firstly, he views it as a self-contained individual who is distinctly unique, separate from

society, having his quintessential core which is independent and autonomous. It corroborates the humanist understanding of the self as discussed above. Secondly, self is part of the whole, which means that exists in relation to the community he lives in and society at large. Thirdly, self is “dialogical” as it evolves on account of its interaction and conversation with others in day to day life. It is more important what transpires in the process of social interaction than what is individually contained in the individuals. Finally, the concept of selfhood may be also approached as “multiple voices.” It implies that human identity is not an absolute construct like the notion of self. It may change and take multiplex forms depending on one's experiences in diverse life situations. Moreover, human self has physiological as well as linguistic dimensions. Therefore, our identity is particularly shaped by the “culturally available narrative forms” (Smith). Nevertheless, one needs to be mindful of modes and manners of social interaction and also cultural practices in ascertaining the concept of self. This is where language as means of decoding the conception of self in relation to cultural symbols and social exchange becomes critically important. Language, as Foucault observed, can be deeply political. The way we perceive objects and articulate ideas can be ambiguous, misleading and power-driven. Habermas also has talked about the possibility of distortion of communication in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984). *Language can be used as a tool to dominate (empower) as well as silence (disempower). One's sense of the self is by and large determined by the vocabulary that s/he imbibes/cultivates on account of her/his exposure to various life situations.*

What is central to the postmodern understanding of the self is viewing language as discourse which implies how “a set of meanings, representations, stories and images come together to produce a particular version of events” (Burr 48). As such, our identity is constructed by the way various narratives and discourses become available to us. Selfhood, if there is any such idea, conception or reality, rather than being an absolute theoretical construct is a fluid linguistic structure determinable only relatively (temporarily) due to the infinite “play of signification” (Derrida). Thus, discussing selfhood in decisive terms may not be tenable especially in the postmodern context

wherein different markers/ramifications of the concept of self such as identity, caste, class, gender, sex, language, culture, etc. are discursive as well as overlapping categories and remain fluid as these are being continually challenged, questioned, appropriated, subverted and reconstructed.

II

Shashi Deshpande's latest novel *In the Country of Deceit* (2008) is built around Devayani who is twenty six and unmarried. Her parents have died and she lives in Rajnur. Once when she comes in contact with Ashok Chinappa (a District Superintendent of Police), she falls in love with him despite the fact that Ashok is much older and married. She knows from the very beginning that it is a relationship without a future as Ashok tells her on the very first meeting that "I can promise you nothing" (114). Without heeding societal code, Devayani declares her love for Ashok before her sister and brother-in-law. She is not demanding in her relationship and does not want Ashok to walk away from his family comprising wife and a daughter. Devayani is independent in her thoughts and actions. She is self-willed, self-driven and independent enough to step out of this relationship after she realises that it cannot go any further.

Devayani, unlike her predecessors such as Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Jaya in *That Long Silence*, is independent and bold enough to share the family responsibilities. After her parents' death, she is not clear as to what direction her life is going to take. Upon meeting Ashok at Rani's (a film actor) place, Devayani's life changes for all times to come. She gets the best out of this relationship but her conscience keeps pricking her as she has a constant realisation of the fact that what she is doing is wrong: "I knew it was wrong; nothing could make it not wrong. And yet, I had rushed into it. Why had I done it?" (142). After entering the "country of deceit" volitionally, she gradually realizes that she has lost the streak of forthrightness and candour in her behaviour with her loved ones: "I could no longer be open and honest with people I loved; I had to deceive them" (147). Sense of compunction weighs heavy on her mind as she feels "cheap" and like an "adulteress" (148). Her inner strife deepens further due to

her love for Ashok and the impossibility of their togetherness. As such she has no option but to sever her bond with Ashok: “I must stop this, we can't go on. We must stop, I won't go on with this; I must tell Ashok I can't go on, I will tell him it's over” (162). When she is convinced of her hopeless future, she walks out of it.

Despite being modern in outlook, sensitive, educated and bold, Devayani is introspective. She exhibits remarkable understanding of the situation she is in along with the world around. She is straight in her dealings with her family members and that is the reason that her mother calls her “Transparent as a clean piece of glass” (147). Unlike her sister, Savi, Devayani never eschews family responsibilities as endorsed by her aunt, Sindhu. Audacious as she is, Devayani does not heed societal norms and consciously decides to love Ashok. She overcomes her inhibited mindset and realises that only Ashok could make her experience bliss: “Only this man [Ashok] could give me such ecstasy, only he could give me such joy with his love making. Ananda, Sindhu had called it. Yes, more than joy. Bliss. And he could give it to me with a touch, with a word. It was this man, not the sex. This man's love, not the sex. And yet, the sex too” (193). Devayani tries to trace thin line of demarcation between “love” and “sex” but ends up experiencing both with a degree of simultaneity. She spurns hypocrisy and double standards of the society. She does not allow sense of guilt overwhelm her mind as she holds Ashok equally responsible for this extra-marital affair: “I'm not doing anything wrong. It's you—you are committed, you are . . . you are married. And I thought of marriage and I wondered—how can you do this?” (130). Devayani is mature and aware of her biological needs and that is the reason why she does not rationalise what she has done: “I did it because I wanted him, I wanted to be with him, I wanted to be in his company. I wanted to sleep with him, I wanted this relationship . . .” (142). Moreover, her understanding of the notion of love is inclusive as well as integral and her love for Ashok seems to be a natural extension of the same. She makes it clear when she tells Shree: “You know, as well as I do, that there are no boundaries for love, that you cannot draw a line and say 'I will not go beyond this line.' It makes nonsense of what love is, of what it means.' Your *Ajji* loved Savi and me as much as she loved Bakula and you, she loved my mother like a daughter. She didn't draw lines, did she?”

(199)

As such, for Devayani, love is not divisive as it binds us all. Her relationship with Ashok is much more than mere sex. According to Devayani, “there's so much more. We talk, we laugh, I can say to him what I've never said to anyone, he listens to me the way no one has listened to me before, making each word of mine a precious jewel. I don't know how many couples get this, but for me—I never expected this; this complete sharing of everything, it's like a miracle” (199-200). Even the epigraph to the novel throws light on the non-physical aspect of love: “Love is not mere pleasure, a thing of memory, it is a state of intense vulnerability and beauty” (J. Krishnamurti). Krishnamurti's understanding of love has a ring of purity and “vulnerability.” It does not emanate from the past, nor does it have anything to do with the future. It is a happening in the immediate present leaving no scope for memory or expectation to creep in. Attaining such state of love is not easy as you cannot hold on to anything except the present moment in all its glory. Devayani seems to have at least partial if not complete knowledge of this kind of understanding of love if we analyze her maturity in the moment of eventual separation from Ashok. She has the strength of mind to tackle every situation in life. This experience of deep sharing and companionship with Ashok helps her overcome the grief of her dead mother also as she becomes livelier, more vibrant “seeing, feeling and loving” (143) the world around her in a different light.

For Devayani, body is an important means to actualise the deeper aspect of love. Therefore, she expresses her desire for physical union which is the “most complete union, two human beings can achieve” (226). Devayani has no confusion about her relationship with Ashok and that is why she does not lay any “claim” over him. When Ashok tells her that he cannot lose his daughter, Devayani lets him go without any feeling of rancour. She acknowledges that she has experienced “bliss” with him and that letting him go will be like “death” (238), but they will have to live out their respective futures. She has her practical perspective intact and has the capacity to take a balanced view of the situation she finds herself in. One observes a shift in Deshpande's stance in portraying Devayani who despite being woman crosses all socio-cultural barriers by loving Ashok

whose portrayal, on the contrary, is ironical as he is scared of society despite his deep fascination for her.

Savi becomes livid upon knowing about Devayani's affair with Ashok as she doubts his integrity. She doubts that he has done it merely for “sex” whereas Devayani has true love for him. Devayani candidly shares her feelings about Ashok with Shree:

There is no one else in the world about whom I can feel in the same way, no one with whom I can feel so right. And he— he loves me. I cannot doubt that, I can never doubt that. I have only to think of his face when he looks at me, a look for which there's no single word. All the words that come to my mind— fond, hopeful, tender, yearning, desiring, above all loving, passionately loving— are not enough, they cannot encompass what I see on his face. (200)

Ashok also assures Savi that Devayani is “very precious” (220) for him and that he will never hurt her or betray her trust. Nevertheless, with the passage of time, Devayani is able to understand Ashok's dilemma of getting caught between his love and family responsibilities. She experiences a commixture of the feelings of regret and joyous satiation as she wonders:

... if we had never met, I would never have got all this . .
.. What do I call it? Joy? Yes, I would never have known the joy, the experience of loving, being loved, of becoming one with other human being. I wonder whether this union is what we long for all our lives. And you and I were lucky to have it. But we can't go on, that is the truth, however precious this is to us, we can't go on. (237-238)

Thus the ultimate realisation, which was the vary basis of this relationship, dawns upon Devayani and lets him go with grace, and pain of parting in her heart. She feels a blank in her mind as there will be “Nothing to wait for, nothing to fear, nothing to rejoice over” (255). She feels nearly dead to imagine her life without Ashok. The weight of separation is indubitably crushing for Devayani but her aunt, Sindhu's words soothe her deeply: “Nothing remains unchanged. Love gets diluted, hate is forgotten and friendship and enmity keep shifting all the time”

(257). Devayani knows now that she cannot give in like that and is in agreement with Rani and Sindhu's opinion that "things pass, things change" (258), but has the realization that her love for Ashok will never change as he symbolizes her lived past/ experience which filled her with bliss and sense of completion. She does not even want to forget it; in fact, she cannot, as Ashok is a part of her being. She wonders at one point: "Is this what my life is going to be like from now—a constant struggle between trying to forget and wanting to remember?" (258-259). Nevertheless, she knows that she has set Ashok free for all times to come and also knows that her inner individual space is nobody's business wherein Ashok will remain simply because he has become individualized essence of her psyche. Thus, Devayani emerges as a woman who not only sees reality as it is but can also outgrow it as time passes. As far as her love for Ashok is concerned, it touches timeless dimension as she says that it will never change. Their love, in fact, has caused deep inner transmutation in her psyche which endows her with the capacity to understand the world more clearly and deal with relationships in a mature manner.

From the viewpoint of emergence of selfhood, Devayani's decision to enter the country of deceit is critical. Even though hers is a conscious decision, it is not without problems. For instance, she undergoes the crisis of conscience and is briefly rattled by deep sense of compunction. Nevertheless, she refuses to give in and becomes more acutely aware of what she wants and how her love for Ashok benefits her. She keenly observes her experiences and shares them with Savi and Shree who scarcely break the conventional mould of their thought and perception. She makes her own choices not only in relation to Ashok but also the rest of the characters in the novel. She is emotional but not to the point that the clarity of her vision gets blurred. Devayani presents a beautiful blend of the head and the heart particularly in emotionally charged/ unnerving situations. She is the one who has carefully thought over the whole problematic and the socio-cultural implication of transgression (as a desire constantly unfolding and rarely gratified) as she moves into the country of deceit. Upon fulfilment, Devayani, who seems to have been portrayed as an exception to patriarchal norms, emerges stronger despite

constantly nagging sense of compunction at the back of her mind. Devayani's sense of the self is unsettling (at least to the patriarchal mindset) as she is self-willed, self-driven, self-questioning, self-rectifying and self-sufficient unlike most of Deshpande's female protagonists. She profoundly realises two dimensions of love as mentioned in the epigraphs to the novel namely love as a "fantasy feast" (A. K. Ramanujan) and love as a state of "intense vulnerability and beauty" rather than being mere pleasure, or a thing of memory (J. Krishnamurti). Having experienced the beauty and vulnerability of love along with living fully its physical and celebratory aspect, Devayani knows toward the end of the novel as to how "love" becomes "atonement" (257) and how the disastrous emanates from the miraculous and wondrous aspect of love. Therefore, she does not want to forget it ever: "No, I don't want to forget, I want to remember; it is not remembering, but forgetting that will be my greatest enemy." Devayani's clear and emphatic choice to remember her past in all its tender, gentle and passionate aspect affirms her evolution into a woman who can meaningfully deal with the "emptiness" within her with the realisation that she has to "keep going" come what may. Not that she has arrived but she is better equipped to deal with her life to come as she has had her "moment, a very brief moment, when I raised my arms and my fingertips brushed the sky" (259).

If we view Devayani in the light of Jungian process of individuation, she has already undergone its fourth stage of transformation thereby keeping her individual standpoint intact. Being the extension of her psyche, Ashok represents Devayani's animus (to form archetypal anima-animus 'syzygy') whose actualisation leads her towards "psychological growing up"/selfhood in the Jungian sense. In Maslowian terms, Devayani seeks self-fulfillment through her idiosyncratic self which keeps shifting and changing in her desire to be what she wants to become. She has had her share of "peak experiences" (transforming moments of love, understanding and happiness) in her life that have resulted in her transformation. Kohut's bipolar self is nicely evidenced as there are several instances of healthy as well as unhealthy narcissism in the novel. The former is exemplified when Devayani hates and denounces herself for entering the country of deceit resulting in her self-denigration as

she feels “cheap” like an “adulteress.” However, when she experiences love as “ananda”/ “bliss” that can cause deep inner transformation, healthy narcissism comes into play and overwhelms her being. Interestingly, Deshpande has been very cautious in building the narrative of *In the Country of Deceit*. Viewed structurally, there is nothing that could be viewed in the sense of formal closure novel. Every single narrative strand has been kept open ended. In this sense, each experience of Devyani has been envisioned and executed in a dynamic mode. Not that she is through with love once Ashok returns to his family, or that she is in any sense alienated; Devayani's experience of love is much more inclusive and has a postmodern curve as she can revisit it at will to negotiate her immediate present meaningfully in the near future.

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India For Indian Diaspora: 'My Damned Soil' , Modern India

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'India' has been the sole interest for the Indian diaspora and Gita Mehta is one of them. She begins with *Karma Cola*, lingers over *A River Sutra* and concludes in *Snakes and Ladders*. The present paper seeks to examine Gita Mehta's endeavour to present her native place India in 'glacial progress towards liberation; more than the political freedom', the modern India: beyond comprehension – to be marvelled upon, with specific case of *Snakes and Ladders*, a non-fiction.

Snakes and Ladders happens to be a collection of her brilliant essays on modern India which are at once fragmentary and personal, as she herself admits in the *Foreword* of the book. The game of 'Snakes and Ladders' is primarily the 'Game of Knowledge' used by the author as a metaphor for 'a meditation on humanity's progress towards liberation', for the 'roller-coaster ride' after Independence, the 'highs so sudden we have become light-headed with exhilaration, the laws too deep to even contemplate solution'; it illustrates our attempts to move our ancient civilization towards modern enlightenment. The author feels that we have vaulted our painful stages of bitter experience, as felt by other countries, as if lifted by ladders we had no right to expect; at the same time, the snakes of the past nightmares swallowed us back to square one. In the first chapter 'Freedom's Song' she talks of her birth and the role of her parents in bringing her up and their roles in the Freedom Struggle of India; her house as 'Absconder's Paradise', complimented by the Vicereine of India, later imprisonment and the humiliating experience at the hands of the Britishers during the nationalistic movement which had broken the *shibboleths* that constrained the conventional Indian society, yet they could discover their own strength in doing so. Whatever

the case may be the author says repeatedly, "This is my damned soil", and quotes the words of her uncle, "I wouldn't recommend my life to everyone. But I think when you face everyday for years, and are lucky enough to survive, you learn a little about its limits." (12) She recalls Sarojini Naidu as her mentor who used to call Mahatma Gandhi a Mickey Mouse' and Robert Payne who

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used to call Naidu as 'exuberant, earthy, irreverent, improbable – one of those robust personality of such woman is 'fearlessness' and she says, “Their courage did not seem to be inspired by self-aggrandisement or ideological dogma or religious fervour – those certainties which usually fuel suicidal actions – and sometimes I wonder if they indeed possess what Mahatma Gandhi called a kind of moral force.”(11)

In Independent India, the things have changed fast: 'from individual fearlessness in the face of social and political injustice to craven courting of those who possess social and political power.' (12) Such is her memory of a senior bureaucrat with a genuine conviction that Mrs. Gandhi's family owned India. Mrs. Gandhi was observed with an imagined inheritance which breed intense paranoia about those who refuse to accept it, it also brought spy-versus-spy paraphernalia of the world be despot. Yet it was her 'dammed soil.' She faces the question: 'Why does no one want to be an Indian?' The question may be innocent but it shows a sort of racial insult to which her reply is, 'I suppose, some of us have it thrust upon us.' (14) As a child she thought of getting respect for the richness of the past, but she failed to garner reverence on that ground because, the grim figures of the present where the realities of youth, a burden of social and economic disparities which even the most Herculean endeavour seemed powerless to reverse'. (16) The only reaction was: “What have you got but snakes and monkeys? Indians are just poor and dirty and backward!” (15) She could mutter 'damned, unfair'. (16) To the 'self-confident dwarfs from the first world'. (16) Another important reason that the author diagnoses is 'to be an Indian today is to be assaulted by the enormity of the tasks we have inherited with freedom'. (16) This task is targeted at illiteracy, poverty, corruption and the incomprehensible democracy.

In the section 'My Damned Soil' Gita Mehta describes the contradictory realities of India, its concept of nation and national integration, the annoying absence of identity, lack of homogeneity and the diversity in its vicious forms : language, religion, region, etc. which attracts comments from different corners of different sorts, such as,

“Those who believe in the dialectics of materialism or the authority of history wander through the ruins of glorious empires and tell us India has burned nothing from the past. Others play statistical roulette and tell us India has no future”.

(20)

Then we have some catchy accurate phrase, for instance, India as 'functioning anarchy', 'the sum of a million worlds enclosed by oceans on three sides, the mighty Himalayas on the north,' 'the land of fabulous contrast', 'the degrees to which diversity is attained, unity retained', (Arnold's definition of civilization, adequate for India), etc. The writer is assured that 'Indian culture is still in business that Krishna will continue to play his flute whether he is in a field, Rolls, or a rocket'. (24) It is in India only that 'we are still faced to remember that people are individuals as well as anthropological or economic statistics'; (25) and yet 'we could never survive as democracy because a hungry man can have no understanding of freedom... people whose stomachs are empty have no idea what democracy means; (29)... the diversities of India's past are more than matched by the immense complications of her present, her problems infinitely more complicated than the simplistic solutions offered either by her own leaders or by experts from abroad' (30), and finally, 'India progresses, a monumental juggernaut of contradictory realities' (30); and say 'That is Bharat. That is India.'(31)

The second section of the book is rather stereotyped where the titles are self-suggestive such as 'Banish Poverty' and 'Banish Charity'. In 'Reinventing the Wheel' she talks of the art of wavering, the fabric and machination of Indian culture. In 'Food for Thought' there is a minute description of the famine in Maharashtra in 1973, the policy of Pt. Nehru and Shastri and the beginning of Green Revolution. By 1980 the things were completely changed, farmers going on nation-wide movements, demanding higher prices for their crops, demand for tax concession and subsidies, etc. But the result was not a happy one: "like her landless labourers India was herself now in bondage, facing ever larger interest payments to her foreign creditors on ever larger loans. But her peasants, her migrant workers, her craftsmen dependent on diminishing village patronage, were still leaving the land."(63)

Gita Mehta says that the old India was poor in which 'self-denial was solidarity',(65) and around Independence we were influenced by Gandhi's austerity which Sarojini Naidu observed as 'costing Indians a lot to keep Gandhi poor'(66), a sagacious comment at the murky economy. The author recalls her early days of sixties: "we were living in the age of ideology, the very heart of a Cold War that pitted social justice against ruthless capitalism, and we were our poverty with pride-----

After all, it was the heyday of Nehru's socialism" (67). Later on, the steps taken by Mrs. Gandhi was for 'self reliance, independence from the Western commercial imperialism that had replaced the Western political imperialism' (68) then came Rajiv Gandhi who dismissed hollow self-reliance and opened India's economy to the world, deregulating industry, slashing taxes. But his love for foreign goods in all ways could only make possible: 'Homespun was out, luxury goods were in', (69) and for the independent India 'it was politically correct to be rich.'(69)

India kept on changing its hue and colour; in the seventies it attracted foreigners for 'spiritual enlightenment' and in the eighties, with Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister, Indian economy underwent liberalization and 'money became the new enlightenment'. (70) At the same time, this was the time when the author could feel 'more patriotism paled into insignificance' (71) when she was invited to address 'five hundred international young Presidents and their wives arriving for India 1986'. The self-confidence of Indians got strength in the eighties: The skills of the modern world are by no means alien to us. Doctors, engineers, laboratory workers, economists, accountants – at the level of medium technology, Indians are second to none. And each time there is a new advance in technology, Indians are ready to seize it.' (85-86) Yet we are different from the West: "Ancient pragmatisms are India's saving grace, preserving a way of life in which the machine is still used by man, not one in which man becomes the machine. But that is a difficult thing to someone from the West."(85) If Malaysia, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia are known as South East Asian Tigers, India is the Caged Tiger. 'One Indian Prime Minister after another, in the attempt to remove poverty, had only mired us further in poverty.'(87) The author has an accurate calculation: in the fifties Nehru's dream of self sufficient economy through rapid industrialization, neglected the needs of rural India; the sixties had green revolution; the seventies had obsessive centralization and spiralling farm subsidies: in the eighties Rajiv Gandhi's interest in a new India was soon exchanged for the political manoeuvrings of the old India and his successor V. P. Singh was less concerned with economic development than with political change; in the nineties our foreign currency reserves were depleted and nation's gold was sent to London as surety against the international loans ; in 1991 Narshimha Rao moved from Indian socialism to market economy – and this India goes on , there is nothing to stop us; but democracy is a time-bomb and

we are in a land of million mutinies, as V. S. Naipaul says. Gita Mehta recalls Dr. Ambedkar who drafted constitution and had cautioned against hero-worship in democracy; it is dangerous with powers which enable him to subvert this institution of democracy. Perhaps the author's final pronouncement is remarkable when she says, "For sheer idiosyncratic panache the spectacle of Indian democracy is unique". (94) and the most annoying statement, "Modern India is a fiction."(95)

The gist of the whole book 'Snakes and Ladders: A View of Modern India' is to be found in the last chapter of the second section of the book titled 'Management of Crisis' where she says, 'India is a fiction --- a fiction in search of an administration.'(97) We have the vision of our old generation, that of, freedom, equality and non-violence which have turned into siren songs which N. C. Chaudharhi calls 'Continent of Circe' and calls India 'her political seduction have truly made swine out of men and women; 'it's scale of India'(97). Surprisingly Indian political leaders are finding tea and monarchy more palatable than governance; the reflected power creates megalomania in elected representative; democracy demands accountability which melts in the crowds. India is changing fast and in such a case megalomaniac is a convenient retreat ; it is politics partially; but we are not ready to endure the injustice of the past. Economically we are yet to find a system of development for the vociferous population and the world of exploding scientific and financial expansion bringing out inimitable chaos. In this world winning an election is tantamount to winning a lottery and it makes the political corruption endemic, pilloried by satirists, yet from the vantage of time we are leading towards the unknown with Ambedkar's constitutional dreams and incorruptible non-violent politics of Gandhi.

The third section of the book starts with the sudden death /murder of Gandhi by a Hindu fanatic as he was preparing to leave on a peace march for the killing fields of Partition, the mass exodus, fleeing the orgy of fear and savagery, for whom non-violence and proud humility went hand in hand, and who believed that Indians would govern themselves with greater justice than their colonial masters. However, India has seen the beginning of nepotism with Pt. Nehru as anointed leader of the Indian National Congress by his own father while travelling to a nationalist convention in 1929, and later Pt. Nehru appointing his daughter Indira Gandhi as President of the party

organization, both of them becoming the Prime Minister of the country subsequently, leading to the shut down of democracy in the whole of India, for instance, the dismissal of the Communist Govt. in Kerala in 1959; this was the first major act of corruption in free India's public life, denouncing the left claim that communism was a legitimate road to social justice. The post-Independence India started with Congress culture and the Congressmen who cynically retained power by playing on the fears of the country's minorities: the Muslims, the lower castes, the Buddhists, the Christians, etc. The author recalls her visit to the North East (Assam) in 1978 when the turmoil was at its peak and there was a movement against the people of other states residing in Assam, they were brutally beaten and compelled to leave the state; India's pluralism and Gandhi's non-violence were at stake; the chaos and crisis need no rehearsal and it was in full swing. Non-violence is India's creed but it has failed enormously. Now the horrified Indians could watch in disbelief as our politicians forged ever more unholy alliances to keep themselves in power and it resulted in exponential growth of corruption in public life, dependence criminals to ensure electoral success, increasing hatred as pattern of democracy, etc. India has seen its dark days of the emergency of 1975 and the excesses of the period, resulting in Mrs. Gandhi's losing her parliamentary seat by a massive margin ; the Emergency was India's watershed. Another watershed could be sensed in the Sikh resolution, the Blue Star Operation, the murder of Mrs. Gandhi and the upheavals afterwards and the author is surprised to articulate "The wonder is that India still exists to surmount them ----- Democracy of India is a wonder of the world ---- and its guardian is not the politician so beloved of feature writers but the faceless, nameless, all enduring Indian voters." (159) The problems that we have to face are sectarianism, affirmative action, political assassination, Civil War, unstable coalitions, the electronic marketing of political aspirants, separatism, corruption, and above all, the rhetoric of religious hatred as an illegal use of political process.

In the fourth section of the book Gita Mehta begins with defining India and she cites the definitions of Mark Twain and Alex Aronson. Mark Twain visited India at the end of the nineteenth century and wrote of his delirium, "-----the land of dreams and romance, of fabulous poverty, of splendour and rags, of places and hovels, of famine and pestilence, of genii and giants and Alladin lamps, of tigers and elephants , of cobra and

the jungle, the country of a hundred nations and hundred tongues, of a thousand religions and two million gods, cradle of humane race, birth place of human speech, mother of history, grandmother of legend, great grandmother of tradition, whose yesterdays bear date with the mouldering antiquities of the rest of the nations – the sole country under the sun that is endowed with imperishable interest for alien peasant, for lettered and ignorant, wise and fool, rich and poor, bond and free, the one land all men desire to see, and having seen once, by even a glimpse, would not give the glimpse for the shows of all the rest of the globe combined.”

On the other hand, Alex Aronson said that India was a civilization and 'civilization is always a process: not a being but a becoming.'(164) However Gita Mehta has her own influences/observations that labels India as 'Karma Bhumi and Land of Experience'. (164) Even today these observations are astute with unpredictable and surprising civilization defying definition of any sort , may be due to her indolence. The author is of the view that, “In any case, in a world of perpetual motion India remains a perpetual becoming, a vast and protean sea of human improvisations on the great dance of time' (164,)She further admits, “The art if there is one in India, is supposed to lie in the living.”(175) Therefore , she writes about filming (Satyajit Ray), the telecommunications company, the relevance and significance of trees and forests, love songs of India (Jaydeva's 'Gita Govinda'), the greatest sages of Indis, the national anthem and the final acknowledgement to God for His fabulous gift of making 'India at his leisure'.

Obviously, India remains an undefined entity, God's special gift to mankind and despite all its distractions and drawbacks, 'a thing of beauty, a joy forever'; like V. S. Naipaul she does not have a negative proposition as 'an area of darkness', 'a wounded civilization' or 'a million mutinies' rather India as 'Karma Bhumi'- the land of Experience- dismissing other countries as the land of consumers'(199), 'an extraordinary world spinning through an extraordinary time'.(VIII)

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NUDE

Riza Lahi (Tirana, Albania)

When the moon strolls around the lake
like swan
I close my eyes.
She quietly climbs down
With her silver long hair
And the musk perfume
With the costume of the bride of Tirana
From the sky
Hold my hand
And take me to the world of stars
From one constellation to the next.

Everywhere, her velvet hands
Clasp my arm
And mad I go
Under the spell of her exalted moons.

Lo, what marvellous constellations we have
In front there,
Beyond...!
Do you like to promenade around again?
Or want to walk back
To the cold waters of the night,
At the lips of artificial lake at Tirana
Or to sunset at the beach
Or the pub of your solitude – “Luhazen”
To admire me
On the night's waves
Swimming
Nude?

Natura Morta

Herein was the stink of the garbage, pee, dung, shit
Where we used to behold
The half clad Romas going out
Of their shanties, where
They spent the night and were waked up
By the greyhounds' morn barks.
They take care
And not trample under foot
The garbage, dung under the
Hot summer sun and
Cow's low.

All that appears is now
Under the waters, where wriggle
Small gudgeons,
Very small, quite small gudgeons
As small as
Wriggling worms of
The decomposed cadaver.

I would give everything to those moments
For, garbage, pee, dung, shit smell
And for the romance of
The half dressed Romas
Going out of their
Shanties, across
The greyhound's barks and
Cow's low

But I couldn't
And am out of breath
Alongside the giantess
Of waters' cemetery.

The Grand Canyon

Rama Gupta (India)

Coming out of darkness
and moving into light
changing and challenging shapes
manifesting its ever changing
display of rainbow colours
and endless forms
opens out the vast expanse of eternity before me.

The silence, the space ,
the cloud, the shifting sun lights

Its beauty crowds me.
It speaks of Thee, Thy purity,
who carves the spaces with deepest colours,
playing with dark and light,
presence and absence, solid and intangible.
Awed and insignificant
in the presence of this phenomenon vision,
I seemed to move more and more out of my body ,
sweeping up to the doors of some tremendous discovery
here I shall find happiness!
with the physical sense shattered,
storms of discord and despair,
winds of pain silenced,
Magic colours send vibrations
of melting notes into the still depths of the soul,
lightens up the darkest corridors of my being.

Time stands still.
Both past and present vanish
Nothing existed except
The continuation of this one moment---
Eternity

Know not the source of this light
but see what it reveals.

Bereft I was, I saw not
this undiscovered continent
even in my dreams.
As a blind beggar feels the warmth of the sun,
the miraculous tunes possess
the secret knowledge of the Ultimate
carry the burden of Truth

I hear the voice of truth
in all things.
it awaits me in its stillness, in its silence.
to greet the traveller like me .
Let the soul seek meaning,
content with the slow,
serene movement of the vista
in the slant of light
Will it stay with me?
Oh, The wordless melody echoes in me,
sings the tunes without words
and never stops at all.
I hear it in the windy land
and on the strangest sea
through desert or wilderness
beyond the farthest reaches
where distance or emptiness exists
to enlarge human loneliness.
I pass the fields of setting sun.
with the vision of the changing, shifting world.
The music of the silence still echoes in my being
Not stilled even by the chilly fears of the unknown,
locked in flesh and bones of my body

Transcending the Self in R.K Narayan's

The Guide

"Most powerful is he who has himself in his own power." Marcus Annaeus Seneca

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Gitanjali Mahendra

According to Maslow a human being is an irreducible unit, everything in him is related to everything else, in greater or lesser degree. No human being can be compared to another. Therefore every individual is unique, his ideals for himself and his path of growth is his own. Each man's task is to become the best himself. His goals arise from his own nature and are not to be chosen by comparison or competition with others. Fulfilment of basic needs varying from food and shelter to the highest need for self-actualization paves way to achieving of what Abraham Maslow terms as self-actualization. It makes possible the transcendence of self, and of selfishness. It makes it easier for the person to merge himself as a part in a larger whole than himself.

The Guide is a story of transcendence and transformation of earthly desires to lead the characters to a higher level. Raju, the hero of the novel, is a round character who passes through three phases— a carefree guide, a lover and a guide to the to the inner instincts of Rosie's love for dancing and a spiritual guide to the common people of village Mangala. He changes from being carefree to serious, from sinner to the saint. Raju the protagonist transcends from an ordinary tourist guide to a spiritual guide. Rosie a housewife discovers her true potential as an accomplished dancer.

The protagonist Raju's motives are his own, taking always the form of "personal projects." His inheritance is unique; his experienced environment is unique. The highlights of Raju's childhood are the coming of the first train at Malgudi station. He looks after the large grocery shop right on the platform. After his father's death, he is able to make his choices and creates a small corner for new books, used books and paper, "Though my father thought very highly of our shop, I could not share his view. Selling bread, biscuits and accepting money in exchange seemed to me a tame occupation. I always felt I was too good for the task." (*The Guide*, 47- 48) All these books and papers are read by

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him in his free time and this knowledge helps him later in life. He then becomes a tourist guide and his efficiency can be proved in the following passage.

“Even as the train steamed in at the outer signal, I could scent a customer. I kind of had a water-diviner's instinct. If I felt the pull of good business I drifted in the direction of the coming train; I could stand exactly where the prospective tourist would alight and look for me: it was not only the camera or binoculars slung on a shoulder that indicated to me the presence of a customer; even without any of that I could spot him.”
(59)

Raju is a person who is trying to seek selfhood and transcending in every situation he finds himself. He exercises his mental forces and the mental ability to determine his own actions. To a very large extent, he does determine what he wants to do from a large number of possibilities. He becomes a railway guide realising his own nature.

“I never said, 'I don't know'. Not in my nature, I suppose. If I had the inclination to say, 'I don't know what you are talking about,' my life would have taken a different turn. Instead, I said 'Oh, yes, ...’”(55)

Raju is by turns a railway vendor, tourist guide, family friend to Marco and Rosie, seducer, impresario, business manager, an influential and corrupt member of Malgudi high society, swindler, jailbird, fake swami, and true acetic. He is able to play each role with gusto; he is a personality, which has a wide variety of interests and sensibilities. In his choice, a man demonstrates his intent. Raju finds himself in a world he never made, a world of apparently infinite possibilities. In this world, he is constantly confronted with choices for which he is always less than adequately prepared. Thus, he is faced with uncertainty, with contingency, with the possibility that his choices may fail to bring him the result he intends. Raju makes a choice to be fully

devoted to Rosie. “She did have a figure, a slight and slender one, beautifully fashioned, eyes that sparkled, a complexion not white but dusky, which made her only half visible—as if you saw her through a film of tender coconut juice.”(65) Due to Rosie, Raju neglects his business, runs into debts, involves himself into litigations and brings himself almost to the brink of ruin. His mother calls her brother who gets angry and asks him.

“What has come over you? You think yourself a big man? I can't be frightened of scapegraces like you. Do you know what we do when we get an intractable bull calf? We castrate it .We will do that to you, if you don't behave.”(167)

Raju decides to stand by Rosie he tells his uncle to leave. His mother is outraged and says, “What a fine boy he used to be! The moment he set his eyes on you, he was gone.” (170) Raju becomes more stubborn and allows his mother to leave the house. Despite constant reminders by his friend Gaffur he continues his relation with Rosie. “She is a married woman remember.”(88) From this choice that he makes branch unimaginable consequences. He organises his choices, his adaptations in terms of his estimation of the possibility of various outcomes and tries in the process to increase his chances of actualizing that which he wants in his life, while diminishing the probabilities of that which he does not want. In the impossibility of assuring, the outcome of his choices exists the possibility of tragedy ensuing from the choice that he makes. His lack of judgement and motivation by self-regarding instincts leads him to his downfall.

The most important part of the novel is when Raju performs the role of a spiritual guide. He passes for a spiritual saint who speaks very little. His taciturnity makes him appear a great saint in the eyes of the villagers. The village is afflicted with an acute famine. People come to the temple and ask Raju to undertake a fast to propitiate the rain God, but Raju knows his reality. Suddenly his spirit prevails over his mind and gives him a

peculiar strength. The theme of the novel is the universal human quest for spiritual fulfilment through the freedom from the vexation of the spirit. As an individual who is a Hindu Raju finds his fulfilment and self-hood after being transformed into a saint. Life or any form of vital activity feels insignificant or meaningless when taken by itself. However, by assuming the heroic and strenuous mood, a man feels he is living for the sake of some higher purpose. From this perspective, it is obvious that higher ideals are important to Raju, only because commitment to them makes possible the release of his energy for the heroic life. Raju's redemption is achieved when he finally puts the well-being of others above the claims of the self. Transcendence brings him to the realm of metaphysical speculation; probably the nearest equivalent of transcendence as here, conceived would be spiritual guru or swami. This resolution gives him a peculiar strength. He says these lines:

“If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly?’ For the first time in his life he was making an earnest effort; for the first time he was learning the thrill of full application, outside money and love; for the first time he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested.”
(237-238)

When a person is able to free himself of the false equation of 'I' and 'Me', he is open to experience; he leads his life in a new fashion. To be freed of the 'self' would be to meet life with a new innocence, an intensified involvement, more acute feelings whether happy or sad more detachment from the trivial and popular and more risking of life. Clearly, in such transcendence love, faith, commitment, and creativity are ultimately expressed. This brings the ultimate realisation of human potential, a point at which apartness is absorbed by wholeness. The aim of man's life is therefore to be understood as the unfolding of his power according to the laws of nature.

According to Iyenger: “On closer scrutiny, even the characters in these novels seem to achieve a sort of transmigration from body to body, name to name and ultimately to blur the sharpness of the distinctions under the haze of a general acceptance.” (363) The discharged convict is taken for a swami. Raju does not choose to be the swami; he is lead into it, however he discovers that the mystic goal of Hinduism is union with Brahma or “the imperishable being of the Universe”. Raju gets into the fatal fasting because of his words getting twisted by Velan's brother. From the physical collapse of Raju, emerges his spiritual ecstasy. In the *Journal of Indian writing in English* Binay Kumar Das says, he “wins the trust of people in spite of himself. That is where we find by the manipulation of the gods. Raju transforms his character and makes himself acceptable to the credulous Indians.” (46) He moves from self-seeking love for Rosie to his self-annihilation for the welfare of the countrymen through his final penance and death.

Rosie too transcends from her position of a housewife, who belongs to the family of dancers, traditionally dedicated to the temples. She has the instinct and urge to be a dancer in her blood. She feels discontented and perplexed and this perplexity urges her to move towards new solutions. She has an innate drive for becoming a dancer and recognizes that there is no meaning to life except the meaning she gives to her life by the unfolding of her powers, by living productively.

“Her eyes always lit up with a new fervour at the mention of dancing. So I sat up with her helping her to day dream. I found out the clue to her affection and utilised it to the utmost.”(122)

Marco and Rosie have a loveless wedlock. Rosie is young fun loving woman with an irresistible passion for dance, while Marco is a cold serious scholar obsessed with archaeological pursuits “Anything that interested her seemed to irritate him” Rosie does not share a good relationship with her

husband, Marco who suppresses her desire to dance and calls it the antics of a monkey. Raju on the other hand appreciates her dancing skill by calling her “the greatest dancer of the century” (68)

Raju cleverly makes a way into her heart by giving her what her husband always denied. “All night I didn't sleep....The way you danced your form and figure haunted me whole night.”(72)

Marco on discovering their affair leaves her. Raju encourages Rosie to dance and launches her on a career as a public dancer. She is reborn as Nalini and soon becomes a dancing sensation. There is a phenomenal rise in Raju's fortunes. She looks for fulfilment within herself, later when Raju goes into prison for forgery, she undergoes a process of self- discovery and realises the hidden facets of her personality .Raju comments “Neither Marco nor I had any place in her life which had its own sustaining vitality and which she had underestimated all along.” (223) She is able to transcend and find her moments of fulfilment as an accomplished dancer. To achieve this she comes close to Raju and ruins her married life. As Bonner has rightly put it:

Man desires not only safety and security, but the exultation that comes from adventure and the search for novelty. He has known to abandon security for the risk of achieving greater fulfilment and a higher level of self- integration.” (Bonner 143)

Rosie is almost an ideal woman from a feminist point of view as her mental horizons have broadened and is interested in more than her family, a woman who is capable of bearing social responsibility and who can independently arrive at her own opinion.

R.K. Narayan strongly felt that his novel *The Guide* was not about saints and pseudo- saints of India but about a particular person. The Humanistic view of life is that man's task is to give birth to himself, to become what he potentially is. The most important product of his effort is his own personality. Man's

life is precisely the paradoxical one of realising his individuality and at the same time transcending it and arriving at the experience of universality. On the twelfth day of the swami Raju's fast, he hears the 'rain in the hills' and sags down. Narayan leaves the readers wondering as to what happened to Raju. What matters is that it is only after he stopped thinking about himself that he is free of attachment of any kind. He does become the guide but of a superior nature in the final analysis.

The ultimate search of identity is in essence, the search for one's intrinsic, authentic values, especially it is clear when we remember that improved self knowledge and uncluttered understanding of one's values is also coincident with improved knowledge of others and of reality of human existence in general. This clarity experienced by Raju leads him to becoming a person. Like all human beings, Raju and Rosie are not exempted from the basic human predicament, of being simultaneously merely animal and animal- transcending, adult and child, fearful and courageous, progressing and regressing. This is what existence is all about. Raju is able to accept the responsibility of a spiritual guide and the fact that by using his own powers can he give meaning to his life.

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That Evening

K.K. Srivastava (India)

Overwhelmed was I
in the triumphal company of that evening,
the evening so aglow in it's
own cheerfulness, glorious,
tempting me to toy with ideas
trapped in untruths,
yes, these I invited in mutilated fragments, gorgeous.
Unscathed these came without
toiling for any passion
wearing a faint beam of docility
but convulsing dexterously.
A quaint mind queering so many
verisimilitudes of untruths
absurdly needing painful doses of laudanum.
Illumined through the dreams
I always distanced from,
these visited upon me subconsciously
as a lulling nightmare.
Shaking, floating wildly along,
these grasped misted up buoyancy,
before making dizzy strides along
with the juggernaut calmly.
While the sordid acclamation dawned
upon me in frozen interruptions,
with nery gusto, I dared the delusions
to confront me soberly.
While grotesque imagery feigned
longing for masked oblivion, uncouthly,
I condemned the amorphous diminution
the jettisoned my designs, though lugubriously.
The shadowy nymphs
irked me off and on, an unending story,
like a lily drowning selflessly in
a watery pond of tearless tears.
My chivalry gazed at undecorated
asymmetries of the evening,

while her icy crookedness tantalized
the eloquence of ageless seers.

Fading Roots Of Childhood
Through the threshold of childhood,
I limped towards the miracles of youth.
On the horizon, passive but firm, saw I
the eclipsing glimpses of worn out
roots.
The smoggy,
seizing of the facts,
the realities
of tales of falsehood, so cherished,
advance.

Scars don't heal suddenly,
Scars are not out of hiding.
As yet.

I walk with my unsavory movements,
someone halts me, reminding
me of the ultimate festivals of atonement,
one has to pursue, sometimes for long,
to reach.
Swollen I stand, aghast,
joyously leaping youth,
looks forward to meeting
the incredulous motives.
Stories lie in silhouetted remembrances
circling faded roots.

The menacing miseries don't heal suddenly.
The soliloquy of the silent is not out of hiding.
As yet.

Wipe out,
grapple with,
the crumbling traces of childhood,
the smokes of cynical traces,
youth is just an outpost.

Sensuous perceptions bemoan the arrival
of the images we wrongly believe are
left in the burial grounds,
barren for long.
The roots that are timidly talked of
by persons, renowned,
enshrine themselves in a vacuum of
crystallized infatuations.
Alive for so long.
undeterred, the fading roots hop around,
majestically, in a state of softened tranquility,
as if the wiliness in us,
on the verge of it's
own arrival.
Wretched lingering of rootless
dilemmas contain me conceitedly,
force me to disown my
own sagacity.
Too ignominious indeed.

Delicate Taste

Mubeen Sadhika (India)

Palm smells cardamom. just now
ground it. mutton needs spice.
all fibers should be cooked in hot
masala. adding lot of
butter. meat pieces contain
salty, sour, sweet tastes. no
odd smell. animal to be forgotten.
flesh to have a succulent characteristic.
soft and tender. fatty tang.
citrus to reduce the odour.
salt used to raise the flavour.
savouriness rich in sauce. tongue
to rule the order. palatable
to be the imagination. moreover
aftertaste not to be tart.

everytime should be perfect.
memory carries ambrosia. close
to that only accepted. because
blanched or deep fried or grilled
or barbecued would turn the
recipe more fragrant. receptors
never go wrong. always
demanding too. appetitive
mood to bring prosperity. aversive
signal negativity. saliva
secreted to the optimal
level. driving the force
to the maximum. alteration
in the senses make the
system baneful. licking
the last food enables
complete salvation. this
slavery never ending. since
bitterness would chase
ceaselessly.

Arun Kolatkar's Craft of Poetry with Special Reference to his Jejuri

Conifers Call
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Anurag Bihari

The paper entitled “Arun Kolatkar’s (1932-2004) Craft of Poetry with Special Reference to his Jejuri” by Anurag Bihari undertakes an analysis and assessment of Arun Kolatkar’s craft in his English poetry viewed from a biographical-critical perspective. It attempts to show that Kolatkar’s concern for poetry was not exclusive but inclusive; it was not compartmental, but comprehensive. If he was interested in writing English poetry, he was not less interested in creating poetry in his mother tongue, Marathi. If he won the Commonwealth Writer’s Prize for his English poetry, he also won the Sahitya Akademi Prize for his Marathi poetry. Poetry was not his sole and primary concern. In fact, his bread-and-butter occupation was graphics designing in which sphere, too, he won many a prestigious award. But the focus of the paper is not so much biographical, as critical; it is not so much all his poetry, as his Indian English poetry; it is not so much his Indian English poetry, as an in-depth study of his masterpiece, Jejuri (1976). It has been attempted to project Jejuri as a testament of the poet’s spiritual aspirations and their eventual stultification by the time the journey comes to an end. Viewed from an autobiographical angle, the journey to the temple of Khandoba at Jejuri turns out to be an aborted pilgrimage. What he had expected to find was not what he really found. All his expectations were belied. It is such contradiction between the reality of religious practice and the wish for spiritual fulfilment that constitutes the cynical dialectics of the poem which seems to be a record of the thoughts and feelings of a man who can at best be called an agnostic.

Arun Balkrishna Kolatkar (1932-2004) was a avant-garde Indian English poet who wrote with equal competence in both his mother tongue Marathi and English. He was born in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, where his father Taty Kolatkar was an officer in the Education Department. He lived in a traditional partriarchal Hindu extended family along with his uncle’s family. He attended Raja Ram High School in Kolhapur, where Marathi was the medium of instruction. After graduation in 1949, disregarding his father’s wishes, he got himself admitted to the JJ School of Art, where his childhood friend Baburao Sadwelkar was also enrolled. His college years marked “a mysterious phase of drifting, and formal as well as spiritual education”, and he graduated in 1957.

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The scene of his professional life was centred in Mumbai, the early phase of which was marked by poverty and frustration. But parallel to it ran his pursuit of literature. It was around this time that he translated Tukaram into English. This period of struggle and transition has been captured rather ironically but poignantly in his Marathi poem, “The Turnaround”:

Bombay made me a beggar.
Kalyan gave me a lump of Jaggery to suck.
In a small village that had a waterfall
but no name
my blanket found a buyer
and I feasted on plain ordinary water.
I arrived in Nasik with
Peepul leaves between my teeth.
There I sold my Tukaram
To buy some bread and mince²
(translated by Kolatkar)

After many years of struggle, he started work as an art director and graphic designer in several advertising agencies like Lintas. By mid-60s he was established as a graphic artist, and joined Mass Communication and Marketing, an eclectic group of creative artistes headed by the legendary advertiser Kersy Katrak. It was Katrak, himself a poet, who motivated Kolatkar into bringing out *Jejuri*. Kolatkar was, in advertising jargon, a visualizer. It did not take him long to become one of Mumbai's most successful art directors. He went on to win the prestigious CAG award for advertising six times, and was admitted to the CAG Hall of Fame.

Kolatkar was hesitant about bringing out his English verse, but his book, *Jejuri* had a wide impact on fellow poets and litterateurs like Nissim Ezekiel and Salman Rushdie. Brought out in 1976 from a small press, it was reprinted twice in quick succession. Pritish Nandy was quick to recognize its literary worth and promptly anthologized him in the cult collection *Strangertime*. They won such popularity that for some years some of his poems were also included in school texts.

Jejuri, in fact, is a poem sequence dealing with a visit to Jejuri, a pilgrimage site for the local Maharashtrian deity Khandoba (an incarnation of Shiva). In a conversation with poet

Eunice de Souza, Kolatkar said he had discovered *Jejuri* in “a book on temples and legends of Maharashtra... there was a chapter on *Jejuri* in it. It seemed an interesting place”³. Along with his brother and a friend, he visited *Jejuri* in 1963 and appears to have composed some poems shortly thereafter. A version of the poem “*A low temple*” was published soon in a little magazine called *Dionysius*, but both the original manuscript and this magazine were lost. Subsequently, the poems were recreated in the 1970s and were published in a literary quarterly in 1974, and the book finally came out in 1976.

The poems evoke a series of images to highlight the ambiguities in modern life. Although situated in a religious setting, they are far from being religious. Their sceptical note is so pronounced that an interviewer asked him if he believed in God. Kolatkar's answer was rather non-committal: “I leave the question alone. I do not think I have to take a position about God one way or the other”⁴.

Before *Jejuri*, Kolatkar had also published other poem sequences, including the *boatride*, which appeared in the little magazine, *damn you*: a magazine of art in 1968, and was anthologized twice. A few of his early poems in English also appeared in Dilip Chitre's *Anthology of Marathi Poetry 1945-1965* (1967).

Any assessment of post-independence, post-modern, anti-romantic Indian English poetry cannot claim to be comprehensive without allowing the niche that Kolatkar deserves to occupy among the ranks of Indian English poets. *Jejuri* is unanimously acknowledged to be his magnum opus. It is a private man's survey of a world that has become manically public. It is a long narrative which won him the prestigious Commonwealth Writer's Prize in 1977. He was no less acknowledged and esteemed for his Marathi poetry. The Marathi verse collection *Bhijki Vahi* won the Sahitya Akademi Award in the year of his death (2004).

The journey to *Jejuri* was something of a cynically secular pilgrimage. Its dialectics is based on the poet's masterly handling of what he calls the principle of 'balance' which consists, inter alia, in a juxtaposition of the poet's impressions of the temple of Khandoba at Jejuri near Pune in Maharashtra and those about the railway station via which he went to the temple. MK Naik has this to comment on Kolatkar's handling of balance

: The surrealistic similarities startlingly disclose how at both the places (and no two places could be more dissimilar) there is the same blind faith is ossified tradition and the establishment, the same exclusiveness and the same dilapidation and general deadness.⁵

Though not quite qualified to be called an Indian *Waste Land*, it is no doubt a serious attempt by a modern Indian English poet to review his ancient heritage vis-à-vis the present existential paradigm.

In attempting a critical analysis of the poetic technique adopted by Kolatkar on the treatment of poem's theme, the poet and his language must be viewed in the right esthetic perspective. A penetrating probing of the dynamics of the poem is imperative. Kolatkar's soul is wounded and lacerated at the sight of how Indians have undone the values for which the world values them. The present scenario in India is one where religion has been gutted clean out of all its serious spiritual content and vitality.

Kolatkar early explored the possibilities of the highly imagistic and its opposite, the anti-poetic. His best-known early poem is 'Three Cups of Tea', supposedly originally written in Bombay Hindi and translated into an amusing American tough-guy realism that sounds like something written in the 1930s or 40s:

I want my pay I said
to the manager
you'll get paid said
the manager
but not before the first
don't you know the rules?

While 'Three Cups of Tea' has attracted much attention in India because it was in a very local form of Hindi before being translated by the author into a particular kind of American realism. It really displays Kolatkar's love of parody, tone, posture and language. Here is a poet with a sense of humour and a delight in pastiche.

Though written in English, *Jejuri* is essentially an Indian poem. It should not be out of place to point out in this context that Kolatkar's English poetry is arguably a spillover of his Marathi poetry which is patently written in the Bhakti

tradition of Tukaram. Yet *Jejuri* is undeniably a modern poem as far as its treatment of myth, symbolism and contemporary social and moral milieu is concerned. It may not be wide of the mark to suggest at this point that though it may be purely coincidental, the name Jujuri seems to be tantalizingly echoic of the English word 'jeune' which means 'arid, meagre and spiritless' deriving from the Latin word 'jejunus' meaning 'hungry'. It is this onomatopoeic undertone that seems to suggest its parallelism with Eliot's *Waste Land*. Kolatkar, like Eliot, is here evoking a world where people are spiritlessly spiritual, mechanically moral and only ritualistically religious. Death indeed seems to have undone so many, leading as they do a life deracinated and desiccated.

The thirty-one short sections of the poem consist of three-line rhythmic units in which every verse consisting of three or four syllables tempt one to speculate that in his versification Kolatkar may have been influenced by the Japanese 'haiku' which is a poetic genre that consists of three lines of five, seven and five syllables respectively. While on the subject of the thematic and stylistic concerns of Kolatkar in *Jejuri*, it is important to bear in mind that the questioning attitude constitutes its conceptual core. He is no respecter of icons. There is nothing so sacred that he would not question. The questioning (modern) attitude is the core motif of *Jejuri*. His vision is a repudiation of orthodox religion, revealing a mature spiritual sensibility. Temples have failed to instill in us a sense of divinity and morality, temperance and concentration, freedom and emancipation. Like devotees and priests, gods and goddess are stone blocks and stone dead. What we find in Kolatkar's world is an all-pervasive de-culturization of priceless human values. The poet cultivates a balance between the ruined temple and his piercing vision; the material world and the spiritual world. Thanks to his vision of man and his religious persuasion, in *Jejuri* he puts the axe right at the root of the mass, nay the mob, mentality towards religion. To him, faith cannot be a fossil. In order to vitalize people spiritually, it has to be a living and breathing force. Without life, faith cannot bring life to people.

Kolatkar's handling of style, symbolism and image in *Jejuri*, is of a piece with his artistic concern for the structure and contents of the poem. He has worked out a harmonious fusion of the poem's matter and manner. Writing of the people and for the

people, he uses a diction which is remarkably simple, homely, colloquial and racy. There is something unmistakably Wordsworthian about Kolatkar's attitude to diction which is not poetic though used in poetry. Being a modern poet, he has understandably assimilated quite a number of modern influences like symbolism, surrealism, Freudism etc. While formalist criticism will find Kolatkar poems teeming with the literary devices of 'defamiliarization' due to this oblique idiosyncratic vision, the opposite approach, which is usually some version of socialism, will focus on the theme of alienation of an elite English educated bourgeoisie from his cultural context. Both these approaches have predetermined notions of what Kolatkar's poetry will yield. However it must be admitted *Jejuri* is a work of art transcending the polarities of 'social existence' and 'individual vision'. One only has to take a closer look at Kolatkar's poems to see that they are not only, in Bruce King's phrase, 'defamiliarization and transformation of the commonplace', but are also deeply embedded in the cultural and historical milieu.

He chooses incidents and situations from the life of common people, harbour and the Khandoba temple, the woman-beggar and the stray dog, the railway station and the tea-stall boy. He uses commonplace language used by them, to describe them. He colours description with his imagination. Usual becomes unusual, trivial significant. These descriptions show how our life runs conforming to the laws of nature.

Kolatkar is a quester who is yet to find his Holy Grail. He seems to be restlessly oscillating between faith and reason, between hope and skepticism. He finds the current socio-cultural condition in India "a heap of broken images" marked, as MK Naik so aptly points out, by "avidity and ugliness, decay and neglect, fossilization and perversion"⁶. The very soul of India seems to be stricken. Mercenarism and Mammonism have a field day everywhere. The deities have degenerated into despicable commodities manufactured by what is now facetiously called god-industry. To the spiritually degenerated generation, God is money and money is God.

Indignant at the travesty that men have made of their religion, Kolatkar comments in the section entitled 'Manohar' in *Jejuri*:

It isn't another temple

he said,

It's just a cowshed⁷.

The world is indeed too much with him and he weeps at what man has made of God. In the same state of spiritual heartbreak, he goes on to say in the section entitled 'A scratch':

What is God

and what is stone

the dividing line

if it exists

is very thin

at Jejuri.⁸

If a Magus, Kolatkar's journey is still in progress with Bethlehem still eluding his reach. *Jejuri* is a journey without an arrival.

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Stream of Jasvinder's Love Will Make Way Through the Rock

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Shujaat Hussain

It is my honour and pleasure to review a book of nationally and internationally acclaimed and admired poet, critic, reviewer and philanthropist - Jasvinder Singh who has already reviewed over three hundred books of Indian and foreign writers. Truly, he deserves to be called a trend setter of getting books reviewed in contemporary India. All the writers aspire to get his book reviewed by the iconic reviewer Jasvinder Singh. He has way and style of his own to touch the book and extract what it has and propound for the readers to make their judgment for the qualities writers have put in their books. Really he has yielded a new dimension, direction, height and class to the genre of review.

I believe he could do because of his love and passion towards human beings. If I ask him what has he got in return – monetary or spiritually? He would definitely tell 'nothing else' and of course it is love. It energizes and invigorates his spirit to do more and dil mange more.

My conscience compels me to write here. The Trinity of Indian English literary field - there are three names that strike my mind – Jasvinder Singh, Prof Syed Ameeruddin and Anil K Sharma who deserve highly commendation simply because they are men of substance, heart, conscience, free from biases, bold and thoughts without lust. Work earns name, fame and cost. All the three legends have been irrigating and cultivating Indian English literary field with great magnanimity, morality, vigour, verve and vision. Jasvinder Singh reviews books of the writers, Anil K Sharma carry them in his journal, *Contemporary Vibes*.

Jasvinder explores beauty and sense in the thoughts,

Shujaat Hussain, 4/777, Friends Colony, Aligarh-202002

skills and arts of the writers in their works through his love and passion. Anil K Sharma, too, do the same and carry them in his journal without lust, hope, coterie, and provides a pulpit from which writers find themselves on the literary horizon. Prof Syed Ameeruddin keeps his eyes opened staring at the horizon whosoever seems glittering honours him/her awards to promote and encourage irrespective of religion, region, caste and creed and without his preferences, faith and emotion. These three are the icons of Indian English literature.

The book, *Selected Poems (1980-2005)* attempts to lead one into the radiant world of love, compassion and comfort. It convinces the reader to understand the significance what it comprises. The book is not intended to create a new conception but definitely it delineates with his pure language how to fly in the air like birds, how to swim in the river like fishes and how to live on earth like human beings –with love and compassion. Money mesmerizes memory; worldly glory takes us into the realm of illusion where men become victim of their own created problems but love makes darling and creates congenial atmosphere to collocate..

He does not preach human beings but wish of all ages and of all walks of life it is love and compassion on which your life can savour comfort. There are 75 poems in this book and all of them bear his three decades experiences. Theme behind the poems visualizes facts. What he speaks realization by the readers will take them to a world of comfort through love and compassion alone.

The title page of the book reflects his thoughts that his mind contains his heart what feels and the contents these poems bear. Tender flowers spread all around offer gift to humanity, true devotees and lover of humanity. Picturesque title page generates ideas to believe that the inner pages offer fragrant thoughts and tender feelings of the poet.

A GREAT SOUL provokes thought and inspires. Sublime thought and inspiration comes from a man who has constantly been extending his love, affection and blessings.

After his eternal departure he rests in heaven because of his loving behaviour that God loves this characteristic of His creature. This is one of the greatest demands of the time. Love towards poet was so immense and influencing that it dwells in his thought – an album of sweet memories. This is the cardinal message through which one can win the heart of human beings and the grace of God. Such a virtue wins heaven.

The man must have a goal of life. To attain it he engages himself in struggle and action. This makes a man successful – earnings of life. He wins appreciation and applause. The second message inculcates passion to perform something glittering and everlasting.

The poet wants to hear 'I Love you' to feel the bliss of life. Love is serene and satiable. He knows love is an unraveled myth and a deep mystery. However, he longs for eternal love because the world around is sulking and it is full of agonies. When someone says to the poet 'I love you' it soothes poet's inner-self and imparts incessant pleasure - bliss of life that is the essence of his poem *BLISS OF LOVE*.

Jasvinder tosses the idea of pleasure which is empirically explained in *ON PLEASURE*. Life encounters mirth and mellowness, pain and sorrow, fall and rise and gloom and luster. But the poet embraces the middle path i.e., solace. It invariably befriends the poet. Failures are the pillars of success. One should not lose the heart in hard times. Thus he speaks:

In failures too
World appeared a pleasant place to live
And to face life in its upheavals
Falls and rises changed moments
Like solace and pleasure
With gloom and luster.

Love-laden Heart presents a unique way of love, possesses own way of love. The world of love of the poet ravel's 'unrevealed' and 'un-understood'. It seems neither unilateral nor reciprocal. However, it lives in the heart of the poet. The poet opines that love is eternal. If she loves me, the poet accedes 'whets my fancies/And elations'. *Love swells in my heart/In*

nights bright with full noon/Or endowed/With countless stars. In his imagination his beloved's smiles and grimace imparts fathomless delight.

Jasvinder never goes without message through his fecundity of poetry. He does not use much praise with adjectives like romantic poets Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Byron and Donne. He believes in sublime love. He discards physical visuals or clues to display of his love towards his beloved. Nudity and sensuousness is not art or definition of love to him

Golden Rule has been constructed with the puissant words such as 'God, religion, eternity, ray, hope, divine, light, conscience, love and humanity so it dazzles in pulchritude itself to conquer the darkness, kindle the gloomy path, everything becomes transparent and men need not to move in bewilderment in quest of God for salvation.

Undoubtedly, devotees offer sacramental victuals to their respective revered gods and goddesses to please and earn blessings. These lifeless gods and goddesses are utterly failed to guide their devotees to move on the righteous path and what is good for them and what to do in earnest. Jasvinder comes forward with a ray of hope/A divine light. Just look around for good and love. This passionate feeling dashed down when a destitute woman gave birth to a baby in mud near Shankar Market at Connaught Place of New Delhi, happens to the capital of India – abode of 34 crores gods and goddesses. She passed four days with her new born baby in mud and heavy rains but none came forward to her help. Where were the devotees of...? Absolutely and obviously Jasvinder is fearless and speaks his mind.

It is a vague ideology that God dwells in preaching, religion, temple or mosque. On the contrary, He dwells in "*Love of humanity*". This is the rarest thought that has come from the contemporary poet, Jasvinder who belongs to the 21st century and opens a new avenue for other poets who ponder over what to write.

His words come out of his mind in a form of sublime thought crossing the firmament of his conscience and refined in Holy River of his soul.

The poet finds himself in a state of annoyance as the inherit culture has radically deranged and he does not like so. His erudition coupled with experience would have multiplied his perception that is why he speaks with confidence:

Do no make me realize
What is honesty
And what is dishonesty,
These terms have become meaningless.

Changing is rapidly taking place all around the world. Even soul and body have changed. Here, readers encounter a significant metaphor “*I am like a house*”, doors are shut but its walls have fallen down. We may understand from the fact that demolished houses are unworthy to live in likewise soul and body has lost its significance and essence in the real sense of the term. It disheartens poet from the present prevailing feature of the surroundings of the humans they dwell in. He applies figure of speech to yield impetus to his thought in *A MYTH* and it makes his thought grandeur.

'Man proposes, God disposes' strikes the mind of the poet. *What I wanted eluded me/What I abhorred, in abundance/Came across me*. This seems that the poet has been unlucky. His fortune moves near the desire but remains unfulfilled. It happens to others, what they desire does not achieve. It never means that he did not deserve, nor did he make an effort to attain. It contains strong reason to believe that whatever He does must be the best. Believers believe in it. He has complete faith in Almighty and complete submission to God:

To count the moments
Which the supreme nature
Blessed upon me to pass
As allotted action,
And future uncertain
With destiny unknown.

Words we use speak itself. Readers understand what exactly poet wants to communicate through the words he has built up his thought. “Wounds, rues, weep, pain, agony, ups and downs, in vain, prick and dismay” make ample clear that the poet's heart bleeds. But the spirit and fervour of the poet is strong. He possesses unflinching faith in his effort and struggle. He never looks at healing balm or agony, ups and downs can't make him to leave his path nor does it become hindrances in his move. Despite all odds he appears optimistic:

A glimmer of hope
That times will alter
So, life will change
Its course
To be joyous again.

Heart is unexplored and unsearched for is the view of Jasvinder. He penetrates in it and comes out with a wonder that is a precious gift to the readers. It is laden with emotions, love and hope. It endures pit-falls, bears the shattered dreams, nurture desires. It shuns malice, eschews aspersion. One can use it as a mirror of one's characters to see oneself a deserving to be blessed with heaven or will go to hell. Creator dwells in it. Honey coated thoughts reside in it.

What a beauty of heart! It is embedded with love, emotion, mirth, mellowness. It performs vigorous and virtuous deeds and yet like a delicate flower of fragrant feelings.

To face facts with courage and at ease provides comfort and satisfaction as lives is full of problems with each merging of day and multiplies as days roll on. It may be from basic amenities or from social milieu - abundance, no escape from them. We should learn how to live with them, mould life accordingly with the intention not to make life happy, and instead wish to get comforts. If fails in getting what we desire –one way is left just to endure –cannot ignore. The poet suggests a way of relief and comfort in his poem. *What Cannot be Cured.....* A fantastic product he has produced in his poetic lab.

The Horror or Terrorism describes the helplessness, hapless, pain and agony of the innocent people because of lawful state of affairs coupled with politicians and their policies. This

poem depicts gruesome scene where blood spatters, fire engulfs, and cries go in the air, fearful eyes search for help. But who are there to extend tender hands for help those sufferers. The poet raises a question which attracts the attention at once because he is a man of experience, brave, unprejudiced, tells the truth without fear and without caring of winning accolades. He pleases God as he speaks in favour of His creatures.

Jasvinder solely and directly condemns and blames immoral politicians of his country. The leaders embrace politics to own the society as their sole possession and birth right. How shameless are our leaders as they show smiling faces at the time of failures, turmoil, disasters and engage them in changing dresses when our people bleed in bomb blasts, injuries make them restless and cry for help.

He predicts future and fate of our cunning politicians. The last resort is left. Now, people seem fed up with them. Citizens are lying in wait with shoes in their hands to hurl at them. Climax of their sordid affairs no longer will continue.

He is firm believer in God. God will save us from their hypocrisy, malfunctions, scams, scandals, riots, misuse of policemen and administrators and usurping nation's wealth, crimes, cruelty and patronage of criminals. So he raises his hands, closes his eyes, takes deep sighs and says:

Only God can save the world
that is only the living men's
Consolation.

His ravishing style, free of solecism and redundancy, puissant thought, rectitude message, and re-cher-che subject to deal with in the entire realm of his poetry –a collection and effort of long 25 years –a perfect period from his birth in the poetic world to the culmination of maturity to contribute in Indian English poetry –will remain a source of inspiration for writers, readers and Indians. Jasvinder's initiative for Love - makes him a pioneer, a messiah of human beings but the great rock and challenge before his suggestive thought is arms manufacturers and arms dealers. However, being an optimist –stream of love will make way through the rock.

Weighing Shadows

Cristina-Monica Moldoveanu (Romania)

As always
My eyelids in the morning
Were grasped between
The pale clouds
And in the middle I felt
The temple stone nailing
The words
And seeds of dust from
The evening wind
When a little girl was
Skipping the rope
In front of her house
Counting one two three
Something inside me
Startled as a stitch
Amongst my ribs
And old grand father
Clock between myself
and others time
with the same strings
the moment when
someone was calling my name
and my name seemed to
be blended in me
carrying me everywhere
as a wonder through
the force of gravity
when I kept my eyes closed
believing that I could fly
and only the silence weighed heavier
since then the same law
is waving white thread tightly
and I don't know how dreams can unweave
I think that only the rain
Is casting its shadow
Or may be the sky in its
Hanger of light swallows them
Always a little better but will
A little too late.

Aloof

My eyelids crumple
as lemon skins squeezed
until the last drop,
a hidden flame is dripping
through open and bitter pores
Incense is burning in the chapel,
the trace of my knees
scattered in cinders
near the iron stove,
a white sun glides
upon the pew arms.

At the snowfield edge
roofs are fuming and trains are running,
people on the corridors
clutch the window bars
hand after hand,
the thread of words tightens,
bells toll for vespers
closer and closer.

Murky

It was too much light at noon,
time was crushing her in the middle,
inequal beats from dawn and sunset
directed north passing through the mountains
in the compartment a stiff suitcase
was pushed in a corner as a safety belt,
the wrist watch was shining every five minutes,
her temple was pressing the window sill,
unspoken thoughts were freezing on her lips
a murky sky was oozing through her fingers
as a running dry pond,
only in the evening the window was deepening,
her eyes were avoiding themselves
gazing at faraway recalling lights,
more and more pale flocks of birds
were rotating as clock needles in her pupils
passing through the tunnel when night falls

it is late and the lonely woman
looks in the mirror

maybe unwillingly,
the light drips as a lukewarm tea,
her eyelashes are disjointed flights
loosing their direction,
other eyes break other eyes shell,
new street lamps light up in the same station.

The Fall

Uktamoy (Uzbekistan)

On trees branches the fall is jumping,
Making the green leaves its feeding.
The dress weaved of flowers fragrance
Is burning my entire body flaming.

My grieves are burning in my sad world,
Welcome bright grieves to my body.
I live now consenting to your soul
Until alive times wander over me.

The joy is mold, endless is the sorrow
Pour your heart into my longing heart.
Weeping you can wipe your tears,
At the edges of my happiness, so sad.

Fall am I, my feelings pour on the ground
I can't leave the lonely lodging.
The grieves ousted to Karbalo desert
Are wintering in my heart hanging.

Language of Dry Leaves

In the woods liver
green blood is streaming,
The leaves sing folk songs
while dancing.
My body is filled
with green rays,

Let's speak with me
in the language of the leaves.

The drops are the opened
secrets of the heaven,
The curious tender grass
picks up with pain.
The secrets can not be
housed in my sky,
Let's speak with me
in the language of the rain.
The passed day maturity
will not come back.
A cloudy anxiety
is stretching to the heaven,
The life is stolen
by a horse with wings,
Let's speak with me
in the language of the wind.
If an orphan leave lays
the head upon your leg,
The orphaned dreams
crystallize on its flower.
Do not come
with blue eyed grieves,
In the language of dry leaves
the words flame.

Sonnet 1

Sonnet Mondal (India)

The time has vanished when I used to rely upon my branches-
I am now, just like a tree whose lithe boughs have congealed,
Enduringly bent and rotten without the sap inside that have been
sealed
Somewhere else, for someone else's to be filled.
The provider of shade is now herself craving for calm benches.
The yearning in psyche is still strong yet has lost poise,
My opinion doesn't matter anymore owing to my faint voice;
I fear placing my words to prevent creating noise.
Shall the doctors be able to cure me to early stages?
Or shall I be forced to be like this for the rest of my ages?
I will stay in this form, but will not groan in pain-
When my children are enduring me, shall I not endure them?

Let my branches fall and let me turn cripple,
Till I have the verve in the nerves of my eyes, I must see them
idyllic.
The time has vanished when I used to rely upon my branches-
Perhaps I have disused the forming element of my cadaver-
This had left me like a brittle glass upon the soft bed cover;
I have no clout to enjoy but smirk occasionally-
When I see them laughing in joy, those who care me blissfully;
Let this be my life now, contended with all I had over the years
and forget that-
The provider of shade is now herself craving for calm benches.

Sonnet 2

The girls came to me, each with the opinion of being diverse in
their own tales-
The first one with the policy of 'to be for one is to be forever';
The second one with the principle 'to love I belong never';
The third one with the words 'to head towards love is a daring
endeavor';
Confusion prevailed over my musing wits with those terse lines
from the females.
Spending a night with each will increase my awareness and
compel,
All of them were to be my lovers to compete swell, to lift me up
from the baffling well,
The second one came, she lost; the first one with a pre-relation,
she too failed;
The third one tried to be safe; wasn't all swept in just a gale?
Was this their commitment to lips or was there more for fake
sales?
The will power of women didn't lie in words but they are like
volatile chemicals,
Touch and vanish without informing, sometimes leaving a trace-
To fall into them is like digging deep in a well,
Still I would experiment, if not the purity of words then the purity
of pelt.
The girls came to me, each with the opinion of being diverse in
their own tales-
Experimenting was just a filthy cause, lust lasted in heap,
Unsatisfied with one that led to two and three and seep-
The beauty beneath the blood; the feeling of ship in a storm,

Perhaps I chose those girls changing their norms;
I fell in love through yearn, but they seemed to scorn...
Confusion prevailed over my musing wits with those terse lines
from the females.

Riding elephant

Ajay Sharma (India)

As far as I remember
I love dreams in only slumber
Because in real life
My dreams will never be fulfilled
Surely this is state of my fate
Even on my house the Sun light is partial
On occasion of full bloom
Moonlight is nil
In general the sight of moon is rare
Even the stars are invisible from everywhere

Thus
Such is present
Similar was past
Likewise would be nature
Of my future
There are many
Who love the Sun of noon
And the moon
When is at full bloom
But I love midnight 's Sun
Also mid day's moon
And even empty spoon
Also devastating typhoon
Even then
In happiness I am second to none

My heart do feel about
Their moon and Sun
But these are not stored for everyone
Be cool, calm and full of content
When you walk barefooted
Feel as riding an elephant

Wheel of time

As the wheel of time rotates
And to none it waits
Only swift individuals with itself takes
One who unnecessarily comes in way, it breaks
Wait for time as it waits for none
None can command time
As time commands everyone
Even emperor can never go ahead
Unless before time it bows its head

Many dared and did try
To defy
The time
And boasted here and there
However reached no where
Those who cared time
With prime
In front of wheel of time, who slowed
And humbly bowed
With complete control
Got the goal

So come and listen
One by one
Advice of mine, wait and value time.
It is only way to climb
While singing delightful rhyme

A.K.Choudhary As a Romanticist

Conifers Call
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Prem Tanzin Negi

Arbind Kumar Choudhary is a poet, critic, teacher and, above all, the editor of two refereed literary journals Kahinor & Ayush whose poems are not only published across the globe but also translated in a number of European languages. Being a founding father of International Association of Poets, Essayists & Novelists, he arouses the literary sensations amidst the muse lovers in general and peeping poets in particular. Observing his grand literary achievements that exceeds more than 1000 poems in English, The IWAA, U.S.A. and International Poets Academy, Chennai honoured him with Honorary Membership and Life Time Achievement Award respectively.

A.K. Choudhary is really a great Romanticist whose poetry incorporates sensuousness, imagery, imagination, love of nature, beauty, love, melancholy, myth, pictorial element, symbolism, etc through out his poems. Like Shelley Choudhary is a reformer as well as a poet. He is a great inheritor and exponent of the ideas of the individual freedom. The ideas as well as the passion of the freedom glitter and vibrate in his poems.

Love, liberty and nature are treated in the same ideal way. His love soars and fades way into eternity. The territory of liberty is impatient to make him own and all men's nature is not only flowers and streams, mountains and seas, but the movement of an eternal spirit. Its dazzling images, its rapid rhythms, its grace and delicacy of touch, its exquisite melodies and harmonies win us to forget the vagaries of the reforms in the perfection of the artist.

Very few poets have the knack of Choudhary in his power of accumulating succession of sublime images in

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flowing verses, no poet has ever exhibited such inexhaustible resources in finding words metrically suited to the subtle and intricate wanderings of spiritual thought.

Like the Romantic poets Choudhary is pre-eminently a poet of love. All forms of love are very beautifully woven in his poems. He glorifies the swelling boobs, her glittering eyes, waist, parrot nose and fleshy body like her ardent suitor.

Like Byron his physical freshness is rooted in the spirits of man. The sparkling eyes, blooming lips, soft and silky unreality. It is the heart which is ever young and makes one feel young. The poet sings,

“The vision of her physical fervour
Stirs sensation everywhere.” (1)

Her swirling and staring jupe stirs peeping Tom's concupiscence. Melomania and lovelornia thrill celestial mania. The poet addresses her- O Terpsichore, time's best jewel. O celestial fire! Be perennial.

On the other hand, he also focuses spiritual love by quoting Hir, Rangha, Rambha etc known for her charms long ago. Like a nature poet he also highlights sacrificial side of love through the gods and goddess such as Sita, Draupadi, Radha, Meera etc. His philosophy of love covered a wide range of spiritual thought.

What is the unique feature of his poetry that makes him great is the blending of the Indian myths and cultures with the European in general and Greece and Roman in particular. Endymion, Hyperion, Lamia, Lucifer, Dryad, Lethe etc. are frequently used by the poet that is the ample proof of his mastery over these languages. In other words one can say that he has presented a lovely picture of Indian culture through the western characters that is the additional beauty of his poems.

As a keen observer he glorifies different aspects of Nature and her objects. Comparing between Nightingale and the poet himself he finds Nightingale a symbol of art and beauty over the manly misery in a dramatic way. Kaleidoscopic image can be visited in his poem Cloud, being the messenger of the beloved to the lover. He sings :

“O' fair luminous mist
Messenger of her unfathomed grief
Rooted with the earthly mist
And stood like a cliff.”(2)

Melancholy is one of the leading poetic trends amidst the Romantics of which Choudhary is not an exception. To Choudhary Misery is the source of the treasury for spiritual wealth. One can find a great resemblance between Keats and Choudhary While Keats sings:

“How beautiful if sorrow had not made
Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self” (3)

And, Choudhary murmurs melodiously –
“The strife of life is better than ever” (4)

In the preface of my songs, Choudhary declares, “To lead a poetic life is to embrace a crown of thorns as a bed of roses.” Earthly life is full of tears and fears unlike the spiritual life laden with unfathomed Joy. Majuli is Choudhary's Malgudi where he sings even in solitary mood:

“She is a bliss of solitude
She is a paragon of promendate” (5)

To Choudhary, Nature is under a vow of celibacy where fauna is ever free and easy. Like Shelley he opines that change is her nonchalance. Like Wordsworth, he treats Nature as a soothsayer that pours oil on the troubled waters. He treats spring as the best season:

“Willowing and sparkling
Are darling of the spring.” (6)

He calls the poet a sage, pneuma and, above all, lama whose prime objective is to sabotage worldly cage. His Ganga is a congregated might like many a voice of one delight. The vital feelings of her delight ridicules fatal feelings of delight. To him the earth is the nest of vipers. Anarchy, misery, torture, humiliation etc. have become the part and parcel of modern life. Hence he raises a question to God.

“O' God! Where is epiphany?” (7)

Choudhary rebukes 'leader' and confers on him the name of Faustus known in the history for selling his soul for pleasure for twenty four years only. Our leader is the falcon whose duty has become to suck poor's bone-marrow and breed Herod policy and reap dog-eat-dog policy.

In his poem Thomas Hardy the poet sings that tears is the fragrance of life :

“A Koel of 88 Years
Spreads fragrance of life's tears” (8)

He is a dazzling cry, storm-like sound that in its melancholy and sadness, stirs our hearts to do heroic deeds. Choudhary murmurs melodiously -

“Happy and misery
Lead to Tom, Dick and Harry
The strife of life is better than ever.” (9)

In The Earth Choudhary sings.

“The earth is the nest of vipers
Laden with party poopers.” (10)

With Choudhary poetry is supreme. Its sweetness and its grace are romantic and classical alike. Freedom of conception and restraint of style are the twin servitors of the beauty for which poetry exists. Each flower and cloud every stream and hill, the wind that visited the world and the birds that lived among them, had each their own life and rejoice in communicating all they had of character and love to one another. In an interview with Patrick Sammut, editor of *Versi*, Malta, Choudhary marks a candid statement, “The poetry is neither a play of words nor art for art's sake. The muses are for words what wind hover is for small birds. My poetry message is such bride that becomes a glittering star amidst wedding parties of words, arts and techniques. In other words one can say that these wedding parties accompanied with words, techniques, arts and many more in the disguise of poetry trimming multiply the intensity of the poetic beauty.” (11)

To Shujaat Hussain “His verse is marked by virility of thought, harshness in tone, precision of language, and stirring feeling. Many of the poems have different rhyme schemes, and

variation of lines within stanzas. His individuality speaks itself . His creation has elegance, perspiration tilts the mind, touches conscience and provides provision to vision and observation.”
(12)

To Biplab Majumdar “ One important feature of Dr. Choudhary's poetry is, most of his imagery and mixed metaphors are significations soaked with the historic or mythological facts and figures. The Judicious blend of such element, coupled with mesmerizing metaphysical symbolism with pristine Pegasus make his work a valuable addition in Indian English Poetry.”
(13)

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Fish King

Liza Garza Hillman

I kissed his lips
and he swallowed
me whole,
the fish king,
triumphant
in deception,
as cobalt scales
glistened
a moment
in surface light.

Veiled tails
propel us
below the lilies
deeper
into his watery
world.

I lie in the pit
of his belly
at the bottom
of my breath,
an empty secret
waiting
to be filled
again
at the surface.

I have been
thigh-deep
in ocean waters
where dirty sirens
stole what was
inside.

A failed conjurer
I have been,
my summons unable
to sift matter
from water.

And the child
that was lost
waits under

the surface,
elusive,
listening from
below,
liquid, fluid,
somewhere beneath
or just ahead, just behind
or just beside
emerging,
receding,
emerging

receding.
We part in winter
when soft rain
grows heavy
on my face
and night chills,
wrestling with
my lips.

The March wind
holds me still,
my breath fleeing
as thin serpents
weaving the
night sky
while my heart
hides in the forest
held to damp earth
close and cool.

I dream of you
wrapped in
blue summer
and morning air
and try
not to burn
or pulse
too strong.

Softer thoughts
surface

to my tongue,
shrouding my soul
with inadequacy
and leaving
me to a silence
that won't
be still.

Longing wears
thin to desire
and Love's
whispered songs
begin to scream
for reunion
to redeem my sleep
binding again
heart to soul,
heralding
spring,
heralding
return.

Annihilation of 'i-ness'

Roshan Lal Sharma (India)

It poured,
and poured
annihilating
that 'i-ness' of mine
to which
I'd cling
like an aggressive woodpecker
to a thick peepal stem—
consciously
sub-consciously . . .

As the sun
danced on
the phantom hilltop green again
the 'i-less-ness'
deepened further . . .

The eternally craved for beloved
glistened
in the glossy wet
of the grass;
the foliage around
dripped
with the water of celebration;
rocks were still,
wet
and sang of
endurance,
love . . .
And so did the birds around . . .

The Unsaid

The unsaid
the other day
simmered,
pulsated
oppressively
and
the silence remained
at its vociferous best . . .

If There Be A Third World War

Stephen Gill (Canada)

If another war breaks out
no one may survive
to watch
the white front of the moon
that is often so fascinating
and to sit in pleasant warmth
of the sunshine
or be captivated by the vastness
of an unmoving glossy ocean
under a starlit stilly night.

The clear blue skies will glow
through the mist and rains
seasons may come and go

but no singer to glorify them
and also
the gleam from the moon
glancing off the ruffled lakes.

Mother shall be lonesome
gases hover on her
the hounds of disease wander
living will be
worse than dying
if a nuclear war breaks.

War Fever

War fever
poisons the air of surroundings
suffocates the soul of the fine arts
crumbles human relation
kills the appetite of aspirations
weakens the liver of love
turning everything upside down.

It brings
darkness to the mind
spoils the taste of happiness
mutilates the body of humanity
compelling
the worship of violence
seizure of sons from mothers
and
the cultivation of thorns.

War fever
kills the lamb of truth
drags into the vortex of hatred
causes a thirst for power
admires the roar of the cannon
and urges
crushing of peace.
Gill

Female Characters Serving as Counterpoise to Heroines

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G. Shilpi & Dr. Gurudeo Poddar

Besides the heroines, Jane Austen's novels have several other women characters who serve as foils or counterpoise to heroines: Miss Thorpe to Catherine Morland, Lydia Bennet to Elizabeth Bennet, Mary Crawford and Bertraw girls to Fanny Price, Elizabeth Elliot to Anne Elliot. These foils or counterpoise have their own significance; besides they add to the significance of the heroines. Oxford Dictionary explains the word "foil" as

...anything that serves by Contrast of colour or quality to adorn or set off another thing". It is further defined as "a thin leaf of some metal placed under a precious stone to increase its brilliancy or under some transparent substance or under some transparent substance to make it appear to be a precious stone.

The word "Counterpoise" means to "balance by a weight on the opposite side or acting in opposition." In all these definitions the emphasis is on "Contrast" and "acting in opposition". These other characters in the novels are also meant to be the contrast or opposites of the heroines. They work as contraries to the heroines in their thought and action. There is a clash of tones in the novel – one of moral good-sense, the other of its opposite. This produces great heat in discussion and an added charm in the heroines. The "Contrast" "serves" to adorn or set off another thing". The counterfoil serves "to increase" "the brilliancy" of the "precious stone" and "to make it appear to be a "precious stone". These terms tend to describe accurately the function of the other women in the novels. They may be the opposites in their thoughts and action. But instead of putting heroines to any harm, they tend to enhance their beauty and significance either by bringing their womanly attitudes and attributes to the fore by presenting themselves as challenges to their womanhood – the feminine aspect of their character – or by making them realize their mistakes through their own contrary actions or thoughts and then also visualize their own future course of action. In Shakespeare too we have such foils or

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counterpoise. In *King Lear* we have Goneril and Regan as foils to Cordelia. By contrast, Cordelia shines all the more; she is also able to decide her future course of action. But then Goneril and Regan, as the story progresses, turn out to be outright villains. Here lies the difference between Shakespeare and Austen. Shakespeare had neither equal nor second. But among the writers who have approached nearest to the manner of the great master we have no hesitation in placing Jane Austen. Only the vehement passions which make out the characters of Goneril and Regan escape her attention. And that had been the charge of Charlotte Bronte against Austen.

She does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of genteel English people curiously well. She ruffles her reader by nothing vehement disturbs him by nothing profound. Passions are perfectly unknown to her; even to the feelings she vouchsafes no more than an occasional graceful but distant recognition: too frequent converse with them would ruffle the smooth elegance of her progress. Such is Austen's presentation of not only of her heroines but also of their foils. These foils are common – place, all such as we meet every day. Yet they are all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings.

This discrimination comes from her dramatic instinct by which one chapter evolves the next and one character becomes necessary to the elucidation of another.

In *Pride and Prejudice* there is Charlotte whose one action brings out the mental make – up of the heroine Elizabeth. That one action of Charlotte seems inevitably to lead to the exposure of Elizabeth's attitude towards marriage – the theme of the novel. It might be that without it, the sensitivity of Elizabeth might have remained suppressed. With one stroke of her invention – the dramatic invention – Austen touches the depth of Elizabeth's heart. It is a positive revelation that not only throws light on Elizabeth's strong mind and personality but also adds to the artistic charm of the novel. The decent stodgy Charlotte puts up cheerfully with Mr. Collins as a husband; and Elizabeth can never quite become reconciled to the idea that her friend is the wife of her comic monster. And that is precisely the sort of idea that Jane Austen herself could never grow reconciled to. The people she hated were tolerated, accepted, comfortably ensconced in the only human society she knew; they were for her

society's embarrassing unconscious comment on itself. Charlotte's marriage can be explained in terms of the impossibility of young women's earning their own living at that period. She herself has tried to explain her marriage in such terms. But Charlotte's compliance has a deeper root it is presented more as a considered in difference to personal relationships when they conflict with cruder advantages in the social world. Elizabeth looks at Charlotte's marriage that way; she is very serious about that; she is least bothered about Charlotte marrying for security –

She had always felt that Charlottes opinion of matrimony was not exactly like her own, but she could not have supposed it possible. When called into action, she would have sacrificed every better feeling to worldly advantage. 1

This is not a bare statement of facts as looked upon by the heroine. What is most important here, on the part of the heroine is to enter into the unknown recesses of her foil a character that she takes to be her best friend who is supposed to share all her secrets with her but whose mind keeps her secret to itself. Elizabeth is not ready to accept the statement explaining the position of Charlotte at its face value Charlotte is not ready to give more. So the heroine tries to explore the mind of Charlotte – the foil – by herself and bring out the truth. So she enters her consciousness only again to dart back from their to her own consciousness and then to compare and contrast – to feel that in their attitude to marriage they are miles apart – “Charlotte's opinion of matrimony was not exactly like her own”. But a greater revelation is yet to come; Charlotte can go as low as to reject human relationship for certain matrimonial and material gain. There lies the difference between two women one going down in human scale and another going up. There starts Elizabeth's dislike as well as sorrow for her friend. Elizabeth finds both the reader and the writer on her side. She wins credit as well as appreciation from both for her feminine proclivity. Thanks to the presence of Charlotte that Elizabeth could reveal herself thus. And probably it was to be so for Elizabeth has been declared to be a heroine after Austen won heart. We know at the biographical level that Jane Austen herself, in a precisely similar

situation to Charlotte's spent a night of psychological Crisis in deciding to remove her acceptance of an "advantageous" proposal made the previous evening. And her letters to Fanny Knight show how deep her convictions went at the point Charlotte is Austen's early allurements for advantage; Elizabeth is her later conviction. When we correlate the three – Charlotte, Elizabeth and their creator, Austen at their unconscious level then the deeper psychological facts of these characters become clear; also the novel reveals its actual understanding of the women problem as related to marriage which is looked upon more in terms of human relationship than in terms of security.

Lydia Bennet is yet another character necessary for Elizabeth. Lydia's action is responsible for bringing out yet another characteristic of Elizabeth's character. Elizabeth is all out for woman's freedom from the social burden of marrying for security in life. But she is not for disruptive freedom – freedom that disturbs the individual, the family, and the society. Lydia walks on a road that leads, in the eyes of Elizabeth, to extinction and not to life. She blames her parents for this aberration on the part of Lydia. Lack of restraint and proper direction are taken to be the causes of her willfulness. The ultra – feminists may not like this Elizabeth advocating restraint and direction but Elizabeth is for freedom that observes certain restriction – on its own. It is not something imposed. It is the product of one's won culture and Lydia lacks it.

All these ideas of the heroine are revealed to us in the form of her instant reaction to the activities of those women characters who are in the novel as her foils. The same is true in the case of her novel *Sense and Sensibility*. It is meant to be a comedy in which we come to realize the superiority of sense as compared to sensibility. Accordingly we have two characters. Elinor and Marianne the one representing sense and another represent sensibility. Naturally, according to the theme. Elinor is granted a superior place. Marianne has a lower status as a foil to the heroine. Marianne's presence in the novel is intended to bring out the merit of Elinor, not simply by comparison and contrast but also by the declared acceptance of Elinor merit by Marianne who paints herself in neutral colours. There is neither any exaggeration nor any understatement of facts by Marianne. It

may be called a bare statement of facts:

Oh! Elinor,' she cried, 'you have made me hate myself for ever. How barbarous have I been to you! – you, who have been my only comfort, who have borne with me in all my misery, who have seemed to be only suffering for me! - is this my gratitude? Is this the only return I can make you? Because your merit cries out upon myself, I have been trying to do it away. 2

It is a carefully prepared climax where the last line becomes highly significant. In the face of Marianne's attempt to ignore her merit, Elinore's merit cries out upon her. Marianne's negative attempt engages our sympathy for Elinor. Her impulsive directness seems to be an appeal for Elinor and her superior merit.

The same relationship between the heroine and other women characters is there in Emma too. Emma may be called a novel of discovery of faults and repentance on the part of the heroine. The heroine's faults lie in her bad behavior to other women. She really does behave extremely ill by Jane Fairfax. But soon we realize that each machination of Emma's each imagined piece of penetration, is to be a thread in the snare woven unconsciously by herself for her own enmeshing in disaster. This realization on our part keeps our sympathies poised about Emma. That is the triumph of Austen's art – bringing the heroine in collision with the other women thread getting herself ensnared and thus ensuring the reader's sympathy for her. Always some charm of hers is brought out, to compensate some specially silly and ambitious naughtiness. Her unsuspected good qualities come out of her own disasters which are the outcome of her own most cherished follies committed by her in her relationship with the other women. Emma's own bad behavior on Box hill is there to give Jane Fairfax a lift in our sympathy at her critical moment, while Emma's repentance afterwards is just what is wanted to win us back to Emma's side again, in time for the coming Catastrophe.

Thus Jane Fairfax's presence in the novel is as much needed for the proper development of the heroines' character as for the novel's catastrophe.

Certain significant facts come out in this discussion. In the novels, the other women are always presented from the angel

of the heroine. Despite apparently artless words of eulogy, the author is steadily working all the time to give us just that picture of these other women, as cool reserved rather sly creature, which is demanded by the balance of emotion and the perspective of the picture. Further, it is curious indeed how often Jane Austen repeats a favorite composition; two sympathetic figures major and minor set against an odious one. In practice, this always means that while the odious is set boldly out in clear lines and brilliant colour, the minor sympathetic one becomes subordinate to the major, almost to the point of dullness.

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Silver Jubilee of Cricketing Extravaganza

Sanjeev Kumar (India)

January 1st, every year when does sun arise
Make happy the folk, children and skies,
Glittering rays of sun, as it appears on the Green
Celebration of New Year on the Green are seen.

This cricketing extravaganza not matters of compete
But source of meeting point for all speech,
Every morning children are ready to get a peep
Mother stopping them to have a drink deep,
Recognition of New Year;
Through this event on the Green are seen.

People around the hamlet come and say
such sports in youth were they play,
Among old folk levelled light jokes
And spread smile around the air shores,
Recognition of New Year;
Through this event on the Green are seen.

People stage confectionery shops
Wish out for lucrative hope,
Take jalebee with them each
Exchanges best wishes on this eve,
Recognition of New Year;
Through this event on the Green are seen.

Behind mountain when does sun descend
And sports comes to an end,
Children come to the laps of their mother
Lullaby, send children to sleep,
Next morning, wake up with blind eye
Lashing hope, for New Year, on the Green are seen.

Book Reviews

HIBIKI, Cathy Drinkwater Better and Geert Verbeke, Belgium : Empty Sky, Flanders, December 2010, pp. 97.

'Hibiki' is a Japanese word meaning 'reverberation' Cathy Drinkwater Better and Geert Vebrbeke, poets hailing from Maryland (USA) and Flanders , Belgium , respectively, present in HIBIKI a handful of reverberating thoughts emanating from their spontaneous inferences upon capturing timely moments in an instant.

Cathy has been a distinguished and multi-faceted person, having many laudations as writer, poet, freelance journalist and humorist, and writer. She has three other published haiku collections also to her credit. Her poetry is complex, with brevity of thought and momentary interaction with the occurrences or phenomena around her, as in this haiku:

the still lake
echoes a rising moon
spring peepers
and
homemade kite
wrestle the wind
teacher's voice

Through her observations about the captured moments she creates impressions of innovative thinking, as in her assertion in the words:

first blush
of the bud tree
new love

Nature always showers opportunities through her wonderful phenomenal changes; for example dawn, dusk, and dark night. Cathy avidly observes one such phenomenon thus:

morning sunlight
through irises
the cool stone path

In these lines she depicts the beauty of light on a 'stone path,' which illustrates her beaming thoughts. A wonderful inference indeed.

boys shout
on kickball field
more war dead today

These lines suggest the poet's fine imagination about the sportsman spirit, the common winning instinct, and the ravages of war. She has exhibited another example of glistening thought in writing:

long-awaited letter
all she needs to know
between the lines

This observation also ekes out a dilemma of a complex situation between what is written and what is not. Cathy touches emotionally through her avid witness that:

morning drizzle
flowers tied with ribbons
in the old graveyard

It is an unconventional thought combining 'drizzle,' 'flowers,' and 'grave yard'. Her succinct and innovative thinking is highly admirable, since revelation inspires thinking beyond the poet's brevity of thoughts. A subtle poetic diction adds beauty to the expression.

Thus in these and other haikus as well one finds that Cathy meticulously plays with words to create fascinating reverberations with a rhythm of thoughts and imagination. 'Haikuholic' Greert enchants the readers through the finest imagination with an expression of:

reading haiku books
in the empty temple hall
the scent of flowers

The following haiku sinks deep into the heart and mind through a depiction that:

her death
disappears under bouquets
the absence grows

It is well said that the dead never return, but their remembrance makes one to feel their growing absence: as the flowers wither away, so does the realization of one's loss increase.

Wordsworthian expression is drawn out of poet's

observation that:

spring time opens
the civil ceremony
so many blossoms

A deeply captivating observation of the incessant beauty of nature is depicted through 'blossoms.'

Here is another expression of the poet which prompts the reader to be lost in thought:

winter leaves him
a legacy of children
a legacy of memories

It is a unique blend of fine and touching feelings; a glimpse of memory as the finely knitted thought of a reverberating emotion. Emotions escalate, ripples emerge. Such an impression is found in the poet's touching memory:

during the interment
the down power lashes
drops against her cheek

Here is yet another expression of the poet visualising a sequence of cherished and emotionally touching memory:

under her photo
a few rose petals
and some butts

One feels like sinking into a perennial state of pensive feelings. A similar expression also reveals a similar situation when he tells us:

gloomy memory
the invited guests
maintain silence

Reading one after the other of these haiku one feels like exclaiming Geert is great; that he is a fine juggler of words and imagination, working out innovative thoughts as in the following expression:

over and done
in the sadness of memory
the hangover survives

I personally feel words fail to suffice in expressing more appealing and sound opinions about excellence that dwells

in Geert's haikus; except to say that he is a poet par excellence and a poet extraordinaire. His wit and wisdom, his brevity of thoughts, and his excellent expression arouse passion in a reader enough to place him in extraordinary veneration.

In a nutshell, both Cathy and Geert have enormously endeared themselves to the readers through their amazingly well written haikus. They deserve all accolades and laudations for the poems they have offered to the readers of HIBIKI. The publisher also shares the compliment for the excellent layout and cover design, which enhances the book's attraction.

Jasvinder Singh
Govind Puri, Kalka Ji, New Delhi

Slum Flowers, Sreedharan Parakode, New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation, 2011, pp. 103

In contemporary society, knowledge, information, debates and expectations are besieged bastions. The poet P. L. Sreedharan has probed these effective stimulants that have been in vogue to embellish human mind and human nature. Knowledge is the source to achieve prime life among the established icons of civilization. Information is the necessity; it is the mass of science and city life; it is the foster mother of communication and business. Debates arouse uproar; they make people stand crossroads; go beyond cross-cultural periphery and shape the mind with new nuances and encourage better performances. Expectations envisions insights and intelligibility; they explore emotions and incite emancipation, Yet these four determinants create such a forum for a thoughtful critic. It is wonder to catch up with that imagination.

The poet with his pithy power of structure and trenchant expression leaves a scope for the reader to see the perspective of an extraordinary man. The creations of an extraordinary man have transformed an ordinary man into a 'robot' whose life is synchronized within dynamic forces. It may be through money, education, migration, computer, net or the signals that are the babies of scientific world have transcended and ordinary man's mind with the pace of dispute, bluff,

separation, depreciation, inflation, deflation and intrusion. The poet suggests that growth and opportunity have become infectious and have caused forgetfulness in the relationships and sighs are neglected and swallowed. Atrocities and rights stand side by side as if they are both impatient to hurl the follies of lost culture upon each other.

Indeed Sreedharan has provocatively used the images to construct the inadvertent human nature whose axis of advancement holds on the weight of the animated nature.

The vocabulary of the language is very much contemporary, simple and adequate to delineate the metropolitan life and expression. The usage of the structure elicits metamorphoses of societal attributes that are awesomely the realities but not the allusions.

I congratulate the poet for projection of the absurdities of advancement with awe and unrest. I wish the readers would find contemplative and cognizant.

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Fate's Conspiracy, Nita S. Nagarsekar, Bhubneswar, Orissa:
The Home of Letters, 2010, Rs. 100

This is a wonderful book of highly philosophical and emotional poems dealing with contentious issues of the role of destiny, existence of God, expectations of spirituality, definitions of happiness, dimensions of paradise.

The book has thirty nine poems, all of divergent interests. As the title goes, the opening poem talks of conspiracy of destiny; this is what one feels about the role of fate, with varying degree of appreciation in different ages and mind, as the poetess feels,

'what made me stumble to write poetry
Was it sheer chance or fate's conspiracy'. (9)

She recalls the father as a 'super-dad' and defines life in a new way,

'for life changes its scope
Like the kaleidoscope'. (11)

She equates 'love' with 'paradise' and leads a man to better deeds to attain god. 'Guess, He is not won by discourse, a pilgrimage, but by deeds' (13), though she is convinced. 'But unfortunately true love is hard to find'. (14) She is satiric in devotion', 'worst enemy' and 'Warranty'. The poem 'For the child's sake' is sympathetic towards the poor and downtrodden,

'She tries to refrain, resist
Fight the hungry beasts
But the picture of her ailing child...' (23)

Rain attracts the poetess time and again, and it can be felt in the poems 'A drop' and 'what When'; it tickles down the sensual spine / it became wine in the poem 'A Drop' whereas in the poem 'What When' it is blissful on the one hand and has a negative effect when 'drawn you in depression and vile'. In the poem 'Let Go', she talks of ego and then like any emotional being dwells on 'Love' as an 'intoxicating wine'. The poetess redefines love as 'trust and commitment' and not 'fiction or fable'. Love is something 'beyond comprehension' and can be felt only. Here the poetess is unparalleled in her expression, as she says,

'It is the beautiful rainbow, a blissful shower,
Can change the thorny showers into fragment flowers...
Love is medicine for any kind of pain'. (26)
In the poem 'Life is ...' the poetess defines life,
'Life is all about love, faith, hope'. (27)

It happens with all of us when we start our journey of life with a dream and illusion which culminates in disenchantment; in the poem 'Harsh Reality' she feels so 'rude awakening from illusion'. (28) In the poem 'Super-Dad' she recalls her father and in 'paradise' she finds 'red paradise' at her mother's feet. War is not the solution to bring peace on earth is the message of the 'Battle and Wars' and 'Barter' talks of voluntary migration of the mass population to the alien land for monetary gains. 'Time Moves On' talks of the fleeting time 'Unsatisfied Desires' talks of the anxiety generated by discontent. Love is the 'Gem of Life' and bond of humanity can be felt at every juncture, "So long as we are bound with bond of humanity irrespective of religion, status, identity, community".

Introspection leads to self and analysis and she disapproves pride, “Today, to cry in pain/ having ruined my life in tavern!”(38) the poetess can sense our long waiting for death in the poem 'A Long wait' and in 'Peace of mind' life is like turpentine, sublimes within no time. (40) The discontentment of the poetess can be felt in 'Blissful Spring' :

“My life was incomplete a mess
Void and loneliness”. (42)

The reason is very simple, she is a disenchanted and disillusioned soul, that is why, she reiterates,

“Life is a flowing stream
Past, present a dream
But dream it is...” (44)

She lingers at the petty distractions such as 'Rag Pickers' and 'happiness'. Happiness is discovered as a 'state of mind' and the mission of life beyond comprehension:

“For name and fame, we yearn, we long
But that too will be forgotten before long!” (47)

Precisely the poetess touches the essence of life and deserves appreciation for her philosophical and yet clandestine approach towards positive life.

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My Love Poems, Bijoy Kant Dubey, West Bengal: C.K. Town ,
Midnapur, 2001.

B. K. Dubey's small book of poems titled 'My Love Poems' is exquisite in many ways. With its 77 love poems we come across his innocent heart which goes from his longing for his girl and explodes in his vast horizon seeking resemblance with an ardent yearning for the almighty, a love for the unseen. Certainly it cannot be bracketed under a novice practice as a new dimension or a new definition for the concept of love.

The first remarkable posture is the poetic style which is more prosaic than poetic. We cannot infer what poetic or prosaic style he has adopted. The very first poem “Breaking My Heart”

is a confession of betrayal, a negative feeling and an assertion of his true-love-self. It is followed by the poems of simple and straight statements in poems like 'How Deep my Love for You is', 'Say, Say...You Love Me', 'I Shall try my Best', 'Why are You', 'You Are', 'They Ask Me To', 'Call Me Call Me', 'I Think', 'The girl of My Dreams', 'My Love Letter', 'What Did I Not See', 'I Want to Write', 'I Love You Bobby', and 'What a Life'.

All the poems in this volume are confessional in nature which can be termed as purely personal which he himself compares with the poems of great poets like Spencer, Shakespeare, Burns, Wordsworth, Keats, Browning, Tennyson, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Manmohan Ghosh, Tagore, Aurobindo, Naidu, and Pritish Nandi etc. Surprisingly he admits in the preface of the book that his poems are derivative, imitative, copied in theme and style and he is a minor poet. Not only that he also admits that his love poems are poems of 'a wounded heart' and 'pains of love'. He also differentiates his love from the western love because he belongs to a tabooed, conservative and restricted society and this is the most important reason for being betrayed and disenchanted. Somewhat like a simple poet and like a simple love he poses himself and presents himself, the intensity of his love, and so on. His love remains unresponded and he remains awestruck as he says

“I had a deep love for you, which you didn't come to feel my heart”. (1)

And he reiterates

“You do not know how deep my love for you is”. (1)

His anxiety surmounts when he utters, “Say Say Please that you love me, I Love you , I Love you,” (1)

Yet he is not fed up with whatever is going on and maintains:

“I shall try my best to forget you...

I have the world of mine where man is but a lover on the path of life”. (2)

His search continues and so are his queries,

“ Why are you sad today, my love ?

You have given tears to the eyes of mine...

I a poet of deserted and broken world...

I love you more than life...

Whi has not ruined me in this lkife of mine...
I have not known it so far...
I do not object to you going...
Are you my love...
I see you in this heart of mine.
Where you...
I Know my love...
Without seeing you how can I live
You see I am a man of heart...
Say say please you love me. (2-22)
He wants to know the whereabouts of his love, and says
repeatedly where are you?
He compares his love with red rose, Monalisa etc. and
is confirmed of the fact that his life is meaningless without his
love:
“ what a life without you!” (40)
This book is a true epitome of love so to say.

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An Interview with Cathy Drinkwater Better

Interviewer: Jasvinder Singh, August 16, 2010

Cathy Drinkwater Better was born in New York in 1952. An award-winning poet and journalist, she is also a prolific book author, writing predominantly for children. Her haiku and related forms have been published, in-print and online, in literary journals, magazines, newspapers, and anthologies in the U.S. , Canada , the U.K. , Australia , New Zealand , Romania , and Japan .

Better has more than 60 books to her credit, including three collections of haiku: *the moon tonight* (Los Hombres Press, 1996); *the sky is all there is* (Astute Platypus Press, 1999); and a chapbook set, *cat and human* (Black Cat Press, 2002). She has written children's books for publishers including Sesame Street , Paradise Press, Concordia Publishing House, Broadman & Holman Publishers and Flying Frog Publishing. Her first book, *Don't Hit Your Brother With Your Mouth Full*, was a collection of her humor columns (Acme Press, 1995).

A published poet since 1969, Better began publishing haiku in 1989. Since then her haiku, haibun, haiga, and tanka have appeared in journals including *Frogpond*, *Modern Haiku*, *Ribbons*, *The Heron's Nest*, *Gusts*, and *Simply Haiku*; and anthologies published by Red Moon Press, bottle rockets press, the Haiku Society of America, Haiku Canada, and others. She has taught haiku in elementary and middle schools and for adult education programs.

Better's haiku and tanka have received recognition in several contests, including in the Francine Porad Award competition (2005), the Robert Frost Festival Poetry Contest for Haiku (2005, 2008); the Zen Garden Haiku Contest (2007); and the Yellow Moon tanka competition (2005).

Better began her professional career as a newspaper reporter and photographer and a humor columnist. Later, she was a communications specialist for a large labor union, then editorial director of an international book publisher. She worked as a production editor for several medical journals until becoming

editor-in-chief of *The Medical Bulletin* newspaper in 2002.

Through the years Better continued writing her column; in 2010 she marked 26 years as humor columnist. Her bi-weekly columns are: “For Better or Worse,” in *The Carroll Eagle*; and “It’s Getting Better,” for the *Northern News*; and she freelances humor for *Carroll Magazine*.

Recently Better’s column in the *Eagle* received its fifth consecutive first-place award in the Maryland–Delaware–District of Columbia (MDDC) Press Association Editorial Contest. Her humor has also garnered other MDDC awards since 1988, and prizes in competitions sponsored by LCNI, Inc., and the Society of Professional Journalists.

In 2002, Better and her husband, Doug Walker, founded Black Cat Press, which specializes in Asian forms including haiku, tanka, haibun, and sijo. Their most recent publication was *Into the Sun: Selected Haiku and Tanka*, by Edith Bartholomeuz (2009), which Better also illustrated.

A member of the Haiku Society of America, Haiku Canada, the Irish Haiku Society, and the British Haiku Society, Better was a longtime member of the Towpath haiku group and co-founded the Haiku Poets of Central Maryland in 2004.

In addition to writing poetry, Better continues to freelance as an author, editor, and journalist. She and Belgian poet Greet Verbeke of Flanders, Belgium are collaborating on a book of haiku to be published later this year (2010) by Empty Sky

Tell us something about yourself.

I was born in New York , in 1952. I’m and I have three grown children—two boys and a girl—and a stepdaughter. We live in a rural area in the state of Maryland on the mid-Atlantic coast. I’m a long-time journalist and humorist, as well as a freelance writer and children’s book author. Most recently I’ve been working as a newspaper editor, while continuing to freelance as both a writer and an editor. In the past I’ve been a newspaper reporter/photographer and editorial director for an international book producer. My poetry, including haiku and related forms, has been published in the U.S. , Canada and overseas since 1969. My husband, Doug Walker, and I own Black Cat Press, a small-press book producer and publisher of Asian-form poetry.

When did you find the poet in you?

When I was quite young. It actually took me a longer to find the “regular person” in me and get a “real” job! I can recall composing poetry from the time I learned to write. Some of my earliest memories are of making little books of my stories and poems, complete with illustrations and construction-paper covers I bound them with yarn.

The forms you write most often are haiku (including haiga and haibun, which incorporate haiku into art or prose), senryu, and tanka. What inspired you to begin writing haiku and its related forms?

I first became aware of haiku in my mid-teens, when I bought a small book containing translations of haiku by the Japanese masters of the form: Basho; Buson; and Issa. I fell in love with the simplicity, yet depth, of the form. I began writing haiku—or trying to haiku—almost immediately. As an adult, I slowly made my way to the related forms of haibun—a favorite of mine, as it combines prose and haiku; as well as haiga, both traditional-style and its modern cousin using photography. After discovering senryu, I was once again excited about a “new” form—new to me, anyway. As someone who has written humor all her life (it got me sent to the principal's office more than once when I was in school), senryu and I are a natural match. My mind often works such that I write senryu even when I've set out to write haiku. I discovered tanka nearly two decades years ago, through the book, *The Ink Dark Moon*, which contains translations of classical Japanese tanka by two female poets of the 11th and 12th centuries. Once again, I immediately adopted the form and began trying to write tanka myself. At first—as with haiku—I began by imitating the masters and studying the “how to” books. Eventually, I found my own voice, but I still prefer the “classical” style of tanka, in form, to the more modern interpretations.

Some say that “poets are born, not made.” What is your opinion?

As with any art, I believe someone with a modicum of ability—and an interest—can learn to write poetry. But, also as

in other arts, some people are “naturals,” born with a special propensity and talent for poetry. For example, most people can learn to sing a song reasonably well or to move around a dance floor well enough; but not all of us can be opera singers or have a career in the ballet. I also think that people with a great deal of talent in poetry often go undiscovered, perhaps for their whole lives, because they were never introduced to poetry in a way that grabs their heart and soul.

Do you see any relation between music, poetry, and art?

How do you/your work connect with this idea? Yes, I see a very distinct connection between all the arts. Poetry can be set to music just as music can paint a picture in our minds or write poetry with sound rather than words. Combining artwork with poetry, as in haiga, suits my desire to give either a poem or a photo or drawing more dimension than any one would have had alone.

Poetry—especially haiku—often seems to take a backseat to other literary forms, or is treated like a “step-child” in the world of literature. Do you have any ideas on how to encourage and promote poetry and/or haiku to reverse these ideas? Many people are afraid of poetry because they think they won't be able to understand it. In school, it was just something they “had” to do. Poetry, like other types of writing, is a form of communication. Poetry that is too abstract or obscure doesn't communicate with many people. Haiku is a relatively “simple” form of poetry, in that it appears simple on the surface, but can also be enjoyed in all its depth and craft. It is accessible to anyone on a literal, imagistic level; but can also be enjoyed in all its complexity. I'd like to see more poetry in mainstream publications and on websites where people go for news or entertainment. A regular “poetry corner,” perhaps, that would catch the eye of a reader and draw them into the world of poetry, even if only for a few moments. Public poetry readings at art centers, libraries, and even in schools would also help to give poetry in general and haiku in particular a wider audience, as well as dispel some of the “mystique” of poetry that can put people off.

Do you have any suggestions on how to give haiku and its related forms their due and the respect they deserve in the poetry community and among readers?

If we, as haiku poets, only submit to haiku journals, we will be speaking only to one another; even if our work is published around the globe, the haiku community remains a narrowly defined and somewhat closely knit group of people. But there are many poetry journals that do accept haiku along with other styles of poetry. We should seek out those journals and submit our work to them; in that way, more “mainstream” poetry readers and editors of poetry will be exposed to haiku and, with luck, come to appreciate. Occasionally journals which have never accepted haiku in the past can be persuaded to publish a few haiku now and then, especially in the form of sequences.

Tell us something about the Haiku poets of Central Maryland.

Elizabeth Fanto and I originally founded the group (in the fall of 2004) to give beginning haiku writers a place to learn about the form, share their work, and stretch their haiku “muscles.” We also have haiku workshop sessions at our bi-monthly meetings so that we can all improve our writing skills or get other members' input with a poem we are working on. The majority of haiku groups, I think, often bring together haiku poets who are already self-confident, knowledgeable, and published; but groups like this can be intimidating to beginners who want to learn haiku. HPC M was designed for both longtime and new haiku poets. It's a good balance and we all learn from each other while enjoying fellowship based on a common interest. I'm not sure why, but HPCM very quickly acquired members across the U.S. and abroad, in addition to those from our geographical region. We aim to provide our distant members with a “meeting experience” even if they can not attend in person. They can send us poems or notes to be read aloud by email or snail-mail and often send poems for the workshop sessions, too. Afterward, our bi-monthly newsletter, *The Dragonfly*, which write and distribute, mostly by email—which is sent out mostly by email in the month between two meetings—recaps the meeting, including detailed reports of our workshop sessions. Even local

members sometimes email poems for a meeting if they are unable to attend in person for some reason. HPCM also publishes an annual poem sheet containing the best of our members' work. This is widely distributed locally and by haiku friends around the U.S. and the world. The poem sheet serves three purposes: to give poets who have never published a chance to get their work in front of readers; as a chance for poets to share their work with family and friends in publication form; and, finally, to put haiku before the communities at large by being distributed at libraries and other community centers.

What does haiku poetry mean to you?

Haiku poetry enables me to record a brief moment in time, one that is special to me in some way, using words. It is a “snapshot” of that special moment in the same way a photograph would be—but, as a writer, I can capture the moment even if I've left my camera at home. Of course, there are some “moments” that can only be captured in a haiku; a photo wouldn't do them justice!

Is poetry a source of personal satisfaction for you?

I have been able to express my thoughts by way of poetry from a very young age, so I can't imagine not having that outlet. Ideas that might never be fully or clearly expressed in prose can be brought to life in poetic language. Of course, it doesn't hurt seeing one's name in print. I've published thousands of poems, stories, books, articles and column; but seeing my name in print never gets old!

Poetry is a genre of literature which is more economical in language while having the ability to bring out vast revelations about emotions and the universal connections between human beings. How do you feel about this? I agree wholeheartedly. I have many long-distance friends whom I've never met in person, but who are very close to my heart. Expressing ourselves and sharing our thoughts and emotions through haiku, or tanka, can be a fast-lane “short cut” to friendship.

Haiku does not hold a prominent place in school curricula. If poetry is included at all, haiku often does not appear in the

syllabus. Your feelings about this?

I find it discouraging that, even now, school curricula continue teaching students that haiku is “a 17-syllable poem about nature that is written in three lines.” That is, if they teach it at all. That definition would suffice to introduce a very young child to haiku; but after a while, students deserve more than that. The form is has the potential to be more profound, more meaningful, and more rewarding than merely a “five-seven-five nature poem.” Even children as young as 10 can begin to grasp some of the more complex aspects of haiku; and that, in turn, can often give them the desire to learn more and dig even deeper on their own. For decades I've presented haiku to school children, at almost every grade level, as a guest-poet, workshop organizer, or program presenter. Children in elementary, middle, and high school are quite capable of delving more deeply into haiku than “five-seven-five,” and almost every student I've worked with has embraced the form and enjoyed it a great deal. As a matter of fact, youngsters write some of the best haiku because they do it “naturally.” It just flows from them. Also, even young children are more able to take in information about haiku, and to appreciate it, than people give them credit for.

What differences do you find between classical and contemporary, or “modern,” haiku?

In my haiku-writing, I try to stay as close to the original, classical form of as my English language will allow me—that is, to adapt Japanese haiku to my own language as best I can. I can use haiku elements including kigo; kiriji; and, of course brevity to create an “English haiku” (although that is somewhat of an oxymoron!). Modern haiku—which I practice as well, but not as much—has the ability to go farther by opening up the possibilities of visual haiku, one-line or two-line haiku, and all manner of modern subject matter never imagined hundreds of years ago.

Where do you find inspiration for your haiku?

Absolutely everywhere! A person need not travel far to write haiku; although travel is a wonderful way to be inspired. I rarely travel, but I can find haiku in my home, my neighborhood, my town...even in long-ago memories that are finally ready to be

written about. If you know how to look for them, haiku are all around.

Do you feel that haiku, or poetry in general, can help a person face difficult, emotionally trying, or tragic situations? Do you think it has any therapeutic value in relation to depression or anxiety?

Poetry has proven therapeutic value, helping people who never even thought of themselves as poets to heal after emotional or traumatic events. The “freedom” of poetry to express all manner of thoughts and feelings from deep within can enable children of trauma, or those who may be developmentally delayed, to communicate more easily than they would have otherwise. Because the language of poetry is different than that of prose, it can help to tap into another part of ourselves, maybe the part that has been wounded or is too shy to come out. Poetry can bring that which is frightening into the light, and take away the fear. It can relieve anxiety simply otherwise occupying the mind and helping to explore the cause of the anxiety. Writing is a one person / one-sheet-of-paper activity: it's very private, but can be shared—if the person is ready—to help a counselor better understand a client or patient. When someone knows that they can express anything—no matter how dark, or confusing—without restriction, that freedom brings hope for healing. Poetry provides an opportunity to stretch, bend, and shape language in ways not possible in prose or everyday speech...or in speech at all. Letting go of our inhibitions and facing our own natures, even the dark or scary parts, is a function of poetry. A feeling of freedom in self-expression is a form of ultimate self-acceptance.

Is haiku reaching a new stage of recognition in current literature and in society?

Perhaps. There are numerous haiku journals in the world, both hard-copy and online; as well as groups on the local and national level where one can meet other haiku poets. Even non-haiku poetry societies, magazines, or festivals sometimes sponsor haiku contests aimed at the general public. Unfortunately, many of the winning poems in mainstream-sponsored haiku contests,

judged from a non-haiku perspective, are either bland five-seven-five nature poems; or, worse, they are a joke or an aphorism expressed in 17 syllables. I'd like to see the general public embrace—or at least expect—more than that from a haiku. This can happen only through exposure to the form in its best examples. You can lead a reader to haiku, but you can't make them write it!

Do you find any relation between haiku, or poetry in general, and religion?

Religious symbolism is often used in non-religious poetry because the similes and metaphors are archetypal and therefore familiar to the reader, something they can understand in relation to things in their own lives in order to unlock the poem. In longer forms of poetry, I've found myself using religious symbolism in this way, sometimes without realizing it until I am finished. Haiku can depict religious events, or events with some aspect of religion in them. Vice versa, the ideas inherent in religion(s) are often more easily expressed in poetic language—both poetry and religion lift us up out of ourselves and our everyday lives and carry us to a higher plane. Poetry can be the catalyst to understanding concepts of spiritual importance.

What advice would you give to the upcoming or fledgling haiku and tanka poets?

Read, read, read! Read haiku books, journals, and visit haiku websites. Pick up one—or more—of the many fine “how to” books by some of today's best contemporary haiku poets. These explain haiku background and techniques that can help the fledgling poet learn to use the haiku to its greatest effect as a form for self-expression. Finally, the old saying that “imitation is the sincerest form of flattery” is just as true in haiku as for anything else. Imitate the ancient masters, their successors, even your favourite contemporary haiku poets. This way you can “learn by doing.” Although I sometimes feel that I learn more about haiku from failure. Send out a poem; if it comes back rejected, try to figure out why, revise it, and try again. There's no such thing as too much practice.

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