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Editor
Intekhab Hameed

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Editor's Note

WritingToday is an International bi-annual journal published at Aurangabad, (MS) India. It is a peer-reviewed refereed and registered journal supported by rigorous processes of criterion-referenced article ranking and qualitative commentary ensuring that only intellectual work of the substance and significance is published. *WritingToday* aims at providing a comprehensive approximation of literature produced in English today. The journal is committed to register the responses of the young and the senior scholars who approach a text as a discourse across cultures, literatures, themes, concepts and genres. It focuses on the excellences of literature and language as viewed in different critical contexts, promoting a fresh and insightful appreciation of the text. The basic targets of the journal is to publish a rich collection of selected articles on issues that deal with studies in Indian writing in English, diasporic, colonial and post colonial literature, critical theory and translations. Articles may include studies that address multidimensional impact of the recent intellectual and critical discourses. *WritingToday* invites scholars and writers to submit works on critical writings,literary and linguistic studies, creative writings that include works of prose, drama, fiction and poetry, reviews and review articles on books of academic, literary, cultural and theoretical orientation. The *Journal* embraces internationalism and indicates an attempt to engage in the concerns of teachers, researchers and scholars around the world with the critical or creative contextualization of the issues that signify the intellectual endeavour within and outside academia.

Recent political and cultural occurrences, ideological alignments/re-alignments and the consequential radicalization of literary and allied disciplines that have a direct impact on the generic, linguistic or contextual transformations are especially taken care of. This issue, therefore, has articles on sociological nuances, minority discourses, women's voices both within and outside the country. Translation as we know, remains an authentic cultural transaction. The Journal, therefore, intends, as a regular feature, to publish translations from indigenous Indian and other languages so as to have a holistic view of the creative and critical directions. English translations and some noted reviews of a widely recognized Urdu fiction writer, Joginder Paul, and his views on the art of fiction are published along with a comprehensive interview.

The editorial board believes in authorial freedom; readers' responses will be published to promote a healthy and productive debate. *Writing Today* has also planned to initiate debates and provide platform for discussions on the current issues that keep coming up and reverberate the intellectual, cultural and academic institutions.We humbly seek suggestions of the readers and scholars in this regard.

Intekhab Hameed
Editor

A word for the contributors

Contributors are requested to carefully follow the following format to enable us to design the lay out in order:

- **Title:** The title page should contain the **title** of the paper in bold, Font size 16 with the **author's name**, designation, address and a few words about achievements, interests and engagements,
- **Text font :** Times Roman, 12 font,
- **Line Space:** 1.5 space for the text and single space for quotations and list of the works cited,
- **Margin:** One-inch margins top, bottom, left, and right,
- **Works Cited:** References at the end of the manuscript. The list should mention only those sources actually cited in the text,
- **References style:** MLA style sheet,
- No foot Notes please,
- Titles of Books and Journals in Italics and Titles of Articles in quotes

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Korzybski's Concerns, and Conscious Time-bindings Predictions

Milton Dawes

If knowledge is power, technology has been contributing to ''people power" and 'democratizing' the world (ideally: government by the people, for the people, by the people) seemingly faster than people or their 'leaders' seem able to cope with. At near the speed of light more and more people have access through technology to more and more information (and misinformation). Our increasing inability to manage and adapt can be attributed to many factors including the following: Knowledge ("knowing things" more accurately often 'verbal knowing') is usually identified with "intelligence" (applying knowledge, creative-critical thinking, "good" (accurately informed judgment) in attending to new situations. Those in charge of education systems generally do not emphasize, and promote as a cultural value, critical-creative thinking, and conscious times-binding practice towards attaining higher levels of intelligence, and understanding: "Understanding" taken as "exploring, making sense of, and making connections between what is 'known' through practice." Also, education systems generally do not usually encourage students to develop a habit of ongoing self-education and self-development.

A great deal of our human interactions involves words". Words and symbols emerged before we understood the tremendous power of words and symbols to affect our relationships. Similarly, technology emerged and is expanding faster than we are learning to manage our relationships, differences, diverse interests, and repeating conflicts. With technology, we are able to communicate with each other across thousands of miles in a few seconds…And we are also able to drop bombs, kill and maim others no matter how far away. Our use of technology has expanded and accelerated the democratization of "power": power as "the ability (for 'good' or 'bad') to produce an effect, to influence, to initiate and accelerate change, to produce things, etc." More and more peoples are reacting against what they have experienced as "abusive, disrespecting, top down, we know best management"...and it seems that 'leaders' have not yet got the message. Ours and theirs familiar, well entrenched ways, vested interests, etc. contribute to resistance to using technologies or other mediums to promote, re-view, revise, and improve many of our beliefs, attitudes, and approaches and practices based on our earlier times-binding, less informed ways of thinking. Present old ways of doing things, whether in 'management, 'leading', warring, etc., persist despite much evidence of their increasing ineffectiveness. (War 2014 is not war 1914.)

Recent events in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Iraq, Syria and who knows where next present us with powerful examples of the use of computers and cell phones to initiate what might turn out to be a new development in world order (or disorder). Although many experts and others exclaimed that "No one

saw this coming", I believe that serious student-practitioners of general semantics not only expect these upheavals but also can predict as did Korzybski some 80 years ago, that there will be many more 'upheavals' to come. Many of our unexamined, and unrevised primitive beliefs; our habitual ways of thinking; our social, political, economic, religious, legal, and other institutions which are based on, and operate following primitive (earlier times-binding) and habitual ways of thinking; poor appreciation of the power of language among other factors, guarantee that there will be more and more upheavals, rebellions and wars': This, despite Einstein's caution that 'We cannot solve our human problems using the same kind of thinking that produced them in the first place'.

Below are selections representing some of Korzybski's concerns, predictions, and times-binding suggestions addressing 'past', present, and highly possible future upheavals. "Korzybski saw it coming". These predictions can be read in his books "Science and Sanity" (1933) and "Manhood of Humanity" (1921) outlining his system "General Semantics". (Conscious times-binding involves deliberate conscious work to improve on what ourselves and others have 'produced' "thought, said, understood, believed, did, etc.")

Some Concerns, Predictions, and Proposals Selected From Korzybski's "Science And Sanity", and "Manhood Of Humanity" (his seminal books on general semantics).

If we teach our children, whose nervous systems are not physically finished at birth, doctrines structurally belonging to entirely different epochs of human development, we ought not to wonder that semantic harm is done. Science And Sanity, page 149 ... mankind represents an interdependent time-binding class of life, and any group of people who possess physical means for destruction and still preserve infantile standards of evaluation become a menace to the culture of the whole race." Science And Sanity, page 557... Under modern conditions, which change rather rapidly nowadays, obviously, some relations between humans alter, and so the institutions must be revised. Science And Sanity, page 285... One of the great difficulties facing the world today is the passing from one historical era to another. Such passing, as history shows, have always been painful, and pregnant with consequences... Now we are witnessing the struggles of 'democracies' with 'totalitarian states',... In all these transitions it took one or more generations before the upheaval subsided and an adjustment was made to the new conditions. Science And Sanity, page xlviii (5th ed.)

If we live in modern world, but keep the 'emotional attitudes' of primitive bygone days, then naturally we are bound to be semantically unbalanced, and cannot be adjusted to a fundamentally primitive 'civilization' in the midst of great technical achievements. Science And Sanity, page 727 …

As we learned lately, not only human achievements, but also human disasters, are mostly interrelated and international, and are becoming more so every year. Obviously with Aristotelian narrowness, selfishness, shortsightedness, infantilism, commercialism, militarism, nationalism, etc., rampant, mankind, to prevent further major Aristotelian disasters, would have to produce a special international body which would co-ordinate various structural achievements,

strivings, etc., formulate and inform the great masses of the modern scientific Non-Aristotelian standards of evaluation. Science And Sanity, page 558 (Unfortunately such international bodies, the "U.N." for instance (while appreciating its worldwide contributions towards improving human conditions) are composed of members who bring to, and run institutions based on their individual and cultural ('tribal') thinking, beliefs, biases, and values: Factors not significantly different from the general and traditional attitudes (self-interests) and ways of thinking. For conscious times-binding ethical improvements to such 'bodies', the following factor has to be acknowledged and addressed: Institutions and organisms are generally and naturally self-protective and will resist what is perceived as threats to their survival and structural integrity.)

Science and mathematics show the working of the 'human mind' at its best. Accordingly, we can learn from science and mathematics how this 'human mind' should work *to be at its best*. Science And Sanity, page 728... Sanity means *adjustment*, and without the minimum of the best structural knowledge of each date concerning this world, such adjustment is impossible. Science And Sanity, page 727... The experimental development of science and civilization invariably involves more and more refined discriminations. Science And Sanity, page xcvii (5th ed.)

...we read unconsciously into the world the structure of the language we use. Science And Sanity, page 60…We do not realize what tremendous power the structure of an habitual has. Science And Sanity, page 90

Our rulers, who rule our symbols, and so rule a symbolic class of life, impose their own infantilism on our institutions, educational methods, and doctrines. This leads to nervous maladjustment of the incoming generations which, being born into, are forced to develop under the un-natural (for man) semantic conditions imposed on them. In turn, they produce leaders afflicted with the old animalistic limitations. The vicious circle is completed; it results in a general state of human un-sanity, reflected in our institutions. And so it goes, on and on. Science And Sanity, page 41... Democracy presupposes intelligence of the masses; totalitarianism does *not* to the same degree. But a democracy without intelligence of the masses under modern conditions can be a worse mess than any dictatorship could be. Science And Sanity, page lxxvii (5th ed.)

Our rulers: politicians, 'diplomats', bankers, priests, of every description, economists, lawyers, etc., and the majority of teachers remain at present largely or entirely ignorant of modern science, scientific methods, structural linguistic and semantics issues of 1933, and they also lack an essential historical and anthropological background, without which a sane orientation is impossible... As a result a conflict is created and maintained between the advance of science affecting conditions of actual life and the orientation of our rulers,which often remain antiquated by centuries, or one or two thousand years.The present world conditions are in chaos;... Few of us at present realize that, as long as such ignorance of our rulers prevails, *no solution of our human problems is possible*. Sanity And Sanity, Page xcii *(5 th. ed.)*

We are constantly producing more and more complex conditions of life, man made, man-invented, and deceptive for the non-prepared... In spite of inventions and discoveries of science, which are *human* achievements, we still preserve *animalistic* systems and doctrines which shape our semantic reactions. Hence, life becomes more strained and increasingly more unhappy, thereby multiplying the number of nervous break-downs. Science And Sanity, page 459

At present I am chiefly concerned to drive home the fact that it is the great *disparity* between the rapid progress of the natural and technological sciences on the one hand and the slow progress of the metaphysical, co-called social "sciences" on the other hand, that sooner or later so disturbs the equilibrium of human affairs as to result periodically in those cataclysms which we call insurrections, revolutions, and wars. Manhood of Humanity, page 22

Because we are human beings we are all of us interested in what we call progress progress in law, in government, in jurisprudence, in ethics, in philosophy, in the natural sciences, in economics, in the fine arts, in the practical arts, in the production and distribution of wealth, in all affairs affecting the welfare of mankind. It is a fact that all these great matters are interdependent and interlocking; it is therefore a fact of the utmost importance that progress in each of the cardinal matters must keep abreast of progress in the other cardinal matters in order to keep a just equilibrium, a proper balance, and so to maintain the integrity and continued prosperity of the whole complex body of our social life. Manhood of Humanity, page 15

In general semantics we are concerned with the *sanity* of the race, including particular methods of prevention; eliminating from home, elementary, and higher education inadequate aristotelian types of evaluation, which too often lead to the *un-sanity* of the race and building up for the first time a positive theory of sanity, as a workable non-aristotelian *system*… Science And Sanity, page lxxxi, (5th ed.) (I think individuals, institutions, professions, societies, nations (as 'tribes'), etc., have too much investment, too steeped in old familiar ways: Radical changes to these established ways would be too disruptive, inconvenient and impractical. Consequently and understandably, attempts at change will be strongly and even violently resisted. But individuals can practice conscious times-binding towards becoming saner, more intelligent, kinder human beings.)

Depending on science for more and better killing machines is certainly not the solution for human problems, culture and civilization. Science And Sanity, page lxxix (5th ed)

Through training in the consciousness of abstracting we become aware that characteristics are left out in the process of abstracting by our nervous systems, and so we become conscious of the possibility that new factors may arise at any time which would necessitate a change in our generalizations. Science And Sanity, page lxiii

We read unconsciously into the world the structure of the language we use. Science And Sanity, page 60…To achieve adjustment and sanity and the conditions which follow from them, we must study structural characteristics of this world *first*, and, then only, build languages of similar structure instead of

habitually ascribing to the world the primitive structure of our language. All our doctrines, institutions, etc. depend on verbal arguments. If these arguments are conducted in a language of wrong and unnatural structure, our doctrines and institutions must reflect that linguistic structure, and inevitably lead to disasters. Science And Sanity, page 59

Since words *are not* the things we speak about, the study of linguistic structure become a most important research method. The more languages (theories) we have for analysis and structural comparison, the more glimpses do we get at the structure of the world…. If we want to progress in any line of human endeavor, this progress is always dependent on the language we use, since what we call 'progress' is always a co-operative affair and therefore dependent on means of communications and languages. Science And Sanity, page 725

It is not generally realized that with human progress, the complexities and difficulties in the world increase following an exponential function of 'time', with indefinitely accelerating accelerations. I am deeply convinced that these problems cannot be solved at all unless we boldly search for and revise our antiquated notions about the 'nature of man' and apply modern extensional methods toward their solution. Science And Sanity, page xxxv (5th ed.)

I must stress that I give no panaceas, but experience shows that when the methods of general semantics are *applied*, the results are usually beneficial, whether in law, medicine, business, etc., education on all levels, or personal inter-relationships, be they in family, national, or international fields. If they are not applied, but merely talked about, no result can be expected. Science And Sanity page xxxi (5th ed.)

"Science And Sanity", "Manhood Of Humanity", and other books on general semantics (including Bruce Kodish "Korzybski A Biography") are available from "The Institute of General Semantics". For more on general semantics contact The "Institute of General Semantics" and visit <miltondawes.com>

Translating India into English: Issues and Insights

Aparna Lanjewar Bose

During the last two centuries role of translation in communicating literary movements across linguistic borders has become important. The tradition has given us writers like Shaw, Yeats, Joyce, Becket and Heaney in a single century. Indian literature too has gathered its writing tradition from the ideological activity of translation during the late 18th and 19th century. Some Indian English writers have been good translators themselves. Indian literary communities possess a translating consciousness and this can be said matter-of-Factly because the very foundation of modern Indian literatures was laid through translation activity be it by Jaydeva, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Hari Narayan Apte or Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. (Bassnett and trivedi) At least till the nineteenth century literal adherence was not insisted. Deviation was liberally tolerated, encouraged even preferred, the translators were not affected by the anxiety of fidelity to the original. The features of the target language and tastes of the target readers at the time of translation are some factors that promoted a free style translation.

India has a long tradition of translation with its multicultural and plurilingual heritage. On one side where creative abundance is at its fullest, on the other side there have been numerous challenges too in the area. Raja Rao had categorically stated the difficulties of operating between, and the identity crisis that comes about with linguistic uncertainty, because as an Indian he wrote in the English language which was and yet was not his own. It was in English that he was educated but it was not the language of his emotional and psychological frame. To quote him, "We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We can write only as Indians."

This reflects the classic dilemma of writers like Rao who can neither write like the English nor write only as Indians and who are never quite comfortable in either. The imposition of one language and its cultural paraphernalia for the study of literature onto another with disregard for cultural differences, forces bilingual or multilingual writers into a crisis of identity which is well articulated by the African writer Ngugiwa Thiongo who opines that he always lived in translation. His mother tongue was Gikuyu and he learned to read and write it as a child. Later he learned Kiswahili and English but problems began with English and to quote him, "I soon came to realize that my relation to English was based on a coercive system of rewards and terror. I was rewarded with praise and distinction when I did well in English both spoken and written but punished and humiliated when I was caught speaking Gikuyu in the school compound."

He traces his writing career in terms of self translation. When he wrote in one language the other was running through his head so that writing in English became a literal act of mental translation. He wrote in his mother tongue- gikuyu, a novel,while in prison but later translated it into English to reach the wider audience.He explains how he came to find himself writing and rewriting, translating and retranslating various drafts; so that he became engaged in a continuous dialogue with Gikuyu and English, this time without wanting to highlight his Gikuyu. "I was no longer interested in trying to make the readers feel they were reading a text written in another language if they wanted to authenticate the original language of its composition, they could go the Gikuyu original."

This is a dilemma faced by multilingual writers in a colonial context but what is perceptible here is also how the writer has moved in effectively decolonizing his own writing practice. Writers seeking to develop post colonial strategies have struggled with different ways of highlighting multilingualism and rejecting the English dominance. Later debates raged in whether the writers should attempt to break into the international market through established English language publishers and surrender to the might of the global publishing market or subvert the colonial language and refashion it in new conscious postcolonial ways.The key lay in asserting the power of African languages with their history of oral tradition.

Language carries the values of a people so if a language is suppressed it is the potent symbol of wider oppression. Linguistic domination should be resisted through a revolutionary linguistic strategy as failure to do so would ensure domination of a people's language by the language of the colonizing nation and that would result in the dominance of the mental world of the colonized. Ngugi chose to reject English first as it was the language of the colonizer but later recognized that he also needed to be translated into English in order to reach a broad international community. He came to see in translation into English a way of asserting the primary status of Gikuyu in his career graph. This reflects a major shift of perspective in post colonial attitudes towards translations.

Indian English writer has to deal with non- English speaking people in non- English speaking zones and has to overcome the difficulty of conveying through English a vast range of expressions and observations whose natural source is the Indian language. The English he/she writes conveys the spirit of the Indian region, he/ she is depicting, the quality of that particular area, characteristics of its speech, its typical responses and distinctive spirit and flavor. Thus each writer has to find his/ her own answers, styles and English.

The writers do not write in an Indian English or even in their own English but an English intended to approximate the thought structures, speech patterns of their characters and also not to betray the Indian text and context by an easy assimilation into linguistic and cultural matrices of Anglo American English.

Mulk Raj Anand conveys a Punjabi flavor in the English language while RK Narayan depicts customs and manners of Tamilians in English. The characters are shaped by a language that is not only different from English but markedly different from Punjabi ethos pervasive in Anand's works or the Bengali

which is the normal mode of the characters in Bhabani Bhattacharya's works. Indian English writers are not so much translating Indian language texts into English as using various strategies to make their works read like translations. These texts seek to decolonize themselves from 2 oppressors' western ex-colonizer and traditional national culture. These writers intentionally create not just English but multiple Englishes so to say.They create an English to fulfill their translational creative aims. Interestingly, non-Indian reader will not only re-orient oneself to read the text in a particular regional language but also a north Indian would struggle to read a text that has southern linguistic and cultural ethos and vice versa,As texts are located in terms of geography as well as religion, caste and gender. Anand consciously introduces translation of Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi words into all his writings and chose to write a kind of English that challenged monolingual English reader as well as bilingual but non- Punjabi Indian reader. Such indianisations are found in abundance in many Indian writers adopting translation strategies who do not want to go off the source language/culture.

Ramanujan made English translations appear sound and professional though he was not part of any movement, may feel he was a precursor. His translations of the Virasaiva poets or folk tales or the love poems exemplify that English would play the role of foregrounding tales, legends stories and literature from the kitchen languages. Opposed to the historically and culturally homogenizing Sanskritised vision of India he emphasized on the linguistic, regional diachronic diversity of the subcontinents' culture and was more interested in non classical Desi languages as opposed to classical languages such as Sanskrit or Persian. He was at equal ease with both Kannada and English as well as Tamil and English and brought the two languages to the centrestage.

Post Rushdie English is no longer seen as alien or not one's own but an established India language. And the new breed of writers can sound natural than their predecessors because of tolerance and acceptance of various englishes.These new writers are more urban and deal with characters who normally speak English. To quote Rushdie"the children of independent India seem not to think of English as being irredeemably tainted by its colonial provenance. They use it as an Indian language, as one of the tools they have to hand." GJV Prasad says it's not even a language of the streets or the most preferred of languages in offices. There is greater code mixing and code switching and less puritanical attitude to it. But all this has achieved a greater legitimacy for indianisms in English and writers will have to accept the challenge of writing about non- English speakers and non English cultures.The notion of radical bilingualism proposed by SamiaMehrezthat calls for literary space for bilingual postcolonial writers, where linguistic and cultural hierarchies could be subverted and no single language would dominate can well be the case study for India in the post colonial context.

Susan Basnett and Lefeverehave argued that translation can never be innocent since there are hierarchies between languages and cultures. WhileLawrence Venutiand others highlight that there is violence inherent in the act of translation where one culture exerts dominance over the other. Translations,

wield a greater power in construction of a national identity at home and in construction of images of other cultures.

Then how to set about translating that does not wreck violence on the source text and its culture. Venuti goes back to Friedrich Schleiermacher who posits two alternative methods for translating: either to bring the text to the reader or to take the reader to the text. Further, leading to the distinction between the foreignisation translation strategy and the domesticating translation strategy especially in context where power relations are unequal, which does highlights the importance of translation as an instrument of cultural exchange.

Coming to the distinctive Indian example of Tagore who enjoyed a cult status in the English speaking world because of the translations of his own poems in English with an introduction from none other than WB Yeats. He was a huge success in Bengali and was seen as an Avant Garde whereas the west regarded him as a mystic. He acknowledged that he had to rewrite his Bengali originals to keep up to the English tastes and he deliberately included poems where the devotional and spiritual element was predominant.In short he structured his material to suit the demands of his target readers.Unfamiliar with the poetic experiments of the contemporary poets his was conservative verse form harking back to romanticism of the Victorians and Edwardians. His success rests not because of the quality of his poetry or some innovative technique employed therein but because he pandered to the western myth about the mystical gentle childlike east image.Thus assisting in the creation of his English language persona,and contrasting it with his more radical Bengali persona.M. Senguptaregards this strategy as submission to the hegemonic power of images created and nurtured by the target culture as the authentic representation of the "other". Tagore was engaged in translation for personal recognition not to intervene but reinforce the Orientalist version of India.These constant adjustments to suit the tastes of the colonizer brought both success and quiet embarrassment. After Geetanjali,Tagore's works were translated extensively into most Indian languages and Rita Kothari mentions 35 different translations of his works appearing in Gujrati.However,writers like Saratchandra, Bankimchandra were translated into many Indian languages even without mediation through English.

Geographically, contiguous literatures had greater scope for translations. For example Kannada-Marathi, Marathi- Gujrathi or the Dravidian languages that had more interaction with each other than languages spoken in the north. Translation from Bengali into other languages were plenty in the 19th century translation scenario. The beginning of the 20th century did not depend on English as it does today and Indian languages borrowed and translated from Bengali even before the appearance of 'Geetanjali'. But it should be admitted that Indian literature garnered international attention only after it came. The major source of struggle for Indian writers has been of course the problem of linguistic hegemony. Emergent literatures reclaim colonial languages and simultaneously acknowledge presence of other indigenous languages.

Gayatri Chakravaty Spivak highlights the textual and contextual difficulties faced by translators in order to make some choices. In her translation of

Mahashweta Devi's short story titled "Draupadi" she had to decide whether to use gender specific personal pronoun 'his' or 'her' as modern Bengali does not make such distinction. Spivak's later choice for the feminine 'her' was determined by her own ideology and the dual contextual framework within which she was working. She is greatly indebted to Derrida's view of translation wherein the so called original text is endlessly modified thereby exposing the fallacy of any absolute meaning. The key to Derrida's thinking of translation is his idea of difference. Translation is undertaken not as a search for equivalence but rather as an unending process that endows a text with new life and new meanings. Spivak's translation of Devi's short stories "Imaginary maps" in 1995 and her essay titled "The politics of translation" reflect her struggles to articulate the role of a feminist translator. Translation is the most intimate of all acts of reading, she argues, from her doubly politicized position of a feminist from the third world. The task of the translator is to facilitate what she describes as a love relationship with the original, "a love that permits fraying, holds the agency of the translator and the demands of her actual or imagined audience at bay." The translator must surrender to the texts which in her terms means translating literally, or in Venuti's terms "foreignizing the text" thus challenging domestication that erases traces of the "otherness" of the original. She critiques the western feminist essentialism with regard to women of the third world. Her foreignizing translations invites readers translablity of writing from other cultures, her insistence on surrendering to the texts raises important pointers of translators being not just readers but rewriters with the original. Interestingly, Mahasweta Devi enjoys more prominence in English as a consequence of her been translated and on which also rests Spivak's own reputation.

There have been many more translations of Indian women's writing both in Indian languages and western languages. N. Kamala considers this growing no of translations of individual authors as well as the growing no of anthologies of Indian women writings and asks some key issues in her own book, "Translating women: Indian interventions" and to quote her, "What differentiates, for example, a telugu woman from a Hindi woman writer when they are both translated into a common western language? How are the nuances of class, religion or caste maintained, if at all? What is fore-grounded and what is erased in these translations? What are the politics that inform the choice of authors to be translated? What is the agency of the translators in these cultural productions?"

A Tamil writer CS Lakshmi recounts her own experiences of getting translated into English pointing out how different languages condition what is actually perceived and also highlights the great cultural differences that emerge from language.shesays,"In Tamil, we sometimes describe eyes as "rain eyes" which are considered the most beautiful... and we have fish eyed and lotus faced women and sometimes men have lotus feet. The images of these flowers evoke different memories in memories of us, not just of the flowers but also their qualities and the emotions they evoke." Translation, she feels, can create a hierarchy between the translated and the final version. Translation into English

is looked upon as doing some sort of a favor to the Indian languages. “It is alarming, the manner in which the English translator have shaped Indian writing to fit their own preconceptions,prejudices or to satisfy market demands.This is the danger especially when the translator tries authorial appropriation of the original and assumes ownership when the author is dead.” Everything cannot be made bare some mysteries must remain. An award for a translated book has simultaneous impact in two languages. When Bama’s‘Karukku’ got translated by Lakshmi Holmstrom and got the crossword prize in 2001. It changed Bama’s life for good. Many other Tamil Dalit writers were picked up for translations after that. When a translation wins a prize the sales of the original also tend to pick up. But literary prizes are very few in India. There definitely can be scope for more in different categories and genres.

What is disturbing however,is translation in India, especially of writings from the margins, giving focus more precisely on one particular genre lately,which is mostly autobiography/ narratives. Poetry, by and large, is the most neglected genre.That’s because its most difficult to translate. Its replete with figures of speech, similes, metaphors, paradox, unprecedented phonological syntactic and semantic patterns like rhyming ,alliterations, versification, morphological parallelisms, syntagmatic and paradigmatic relation between words, region specific, gender specific, linguistic cultural expressions, idiomatic phrases etc. While life stories like fiction offer a lot of scope for action, reaction, spice, thrills and references to the much tabooed subjects, some translations are deliberately done to pander to marketable norms and to satisfy the native urge of the author, of gaining visibility amidst large audience.Therefore, only those life accounts find mention,which appease to the vested interests of both, the author and the translators. Publishing industries are not ready to take chances with poetry translations as regards to saleability and marketability, the way they are eager to take, with life narratives and fiction.

As far as translations of world literatures into Indian languages is concerned the politics that is involved in India’s literary culture is that, it’s not needed. And that they can do without it or already some have done it as an act of love and tribute. Let’s take the case of Indian writers writing in Hindi and wanting to reach beyond to a large international audience by being translated into English. They have been preempted or ignored at large by other Indian writers writing directly into English. We have classic examples of R.K. Narayan, the Indo Anglian writer who wrote realistically with one eye fixed on India and the other hopefully sighting Anglo America, not to mention prefaced by Graham Greene. Tagore‘s example isalready given.

The question still remains how to address the translation that is deemed inferior to the original. Octavio Paz the Mexican Nobel laureate considers it as a creative act. His liberationist theory of poetic translation sees translator as a creator. He understands the impossibility of complete recreation of an original text and dismisses literal translation as servile. A view similar to JorgeLuis Borges who feels that translation is creative rewriting an act designed to ensure the continuation of a writer such as Homer who without translation would have

vanished into oblivion, once the language in which he composed, ceased to exist in its living form.

It is important to retain the spirit but that's not the only thing. The translator has to be humble and devoted to his craft rather than nursing a sense of superiority like Edward Fitzgerald who felt he made 'Rubbaiyat' of Omar Khayyam immortal and more poetic than the original Persian. The approach has to be emancipatory in the sense of freeing the original from the bondage of source language. The common reader approaches the translated text firstly as a text, discourse. It must please and satisfy. The fact, that it is translated from another language is of secondary importance. We first read and enjoyed Tolstoy and Flaubert, Satre and Gothe in English. So also we enjoy a Tagore or Bankim Chandra in English. The common reader of translation is one who does not know the source language and there is no way he can compare translated text with source, unless he happens to be a bilingual literary expert. An average reader will only satisfy his literary aesthetic experience. This does not imply the translator can take liberties with the original. It means his/her primary duty is towards the reader. Since the process of translation, coincides with the process of writing, it has to be a matter of inspiration. In the context of locating an appropriate idiom it may have to abuse language, play with it, mould it or even create it to be able to articulate the uniqueness of experience. But fidelity to the essence is what stands out. Irrespective of linguistic differences, across cultures and communities, there are elements common to languages, such as music and painting with different traditions but with an appeal that is partly universal, partly cultural.

Michael Croninsays, "Translation is not a byproduct of globalization but an integral part of it." and Terri Morrison feels Globalization requires one to deal with, sell to, and/or buy from people in other countries. These people probably speak different languages, have different cultural attitudes, and have different historical backgrounds. They cannot be dealt with, sold to, or bought from in the same way as a domestic company. To put it another way you may know your particular industry inside and out, forward and backward, better than anyone else yet when you step off that plane in a foreign country, that expertise is not enough. If you do not have the knowledge of foreign business, practices, negotiation techniques, cognitive styles, and social customs compiled here, the odds are that you will fail. Doesn't this apply to translation as well? In other words what we now have is a world where translation is extremely important to the extent that globalization could not happen without it. Yet there is no clear understanding as to what happens in translation and very little of the role and status of the translator.

It is to be remembered argues Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler that translation is "not simply an act of selection, assemblage, structuration, and fabrication, and even, in some cases, of falsification, refusal of information, counterfeiting, and the creation of secret codes. In these ways translators, as much as creative writers and politicians, participate in the powerful acts that create knowledge and shape culture"

Translation is at the heart of global communication today and has played a central role in transmission of ideas and literatures over centuries. Through Translations, are effected trans-cultural transmissions and the translators are agents of this. As Walter Benjamin puts it "It is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his recreation of that work" Thus highlighting the importance of translation as an activity that ensures the survival of a text and the significant role of the translator in an age of multilingualism.

No translation is perfect in the absolutist sense. It involves interaction between two authors'languages and cultures and interaction fraught with political implications. Globalization has not only impacted world economy and international politics but has also altered the role of translation.The process of information distribution via translation relies heavily on the new information technology like the internet which has revolutionized flow of information and contact possibilities over large distances.These in turn have led to the emergence of a worldwide translation industry regarded by many as the most important safeguard of linguistic cultural diversity in the face of rising dominance of one language more equal than all others.'English'as the dominant lingua franca. (House, p79)Translation is often found guilty by the anti- globalization movements as propelling the hegemonic post colonial forces of power like the USA. All said and done it will continue to play an important role in providing ways and means for different communities and individuals to interact with and learn from each other.

The tendency on the part of translators while translating Indian literature into English is their practice of leaving behind substantial portions when transferring at times its 1/4th or even 1/3rd especially in case of fiction. Be it Narayan Menon's translation of "Chemeen", or TW Clarke and Tarapada Mukherjee's translation of "Pather Panchali".What often gets deleted or modified in the process is its final ending. Such suppression represents the aesthetic subjugation of an Indian sense of valediction by a western sense of ending.

Ganesh Devyaccuses the western scholarship of devaluing translation and has pointed out that western notion of originality and western aesthetics categories simply do not apply to the long established multilingual Indian context. English in India acquired prominence for a span of some 200 years as compared to say an India language like Tamil which has a continuous history of 3000 years and also the oldest literary language. He refers to biblical myth of Babel that relates to gods punishment to Noah's descendants. He seems to endorse that the widely held Anglo- American notion of superiority of the original against the inferiority of translation was by no means a universally accepted position but rather a manifestation of monolingual colonist mentality and therefore western concepts of originality are incompatible with the non- western philosophies. Harish Trivedi has attacked the way in which some postcolonial writing uses the terminology of "cultural translation." He sees this as a modicum of appropriation by monolinguals of the discourse of translation. He states what Homi Bhabha means by translation is simply the condition of western multiculturalism brought about by migration. And therefore Trivedi disapproves

of the concept of translation which tends to ignore the plurilingualism that is the heart of all translation. Cultural translation as conceived within postcolonial studies is nothing but a manifestation of Anglo-American cultural and linguistic imperialism and cultural translations have become a way of avoidance of the language issues.

Post Colonial translations' cultural and national projects entails translation of world literature into Indian language and translation of Indian languages into languages of the world but mainly through English and these translations amongst various Indian languages has been widely promoted by National Book Trust and the Sahitya Akademi.

The other aspect of such post colonial translation project is translation of Indian literature into language of the world that is wholly marked by aspiration and desire than performance or achievement. It has also meant translating our literatures into English that may be for wider circulation and is yet not fully global.

The works that have been or are being translated can be put into 4 categories namely

1) The indicindological works from classical languages
2) Ancient and medieval works largely to do with the Bhakti tradition.
3) Fictional works depicting various aspects of modern India ex. Novels by Tagore, Premchand, UR Anantamurthy, Gopinath Mohanty etc.
4) Works of modernist writers such as Lokenath Bhattacharya, Nirmal Varma, Vilas Sarang etc.

The first two represent a neo- oriental or post oriental trend, the third category conforms to Frederic Jameson's inadequate description of the third world literary works as national allegories and the fourth category reveals how international, universal and cosmopolitanism can flourish in the third world as well as in the metropolis contrary to Jameson's thesis.

The significant feature of these translations is that large no of them are getting published in India alone by the Indian imprints such as the Penguin India, the Oxford university press India, Rupa/ Harper Collins/Indus, Disha, Orient Longman (India), the N.B.T. and Sahitya Akademi. The success of these publications, amply testify to the fact that English is an Indian language first and international language later. This is proven further by the fact that of all the translations published by the Indian counterpart of Penguin, the parent counterpart in London has barely taken any title for international distribution which is pretty disturbing. This is nothing but reverse colonization that serves to upset the entire process of rendering and making Indian literature as world literature through English translation. This domestication needs to be addressed. To say that the 'empire translates back is all right but the metropolitan and sensible response is that the empire may itself lump these translations.' The phenomenon calls for a comparison with Indian English writing. Are the Indian novels in English translation obdurately regional and therefore not palatable for consumption in the west?

Let's look at the dream nurtured by nearly all great or small writers in the Indian languages. which is one day after they will win the literary award, Sahitya

Akademi or Jyanpeeth and have films made out of their works, the big penultimate thing that should happen is they will be translated into English and that would bring them into the international limelight. But ironically this has not happened in the form of Nobel Prize for literature since Tagore. What could be the reason? Are we not producing good enough works? The question is if a Gabriel Garcia Marquez or a Milan Kundera or an Umberto Eco can win Nobel why not a Sunil Gangopadyay, Vilas Sarang, a Karanth or a Namdev Dhasal? One reason why this may not likely happen is because it is somewhat likely to happen to a Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, or a Sashi Tharoor. Needless, to mention the reasons, why?

In the post colonial global cultural context where do we situate ourselves and our rich literary culture is the vexing question for us. Are we as nation and people happily aligning ourselves with the great Anglo American paradigm as also being people who read and write only in English and not any other Indian language? Do we have alternatives to hold out against such linguistic cultural hegemony against this increasing monolingual literary authoritarianism? Are we ready to wait in order to get translated into English or any other language on our terms?

Translations are often governed by power relation between source and target language. The best example is Edward Fitzgerald's translation of Oman Khayyam's 'Rubaiyat' and Tagore's translations of his own works into English. For translating Indian literature into international languages the only international language used is English and thus English language has become a clearing house for various Indian literatures in India (Trivedi) As regards to the interconnections between translation activity and parallel developments in relation to print and visual media it should include productive exchange between translated texts and televised role of subtitling and dubbing as acts of translation. Technological advances in regional computer software or the increase in the number of regional channels may work as counter processes to the use of English language

Cristina Peri Rossi the Uruguayan writer describes translation as an unattainable object like ideal or platonic love. Borges suggests there never can be a definitive translation of anything, only a constant and dynamic flow of changing versions. Therefore any evaluation of a translation needs to be made in the context with the translation benchmarked against the norms of particular literary system at a given moment in time. This also means that translation is a continuous process, with each generation establishing different criteria for the quality of translation it requires. And then translation is just one individual's reading of a text which can be clearly discerned if translations are compared by different people of the same text. Moreover, it is problematic to attempt to establish a hierarchy between original and translation as the very notion of original is unclear at times. The question still remains when a translation is not a translation? what are the parameters to judge the boundaries of translation? In this regard some observations are essential, to be listed here. **Borges** says that "I have read so much and I have heard so much. I admit it: I repeat myself confirm it: I plagiarize." We are all the heirs of millions of scribes who have already written down all that is essential a long time before us. We are all copyists... there are no longer original ideas. And **Octavia Paz** regards all

literature as being part of a vast system, where every text is somehow connected to every other text, translations of translations of translations. He says each text is unique, yet none can claim to be completely original "because language itself, in its very essence, is already a translation-first from the non verbal world, and then, because each sign and each phrase is a translation of another sign another phrase. Susan Bassnett and Lefevere in their book opine "once we start to consider the way in which both the terminology of translation and the idea of an authentic "original" that exists somewhere beyond the text in front of us are used by writers, then the question of when a translation is or not taking place becomes difficult to answer."

In classical times we find translations between Greek and Latin languages to be of crucial landmark while the famous feats of biblical translation from Hebrew and Armenian to Greek and Latin ranging from the Septuagint to decisive translation of Saint Jerome or Luther in German or the King James in English, mark another milestone in the history of interlinguistic translation. The 20th century saw a number of influential theorists of translation from Croce Rosenzweiz to Benjamin and Steiner to Ricoeur Theo Hermans says Metaphors such as bridge building, ferrying or carrying across, as transmission transference, ubersetzung, and translation convey the enabling function of translation. The enabling which translation brings about is to be achieved by a product a finished translation deemed to offer a reliable image of the parent text as it bears close resemblance to that which remains beyond. Here we encounter metaphors of translation as likeness, replica, duplicate, copy, portrait reflection, reproduction, imitation, mimesis, mirror image or transparent pane of glass. These ways of speaking about translation are so familiar that we are not aware of the metaphor hiding in the phrase like "I have read Dostoevsky" which actually means what I have read is a translation but because it was good to all intents and purposes it was as good as reading the original. In a way then translators do not speak in their own name they speak someone else's words.

Translation has always been in Antoine Berman's resonant phrase "for better or for worse" Ricouer argues that a good translation involves an element of openness to the other. One should be prepared to forfeit native language's claim to self sufficiency which can go sometimes to the extremes of nationalism and linguistic chauvinism when he describes the ethics of translation as an interlinguistic hospitality he says the world is made up of a plurality of human beings and cultures and tongue; humanity exists in a plural mode which means any legitimate form of universality must always find its equivalent plurality. George Steiner suggests that on the interlingual level translation will pose concentrated, visibly intractable problems, but these same problems abound at a more covert or conventionally neglected level interlingually. When two or more languages are in articulate interconnection, the barriers in the middle will obviously be more salient. Jose Ortega Gassetin "The Misery and Splendor of translation" says that translation is a literary genre by itself with its own norms and ends of a translation.Translation is an unfinished business which is not so much pessimistic as an optimistic statement.

Replacing the original text in one language with a substitute or equivalent text in another language known as the target text, can be oral or written translation. It may never be identical to the original. It can only be equivalent in certain respects as there cannot be exact transference of meanings across texts in different languages but only an approximation, appropriate to the purpose. Now how far that purpose be achieved depends on the limits of translatability.

Translation can be approached from different perspectives-linguistic, cultural, sociopolitical, literary, purpose oriented etc. It's not just a linguistic act but also cultural i.e.an act of communication across cultures. So the two i.e. language and culture are indispensable since meaning is of overriding importance, it follows that the cultural frame of reference cannot be ignored.

In recent decades the shift in translation studies is towards cultural orientation. It is viewed more as process of intercultural change rather than a kind of linguistic substitution. This has come about as general trend in humanities and social sciences that have been substantially influenced by post modernist, post colonial, feminist and other socio-culturally and politically motivated school of thought. Therefore, many translators see themselves as interculturally active and socially and politically committed communicators. With them there is shift of focus from the texts as legitimate objects of study in themselves, to the historical and social contexts that restrain their production and reception. Thus translators are given a new responsibility for not concealing but revealing socio-cultural political differences and inequalities to the extent of deliberately deviating from original or even rewriting it in the interest of righting injustice and oppression. Mona Baker suggests that it's the translator's responsibility to the audience for whom the translation is produced as they consciously or otherwise translate texts that participate in creating, negotiating and contesting social reality. Translation thus functions as intervention and a legitimate way of removing perceived socio- political injustices. In India many translators into English take up the task of translation as a social commitment of highlighting the un-highlighted.

A crucial disjuncture between older pre-colonial and present post colonial translational practice is that now translations from various Indian languages into English whether done by foreigners or by Indians themselves, have attained a hegemonic ascendancy and more so not only is most literature being written in indigenous languages but majority of translations are being done from one Indian language into the others. Not to forget the first translation from Sanskrit into English done by Charles Wilkins published in 1785 of the Bhagwad Gita survives better in translation than the original.

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The Pandit and his Elusive Kashmir: An Interview with Siddhartha Gigoo

Deepa Mishra

Most of us have an overall knowledge about the sad turn of events in Kashmir relating to the Pandits about 23 years back. Before I do a formal introduction of Siddhartha Gigoo, I feel, it is incumbent upon me to acquaint the readers with the issues of Kashmir in brief. Late 1980s and early 90s were the years of terrible human tragedy in the Kashmir valley. Selective killings of Pandits in late 1989, followed by a terror campaign launched through letters, posters, pamphlets and newspapers, issuing death threats and warnings to the Pandits to leave the valley in a short and specified time, had created an atmosphere of fear and insecurity. More than one lakh Hindu Pandits migrated from Kashmir to Jammu and other parts of India. Such a huge exodus is a rare and, extremely a painful event ever witnessed in human history and naturally calls for much more than mere fictionalization or intellectualization. Dialogues at all political levels haveended in smoke.Something more meaningful needs to be done to reach the issues to their logical, convincing and appeasing end. A dialogue at the level of academia also can pave a path. Pandits have been deprived of their belonging; their sense of belonging and need to be restored, their agony deserves to be perceived much beyond the external manifestations. Is this collective amnesia a survival strategy for the pandits and the nation?Unless a person belongs to the affected community itself, it is very difficult for anyone to draw the exact psychological footprint that any terror induced human exodus leaves behind. We live in contemporary times in the same country, yet most of us can never properly understand a first person account of the fractured Kashmiri history of the last thirty years. We have a good sense of how things went horribly wrong, yet we can never feel the exact pain and anguish of the displaced Pandits. Our sympathy or even empathy for that matter, has fetched nothing substantial. The issues of their rehabilitation are like pyres, a-flamed eternally, all consuming, reducing to nothingness.There is the other side of the story also. The other side also deserves to be taken into account .Siddhartha has taken up this issue of the other side , that is the side of the Kashmiri Muslim and their sincere efforts to restore harmony , peace and order. Even Muslims have been trying to bring about equanimity, serenity and even strengthen the sense of belonging, the sense of oneness and togetherness in the valley. Siddhartha himself has taken up this issue with diligence and an unbiased stance to comprehend its intricacies. One cannot but appreciate Siddhartha's writerly commitment to human cause and human dignity transcending the immediate affiliation to one particular community. In his novel *The Garden of Solitude,* he has delineated Muslim's desire to regain the pastoral beauty of the valley with all its innocence and chastity. What, however, remains to be seriously looked into is the rootless politicization of the issues which in its final analysis brings about guilt and shame

not only to the valley alone but to the world at large. And Siddhartha has done it to his best in *The Garden of Solitude*.

It is in this context that I had the opportunity of interacting with Siddhartha Gigoo. The idea was to have an intellectual discussion on his novel -*The Garden of Solitude*. A young and promising novelist of Kashmiri lineage and an emerging filmmaker, Gigoo has been in the midst of all the unfortunate happenings and he has seen it all – from the peaceful childhood in the valley, to the eruption of militancy,the mass refuge in the camps of Jammu and the subsequent agony of a couple of decades.Yet he refuses to get carried away.To him,it is not a question of reliving the nostalgia, but reflecting about the lost past with a deep sense of pragmatism. Every word fromGigoo carries the realism that the past cannot be undone and yet, he comes out as one who wants to engage in the past to learn, to figure out how can it be put to best use and how do we collectively make sure that we never witness such unfortunate human hostility ever again.

The historic account of his childhood days in the valley has a spontaneous and lively flow. He sets it up very well; the valley in the early eighties and its innocent beauty never betray his narrations. More importantly, we get a reasonable sense of the day-to-dayhumanharmonybefore the eruption of militancy in 1989.And then comes the intensity of his perspective about how the carnage unfolded, step by step, and the way things have moved ever since.

What impressed me the most throughout the interview was Gigoo's sense of responsibility and balance. He is mindful of the challenges, the distressful state of affairs of the Pandits even today disturbs him a lot, yet he wants to discover a practical and constructive way forward. He comes out as a young thoughtful intellectual; ordinary, yet immensely promising; one who along with hundreds of like-minded youths can potentially play a role in shaping the day-to-day aspirations of the Pandits.

The complete details of his interview below :

Deepa Mishra (DM) : Tell us what you exactly recollect about your sudden departure from the valley.How did the whole build up take place? When did your family realize that you had to leave?Now that so many years have passed by, who would you blame for all the unfortunate dislocation of the pundits?

Siddhartha Gigoo (SG) : Our house was in a small locality between Safakadal and Nawakadal in downtown Srinagar. It was nestled in a cluster of houses belonging to Pandits and Muslims. The locality consisted of narrow lanes, corner shops, a ration ghat, some temples, some mosques, vacant patches of land and an embankment! The neighbourhood consisted of a diverse mix: rich traders, poor people, petty shopkeepers, educated people and illiterates! People with a tremendous sense of humour!

My school was a thirty-minute walk from my house. I grew up during the peaceful eighties. Life was hard during the harsh winters. There was no electricity. People would hoard kerosene, firewood, coal and other items during the summers. People seldom ventured out during the winter days because of

the cold. Sometimes I read a book or two. When I was in class eight, I went to Gulmarg to learn snow skiing.

Then in the winter of 1989, things changed when the militancy erupted. In our locality, the Pandits feared that the uprising and the militancy might lead to a 'divide' and that they would be targeted. I witnessed the bizarre events unfold day by day. While thousands of Kashmiri Muslims came out on the streets, defying curfew and shoot-on-sight orders, and demanding freedom from India, the Pandits huddled indoors in fear and bewilderment, not knowing what to do. Fear lurked in their hearts.During those days many Muslims and Pandits were killed. Panic struck when, in our locality, a Pandit, a retired lecturer,was shot dead by militants outside his house.The Pandit families felt helpless.They feared for their lives when they heard that militant groups were preparing hit lists. Some militant organizations pasted posters everywhere in our locality giving Pandit families 36 hours to leave the Valley.There were announcements on the loudspeakers asking the 'infidels' to leave.

Once while returning from school,I got caught in a violent crossfire between the militants and the security forces.There was smoke everywhere-smoke from teargas canisters. A bystander was singled and shot at. My friends and I searched for cover. Then such incidents became a daily affair.

When the situation deteriorated with the kidnappings and killings taking place, Pandits in our locality sent their children and girls out of Kashmir.Soon, the elders followed suit too.My sister and I were sent to Jammu with a neighbour. My parents didn't want to leave. So they remained in Kashmir till the summer of '90.They were the only Pandit family in our locality who lingered on till summer.

Initially, I felt some sort of excitement. Leaving Kashmir for a different town seemed adventurous. I was in my teens and didn't care about many things. None of us understood the gravity of situation at that time. It was only after spending the first few days in Jammu that the magnitude of the problem dawned on me. People from all parts of Kashmir were already there, living in barns and moving into camps, which were set up by the authorities. Thousands of canvas tents were erected. Every evening, I idled around a highway bus stop and saw men,women and children pour out of trucks and buses, and seek shelter in temples,dormitories,sheds,schools and vacant buildings. Few places were habitable.The entire community felt devastated by a sense of desolation and deprivation.

Ours was the last family to leave the locality in Kashmir. Some neighbors came to my father and pleaded him not to leave. They gave assurances. 'We will protect you. No harm will come to you,' they said. Ironically, they also advised us to leave when things changed. It took me years to understand the 'humanity' of it all. Our neighbors were concerned for us. Sometimes I feel that my parents finally left because of my sister and me. They chose to migrate to Udhampur, a small hill town on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway. It was less chaotic in the town and one could see the hills at a distance.

Vested interests were at play. Different people will tell you different accounts. Some even see conspiracy in it. As in, some politicians conspired to

get the Pandits out-to a safe haven. Many say that certain sections of the Pandit community wanted to leave because they saw opportunity elsewhere. Others contest that extremist elements within the Kashmiri Muslim community wanted to 'purify' Kashmir by getting rid of idol-worshippers, Indian informers and agents. Panic spread when some Pandits became soft targets.

My novel seeks to explore such questions through the situations and the characters! But as a novelist, seeking answers is not of any concern to me. Presenting a slice of human condition is.

While fleeing his home in the dead of the night, an old Pandit asked his son, 'Why are we leaving? It is better to die here in our home than there in an alien land.'

DM:Tell us about your parents and the Gigoo family. In the subsequent years of hardship, how did your parents brazen out the harshness of life and how did they bring up the children?

SG: After leaving Kashmir, my parents moved to a rented accommodation near a camp in Udhampur, a small hill town on the outskirts of Jammu.Despite living in a wretched condition,I took things in their stride.The sight of the displaced and homeless people living in camps (canvas tents) was dreadful.I tried to cultivate detachment-in a slightly philosophical sense.I had a feeling that the terrible days would not last long and that good times would return.'This too shall pass,' I would think.

We lived in abject conditions during the initial years. We were a family of 6 and lived in one small room for a few years. Thousands lived in sheds, barns, canvas camps and makeshift migrant shelters set up in schools, temples and government buildings. It continued for years.

My father is a lover of art. To distract us from wallowing in self-pity, he decorated the walls of the room with reproductions of the paintings of Picasso and Dali. The room became an art gallery of sorts.

Yet it was impossible to stave off deprivation and alienation.During the monsoons life was an ordeal.I remember one night my parents spent hours chasing snakes and insects out of the room. It was a question of survival for many of our neighbours who had to live without proper sanitation and make both ends meet on the meagre relief money doled to them by the government. Yet, we were not alone. The conditions were the same for all the migrants. For families from the villages, it was worse. They lost their livelihood when they migrated. They brought along nothing and had no choice but to fight for their survival in shanty tents.

But, in retrospect, I feel the journey has been rewarding and fulfilling in many ways. It brought us together, taught us how to live through and face difficult times.

After leaving Kashmir, I stayed in a dormitory in Jammu. My neighbors took care of me. The dormitory resembled a large cowshed.Many families shared a not-so-big hall without a window. We huddled together and struggled for spaces. The old and the infirm were in agony. Sleep evaded me for many nights. Water and food tasted weird. I barely heard from my parents. There weren't any means of communication.

My sister and I joined my parents in Udhampur in the summer of 1991. Thousands of migrants stayed there in abject conditions. Landlords threw open barns, terraces, rooms and warehouses for the migrants to rent. The rent rates went up. The city dwellers preferred to live in rented accommodation, while those from the villages had no choice but to get into canvas tents.

My days at the camp school were interesting. It was strange attending the classes in puny tents, doing the class work and listening to our teachers. Strangely, everyone around me - the teachers and the students – paid utmost attention to schooling and studies. I had lost interest in school completely as though it was thrust on me. Lack of preparedness and disinterest led to poor marks. Yet, somehow I trudged on from one year to another.

Those were terrible times for me. Failure stared me in my face. I felt crushed most of the time. Loitering around the camp was fun. I was not of a serious disposition.

The displaced people prayed for an early return. They nurtured hope. There were people who didn't open their trunks for months together. Trunks and suitcases were used as settees in small rooms and tents. One migrant said, 'Why unpack? We will return soon.' They kept waiting day after day, month after month and year after year. Yet, there were some who accepted their fate and moved on, facing the hard reality with bravery.

DM:When did the idea of writing a book occur to you? Apart from the gratification of your literary creativity, what were the specific objectives you had in mind?

SG: The images of the nameless Pandit migrants who had to flee their homes in the winter of 1990 remained with me. Strangely, the world didn't take notice of the Pandit exodus.The life and plight of Pandits in exile were horrible. No one cared.The government did dole out relief money a pittance.That was all! Years later, I asked myself a question,'What am I doing?'I guess there was some torment in me too. Some remnants of memory haunted me.All I did was read books and pine for Kashmir endlessly.During the early days of exile,I wrote amateur poetry and short stories. But I was not happy with my writing.I still am not.

A deep sense of incompleteness! Tedium! Endless pining! To overcome these, I read novels, wondering if I could ever write one. So one late evening, I returned home from work, sat down at my desk, dusted it, switched on my laptop and began typing.It all started as a hobby and like any other beginner-hobbyist, I spent days toying with vague story ideas, moulding them clumsily to bring about some semblance of clarity. When in doubt, I ploughed through favourite novels, flipping pages, learning how to weave a scene, write dialogue and create characters.

Originally, the story I had in mind was of a boy in search of the purpose of his existence. He gets to travel to different places where chance encounters with interesting people change his life. But certain other things crept in, mischievously. Kashmir! It was difficult to resist. So I went on and on, almost like a lunatic, unaware of how the novel was taking shape. In the process, I encountered my limitations. It is ironical - I began writing the novel to overcome

a sense of hollowness and seek fulfilment, but found myself falling headlong into other abysses. I guess one has to learn to deal with this incompleteness and live with it, without hoping for either contentment or redemption.

Then one night, I opened a blank word document and started typing. It took me weeks to begin.I struggled but I didn't stop.I guess I wanted to narrate a story; an untold story of the exiles.

DM:When you write, what audience do you have in mind? Is it Kashmiri? Is it Indian? Is it the West?

SG:I don't write keeping in mind a target audience. I just write. Thinking about an audience while writing is a distraction.

DM:It was an important historical moment. I believe that it would be very difficult for anyone who wasn't born at that precise moment to have written a novel so convincingly depicting the lives of pundits as you have done it in *The Garden of Solitude*. Do you feel that you could have written an even better book than *The Garden of Solitude,* had you written in Kashmiri language? Do you think Kashmiri language would have helped you to depict the incidents more powerfully?

SG: I don't know how to write Kashmiri in the two scripts in which it is written.

DM: I wonder if you would comment on any tension you see between aesthetics and being politically engaged as Kashmiri writer.

SG: Aesthetics is very important so far as novels are concerned. Political engagement is secondary. There needn't be any tension. Yet as a novelist one has to grapple with other tensions and situations.

DM: One of the great characters you have created, I think, is Sridar. Do you identify with him? Do you see any part of yourself in that character?

SG: My novel is partly autobiographical. Many of the incidents in the novel are, indeed, based on real events. I have passed through those incidents. After reading the novel, many Kashmiri Pandits told me they saw their reflections in the story.

DM:To what extent do you possess an inherent nostalgia about Kashmir? Do you miss it?

SG: While writing my novel,when I reminisced about my childhood in Kashmir, the violence during the militancy era, the migration,and the initial years spent in exile-I became conscious of my memory.I would wander into the past, trying to relive the memories.I was overcome with a sense of despair when I went to Jammu some years back and saw some migrants still housed in camps.They had become used to a wretched life in the camps and that for me was horrifying.It is this faint remembrance of shared pain which made me go on and on while writing the novel. When I look back,I see interesting upheavals and adventures.

DM:Could you talk about your visit to Kashmir in the recent past? What was it like for you to go back there?

SG: Some years back, I went to Kashmir after more than 15 years. I was on a pilgrimage to the Amarnath cave. On my way back I happened to visit my old house in downtown of Srinagar. It was an unplanned visit. A family, which lived there, trusted me, a stranger, and allowed me to spend sometime in the rooms. I roamed in the neighbourhood streets for a while. A middle-aged woman spotted me, stood in front of me and asked me to recognise her. When even after some moments, I was not able to recognise her, she slapped me gently and said,' You were a boy when you used to come to our place with your father... We were neighbours...' She sighed and so did I.

One of my friends narrated an anecdote. He had a different experience while visiting his house in Verinag after eighteen years. His house had been razed to the ground. A shopping complex stood at the place where once his house was.

My grandmother died in Srinagar, Kashmir in June 2012. A few months back I wrote about her. It is a tribute to the woman who loved me more than anyone else and taught me how to narrate stories. My writing was published in a literary journal.

DM:Do you hope to be able to go back there to live at some point?

SG: Adorno says, 'For a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live.'

Delhi is my home now. This cosmopolitan city is changing rapidly and is home to thousands of migrants from across the country. Kashmir was 'home'. Long years back! My ties with Kashmir will always remain.

My parents live in Jammu now in a small house of their own. They are contented there. The joint family system is dead. The old feel comfortable in Jammu.

DM:Please bear with me for this battery of questions, all connected to each other. What hopes do you have for Kashmir's future?Could you tell our readers about the present status of life in Kashmir. Are you pessimistic or hopeful about Kashmir coming back to its original demographic mix?What is your opinion about the political evolution in Kashmir and related to Kashmir; more particularly about the political leadership that Kashmir has been able to produce after independence and after the unfortunate exodus of the Pandits?What can the individual person in Kashmir do to create an agreeable society of some sort?To what extent, in your opinion, would such individual efforts make any difference?Despite the obvious problems related to the current state of affairs,you seem to be optimistic for the future?Do you believe that people would be able to pull themselves out of this unfortunate predicament,if only they are given the chance to do so?Finally,what,do you think,could be the solution to the problems of Kashmir?

SG:More than 40 years of political debates have led us nowhere. Lives got shattered while the governments were busy dealing with the complex political turmoil in inhumane ways. As an ordinary Kashmiri, I feel brutalised when voices are silenced, people are denied their basic rights and freedoms, and innocents are killed in the most banal of ways. It is one thing living in Kashmir

and another commenting on life there from the comforts of our homes outside the state. There is no denying the fact that the past 21 years in Kashmir have witnessed dreadful savagery and dehumanisation.

Many see no hope of a permanent settlement now, despite efforts by various parties and individuals to seek a lasting resolution. Yet, there is a feeling among ordinary people that the governments are not only incapable of arriving at an innovative proposition that is acceptable to all and takes into account aspirations of the people of the state, but are wilfully trying to muddle issues, further complicate them and seek refuge in a heinous status quo.

Vacillating between hope and despair, many people look for solace in disillusionment. I am one of them.

As a writer, I feel that stories need to be told; especially, the untold ones. Stories of valour and heroism, of love and despair, of ambition and betrayal . . . so that the world gets to know about Kashmir and Kashmiris.

My personal view is that Kashmiri Pandits have kissed goodbye to Kashmir. The most important question is whether they consider themselves as exiles at all.Do they, as a community, really want to go back to Kashmir and settle there?Most people have sold their houses.They keep their bond with Kashmir alive by spending a few days there every summer.They visit temples and shrines on certain festivals.Then they return to their 'homes' in Delhi and elsewhere.

And there is the state subject certificate, which continues to be the most valuable document. Soon, it will become a family heirloom.

I wonder if people of my generation will ever go back. They are comfortably settled outside. I suspect the elders might want to return. But how and for what? The entire matter is fraught with ambivalence.

Although, the wounds have healed to a large extent now, but one never knows. Who knows what will happen a hundred years from now? The children of children of exile! Perhaps, they might want to rediscover their roots. Individuals will make their choices.

For the younger generation, the anguish and despair of all these years have given way to a new found optimism. They would like to leave the struggle behind and align with the new age India of many opportunities. There is no doubt that their Kashmiri heritage would remind them of their homeland for ever and they will be physically drawn to the valley once in a while, but to them life has found a new base and acquired a new definition. I found a loud testimony of this evolving reality in the voice of Siddhartha Gigoo.

(1925-2016)

Joginder Paul

who lived, loved and wrote, and never cared for what the world had to say

Joginder Paul :
Pervasive Cosmic Consciousness

Intekhab Hameed

I see the entire world only in myself...
The high, sky kissing mountains whose peaks keep pricking in my body. (Paul, Nadeed)

Joginder Paul is indisputably a distinguished voice in the realms of Urdu fiction. He is one of the very few writers who have played a role of crucial importance in giving a sharp turn to fictional narrative in Urdu. The ease and virtuosity of his narrative art, his art of characterization, accuracy and authenticity of his delineation and contextualization, his diction and unparalleled style has won him a place that is exclusively and enviably Paul's alone, although he has had giants of fiction writers as his predecessors, contemporaries and successors.

*Born and brought up in Sialkot (Pakistan),Paul was displaced in the prime of his youth. Partition had shattered his dreams and innocent notions of love, tolerance and enduring human relationships.The tyrannies of history and cruelties of time kept shocking his creative consciousness and sharpening his perception of the complexities of life and intricacies of artistic expression.Uprooted,Paul kept searching for himself, his identity on the one hand, the artist in him,on the other ignited an agonized quest for ingenuity and dignity of man, for his elemental simplicity and Edenic purity, which,Paul shockingly discovered was irrevocably lost in the labyrinth of self-centeredness and materialistic narcissism.He suffered and lived and with him grew up his art, his refined sense of taking life, rather than romanticizing or escaping it,in whatever formidable form it came up. It is for this reason Paul's fiction reveals an inherent desire and determination to celebrate life despite monstrous actualities and disconcerting socio-historical realities-a predilection of creative consciousness that determines the enduring texture of his fictional art: "**God closes down some of our ways Sharfu, so that He could draw our attention to the rest of the ways being open".(Nadeed).***

The immediate context of his fictional text is the pains and pangs of migrancy/exile, the acute agony of being torn away from his soil, from his culture, some times because of the pressures of history and at times owing to the socio-economic constraints,'filthy lucre'.The distorted and disintegrated image of man, bereaved of his divne qualities kept haunting Paul's creative imagination. It is this fact of Paul's fiction that makes him more resonant in the recent global perspective and ensures his relevance.Had he written in English his fictional discourses would surely have enjoyed an edge over the entire body of immigrant writing produced all over the globe.Because his refined sense of humour that very often borders on black humour the philosophical texture of his linguistic tropes and semi-conscious soliloquies, the ironical flavour of his dialogues, contradictions and paradoxes embedded in his textualities and above all the emotional intensity and truthfulness of his creative expression are some of the unique dimensions of his art that are often found missing in the immigrant literature written in the west. His intention as an intellectual writer would have been another important point of his edge.

He lived for fourteen years in Africa and wrote continuously for his readers who lived thousands of miles away from him, but, for whom his heart throbbed and eyes dreamed incessantly.The artist in him, nonetheless, identified and empathized with the indigenous people in their hunger and humiliation. The dog in the story"Bahar ke Bhiter"reveals the deplorable conditions of the third world. Discrimination of the nation on the basis of colour, race and country, human exploitation and oppression of a genuine self has always shocked and tortured Paul. A fairly large number of stories, novels, novelettes and collections of short stories,like Dharti ka Kal,Main kyoun Sochoon,Aamdo Raft, Bayana, Bastiyan, Nadeed, Bemohavira and Khabraw, have addressed these issues and many more than can be touched upon in the kind of renderings like the present one which is governed by spatio-temporal constraints.

Modern fiction probes beneath the surficial occurrences and appearances, dives deeper into the

fathomless depth of an individual psyche and soul and traces out the inner yearnings, fears and frustrations, alienation and estrangement which cast gloomy shadows on human existence. Paul's fiction does it dexterously but it also takes a step ahead. His fiction transcends the boundaries of the self and assumes a cosmic status. His pervasive consciousness becomes one with the entire phenomena and leaves no corner unexplored in terms of human life and complexities of human relationships.Joginder Paul is a class by himself his thematic and technical parities with the masters of the craft in India Europe and America notwithstanding-so unwaveringly committed to the art of fiction and deliberately averting commitment to any idea, ideology or 'ism'. He strongly believes that theoretical affiliation occludes the vision and often results in bias or one dimensionality. To quote him:

As a literary writer I have no identity, or else, the determining features of my identity are hidden in the entire cosmic, mosaic manifestations. I simply become whatever I see. This is my identity.

*The entire fictional work of Paul, implicitly or explicitly, thematizes and contextualizes Partition and its devastating consequences, the excruciatingly painful experience of being placed in a foreign field, of desperately looking for accommodation and assimilation. His ironical consciousness, nonetheless, does not miss to target national, international and interpersonal politics, complex issues of cultural and imperialistic drives that govern the production of intellectual discourses today. Joginder Paul, without consciously being so, is a highly postmodern writer in terms of fictional techniques, thematic urgency, generic innovations and linguistic twists. But basically Paul is a writer and weaves his stories out of sheerly mundane realities, a writer committed to the task of making life a relishable and cherishable experience: "**in my opinion, only one commitment is enough for a writer", says Paul," a commitment to the positive reasoning for life".***

Joginder Paul

On The Making of Fiction

(In Conversation with Sukrita Paul Kumar)

Sukrita: As I read your short stories, I experience a certain sense of freedom in your writings. While there is a fairly strong sense of tradition in literary expression in Urdu, your stories do not emerge from any set conventions of short-story-writing. Neither in form, nor in content are there any constraints visible in your choices of expression.Certainly some sense of a pursuit of some "truth" as it were are very much present.The reader follows the lead set forth by the explorations of the writer, one path going into another through the world of the short-story until the moment of illumination is struck and some insightful truth comes home. The autonomy of the world of the story is maintained very convincingly which I think yields that experience of"freedom"to the reader. And, this I regard to be an important characteristic of modern writing.Of course, this freedom has to carry with itself the burden of responsibility and commitment with which the writer needs to explore the reality of the experience he chooses to write about. I'd like you to talk to me about the process that goes into the making of a short-story.

Joginder Paul: When you attribute a certain responsibility to the freedom of the writer, obviously then, the pressure or rather some kinds of constraints are very much there. In one sense, the writer is not free. But indeed the writer has to give himself any number of opportunities to reach at a certain truth, no matter what path he may have to tread, however, hazardous or uncomfortable this may be. Yes, he has to feel free to put his feet confidently on untrodden paths even if they start bleeding and hurting on the thorny ways. Art has its own constraints. I remember, once in a seminar on "Global Consciousness" in Sahitya Akademi, I had observed how a writer does not really function with total freedom. He needs to own the local specific truths of whatever he may have chosen to be concerned about. Now supposing my concern is with an ant's journey from this end of the table to that, I'd not be bothered then with global consciousness. I'd need to have an intimate, precise and minute knowledge of the ant and its movement and that specific experience within that limited framework. I have to be the complete master of that local experience. The same is true of freedom. It has to go along with the limits of the local truth of the experience itself first and foremost. We say so and so has written an "original story", now, what's the meaning of "original"? The word implies the essence of the story assuming its own native form. The writer has no other choice except to discover that form. When he asserts his right of freedom irrespective of the genius of a story, then he may not be able to grasp the features uniquely belonging to the story. If it were so, he might also miss the opportunity to arrive at the truth specifically related to the story. Truth is always contextualized. There'd have to be adequate cognisance of the associative ideas which constitute the nucleus of the truth presented. It's very important in this discussion to point out about the significance

of the associative working of the creator.Therein no form is predefined. The short-story by itself is such a form which, according to me, has no fixed shape or contours. There are as many ways of writing a short story as there are human beings. And, like a living being,a short story has also to appear to carry on with its own independent existence.If the writer is able to come to grips with the original form of the story, the story moves creatively and rhythmically on its own and thus with perfect felicity.It assumes a bearing that grants little allowance for platitudes or prejudices of the writer to hamper its original flow. Some of us writers sometimes obviously and irksomely deliberate in our choice of a complex form and impose it on the experience. This results in a 'painful disturbance in the authentic note of the writing.The strangest or, for that matter, most familiar of the literary forms would be in perfect tune if it originated from the story itself. It is perhaps like this; if you wore your *native* face, I should become familiar with you immediately on contact even though the face by itself were so strange or wierd.

Sukrita: Since the traditions of"katha","dastaan"etc. have been so firmly embedded in the Indian culture, the story writer here is bound to have preconceived ideas about what the form of his stories should be.The "modern" short story may use the existent traditions, but essentially it is a liberated art form. Do you think that the short-story in Urdu and Hindi may have suffered or maybe gained because of the already existent traditions of story-telling?

Joginder Paul: It's actually the preconceived ideas that might undo the story. The writer has to keep himself open and attentive. If you meant this by your earlier reference to freedom, then you were quite right.The writer has to arrive at the story through *its own* form. Preoccupation or unrelated preference in this regard may lead to the crippling of his work.The poor thing will then remain in that condition forever. Of course, it is a matter of great responsibility to be able to carve out the story delicately and carefully enough to retain the wholeness of the experience.To me, a good writer's job is to get at the total figure by not breaking or chipping any part thereof.The story can very easily become a victim of his impatience.Or, it can also become a victim of clichés. What we call a great work is really a product of great patience and detachment. Sometimes a potentially great work falls short of greatness because the writer may have torn it impatiently from his heart.

Sukrita: In many of your stories one notices that the characters are well-rooted in their cultural contexts. For instance, *Bhabho* in your story "Jadoo" is clearly a product of a specific class of the society;similarly in"Dadiyan"you build up a specific cultural context, that of Partition, in which the theme is evolved. The situation is not abstractly universal.The totality is presented through the minutely specific cultural context. It is as if the reader is observing along with the writer the universal emerging through the specifics.One stylistic feature which seems to have been used very effectively in some of your stories is the method of incorporating a "refrain". For example in the story "Bhuk Pret" the refrain is "*Khajoor to bahut meethi hai"* (the dates are very delicious). There are no dates but a make-believe world gets constructed for the hungry man. The *witnessing* stream of consciousness creates a detachment from the

conscious action of the story. The two streams run parallel in the story and reader partakes in each. Such a strategy effectively offers two planes of receiving the action of the story, the specific and the detached observation…

Joginder Paul: But let me tell you this if you try and fit a refrain in every or any story extraneously, it becomes a "design"...

Sukrita: You do make use of this feature quite often...

Joginder Paul: Do I?... But first let me explain. I'll tell you how and in which stories this feature appears. As I said, the habitual following of a design makes a writer victim of what we may call mannerism.Of all my stories which are so many of them, I have employed the device of "refrain" only three or four times. In one case, that is in my short story "Baaz Deed" (The Second Look), the cruel appraisal despite its cruelty should perhaps be regarded just and fair. The reiterative "That's all right" in the story becomes a little too loud. But, in the other stories,the refrain emerges naturally from situations apparently "absurd".If you were to silence the refrain here, you may run the risk of suppressing some of the essentials in those stories. The type of search that is necessary to grasp the absurd content of the experience would naturally evolve a matching style.Where the "refrain" combines with the absurdity of the situation, it creates a tickle, a very appreciative tickle. In my recent story, "Gulzar" the Persian refrain *"Khushamad Sheva'e-Kuffar Ast"* (Flatterers are infidels) goes quite in accord with the situation of absurdity and tempts the tickled reader to draw closer to the spirit of the story.

But then, if one starts using the "refrain" as a norm, then the repetition may fail to work and impede the freedom about which we were talking earlier. Within the framework of the story, wherever, whatever idiom is necessary and seems to come originally, I feel it swings me into action. But, if I get on to a wrong track, a wrong idiom, the story becomes stationary. Earlier, much more than now, before I actually managed to perceive the shape and contours of the story, I had had to struggle hard, occasionally unsuccessfully. But, nowadays, I seem to *hear* and feel the rhythm of the story even sooner than it makes its appearance to me. And when it has been located in the details of its face, the process of the delivery sets in so organically, you may say, without even *my* interference.

Another point: I think "specifics" are very important to the writing of a story normally. But then, this too is no strict norm. The importance of specific situations does not consist in their being material or concrete: they may emerge, if necessary, in a rather abstract way. Indeed they help establish the authenticity of the story. A merely hypothetical story fails to involve the reader in its tension; for, even though it proves a point, he is not moved to identify himself with it in his everyday living reference. The writer has to make the story live and pulsating, just as even in a painting of a barren landscape, the barrenness too has to come alive for it to become a piece of art.

Sukrita: The artist however whether in the writing of a story or in a painting will have to discover a means to project his perspective in some way or the other. It's interesting to see a painter at work; one cannot see the story writer at work in the same way but I believe the creative consciousness would

be working in the same style in both the cases. Well, what I am referring to particularly is the case of an abstract painting. The artist while at work meticulously attempts to figure out the specifics to create an abstract landscape. That happens in the presentation of some stories too, don't you think?

Joginder Paul: As I said earlier, it's with the help of specifics that the experience gets established, authentically. It's strange that sometimes one's abstract stories may outwardly be rooted in a very material specific. For instance, my story "Peechhe". While the protagonist here enters the habitat of sculpture in the Ellora caves, there comes a point when he has a rather odd experience. Observing and mesmerized by the statues,he begins to feel that *he* is a statue and that the sculptured figures are observing him,not he,them.The sense of wonder creates a statue of him.Now the situation presented is very material but the effect is so abstract.

Sukrita: If the approach had been hypothetical, the idea would have been expressed and perhaps even explained but not experienced. The writer who can involve his reader into the expressed experience immediately, I suppose, is most fortunate. But then, while there's this involvement at one level, don't you think it's as important that the reader, as also the writer, should be able to remain a witness. This should help create a duality of awareness.

Joginder Paul: I don't know. I should only say, it depends a lot on how the story is created and how it is received .

Sukrita: Let us turn our attention to your major novel *Nadeed* now. The novel records the spiritual malaise, the blindness of the people of contemporary times very sensitively. Don't you think that it is ironic that our society which boasts of a heritage of the rich philosophy of"Nirvana"a certain kind of wakefulness should have slided into a state of total slumber which is exposed through the metaphor of blindness in your novel.The blindness of a people with open eyes gets revealed rather convincingly.The degeneration of the society into sloth, corruption and darkness becomes all the more accentuated in the backdrop of its ancient values and ideals. Moreover, while in modern times the west has produced a whole gamut of social scientists, philosophers and thinkers, we don't seem to done the same, even though our past tells a different story. We've had in Gandhi a charismatic leader but he too has hardly affected the creative sensibility as such.The intellectual, the thinker and the artist do not seem to interact with each other. Maybe you'd like to comment on"modern India."

Joginder Paul: As regards "wakefulness" well, maybe with eyes open, we have dropped off to sleep. A disturbed sleep, I mean. You have talked about heritage. Indeed, there is an impact of the heritage on one, but more than that, one is affected by the way one actually chooses to live one's life. Are we living the way of our heritage? This is the pungent question. Today the whole world is flowing perhaps in a common stream and the reference to heritage perhaps appears to be just academically presumed. It's not enough just to get to know about something. *Mahabharat* and *Ramayana* are our heritage but the truths of these epics come to us as mere mythology. We have chosen to avoid their experience, their philosophic ramifications and cultural moorings, haven't we?

Our present day world has got so connected and small that the East is no longer the East and the West no longer the West. There's been a whole lot of cultural give-and-take.

One's values develop in accordance with the style and context one actually lives. How are our values growing? We struggled so much for Independence before 1947. What were the dreams our people struggled, suffered and sacrificed for? Haven't we lost track of the meaning of freedom? Today, apparently we are free, but for what and how? It is possible that the earlier meanings of freedom are now irrelevant but then some verities can never be irrelevant. Which are those? While the novel *Nadeed* deals on one level with the problems related to the Indian situation, on another level it seems to be the story of our times all over the world. Whether or not a country is democratic, freedom on a certain plane has become a license for a few dictators who prefer to pass as democrats. It's the quality of "life" a whole people is actually living, that matters. The story *of Nadeed* seeks its beginning from a home for the blind, which keeps growing till the entire country looks like a blind house. Blindness here is perceived as a metaphor. We are looking but are unable to see, and, the person who's able to see claims that his eyes will keep seeing even after he's hanged and dead. He wants his eyes to be passed on to some blind man. But the blind do not accept his eyes, comprehending that the eyes would only serve like a noose around the neck. Now isn't that the problem of our times? The devil used to be painted at one time with two canines jutting out of the mouth and one was able to recognize him at once as the devil himself. Ironically, today if the devil has to be successful in his devilry, he should look like a thorough gentleman. Where is his original identity then? Or what is the real identity of the gentleman today?

Sukrita: As a short story writer whose characters are so living and intense, obviously there'd be a large range of experiences that you go through via your characters. You'd be coming across, therefore, a multitude of experiences. To carry the acute, minute perceptiveness into human nature in the world around on the one hand, and on the other, to exist in the world of each of the short-stories... what does this oscillation do to your state of mind? Are they two different planes of existence? Does that cause a problem of adjustments?

Joginder Paul: A story does not become a work of art just by report: it has actually to happen to you. It's in this meaning that we talk of living stories. The progressive thinkers at one time had started to say that the story is a medium for the propaganda of social reforms, while others declared that art existed for art's sake. Both, according to me, are restrictively academic stances. I tell you at times in life-experiences I feel I'm in the process of living/writing a story; and, while I am writing a story, I cannot but feel I am actually going through it all.Oscillation should perhaps occur when creative writing were distinct from experiences of life. There comes a stage in the life of a writer when he does not and cannot departmentalize these experiences. He operates on the same plane and it is only then that the writer acquires the true creative capability. He then realizes *the real* in his writing as well as outside it. The dividing line has to disappear for him to be able to discern and confront the authentic.

Sukrita: But in actual life, living amidst a rather pretentious middle class society, one may not and usually does not have any control or freedom to operate in one's own style while, I suppose, in the world of one's writings there'd be greater control...

Joginder Paul: Hold, please. The other day I was reading somewhere about *Narad Muni* and *Bhagwan* watching a starved poor man from dying. *Narad Muni* impatiently tells *Bhagwan,* "Why don't you save that hapless character?" Here's the answer *of Bhagwan,* "I am *Bhagwan!* so I cannot save him". A top-notch creative artist, God does realize that life sprouts in whatever shape from one's own *samsakaras* and that he must not interfere with the process of creativity. This may appear to be a contradiction, yet an in-depth study of the working of nature will reveal how innumerable contradictions are reconciled somewhere within to strike a balance.

Sukrita: As a creator, the writer perhaps attempts a grip over that essential characteristic of perceiving the reconciliations, the balance and then the characters have to survive their truths.

Joginder Paul: As in life, there's a sense of urgency in a work of art. A piece of writing that's hypothesized rather than experienced lacks in direness, urgency,and quite often fails to evoke the tension so necessary to involve both the writer and the reader.To see what I mean, just think awhile of the world's greatest short stories. It's the crisis and inevitability they generate,for which they are unforgettable and for which,as you say,their characters seem to survive their truths.

Sukrita: It should be interesting to know how you look at the concept of "time" as a writer, while in the process of writing and "time" as it has to be lived through as a person living from one moment to another.

Joginder Paul: A story occurs sometimes in such a peculiar circumstance that you may not quite identify it in the first instance. An idea suddenly creeps in from one's long-lost past and the writer, if he can place it, ties it up with something from the present. You see, when one is actually living, life presents itself day after day, week after week, year after year that's the non-written experience of the linear life one leads. But after one has lived through years and years of it, all of it can be recalled in a second. It is clear that the recalled experience is not exposed merely, in its pastness. It is its appearance in the present that the artist has to grasp.

Sukrita: That is to say then, that to a writer, totally submerged in creative experience, "all-time" is available at once and the approach to time then is not linear. Everything of the past is immediately accessible and situationally whatever is relevant, is picked up naturally and inevitably. The contours of the story get defined alongside.

Joginder Paul: I believe that till such moment as everything your experience, life, past and present, the inside and the outside of the story do not merge into one organic whole in whatever time scheme, there cannot be creative activity. The important thing is to have the capacity to go through it as a real experience.

Sukrita: There arises another related question... when such an awareness is available to one and when you are creatively living as well as writing...

Joginder Paul: Well, that stage comes when it does, and one is indeed fortunate if it does come.

Sukrita: But along with that a whole range of problems of practical living would emerge because after all modern living calls for a rather mechanized style of living. A sensitive awareness of the goings on in one's everyday life can turn one cynical or an absurdist or it may just lead one to the isolation of an ivory tower. It may create an acute sense of loneliness as well, because, to establish communication with the other may be a serious problem. The gap between the sensitive perceptive artist and the society in which he's operating is very wide in contemporary India. Have you ever felt that you've had to change your mode of communication because you are not reaching your society or that you are either not understood at all or are misunderstood? Do you feel disturbed by this feature?

Joginder Paul: This poses a very important question—why does one write at all? For success or for suffering? If he strove to be a "success boy", he should do it direct. Why resort to creative writing? Creative writing necessarily implies a sort of communication which predisposes the writer's involuntary urge to suffer for all his fellow-beings. It may sound tragic that the poor fool has to live in and through all his characters by not being himself. He could not become everybody unless he himself were nobody. So, he's no problem to himself: his problem consists in others, all including villains and vamps. He himself is the killer he chooses to portray. He doesn't *judge* the killer. He becomes him and owns his sins. It's in this sense that creative writing is regarded confessional. Many a time, the writer choosing to operate "successfully" in his society will rather be one who withdraws, judges and condemns, not the one who is condemned-No, please! Rather than this, let the writer remain misunderstood and disturbed.

Sukrita: How do you manage to escape all those problems which may have pulled you away from the main track of creativity as defined by you?

Joginder Paul: Oh, you learn to fall into the rhythm by and by. But to tell you the truth, I do not escape the problems. I pass through them, as I have suggested, as a nobody. And, since I do not exist, the problems fail to notice me. Even a snake will venture to bite you only when it knows you are somebody. You have to dodge, you know, even when you are most well-intentioned. Yet, to be very honest, I do sometime ask myself, what is more important, to live my writing or my life? What's more native to man, living originally or doing original writing? I do not know the answer except that I salute both who live originally and who are original writers. Both are artists. They wouldn't be original unless they lived their writing. I very fervently believe that the writer as a man and as a writer cannot be two different beings. Unless he is used to treating his writing with such concern as his personal deeds, he cannot imbue it with breath, life and urgency. And if he appeared different from his writing, it only means that either his writing is false or the contradiction is merely superficial and the observer has not been able to reconcile it from inwardness.

As I suggested earlier all truths must be"locally universal" to be convincing.

Sukrita: Do we at this point, perhaps come to the question that you yourself suggested a little while ago, why does one write at all?

Joginder Paul: I believe everybody is an artist. Some, by teaching in a classroom or working in a laboratory; some, by shop-keeping, some, by cobbling, some by reading and some, of course, by writing. It would perhaps be a platitute of a writer, if he considered only himself as an artist. In whatever you seek to express yourself sensitively, becomes your natural medium of expression. Self-expression is inborn in every living entity and it's the measure of the passion with which a person pursues his medium that makes an artist of him. *Baba Nanak* has said that even the vilest of human beings contains somewhere in him the creator himself. I unreservedly subscribe to this observation.

Sukrita: When the process of creativity goes on, story after story... what happens when you finish one story? Do you feel fulfilled maybe of having successfully expressed something? Or, do you feel restless with the feeling that there's so much more to explore?

Joginder Paul: Well, it's like this; you are always in a state of waiting, waiting for the story you have not yet been able to write! You go on waiting story after story, each so dear to you, but the story you have ever waited for remains unwritten. You pass away, still waiting for the unwritten story. And this unwritten story is perhaps written by someone in the next generation. What one calls a continuing relevance of a creative writer is nothing but an awareness on the part of his successors of what more he could have done, that is, of the works that remained unwritten and could now be written after he is no more. Thus does a creative writer strive for his fulfilment. He knows his own limitedness but does perceive the unlimitedness of life he represents and inspires the generation in the wings to take its cue from him.

Sukrita: Your medium of expression is the "word". To be able to use any medium for creative purposes, I suppose, there's must be an intense faith in it. Have you ever felt that language is inadequate for the purpose of creative communication. For instance, you may at times, want to go beyond language, maybe, discard language altogether.

Joginder Paul: Words, I think, become terrible traps and constraints if you regard them significant by themselves.The adventure of a parade of exclusive words in glittering uniform only serves to jam the traffic in literature. Words, therefore, have to stop to function wordlessly for an enduring life-like impact. It may appear paradoxical, yet communicative words recreate a scene silently as in a picture. The more the artistic felicity of the writer over a quiet use of words the less the apprehension that language is inadequate for creative communication.

Sukrita: Yes, but don't you occasionally feel hindered by language, your tool, to express your experience?

Joginder Paul: It depends. I experienced the predicament in "Gulzar", the story you mentioned earlier and at the fag end of another story *Aagey Peechey.* Sometimes your experience is perhaps too profound for language. If, on this occasion, language also doesn't become an inward experience, you are likely to feel unhinged. And, any deliberateness on your part is more likely to lead you away from the moment… that overwhelming moment.

Sukrita: Talking of deliberateness can a story-writer avoid being deliberate?

Joginder Paul: Perhaps he can't; but I am one with Chekov who believes,

a story on the surface of art should never *betray* its writer's deliberate intention to the reader.

Sukrita: How do you compare the experience of yoga with that of art in the context of both aiming at the realization of truth and owning as well as absorbing bigger and bigger reality.

Joginder Paul: Have you heard of the old Greek maxim, "Hard is the beautiful". Both yoga and art are very exacting. Not forbiddingly exacting, for they engage you in *toto* and out of routine, in spite of yourself. I am not a yogi; yet, an artist, I have always felt intrigued by intuitive and direct experiences of a yogi or a *darvesh*. Before attainment, a *darvesh* passes through a life-long self-imposed training to figure out existence in its exact proportions and to search for some divine rhythm underlying existence. So what appears to be his immediate inspiration on his maturity should also point to, as in the case of an artist, years and years of his devout and involved training. But for a very free intimacy with and the resultant grip over the mechanics of creative activity, you may fail to experience life direct and intuitively. Behind intuitiveness works - I'm sure it does work - your capacity to identify a balance between "frenzy" and the mechanics of creative activity, and, of course, you enjoy all this so essentially. In point of fact, it's your faculty to enjoy the discovery of the balance that makes one feel you have just intuitively discovered it. Well, whatever! I know, the balance has to be created and maintained the same way as in Nature herself.

Sukrita: There are a whole lot of personal experiences that one may have had in one's life. They have been lived through in one's life. And then many times, as in your own short stories, there's a recalling of those past experiences. What is the need to go back to them? Is it that those experiences linger because there demand expression? Is there an effort to detach one's self from them through art?

Joginder Paul: First, the meaning of "personal" experience has to be clarified. When one is writing, one does not relate those experiences in exactly the same context as they were actually lived by one. In the organic whole of what you are writing, that specific experience demands a different pattern in synthesis.Whether the experience is acquired through someone else or direct, in the new context,it modifies itself in accord with a different situation and its own unity.The new truths, local to this unity, have to be conformed with.Old experiences then get moulded in a new framework. If the exact expression of the recalled experience is attempted, then the product will be a mere report, perhaps an impassioned report, not art. And, in that, will be retained the writer's prejudices, petty concerns, platitudes.

Sukrita: But if in art some of those experiences are expressed, do you feel relieved of them for ever? Does the experience of reliving them result in a cathartic effect.

Joginder Paul: Yes and no! Not so necessarily, because as long as one is alive and similarly involved, recurrence of old causes may bring back deeper pain which, of course, you have greater capacity at this stage to put up with.

Sukrita: Modern short-story makes great use of metaphors, symbols and allegories etc. How do you approach them theoretically?

Joginder Paul: Critics talk a great deal of the use of metaphors, symbols

etc. Rules are worked out and abstractions sorted, as if their use were a formal exercise. Now, how would you react, if a beautiful symbol emerged from a simple situation of a story taken *as a whole*. This is, in fact, a very natural device as a symbol. Similarly a situation itself can, as in Manto's story "Khol Do" become a metaphor in its entirety. I should regard it as a beautifully perfect metaphor; it cannot be torn apart from the context. What I am driving at is that there are no hard and fast rules with which to work out a conscious use of means of a short story. The story should itself dictate its means and how they can appropriately be employed. Modern means of short story, viz, symbols, abstractions, absurdities, allegories etc. are quite compatible with the complexities of our times yet the means by themselves do not justify the modern appeal of a short story. As discussed earlier, a short story must form all its features naturally from its own seedling. No story can really be significant just because it is symbolic, allegorical or abstract: it has to be primarily its own self to sustain interest. If we use some mannerisms and proudly exhibit our choice of syntax and form to win modern credentials, that in fact makes art restrictive.

Sukrita: What do you say about Kafka's story "Metamorphosis" in this context?

Joginder Paul: Kafka in "Metamorphosis" is superb: The absurd apparent in the story, so incredible, is perfectly in tune with the inward reality of the modern man who is shown *actually* living his steady metamorphosis into a gigantic cockroach.

Sukrita: Looking at criticism in Hindi-Urdu, do you feel critics are trapped in borrowed critical terminology. Do you feel that there is adequate discussion on what is excellent in art. Does critical writing affect you or disturb you in any way? As a writer do you feel upset that the critic may interfere as a "power broker" in the communication between the writer and the reader?

Joginder Paul: Fortunately for the writer, the reader has first to approach the writer direct. Even the critic would only be true in his critical appraisals if, first and foremost, he were just a reader. Judgement, even though necessary, is by itself rather mean. The judge, however, is redeemed when he is inclined to partake of and thus, share the suffering of the creative activity he wishes to adjudge.

As for the current critical scene, yes, the state of affairs is disturbing enough. But writers should, therefore, be bolder, freer and much more outright. Moreover, dependence on criticism, even honest criticism can only, at best, make a first-rate second rater. To be a true creative writer one has essentially to depend upon one's own perceptiveness of experience. As you know, Siddartha in Hesse's *Siddartha* refused to go by Buddha's teachings. To obtain Nirvana, he would rather go by what he himself truly went through. The Nirvana of a writer also rests on how freely he expresses what he has actually passed through.

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A Story has to Live from Within

Joginder Paul

Almost half a century was wasted in debates on Art for Art's sake or Art for Life's sake, generated by the Western academic hypotheses. In fact, literature does not exist in itself, nor has it to be instructive: like life, literature just happens to both writer and reader. In other words, in the creation of a short story, the writer is not led by the need to give a lesson or to assert the value of its style in itself and demonstrate the sublime linguistic characteristics of his writing. However the story may shape up, the writer has to allow life to dwell and breathe in the story. And, just as the tension of confronting real life is compelling in itself rather than presumed, the event of the short story, in the same way, gets completed in its own evolved form naturally and if necessary, urgently. In his short story, "A Boring Story", Chekov gave an apt warning to the new writers, "Although it is you writing your story, don't write it to consciously bring it to a certain ending." I should perhaps here relate my little story, "Base Hue Log", (Settled People) to make the point:

Both, the hero and heroine of my novel were upset with me. Just when the reasons and the circumstance for their marriage had very naturally emerged for their fulfilment,I completely demolished their world by imposing my own priorities on the novel;I was determined to keep them away from each other till the last page of the novel!Indeed, both of them were extremely dear to me. The difficulty was that if I had offered them the opportunity to live with each other, I'd have had to abandon my own personal points of view. After all they were children of my fancy, and who they were or how they were would all be dependent on my choice.

But both of them were on the lookout for an opportune moment. One day, suddenly they disappeared on the sly. I made a thorough search for them in the novel, in vain. They could be found only if they were present there.

I felt extremely regretful. If I could find them somewhere I'd at once get them married. But what could I do now?

You'd be surprised to know that one day, after quite a few years, I met them both by a sheer chance, in my own city.

They met me very warmly and took me home.

As soon as they came out of the pages of my novel, they had organized their wedding. And now, after so many years, they were the parents of three blossoming children and their home was vibrant with life.

No, I found them so prosperous in their own world that I did not have the heart to request them to come back into my novel.

I have not merely concocted this story. I have actually experienced it as it is.

Instead of indulging in exhibitionism, creative language is so much at one with a story that the narrative becomes part of the experience. And thus the story flows out of the pages of the book into life itself. In this regard, another small story of a few lines of mine has surfaced in my mind" Tasfiya" (Decision):

Life claimed that it was true while I claimed my story was truer. Finally tired of it all, I left both Life and Story to live together so that they might sort out the matter between themselves.

I had totally forgotten them for many years. One day I suddenly recalled them and came running to them. I feared they might have been quarrelling all this while. God knows where and how they would be.

But both of them were very happily settled together where I had left them. Each had merged into other so beautifully. I was at a loss to distinguish Fact from Fiction.

Living my stories, by now I have got used to pressures in fiction the same way as those of inevitable events in real life.

In my earlier days I got into writing books by reading more and more books. Where and how could I get a chance to read life? And even if I were to get it, I had to walk through the hard and thorny pavements of poverty and want all my earlier life. One can only scream at the pain of the thorns, which I heartily did and enjoyed in my stories. My earlier stories also betray my huge self-esteem. I was very fond of looking endearingly at my face in the mirror. Thank goodness I did not stay long in that phase; otherwise I could have failed, even at my best, to create a single character except for myself. In fact, I wouldn't mind the green writers to enjoy their greenery in the mirror for sometime. It's perhaps not unnatural. But they should soon give up this posture to be able look at and study others. The mirror makes you but an audacious prisoner of your narrow self.

The effectiveness of the art of creative writing rests on creating characters exactly like themselves. Each character has to acquire his own face and identity. Is this without logic that in this entire universe of crores and crores of people, each person is unique and distinct? Not only this, but it is equally true that just like the events of life, an event in a story too happens just for the first and the last time. Also, the unending truths never get old because in every new happening, their context changes and they are born afresh, and with every new life, they insist upon their new meanings with reference to the changed context.

Perhaps initially, I too was not quite ignorant about matters of art on the level of information and scholarship, yet a piece of art cannot throb merely with information and knowledge. Scholarship does help an artist in a hundred ways, but it is absolutely not possible for it to become a substitute for fine arts. The secrets of fine arts reveal themselves experientially and as they are revealed, the artist begins to realize also the mysteries of the nature of this universe. I have been able to access these secrets year after year slowly through my life. And as I gained access to them, I began to see how impossible it is to draw boundaries around the nature of this universe. It dawned upon me why, in every age some great artist can, at the most, make the coming generation carry on with its creative search by providing inspiration from the deep realization of his own incompleteness. That is how Keats regarded a new Hyperion more beautiful than the old Uranus.

This is a matter not only concerning the future generations, but also a single person of the same generation who, here and now, is keen on maintaining his creative search. If that person began to realize the inadequacy of his immediate "success", it would not be improbable for him to transform from Uranus to Hyperion. Depressed by his sense of incompleteness, to be prepared to try for perfection all over again, is in itself a cause for the emergence of

reasons for a new life. I am grateful to God that at every stage of my life I have kept sensing my inability to reach my destination. And through my depression, my limitless goals remain within my sight. A story of mine "Muhajarat" (Migration) perhaps demonstrates what I mean: "His journey spreads itself over all his life. It begins from his ankles and wandering about here and there, he emerges in the hell of his belly. And getting himself somehow released from there, he suffers the circumstance of separation on reaching the seat of his heart. The journey continues and he then enters the realm of the eyes, where he sees himself lying amidst the dust of the path and realizes he has to go away from this city of regrets and reach his unknown destination-his destiny-his forehead! No-one can escape having to reach his destiny! I too wish to continue my creative journey till the end to reach my Matha (forehead)-my destiny.

I have always felt that I have to yet write the best of my stories, or else, my readers may actually involve themselves in my stories to feel the footsteps of the yet unwritten stories.No story gets completed within the covers of a book. It completes itself in the mind of the reader. While writing my stories, I am seriously involved in the creative search of not only the reconciliations of the contradictions of my own times but also those of all times with reference to my own. Perhaps my reader too, by participating in them, may locate a reason, just like the artist, for his own search. If this is possible, my unwritten best stories will, as if, get created and completed on their own in the reader's mind.

I have written many short short stories, "Parindon ka Jhund" (Flock of birds). To my mind, if the length of a story measures up to the narrative in its correct proportion, it may well be completed in a single line. Otherwise, it may remain incomplete even on the vast canvas of a whole novel. That is why the lines of a few inches drawn with the right proportions in a painting, are able to present the whole of the Himalayas. Moreover, the reader too shares the creativity of the art of a story equally, since with reference to his own association of ideas, he himself makes up all the unarticulated events of the story.

In much of criticism in Urdu, there is talk about the story-ness of the Urdu story. This is often decisively taken to mean merely the sequence or arrangement of events. In my opinion this can be misleading. Actually, the story-ness of a story is reflected through the elements of its inhabitability (abaadkari). If the story is vibrant and habitable, with the smart and relevant description of the thought, all the events emerge in the mind of the reader. Or, even with merely the sharp pointed seating of the events, some strangely original thought occurs to the reader with a great sense of familiarity-To constrict story-ness with a fixed critical definition is to kill the original possibilities inherent in a story.

All that is required in a living story is that it should seem to grow from itself however that may be! That is why, a story cannot only be written in two or ten ways. There are as many ways of writing a story as there are the whole lot of us. It's these unlimited freedoms and the responsibilities inherent in freedoms for which both life and fiction are fresh and full of adventure.

The Second Step

Trans. Nirupama Dutt

With a start, Kasturi Lal Brahman realised it was time for *Ramayana* to be telecast on London's Indian channel. He reached for the television remote on the headboard of the bed. But when he pressed the button, a BBC channel appeared on the screen.He pressed the button again, but the channel stayed put. A few days back, the mechanic had explained to him that whenever he tuned a channel, he needed to press the memory button to set it, but he always forgets. Never mind the television memory button, he seems to have forgotten the button of his own memory. It is years since his wife died but even now, when he finds his shirt missing a button, he calls out for her. As though she were still standing there at the kitchen sink, doing the dishes.

"Look, my button is gone."

"May the buttons of your enemies be gone!" Lilavati piled every problem that faced her husband, no matter how small, onto the ledger of his enemies. "Come, I shall sew a new button onto your shirt."

But now it is Mrs Wood, not Lilavati, who stands at the kitchen sink, doing the dishes. She laughs and says, "I've told you so many times not to talk to me in Hindustani."

"Which language should I speak in, Mrs Wood? You don't seem to understand my English either."

"Well, I understand some of it."

Three or four years earlier, Kasturi Lal Brahman's only child, Amritt Lal Bremen, along with his *memsahib* and her two children from her first marriage, had moved out. On his son's advice, he had rented out the spare bedroom of his flat to Mrs Wood. The middle-aged Mrs Wood and old Mr Brahman had drawn so close to each other in the past few months that Mrs Wood had begun to feel that he was as helpless as her own husband had been. Out of affection and compassion, she began to cook for him. And he, too, quite forgot to ask Mrs Wood for the rent. If the thought happened to cross his mind, he would be incredulous: Ask *Mrs Wood* for the rent? His own Mrs Wood?

"Mrs Wood, your cooking is good and wholesome," Brahman often said half in jest, "but it is somewhat bland."

"My Jekyll liked spicy food too." Mrs Wood always referred to her late husband like this. "So he was happy to manage the kitchen. But you find it difficult even to lay out the tea things when I get home from work."

"In truth, our women spoil us, Mrs Wood."

But the truth is, whenever Brahman's late wife had asked him to help her out in the kitchen, he had bluntly retorted that housework was her job and if she were to go out and earn a living, he would happily become her wife and work in the kitchen. Now, of course, he has retired and is alone at home all day. Mrs Wood, on the other hand, goes to work. Then he laughs-Mrs Wood is not his wife, after all. She is, she is... he finds it difficult to tell himself that she is just a tenant. The thought shames him. "How can I ask for the rent from my own Mrs Wood?"

The BBC programme continues on the TV. A few English speakers are in such animated discussion on the British Way of Life that they seem to be trying to convince themselves, rather than the invisible audience.

Brahman has spent a lifetime in London, but he has always felt that the English do not really think of him as human-merely something resembling a human being. He, too, has always felt that the English are not an authentic people, but only project a certain image of themselves. All except for Mrs Wood. She is different. He could see the sweet berries of his childhood, left behind in his village in north India, clustered on her wrinkled face.

Kasturi Lal Brahman's village was popularly known as the *Ber wala Gaon*-the Village of Berries. Even the blessings and curses of the old folk looked to the *ber* for a metaphor: "May your *ber* be evergreen!" Or, "May your *ber* tree dry up.' From every courtyard, the branches of the *ber* trees rose over the mud walls and swung down into the neighbours' houses. Children swung from branch to branch to get into their friends' homes. In fact, they used the front door so infrequently that when they did, their mothers were disconcerted. "*Hai*, the water in the pond is so high now. Curse them, they may have gone that way!"

When he was a boy, Kasturi's mother had made sure that he did not go near the pond for fear that he would drown. Then she proudly saw him grow into a tall lad who need never fear of drowning in a mere village pond. She had no idea that one day he would grow so tall that he'd drown himself in the ocean. He left home with a friend and travelled to land's end in search of work. And when he couldn't find it even in Bombay, he unhesitatingly waded into the sea. His old friend Rahamatullah, who was in London, had assured him work if he gathered the courage to travel to English shores. "Whatever will be will be," Kasturi told himself and plunged into the deep.When he touched the shore and found his footing on firm, dry land, he decided to send for his bride Lilavati and his son Amriti-Amrit Lal, who was born after he left home-as well as his old parents. They would live together in England.Lilavati and Amriti did come but for his ageing parents, London was a faraway fairyland. So they sent him blessings without number and lay themselves down beneath the wilting *ber* trees in their courtyard, waiting for death. It may be hard to believe but when, a few months after their daughter-in-law and grandson left home, they died within days of each other, Kasturi not only saw their shadows in his rented flat but even heard them coughing.

Kasturi Lal Brahman sat on his bed, his head bent low, as an agitated Englishman asked the other participants, "Which British way of life are you talking about? Are you talking about the way of life that has already been driven off the streets by hordes of Africans and Asians and now finds refuge only in the home?"

Usually, Brahman just laughs away his anger. What a strange nation! When he had come here forty-five or fifty years ago, these people had been singing the very same tune. Come now, how is the British way of life threatened by us? May it blossom and flourish-we have no quarrel with it. We have drifted to your shores in search of work. Our forefathers worked for you in our country and now we work for you in your country. He smiled to himself. Why don't you understand this? When our stomachs are full, we open our mouths only to thank

you in our bad English. And then we get carried away and babble so much that you smell danger to your British way of life.

At the table, Brahman often gets so involved in trying to convince Mrs Wood of the serene and tolerant nature of his community that he neglects his food. Mrs Wood feels sorry for him. "Don't talk while you're eating, Kasturi. Never mind all this. Eat up."

"One does not use one's mouth only to eat, Annie." They call each other by their first names these days. "A man must fulfil his need for conversation too, or he would grow as thin as a reed."

In his final undergraduate year, Kasturi Lal Brahman had won a gold medal in the oratory contest, and he had mentioned this fact in every job application that he made out in India. And the job always went to someone else. Thanks to Rahamatullah, he had found a toehold in England. Before every interview, Rahamatullah had told him not to talk big, but only to state what was strictly necessary. And so, at his third or fourth interview, he landed the job of a junior assistant cashier in a bank. Years later, he retired respectably as a cashier. And now he lives happily on his pension and his social security, in his own flat.

But is this happiness?

home tired tonight, but after you retire you will have to sit right there in front of me, day and night, listening to my stories."

Brahman loved Lilavati most for her patter. He had carefully stashed away his days of retirement, just as he stacked bankrolls of the British sterling all day, in separate wads of months and years. Treasured in his heart and soul, they were to be filled out with Lilavati's stories. But now she was gone and he did not know how to spend his life's savings. Who would he spend them on?

On his son Amritt Lal Bremen? Bremen had added a final 't' to his first name and Europeanised the last. As a baby, he had been round and luscious like the *amriti* sweet, and so he was called Amriti. Cute, chubby and cuddly, everyone just had to reach out to pat his cheeks. He had come to London in his mother's lap. Brahman was thrilled when he took his bonnie baby in his arms but felt guilty for having snatched his sweet Amriti from the home of his grandparents, leaving them with only their memories as they slowly drifted into sleep beneath their withered *ber* tree.

Not only did Amriti look English, he began to laugh and weep in English while still in his cradle. When he joined pre-school around the age of four, British children followed him in reciting *Twinkle, twinkle little star,* as though they were learning their own language from him. His mother was forever kissing and cuddling him. And gazing adoringly at him, his cashier father stashed thousands of bankrolls in his heart and locked them away.

But you can't hold on to fleeting moments of happiness for a lifetime. Within a few years the British son of Indian parents grew up and went to university as Amritt Lal Bremen. And he began to find his parents a bit strange. For instance, there were his father's regular bouts of obsessive behaviour, when he searched all of London for those Indian berries called *ber*. "No, Dad, no! I can no longer stand your Indianness."

Kasturi Lal Brahman's mother strokes her ageing son's bent back with trembling, shadowy hands and reassures him. Suddenly, a loud voice from the BBC show snaps him out of his reverie and brings him back to the present. An elderly Englishman is saying, "You shouldn't feel threatened by the growing population of Asians and Africans; you're quarrelling needlessly…"

"But…"

"Everything will be all right. Their children have been born here, and they have been brought up here. They have no choice but to move away from their parents' alien way of life…"

In his youth, Brahman had often heard such remarks from English people and had laughed at their ignorance. Little did they know that our Shravan Kumars1 had always borne their old parents on their own shoulders on pilgrimages and left them only at the doors of Heaven. As if on cue, the shades of his parents flitted and vanished before his eyes. Suppressing the guilt of having abandoned them in their old age, Brahman had turned to Lilavati and said, "Have you seen greater fools than the English?"

After he finished his MBA, Amritt Lal Bremen got a good job with an automobile company and rose to a senior position in a couple of years. When his mother died, he was away in Kenya, setting up a new branch. He was shocked when his father gave him the sad news over the telephone. When his father asked whether he could get to London by the next morning to see his mother's face for the last time, he said yes. But then he was also a *burra sahib* who believed that first things ought to come first. And the first priority was to remain in Kenya and supervise the company's new project.

There was also this personal project that he could not quite leave midway. He had fallen in love with Margaret Leach, the young widow of an English landowner in the hills. Margaret had just sold her land to an African chief and had to appear in the Land Registration Office in two days. How could he leave her alone at such a time? After talking it over with Margie, he called up his father in the evening to tell him that he could not make it. And he added, "Dad, I am wiring £1,500 to your bankers so that you don't have financial problems in carrying out the last rites." Amritt Lal Bremen knew his mother well. He knew that she was Indian to her bones, and he knew that even after her death her soul would linger, waiting for a glimpse of her son. But Bremen just shrugged his shoulders and said, "What can I do?"

Some ten days after his mother's death, Bremen married Margie. He knew his father would be deep in mourning, so he took Margie and her children for a holiday to Nairobi. Then, in a brief and restrained letter to his father, he informed him of his new situation and said that Margie's children, Sheena and Fred, would be very happy to meet him. He asked his father to get two bedrooms ready for them.

When the family reached London, the house became so crowded that many of the things accumulated over a lifetime had to be thrown away to make room. Brahman wondered why his son did not dump him in the garbage bin along with the other unwanted things. Father and son now shared only a functional relationship. Margaret still seemed to be in Kenya. And her children? They addressed their

stepfather as 'Sir', so how could they call Brahman Grandpa? They could not imagine a relationship with him. Once, Brahman had mustered the courage to invite the children to his room. But Bremen intervened, "No, Dad, I have warned them not to bother you." Brahman did not doubt his son's concern for him, but he also knew that this MBA son of his would not hesitate to dump all human feelings in the bin for the sake of convenience. If Brahman too had passed away with his wife, the son would probably have found it convenient to take over the flat with his new family and would have thanked God for the opportune deaths. And it was for the same reasons of convenience that Bremen and his family moved into a new flat within a few months. After they left, the house seemed so empty that Brahman felt he was his own ghost, haunting the place in Lilavati's company.

"So you are laughing, Lilo. What are we waiting for here? Come, let's go away together."

"Where?"

"To the other world, where else?"

"Well, you're already there -how else could we be together?"

And then, in view of his father's loneliness, Amritt Lal Bremen brought in a lodger, Mrs Wood.

The sound of a conch took him by surprise and he noticed that the television too had lost its memory. The screen now showed the Indian channel and *Ramayana* was about to begin. Rama has just returned to Ayodhya after an exile of fourteen years. Brahman was happy and wanted to join the rejoicing citizens of Ayodhya in a little jig, but the crazy television set retrieved its memory and the BBC discussion was back on the screen. Before he could switch off the confusion on the TV, he heard the doorbell ring. "Oh! Annie is already back from work and I haven't laid out the tea." He rushed to open the door and found Mrs Wood smiling in the doorway. And she was wearing the dress that he gave her on her last birthday.

"Beautiful!"

"Who? I, or the dress?"

He takes her hand and, leading her to the living room, mumbles in Hindustani: "I forgot to make the tea again today."

"You naughty boy! What do you care?"

"No," he says in confusion, "I shall even cook dinner for you tonight." For many days he has been carrying Lilavati's ring in his pocket, wondering whether he should gift it to Mrs Wood. He quickly takes out the ring, seizes Mrs Wood's hand and slips it onto her ring finger. Then he gets nervous, wondering if he has done something wrong.

"How sweet!" Mrs Wood's wrinkled face flushes and she kisses him. "Just sit down now, I'll get the tea."

Mrs Wood leaves the room and the same old Englishman on BBC is trying to convince the other participants, "There is no need for antipathy against these people. Their children certainly don't belong to them, but even they do not belong to themselves any longer, do they?"

With thanks to *The Little Magazine*

Dera Baba Nanak

Trans. Naghma Zafir

When an incident breaks through the confines of the body and takes hold of the soul, it remains with it for a lifetime. For this very reason for nearly half a century now, time and again, this dream creeps into my sleep: first, right in front a herd of cows, behind them grubby roly-poly, radiant children and after them the aged, their beards snow white, aflutter... like birds and at its very end... I.

But wouldn't it be better if I narrated the whole incident?

At the time of Partition, riots had flared up throughout the country. Whosoever could manage a safe escape was considered a brave-heart.

Hordes of people moved from this side to that and from there to here. Finally we too arrived at Dera Baba Nanak from Sialkot. When we boarded the train we had absolutely no idea where we were heading. Do the dead and the dumbstruck ever know which frontiers to cross and where to reach? But, where ever the train stopped, we the dead would begin to breathe in fear of having reached the end of the other world, where in seconds 'they' would barge in raising slogans and shred our souls to bits along with our bodies.

But finally we did get across the border-here at Dera Baba Nanak …On arriving here what did we find? That much before we had reached here, we lay scattered in all four directions, chopped to pieces-a limb here, another there; there a lump of heart, a bunched up woman's breast, here a shriveled up penis, so shriveled that one wondered whether it belonged to a Hindu or to a Muslim.

Along with us had come a raving mad… lunatic – a nameless crazy fellow. No one had any information about him. He had perhaps run away from some place in Pakistan and had landed in our refugee camp.

This crazy fellow at times would start screaming "Don't kill me. I am a Hindu, look!" He would lift up his shirt and start loosening his pyjama strings. " Look! Look!" and at other times, he shouted "Don't kill me… I am a Muslim, look…look!" Suddenly he spotted a chopped penis lying on the ground. His hands groped anxiously in his pyjamas and finding nothing there he moved to pick up the severed organ.

With eyes dilated, he stared hard at the organ in his hand, he seemed to be wondering if it belonged to him or someone else.

When there are all possible reasons to cry, then subconsciously everyone tries to find an opportunity to laugh. Many of us gathered around him.

"No...it actually is mine." The mad man reassured himself.

"How can it be yours, you mad cap! On this side they had chopped off only the Muslims'."

"Really...?"He felt the organ once more. "Well..."It occurred to him that he was in fact a muslim. Then something strange crossed his mind. Suddenly he grasped his throat with both his hands and began wringing it with such force that his eyes popped out-"Mussalle, I won't leave you alive! Mussalle, you killed my aging parents before my own eyes, you raped my sister and...and..." If others had not rushed in and freed him from his own hold, he would have definitely throttled himself!

Just then a rumour went rife in the crowd that a caravan of Muslim refugees was about to pass this side on their way to cross the borders. Immediately there was a mad rush back to the camps to ready the swords and spears for plunder and loot. Everyone wanted to secure a position of vantage for himself. I heard a tilak dhari voice behind me say in utter disgust, "Our qaum, our race can never progress. Is this auspicious occasion meant to be used to amass wealth or to exterminate the malech, the… mussalle?

"Oye Pandita, why worry, when we are here to perform that holy task." Someone among the crowds reassured him.

But at that very moment the loud speaker of the refugee camp began to announce, "Pay attention brothers, a small caravan of Muslim refugees is crossing the frontier from here, and a large caravan of Hindus and Sikhs is about to arrive this side from there. Listen carefully brothers if we create trouble here, then they won't hesitate in spilling the blood of our brothers there. Take care brothers, don't make the mistake of attacking them. . Caution brothers, savdhan, savdhan!" Disappointed, the crowd began to disappear in small groups, towards the main road attached to the borders. "Pay attention brothers…" I shifted my attention from the loudspeaker announcement to the lunatic, who was still undecided where his own penis had disappeared. If only he could find it! Then he would know whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim.

I sat down on a low hillock and watched his actions. A lunatic's mind is hardly empty. In fact it is the very onslaught of unexpected thoughts and ideas that drive him crazy. This mad man too was unable to cope with his agonizing thoughts. He began picking up the scattered limbs and various human parts and busied himself, arranging them into a form.

He continued this effort for quite sometime, and I kept watching him closely. With great effort he would put the severed parts into a shape, then shake his head in the negative and again put them in disarray. He created several shapes, but every time, disappointed with his own arrangement he would undo the pattern. It seemed he was possessed with an agonizing idea and he was trying desperately to free himself from it.

While I was still watching him, suddenly he sprang back in fear and looked horror-struck at the image he had created …A terrifying shape of a monster with distorted limbs as though ready to dig his teeth into him!

Horrified, the mad man dashed straight towards the main road where the dust of the departing caravan of the Muslims had not settled yet. I was glad-at least now the mad man had rid himself of the terrible monster which had grasped his mind.

But he kept running at great speed and disappeared behind the trees that lined the road.I turned towards the adjacent road. On both sides soldiers had been posted at close distance to guarantee safe passage for the Muslim refugees. Behind every soldier, hordes of Hindu and Sikh refugees began to swell. Fortunately a bit ahead on the road, I found an empty space and lit a cigarette. The guard looked at me with suspicion and ordered me to stand back. I stepped back immediately and leaned against a tree. Waiting for the caravan to pass, I began

thinking about my mother. The rioters had attacked our house too. With drawn swords they had rushed in my direction when my mother came between us, …I saw her die a painful death –- the rioters had not even bothered to check whether it was my mother or I whom they had struck. I was preparing her pyre in our inner courtyard after collecting the firewood from the kitchen when two Sikh soldiers had barged in. "Come on! Move…." They said. "But my mother…." "Leave the dead behind, save yourself …come on…."

The guard on the road cast another suspicious glance at me and this time I myself took two steps back. Just then the caravan reached the road.

First, in front, there were robust white and brown cows – they were aware that the Hindus would never attack the cows. Behind the cows were grubby disheveled children who despite the fatigue looked extremely radiant…they knew that the Hindus consider the children to be images of God…these scared gods with tired swollen feet, dragged themselves. Behind the children were the frail old men, with their beards fluttering like birds, each one was supported by a young man, so that pity for the old may lead to their survival too. And after them came the wailing old women and serving them even as they walked, their young daughters and daughters-in-law…these dutiful daughters-in-law and their virgin sisters-in-law... how could anyone even cast an evil glance at them... And behind them a motley crowd of middle aged men and women, holding their restless howling young children in their arms and on their shoulders... In their throats the cry of Allah-o-Akbar stuck half way, the cry which would be a full-throated one, the moment they crossed the border...so resounding that it would appear as if some miracle had taken place.

Arre…who was this? Walking along the side of a frail and fatigued mother, holding her young one with great care, fully alert and in his senses, who was he! He was that mad man!

"Look here bhai..." I tried to explain it to the guards..."that fellow over there...he, had actually come with us from the other side..." But the guards asked me to shut up and to move further behind. I just couldn't take my eyes off the mad man. Is he a Muslim...? No, he must be a Hindu...? Has to be a Hindu...so..."Look here *bhai*..." I pointed him out to the guard "Sh….sh sh…."

The poetry of Mohammad Alvi: The otherness of perception

Prof. Gopi Chand Narang

Take this Ghazal verse of Mohammad Alvi:

I'm a voice drowned
in clamour.
Why complain about others?
Even I haven't heard myself.

The fact that a poet himself/herself is the first reader of his poetry does not reduce the polarity between a text and its reading. The text awaits a reader and criticism is the metaphor for reading. Mohammad Alvi has no complaint against criticism, for much criticism has been written about his poetry. However, the 'voice drowned in clamour' has rarely been heard as it should have been. Good poetry deceives even the critic. Mohammad Alvi has generally been called the poet of senses, meaning that he describes what he sees[1], meaning that his poetry is traditional having meanings that are readily understood. There are many reasons for such a misunderstanding:

The edges of the moon are lit, / The environs of the night are lit.

A line of lightening / And the pathway is lit.

Fireflies flitting about / Here and there, the night is lit.

Who visited me last night? / Made the morning lit.

Flowers, like lanterns; / Wings of butterflies are lit.

The lane with girls, and / The house with windows are lit.

At a cursory glance, this poetry appears to be the act of open eyes, but is it really the poetry of the creation of only open eyes? If it is so, then such poetry should be the poetry of immediately obvious meanings. It is accepted that the verses quoted above have traditional and familiar scenes, but upon reflection it becomes obvious that their effect, instead of being traditional or familiar, is new, singular and quite fresh. Why is it so? Poetry is not the transparent description of external facts. Otherwise, the glow of moon will not appear brighter, the darkness more intense, nor the fireflies more abundant. It should be understood that poetry, instead of being the reflection of facts, is their linguistic formulation, which rarifies and changes them. This linguistic formulation does not preserve the facts as they are. I was discussing the differences between poetry of the senses and that of only the open eyes. Whenever I try to convince myself that the two kinds of poetries are the same, Mohammad Alvi's poem 'The smell of fish' confronts me, and my scenario is subverted. In this poem, the first person, lying in bed at night, reflects that he is putting on weight, and that the next morning he'd give his blue suit to the tailor for altering. The tailor shop reminds him:

Next to the tailor shop, / There's a restaurant;

Its fish is really tasty. / I shall eat it, tomorrow,

But the damn smell of fish / Soaks in the hands.

The imaginary scene continues. Many images emerge and fade into one another: office, boss, taking leave from the office, club, rummy, good luck for the last two days, expectation of winning again, etc., etc.

I wish I could sleep. / It'll be nice
If I could sleep tomorrow / After wining.
Ace, two, nine and ten, / The queen of diamonds,
The smell of fish, / A pack of cards,
Joker, yet another, / Wearing a suit,
A fat old joker." / Musing all this,
He went to sleep, / But never got up.
Next day, / When his funeral procession
Passed by the tailor shop, / The smell of fish from the restaurant
Spread far and wide.

Irrespective of the meaning of the poem, perhaps no one will disagree with the fact that the dominant metaphor of this poem is not that of the eye; instead, it is that of the smell, the smell of fish. The 'fish is really tasty', 'but the damn smell of fish soaks in the hands'.The poem becomes a poem only when his funeral procession passes by the tailor shop, and the smell of fish from the restaurant spreads far and wide. (One meaning of the smell relates to the continuity of life, or to the combined senses of taste and smell, which are programmed in to our moulds.) After 'smell', one naturally asks whether Mohammad Alvi is the poet of open eyes, nose or mouth. We have seen the senses of sight, smell and taste, but one can also write poems on the senses of hearing and touch. But a poet of ears, or a poet of hands? How ridiculous! Even if such a thing can be proven, how does it matter? The uniqueness of one's poetry cannot be proven by asserting that the highlighting of one sense negates other senses, and this attitude in uncritical because it takes away meaning from poetry and brings it to the level of things; it is neglecting the fact that poetry first establishes itself and then describes other things. Mohammad Alvi's poetry is a good example of this.

After dealing with the misleading convolution of the senses of hearing and smell, let us examine that Mohammad Alvi is not the poet of senses as has been assumed wrongly. Apparently, his poetry has simplicity and softness. At a first glance, his poems are very simple, but this simplicity is illusive. For example, see this simple verse; its meanings are not simple.

All day long, children jointly / threw stones, and picked fruits.
In the evening, all birds / started crying in the trees.

Each line[2] of the verse presents a different image of time. The first line describes the day, and the second the evening. There is nothing extraordinary in children throwing stones and picking fruits during the day. It is a common occurrence that we see every day. Similarly, the gathering of birds and making a racket in the evening is also common. If Mohammad Alvi was a poet of only the senses, he would have been content with this, but such is not the case. Alvi's act

of poetry has likened the chirping of birds to crying. 'In the evening, all birds started crying in the trees' has changed the image completely. This is not the act of the external eye; it the act of the internal eye. The replacement of the verb 'chirping' with 'crying' has not only changed the meaning of the verse, but has also made it not-too-easy-to-understand. The day represents light. The evening is the negation of light. The day represents joy and happiness, and darkness is the negation of happiness. The throwing of stones and picking fruits by children gives the impression of the vitality of life. On the other hand, the crying of birds shows pain. What is this pain? It has not been explained. Every interpretation of this difficulty will bring with it new interpretations. The pain could be for the passing of the day and the descending of darkness. Or the day could be the expression of flight, and the evening the folding of wings. The flight becomes lethargic in the dark, and the journey ends. Similarly, children are the symbol of life; their departure in the evening marks a gap in the scene. Or, children the embodiment of innocence, or the first impression of nature, have a special affinity with birds, who are themselves symbols of nature. The breaking of the affinity could be the reason for the pain. Or the playing of children could be the metaphor of the splendour and bustle of life, the departure of which is the negation of the continuity of life and nature; this could be the symbol of pain. Thus, one question leads to another, but all possibilities of meaning are still not exhausted. It should be made clear that this is not the act of describing external facts, nor that of counting things. Instead, it relates to the reality that lies hidden behind external facts; it is the recognition of this reality, which can be seen only by the internal eye and not by the external eye, and which plays hide and seek with the language. We can conclude that this poetry, instead of being the poetry of external senses, is the poetry of perception, or rather the poetry of the otherness of perception. Detail of this account will be given later. First, let us see these ghazal verses.

There were a few stains / on the wall in front.
Upon reflection, / they became faces.
Let me see my name / written on your body.
It will show, but first / let me switch off the lights.
I was alone on the shore, / and in the ocean
The scene seemed to be descending / Here and there.
The earth is scared / of people;
It has descended / into the sea.
In the ocean / of your memories
Emerged / an island.

The first verse will surely remind of the surrealist verse of the god of poetry, Meer[3]. Here the reference is made neither for comparison, nor for lowering the worth of the verse under consideration. The first line of the Alvi verse has a simple description, but the second disrupts the scene, and transforms a simple description into a poem. 'Upon reflection, they became faces' is not common reality. This is not obvious or ordinary perception, otherwise the line would have had external details of the stains. We can see that the second line changed the entire scene. This is that side of internal perception, which was hidden from the

eyes, but has taken a concrete shape through poetry. This otherness of poetry creates depth of feeling in an obvious object, and creates a unique experience from a familiar scene. The uniqueness, drama and freshness of Mohammad Alvi's poetry is the result of this otherness of perception.

Let's examine the other verses too. In the second verse, the extinguishing lights should have caused darkness, in which one cannot see. But the beauty and the pleasure of the verse lies in 'seeing one's name on a body in the dark'.

The imagery of the remaining three verses is the most favourite of Mohammad Alvi, being 'earth' and 'ocean'. However, considering it to be 'the painting of a scene' is self decption. Here also, we notice the same act of poetry, which makes us see the unseen reality lying beyond the obvious. For example, in the third verse, there is no poetry in the act of standing on the shore; it is an ordinary scene, but when the same scene 'descends into the ocean here and there', the verse becomes loaded with a strange feeling and unique pleasure.

The fourth verse also deals with 'descending': 'the earth has descended into the sea' is an ordinary phenomenon, but the reason that it has done so because it is afraid of people reflects the same otherness of perception. The same is true of the fifth verse. The ocean is not the ocean of the sense of seeing, nor is the island the common island. The beauty of the verse lies in the fact that both the ocean and island are abstract, and so the emerging of the island of memories is not the description of a concrete scene.

We should halt here a little, and examine *nazms* of Mohammad Alvi as well. We know that he writes both *ghazals* and *nazms*[4]. He has four poetry collections: The empty house (*Khaali makaan*, 1963), In search of the last day (*Aakhri din ki talaash*, 1968), The third book (*Teesri kitaab*, 1978) and The fourth sky (*Chautha aasmaan*, 1991)[5]. In all these collections, there are almost as many *ghazals* as poems. Alvi is known for both his *ghazals* as poems. His never loosened his grasp of brief poems. He knows the art of constructing a poem. Usually, he begins his poems with a simple description, but then with imperceptible twist, he changes expectations, and the perception of the poem takes a new turn. In other words, Alvi has the ability to create uncommon meanings from the otherness of perception in poems as well. However, a selection from poems is difficult. For this reason, let's restrict our discussion to a single topic. For example, 'death' is a favourite topic of Mohammad Alvi.

It sleeps soundly, / With an alarm clock
Placed in a dark corner / Of the body.
Whether the alarm / Rings or not,
It knows / Even in sleep
When to wake up.

In the first four lines, the description is straightforward: death sleeps in a dark corner of the body with an alarm clock. After these lines, the description is given a twist: would death wake up if the alarm clock does not ring? Death knows when to wake up even in sleep. This twist has made the poem a good poem. The straightforward description mixed with the later twist creates a

poetic truth that is unique and exposes a new layer of meaning. This is a unique characteristic of the poetic temperament of Mohammad Alvi. There is another short poem, with the title of 'Birthday'.

Visiting me once a year, / He asks every time:
"How are you, / Well, I hope?
This calls for a cake. / What's there for dinner?
What have you been up to?" / After chatting about casual things,
He looks at his watch, and says: / "OK dear, I've to go now.
See you in a year. / Make sure to get a cake,
And, yes of course, fish as well." / Then he leaves.
It's nice to see him / For a short time,
But I think / It will be even more fun
When he comes next time / And can't find me.

Birthday, merrymaking, eating the cake are all everyday things. After that the 'otherness of the meaning, i.e. the defamiliarising act of the poetry begins. The real fun will begin when he comes next time and does not find me. The early continuity of life and happiness in the poem is suddenly shattered, and the thought of death takes its place, but in such a way as if death represents the other face of the happiness of life. The following poem also demands attention.

Reading the newspaper / With bed-tea
Is fun. / All news items
Die one after another, / But some ads do live on,
Especially those / Relating to ailments!
Perhaps, we haven't / Recovered fully,
That's why / The doorways of death
Are still not closed on us.

This poem also brings forth an alien view of the truth. We read newspapers daily, and after some time, the newspaper becomes old and useless, except for those advertisements, which interfere with our consciousness by reminding us of an ailment or a weakness. The last few lines, by invading the strata of meaning, put the poem on an uncommon path. Even after evolution through centuries, man has still not become fully healthy. That's why the doorway of death is still not closed on him. Another poem, the tombstone:

Descending into my grave, / I spread my feet comfortably,
And was pleased / That no one
Would harm me here.
This two-yards of earth
Was my property, / Mine alone.
At leisure, / I dissolved slowly
Into the earth. / The sense of time

Had vanished here. / I was at peace,

But not for too long; / I had not yet

Become all clay, / When another man

Forced himself / Into my grave.

Now my grave / Has someone else's tombstone.

In the weave of these poems, the poetic expression usually remains at the common and obvious level, and then suddenly brings forth an unexpected turn, which casts the earlier description in a new light and the freshness of the whole poem becomes an aesthetic experience. In 'The tombstone', this turn comes after 'I was at peace, but not for too long'. As Larkan (spelling?) has noted, man exists in his binary-image, i.e. at the juncture of his consciousness and sub-consciousness. This division (?) takes place as soon as a language enters the symbolic system. The beauty of poetic formation is that it can see the division (?) in the text, and is not satisfied by the common sight. Instead, it brings forth the otherness, or even the otherness of the otherness. In this poem, the scene of personality within personality, tombstone within tombstone, represents the bifurcation of the same division, which is perpetual.

The above discussion of poems clearly shows that in the weave of Mohammad Alvi's poems also, the same subconscious act is present that we saw in his ghazal verses: he first establishes the common feature of perception, and then denies it to reveal to us the otherness of perception or an unexpected meaning. After understanding this aspect of Alvi's poetry, it is not too difficult to survey the universe of his ghazals. It should be noted that although Mohammad Alvi's poetry appears to be the denial of the crisis of urban life, in reality it isn't so. Its axis and environ are something else. There are shades of crises, but very feint.

Let me throw away / from my body the tattered shirt.

Let me see my own body / more damaged than the shirt.

People now live / on streets, in factories.

Ghosts now live / in houses.

I can't / read a word,

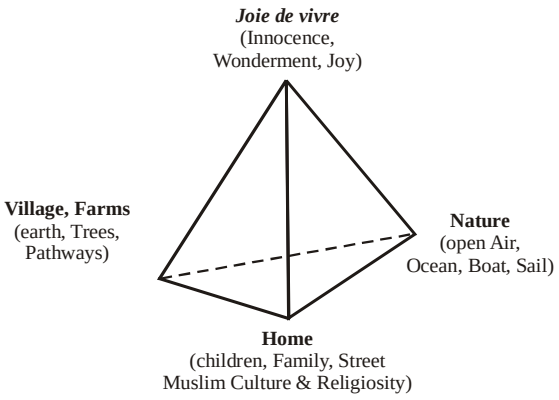
But think / in many languages.

Behold us now, / we won't be found again.

We won't be found / even in stories.

There is no reason to discuss the psychology of Alvi, that his apparent joy is the result of deprivation. All we know is that the poetic universe of Alvi is the universe of *joie de vivre*, intoxication and merriment, life, nature, openness, and simple joys of family life. However, it should be borne in mind that *joie de vivre*, instead of having its usual meaning, refers to a condition of joy, which leads to unseen and expected meanings, and which sometimes takes the form of innocence and wonderment, and sometimes that of internal joy.Thus,we can represent the poetic universe of Mohammad Alvi by a conical shape,which has three directions: firstly, the visible and invisible face of the nature. Connected with this, the second direction

represents village, small and big towns,farms, the shade of a *neem* tree,the *peepal* tree, pathways, or the smell of earth.The third direction, which in the conical chart meets both the first and second directions, is that of the family, the culture and religiosity of middle-class Muslim families. These three directions can be represented graphically as follows.



These three directions, although distinct from each other, are nevertheless connected and complement each other. If the first state is absent, then the second cannot exist. And if the second does not exist, then the existence of the third is in jeopardy. In the above chart, the foundation is one and common to all, but the three sides are open, which signify the multiplicity of meanings. The construct apparently represents singularity, but this is illusive, because every meaning leads to others, and the act of poetry spurs this process. First, look at the hide-and-seek game of visible and invisible images of nature, and see how the poetry of Mohammad Alvi creates unfamiliar situations from familiar scenes. A few ghazal verses:

What else can I take / from the market?

How about / the taste of first rain!

I should give some gift / to the homefolks;

What if I take / the night folded in my eyes!

There should be some entertainment / in the house;

Should I take / an accident home?

The river asked me / again today:

What if I / float you away?

Bringing something from the market is expected, but bringing the taste of the first rain is unexpected. Similarly, gifts invoke images of things, but not of night folded in one's eyes. And taking home an accident for entertainment is also unexpected. The last verse is priceless. The river invites everyday, but its urgency today is something else. No matter how you try, the meaning of this verse can't come in the grasp of logical interpretation. This is poetry where language goes beyond the realm of logic. Mohammad Alvi's poetry subverts the logical expectations, so that the spark of meaning flickers with a strange ecstasy.

Oceans speak \ in the darkness.

All scenes speak, \ if one listens.

All colours became dark \ in the sunlight.

Wings of butterflies \ turn golden.

The boat became pretty \ after it sails.

The sail looked good \ after opening.

Sometimes, \ rains frightened me.

Sometime, \ floating clouds looked good.

The bird is a central image in Alvi's poetry, but in every verse the meanings are different.

A bird sits for long \ on a bare branch.

Land stretches in all directions \ around the tree.

A useless afternoon \ stretches far and wide.

A bird flying \ without any purpose.

In reality, images of birds and trees join easily one direction of the universe of meaning with other. Waris Alvi's is a friend and an unconditional admirer of Mohammad Alvi. He has praised the following short poem. If this poem is read after the previous placed verses, images of the second direction, i.e. village, farm, granaries, take shape in all their splendour.

Six or seven houses huddled together.

A few dogs nodding in a broken cart.

Some water buffaloes standing quiet

under a peepal tree.

Two kites, their wings spread wide,

gliding above dry fields.

The unpaved road raising a dust-storm.

A young boy running behind a car.

The comical chant is only for ease of discussion, otherwise no direction is

and Muslim middle class is also found in the poetry of Mohammad Alvi's

bigger canvas, and is soaked with the smell of the earth, and is sprinkled with a faint colour of the almighty. The direction of domesticity is so dominant that there is no need for examples. Still, we must keep in mind some verses.

Why should I be bothered \ by the fierce sun?

There is the sweet shade \ of the bitter neem tree.

Who walks \ on the sky?

Wooden clogs \ rattle at night.

There would be a parrot \ in a cage in the doorway.

Someone would still be washing \ dirty dishes.

Country fairs would still be held / in the village.

The puppets would / still put up a show.

The whole forest / is full of trees.

Someone would still / plant trees in the forest.

Other poems of the same type also have their own charm. Although the ending of the poem 'The defeat' is romantic (and the romantic feeling is virtually non-existent Alvi's poems), the whole atmosphere of the poem is that of domesticity.

Walls, doors and windows are silent.
Chattering rooms are silent.
Laughing, screaming lanes are subdued.

Birds, always chattering, are subdued.

Neighbours and friends forgot to visit us,

Dishes forgot to rattle.

The cupboard gave up sighing,

Boxes gave up complaining.

The parrot doesn't beg for bread anymore.

I don't find solace on the desolate bed.

Ears long for the whir of the Singer sewing machine.

Now only the mute live in this house.

Your parting has taken away all the good times.

Come back, I admit defeat.

There! You win.

Now let's examine 'Another bad day'. On the surface, its theme is not the same for which this poem is cited here, but after reading it becomes obvious that the motivation of this poem is being fed up with routine and the meaninglessness of daily routine. Neighbourhood, milk van, the call of the vegetable vendor, postman with a bag on his shoulder, the Noor Ilahi greasy spoon, the blind beggar on the footpath, the stretching of the *neem* tree up to the moneylender: all these create an image which cannot be found in the poetry of Mohammad Alvi's contemporaries.

Sad, moist-eyed, I sit alone
By my window for so long.

The noisy milk van came and left.
The vegetable vendor came calling and left.

The postman with a bag on his shoulder
Went home after visiting house after house.

Children came to the school, and left.
All patrons of the Noor Ilahi greasy spoon

Finished their meals.
The blind beggar came to sit on the footpath,

Then, moved under the *neem* tree
when the sun rose high.

The shade of the *neem* tree stretched
Up to the house of the moneylender,

Then returned home tired.
The gate of the house in front still did not open.
Today, like yesterday, was also a bad day.

Now, let's consider the poem 'The bread' which is the metaphor of all this discussion. The parrot circling in its cage and repeating 'give me bread, dear Miss give me bread' and the burning of the bread on the baking plate brings forth the scene-inside-scene of the domestic life. The demand for bread and the burning of the bread are both in orbit. Goat, wife, little son, beggar, give me bread and the burning of the bread all make an effective picture of the hustle and bustle of life and its ups and downs.

The neighbour's goat / Again barged in the house

And gobbled something. / My wife threw a fit.

Our little son was enjoying crying. / He was crying constantly.

The beggar was still standing by the door,

Still repeating the same old blessings.

The house was filled with / The smell of burning bread

And screams of Mother. / The sound of the parrot,

Circling in the cage: / "Give me bread,

Dear miss give me bread" / Was lost in the clamour,
And the bread on the baking plate / Was reduced to black ash.

In the context of the domestic direction, we discussed religious feelings and the concept of the almighty. Before discussing it further, it is necessary to explain that no subject in the literature can be 'innocent'. Every preference, like and dislike in the literature has to emerge from some 'ideology'. Ideology does not necessarily has to relate to politics. Ideology can have its roots in religion, morals, philosophy or politics. In art and literature, nothing lies outside ideology. The preferences and poetic acts of Mohammad Alvi that we have alluded to earlier do have ideological undertones. Without going much into detail, we can point towards these undertones by asking the question: What is the source of Mohammad Alvi's faith? Some images of the culture of Middle Class Muslims have been discussed earlier along with underlying religious perception, but even in these instances Mohammad Alvi avoids logical expression, and takes the religious feeling towards an unknown direction. This otherness of meaning is in itself an aesthetic value.

With an ocean \ of hatred in my eyes,
How easy it is \ to kill some one!
People are strangers, \ and city is unknown too.
common feelings.
these placed verses, see how the verse establishes itself by moving away from
What level of humanity is man living in? Death is cheap, life difficult. In
The houses that we have burned down. \ God must have died in them.
Come with me, I'll tell you, \ But the time has now passed.
He is not in mosques,nor in temples.Where's God, where has he gone?
been possible without an ideological stand.
violence. It is worth pondering how these cruel acts would have agitated the
Ahmedabad, where Mohammed Alvi lives, has faced years of sectarian
You might be angry, \ But Rama will not.
Offering namaz \ Can't be a bad thing.
Our prostrations have \ Glowed here for years.
We've also lit lamps \ Here for years.
But we've also kissed \ This pious land.
Let's accept that this is \ The birth place of Rama,
entitled 'For Adyanji', is unique.
Many poems have been written on this topic, but the following poem,
Let me raze the mosque \ and you the temple.
If you want to destroy, \ then listen to me.
deals with this. Isn't the duality of meaning in this verse beyond the usual logic?
values that any mode of expressing it is insufficient. See how Mohammed Alvi
The mosque-temple dispute is such a crisis of the bankruptcy of our cultural
My friends would carry me \ On their shoulders.
I'll also go to the mosque, \ But only when
And I sit in my home thinking \ That one day,
One can hear the calls for prayers. \ People to go to offer their namaz
There is a mosque near my home. \ From the mosque,
and reversing its apparent meaning.
Mohammad Alvi takes a different route, establishing the eloquence of the poem
Consider a brief poem. It is easy to criticize the state of affairs, but
And for the mosque, I'll leave behind \ a mute call for prayers.
I'll pack all my prayers, \ and take them with me.
For heaven's sake, \ keep it safe.
It may be crumpled, \ but it is God.
We hardly count, \ we are deceased anyway.
Let the name God \ live for ever.

I carry a dagger, / looking for myself.
I am the mourner / of lost tribes,
Of crumbling walls / of the desolate city.
All night we reflected, / and in the papers next morning
Saw the news of our death / at our own hands.
The mad winds have / a hint of the fire of fragrance.
Maybe a flower is simmering / in the heap of leaves.

In the end, the following ghazal, soaked in pain. In this ghazal, the pain has gone beyond the usual meaning of laughing and crying.

Just now I was crying, and now I'm laughing,/Is it true that I've gone mad?
Just now, I was sleeping in my home./Now, I am homeless.
I was pleased to see these people,/Now I'm running scared from them.
My own folks kill me./I'm complaining about my own.
I've to live and die right here. / It's not bad that I am dying.

Expression of kindheartedness on murder and cruelty is easy, but looking through a tragedy and accepting its dual meaning to be the two faces of the same reality is such a poetic act that its equal cannot be found easily.

In the above, we have visited some bright and feint lines of the poetical universe of Mohammad Alvi. Some scenes could not be seen, but some features of the changing seasons and time and space of his intuition, consciousness and sub-consciousness could be seen, and we could enjoy at least some of the ever-changing scenario of his poetry. On the surface, he has a natural disposition. He is not a native speaker of the Urdu language in the same sense as some people believe. Mohammad Alvi is a native of Gujrat, and probably speak Gujrati as well. He is a bilingual person. The suppleness, sweetness of his Urdu must have been borrowed from Gujrati and other languages spoken in the area where he grew up. In his childhood, he did live for a few years in Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi. It is worth recalling that that the distance from the centres of languages give rise to a new multitude of emotions:

It may be true / that this language is not mine,
But I can assure you / that I speak it better than you.

There are some benefits in being away from the 'centres'. There are many examples of this in history of Urdu. Some people claim that the umbilical chord of Urdu is buried in Gujrat, the effects of which were specially felt by Delhi. Wali Dakni[10] belonged to the same Gujrat. Be that as it may, the merging of the tongues of the centres and distant areas leads to freshness in both language and literature.This reference was necessary because poetry needs language. Reading is also through the language. The derivation of meanings is also through the language. A poem first establishes itself, and then anything else. The poetic intuition of Mohammad Alvi neither uses new phraseology, nor invents new grammar. He uses the everyday language, but he diverts his expression to the unusual. Not much credence has been given to his claim:

What I said has been said before,
Still there is some newness (in what I say).

The act poetry makes what has been said before new and fresh, or to make something that was familiar unfamiliar again. There is not much new in language, but poetry uses words to play new games. Mohammad Alvi has carved his own road in this act. He creates environs with perception and meaning. His poetry is not that of the obvious. Although his narration begins with the familiar, but he soon sees beyond the logic and common boundaries, which had so far hidden the otherness of perception. It should be noted that that the new expressions give way to the otherness of perception, thus creating freshness in the poetic expression. The things that 'had been said before' acquire a 'newness'; this is the essence of the craft of Mohammad Alvi, and the secret of the effect of his poetry: it is the act of seeing what remains hidden from the eye.

I can see a house hidden / in the cluster of *shareefa* [11]trees.
I can close my eyes, /and see the inside of my home.

To see a house in the cluster of *shareefa* trees is common, but to close one's eyes and see inside a 'home', i.e. to go beyond the realm of reality, or not to be satisfied with the obvious meaning, is the essence of poetry, and Mohammad Alvi is aptly capable of performing this task.

References:

1) Reference to the foreword written by Mehmood Ayaz (1929 - 1997) for the first poetry collection of Mohammad Alvi, published in 1963
2) In translation, one line of a ghazal verse is usually typed in two lines.
3) Reference to the following ghazal verse by Meer Taqi Meer (1724-1810) *The world is a house of mirrors, if one has seeing eyes*: *One could see faces inside walls.*
4) A *ghazal* is a collection of two-line verses, not all which may deal with the same subject. On the other hand, a *nazm* expresses a continuous thought. For simplicity, a *nazm* will now be referred as a poem.
5) This article was written before the publication of Alvi's collected works, Night lit here and there (*Raat idhar udhar roshan*, 1995).
6) Waris (b. 1928) is a well-known Urdu critic, and a cousin of Mohammad Alvi
7) Muslim prayer Before the burial, the corpse of a Muslim person is taken to mosque for communal prayers.
9) Lal Krishna Advani, a senior leader of the Bharatya Janata Party (1668 - 1707)
11) Shareefa is a fruit referred to in English as custard apple poetry collection of Mohammad Alvi, published in 1963

Separation: A Metaphor of Love

Syed Hasebuddin Sharfee Quadri

This paper is an attempt to study the concept of 'separation' and 'separation as a symbol and metaphor of love' in the light of some verses of some renowned Urdu poets like Jigar Moradabad and Khumar Barabankawi. The allusion to suchverses is small and no claim is made that it is an absolute statement. There may be several verses which may challenge this perspective.

Hijr is the word used for 'separation' and *Wasl* for 'meeting' in Urdu. Separation is not distancing, and *Wasl* is not proximity. People may be separated yet they may be very close to each other, and people may be in proximity, yet very far in reality. Though the word like *Judai, Alhedgi* also convey the meaning of separation in Urdu, I chose *Hijr* for separation as it appears to me more subtle and suitable to discuss and interpret 'separation in love' as against the other words which make me feel carrying more despondent nuance.

Poets and writers of fiction, from the classic to the romantic and contemporary, dealt the theme of love through the concepts of meeting and separation, pleasure and pain, expectation and sacrifice and so on. All of which are noble statesin the space of love. Oftenmeeting emanates pleasure, separation causes pain; expectation anticipates pleasure, sacrifice ensures pain. However, the state of the lover sometime reaches an opposite state wherein meeting brings pain, separation procures pleasure; expectation incurs pain and sacrifice earns pleasure.

Meeting as a state precedes separation. The lover who longs for his beloved may wish for meeting her which is the climax of his love, but there may be lovers who wish to be occupied all the times with the remembrance or memory of their beloved, they find the climax of their love in the state of separation, and hence separation becomes a metaphor of love for them. We know generally any expression that represents some idea based on similarities and likenesses between the expression and the idea without the use of 'as' and 'like'can be called metaphor.However,its meaning today is so stretched, expounded,explicated and abused in the hands of critics and theorists, that one can use this figure of speech for any phenomenon concealed or revealed.I used the term lover instead of poet, though he may just happen to versify the ideasdiscussed here.Love as an action unites and separates people. Unification causes pleasure and separation causes pain. However, love is that action which unites pain and pleasure and it becomes really difficult to pin what causes what.

Khumar Barabankawi says:

Who HainPaasAurYaadAaneLageHain
MohabbatKeHoshAbThikaneLageHain [1]
She is near, yet I miss her (I remember her).
The sanity of love is fixed now.

One is missedif one is not close or near. One is remembered if one is separated. Accessibility to the beloved when hindered can be taken as separation. It does not matter whether the beloved is physically near or distanced. However,

in the couplet above, this itself has been challenged. The beloved is accessible, yet the lover yearns for her, and says that he misses her and calls it the fixing of the sanity of love.

Extreme love often drives the lover into an unconscious state. He is not aware of his senses. He is numb to everything around him, for he is completely and totally occupied by his beloved, but this unconsciousness of his senses and surrounding does not numb him or deprive him to remember his beloved. It is just that he remains conscious of his love only. In other words he is sane to his love and beloved only. Or further he reaches a state wherein he becomes unconscious to the presence of his beloved also. All he remembers is his love. I think this can be taken as one of the possible explanations of the above couplet.

Dunya-e-Sitam Yaad Na Apni Hi Wafa Yaad
Ab Mujh Ko Nahi Kuch Bhi Mohabbat Ke Siwa Yaad [2]

Neither I remember the oppression of the world nor my own fidelity,
All I remember now is nothing save love.

This couplet also presents the state of the lover wherein he does not remember anything save love. In this case the lover seems not to bother about the oppression or persecution of the world, or his own fidelity probably towards his beloved. All he remembers is his love. In other words the state that the lover has reached does not take into account anything save love.

The theme of 'separation' is used by poets to convey pain, yet many others used it to express extreme love. Separation must not be taken here as estrangement which connotes hostility. Separation in the theme of love is not associated with hostility or caused by disagreement to get along. It may be taken as a state which is imposed on the lover and the beloved by society, convention or compulsions.

The pain of separation from beloved always remains a source of pleasure for somelovers. It is a medium of insight and love cogitation. They derive delirious love from the distance. It could be because the search and longing for meeting is the real essence of their journey of life. If they meet the beloved the journey ends and they would arrive at the destination, which they just could not conceive of.

Khumar has beautifully woven this idea when he said,

Mere RahbarMujhKoGumrahKarde
SunaHaiKeManzilKhareebAaGaiHai [3]

O my guide! Misguide me
I heard that the destination has nearly arrived.

These verses do not mention anything about separation and meeting, yet if it is interpreted in terms of the lover journeying to meet his beloved, then the destination shall be 'the meeting' with the beloved, and the lover wants to get astray, for he enjoys the journey which involves missing and remembering of the beloved. Hence the lover feels a threat to his precious possessions, that is, the state of missing the beloved and the state of remembering the beloved.

Main aur Tere Hijre Musalsil Ki Shikayath
Tera Hi To Aalam Hai Teri Yaad Ka Aalam [4]

I and the complaints of your separation!
The world of your remembrance is only your world.

The separation in reality takes the lover to the world of his beloved. It throws him in the world of remembrance. And lover feels that being in the remembrance world of the beloved itself is like being in the company of the beloved. Hence for the lover *Hijr*does not bring pain, it is in fact a source of pleasure, it keeps him all the time in the remembrance of his beloved. Such separation is what I termed the metaphor of love.

For some separation often brings contentment and pleasure, for some the pain of separation is wealth. Though the term separation is not used here, it is understood from the couplet given below that the lover is separated from the beloved.

Sukuun He SukuunHaiKhushi Hi KhushiHai
TeraGhamSalaamthMujheKya Kami Hai[5]

I am absolutely in peace and happiness,
What do I need anything for, when your pain is secured (with me).

Here, the pain of separation is wealth in possession for the lover. In other words if the beloved is far, and separated, then pain is near and accompanies the lover.

Agar TuKhafa Ho ToParwahNahin
TeraGhamKhafa Ho ToMarjaon Main[6]
If you are sulky with me no problem
If your pain is sulky with me, I will die.

The fixation with separation from beloved is the sublimity of longing in love. Separation keeps away lust creeping in love.

The power of separation is pinned to the hope of meeting, when meeting is honoured, then the fear of re-separation looms large. There is no end to separation, it is cyclic.When the lovers meet after being separated by family, society or circumstances, then the fear of separation by death becomes eternal. Hence there is no separation from separation.

In this paper I used terms in traditional gender associated way. That is, lover as male and beloved as female.

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2) Jigar Moradabadi, *Aatishe Gul,* 1967 p. 23, New Delhi: Maktabe Jamia Ltd. 3 & 5 Khumar Barabankavi, 'Na Hara HaiIshq' (https://rekhta.org/ghazals/na-haaraa-hai-ishq-aur-na-duniyaa-thakii-hai-khumar-barabankavi-ghazals?lang=Ur)
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Ensnared in the Impossibility of Writing: Benjamin's Silence in Autobio - spatial Texts

Soni Wadhwa

A man's memory is not a summation; it is a chaos of vague possibilities.
- Jorge Luis Borges, "Shakespeare's Memory"

> In an autobiography one cannot avoid writing 'often' where truth would require that'once'be written.For one always remains conscious that the word'once'explodes that darkness on which the memory draws and though it is not altogether spared by the word'often',either,it is at least preserved in the opinion of the writer, and he is carried across parts which perhaps never existed at all in his life but serve him as a substitute for those which his memory can no longer guess at. Franz Kafka *The Diaries* 1910-1923

Walter Benjamin's perhaps most well-known works on the *flâneur* and the city *Charles Baudelaire* and *The Arcades Project* while extensively focusing on the demonstration of an engagement with the *flâneur*,are not without an element of an engagement with the past the most visible being that with history. Both the texts are filled with references to the social movements and revolutions. This essentially blurs the *flânerie*/memory distinction.In fact,even the cookie moment of involuntary memory, as obvious in the unparried shocks of a city dweller is strongly etched in memory. This is the premise to follow up with a study of memory.

There is an eerie and an uncanny kind of continuity between *flânerie* and memory. For instance, collecting (as a variation on *flânerie*) is also a form of practical memory, since what a collector collects are largely detritus from the past. In another sense, *flâneur* is "an individual whose state of heightened individuality and interiority spurs him to romantic journeying in the infinity of the self" (Buse et al, 4). This journeying into the self brings to the mind a quality of memory too for the self. Further, Benjamin calls *flânerie*"a very specific experience that the proletariat has in the big city one in many respects similar to that which the immigrant has there'[1](347).Thus,perhaps,the *flâneur* is the migrant as well. Perhaps, he is not only observing, but also remembering, since he is interested in the detritus from the past. That *The Arcades Project* is a text of primal history of the nineteenth century bears upon the remembering trope of the *flâneur*. Buse*et al.* also hint at it in their way of connecting ruins as the material for both the *flâneur* and the one who engages in the act of remembering: "Prehistory is resurrected in Benjamin's historiography as the possibility that the whole of the past can be redeemed from its ruins... The whole of history is present in the fragment that is the object of study"(34).So,just as research, collecting (the detritus, the rags from the ruins), observing, reflecting (all those

tropes of *flânerie*) are gestures in studying, remembering too becomes a crucial exercise in the same.

This paper deals with *Moscow Diary* and *Berlin Childhood around 1900* as two unconventional texts in the larger project of city and space texts that can help us appreciate the complexity of Benjamin's way of undertaking spatial poetics. They are

1) in *The Arcades Project* also a perspective expounded upon by George Devereux in his *From Anxiety to Method in Behavioural Sciences*
2) Peter Szondi too in his Foreword to *Berlin Childhood* remarks that 'true objectivity is unusual in they are extremely personal and unfold very private ways of doing philosophy and engaging with research (unlike the foci of the previous two chapters, which were very discursively and teleologically exploration- and argument-oriented, that is, driven by the project of a study. The texts here, on the other hand, display a different strategy-that of presentation or representation of the self. These are voices emerging from a personal space of memory-be it retrieving a past that belonged to another century or a past that happened the same day. They are genres of personal writing-those of the autobiography and the diary. They use memory as a tool to understand time and space, and the performance and execution of memory are what this paper seeks to foreground- not just memory per se but space as an analytic virtue of memory. Both the texts engage with remembering the city and open up interesting strategies that go into unleashing that remembrance. Both were written at difficult times-*Moscow Diary* when Benjamin was in Russia trying to make some contacts for writing assignments, to explore the possibilities of a relationship with Asja Lacis and to introspect about joining the Communist Party in Germany; and *Berlin Childhood* when he was trying to escape the Nazis in Germany. Both demonstrate a pre-occupation with the notions of shelter and refuge-either seeking them or constructing them mentally.

The two texts become 'discourses of space' in their autobiographical elements and in the way they manifest the established idea of socially-constructed self to express the spatially-implicated and the spatially-oriented self. While Benjamin's Baudelaire texts deal with a desire to look and a method to show, these ones exhibit a desire to tell, though not without its imagistic elements. Both *Moscow Diary* and *Berlin Childhood around 1900* have received very little attention from the critics and commentators of Benjamin, probably indicating a bias against the autobiographical or the personal and a bias for the impersonal and critical authorial voice. However it is important to explore spatial handling and tropes of scatteredness in these autobiographical texts, also typical of the *flâneur*.

Written between 1932 and 1934 in Italy and revised in 1938, *Berlin Childhood around 1900* is an autobiography by Walter Benjamin. As with his some other writings, he could not get it published in his lifetime and became one of his greatest disappointments. It is interesting to note that this highly subjective and memory-based account was being written at the time when Benjamin was also collecting notes for *The Arcades Project*. While *The Arcades Project*

turned out to be a highly research based text, rooted in voices from several historical and published works, *Berlin Childhood* was shaping up as the voice of memory and self. The two may seem diametrically opposed ways of thinking, organizing and writing but as all research consists of subjective perspective and therefore is largely autobiographical[1], *Berlin Childhood* seen in the light of this argument helps us locate the text as an important way of knowing[2]. So while *The Arcades Projectlooks* at nineteenth century Paris and is a valid way of understanding a time-space, *Berlin Childhood* too becomes an equally unconventional yet remarkable way of understanding turn-of-the-century Berlin.

Berlin Childhood is not a straightforward autobiography. Like a lot of Benjamin's writings, it uses the 'small form', that is not an argumentative essay, but imagistic writing[3] or miniature portraits from his childhood. It is written in 'thought figures'[4] or the dialectical montage, symptomatic of Benjamin's impulse to do philosophy concretely. Like a few others of his texts, this one too was condemned to rewriting and re-organizing several times. My reading chiefly deals with the 1938 version published in 1989. Like *The Arcades Project*, each of its readings and interpretations is haunted by textual uncertainty. It becomes difficult to decide how to handle the sections of 1932-34 – one wonders why Benjamin chose to delete them in 1938. It raises the question of how to deal with a work-in-progress. The text deals not just with memory but with memory as theatre, as an actualization or concretization in an image of that which is past. Benjamin's conception and study of *flânerie*colours his notion and practice or memory too. Szondi suggests, "Benjamin's tense is not the perfect but the future perfect in the fullness of its paradox: being future and past at the same time" (19). This idea of time is further complicated by Benjamin's use of the present, his 1932-34 or his 1938, as a lens to recall the time past.

The title does not say '*My* Childhood around 1900'. It refers to the childhood that the city offered and moulded for a child of Benjamin's class at that time. David Pike comments on the appropriateness of the use of the medium of the child's psyche: "Because children experience space differently than when they become socialized into its conventional meanings, their representations and memories of it provide different information about it than adults' more conventional experience of spaces" (Pike 870).

Benjamin's is a curious way of doing history – at the level of the form, his expression is very poetic and at the level of dealing with time, he mixes the social and the personal. It is very difficult to quote from *Berlin Childhood* too because its lyrical language does not yield easily to a selection from the context. In one of the pieces, he recalls:

> "In the years since I was a child, the loggias have changed less than other places. This is not the only reason they stay with me. It is much more on account of the solace that lies in their uninhabitability for one who himself no longer has a proper abode" (42).

Simply speaking, the loggias refer to the courtyards of the houses, especially of those in Berlin's old west. Michael Jennings[5], however, makes

interesting observations about them. He argues that in Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, they evoke the loss of a sense of nostalgia because as particular places in the architecture of the house, they lost their function or relevance. They are also seen to have intertextual references to the arcades – both the loggias and the arcades have at least one side or more open to the air. Jennings stretches the possibilities of such a reference to encompass "pre-cinematic photographic technologies" (10) which because of "its box-like form and its shutters, is not merely a figure for a theatrical loge, but for a view camera" (10). The entire text of *Berlin Childhood around 1900* brims with such practices for viewing and thought images. Jennings explores photographic viewing and architectural metaphors in his essay on the text[6]. One of his chief contentions is that Benjamin attempts "to create texts that aspire to the conditions of legibility of the photograph" (11). The medium chosen, that of the thought image or the *Denkbild* is described by Gerhard Richter[8] as that which "encodes a poetic form of condensed, epigrammatic writing in textual snapshots, flashing up as poignant meditations that typically fasten upon a seemingly peripheral detail or marginal topic, usually without a developed plot or a prescribed narrative agenda, yet charged with theoretical insight" (2).

In his thought-images, Benjamin here is of course looking back and looking within at the same time. Both vision and visuality are at work here. With his treatment, it does not remain an individual account, but gains larger proportions and speaks in terms of his class too. It is not an idle recollection, but an exercise in social history. As Pike explains, "Benjamin combed his childhood memories not for consolation, but for encoded answers and ways in which the present somehow could have turned out differently" (871). His preoccupation with the rise of technology as a socio-historical phenomenon reveals itself here too – for instance, in the way he finds his first telephonic conversations echoing differently in his ears at the time of his writing, and in the way he remembers the panoramas fascinating people and then losing them as audiences and as sites that lost favour with the masses after exciting them for a while. Benjamin says that the technological innovations like the panoramas were "suffused with the ache of departure" (43). For a while, the coming of a call, the ringing of the telephone disrupted the sleep of Benjamin's parents and through them, disrupted the whole concept of siesta of that historical period. Therefore, what Benjamin recalls here is not a personal memory, but a (historical) time past, a time lost. It becomes an extremely historical way of doing autobiography and a personal way of doing history. His fascination with spatiality and the city recurs in this text too:

Not to find one's way around a city does not mean much. But to lose one's way in a city, as one loses one's way in a forest, requires some schooling. Street names must speak to the urban wanderer like the snapping of dry twigs, and little streets in the heart of the city must reflect the times of day, for him, as clearly as a mountain valley (52-3).

Something of the *flâneur*-like approach is seen in such a reflection. Perhaps that is one of the things that demonstrate how thinking about the city, and reflecting on the city comes organically to Benjamin. The city does not

become something extraneous to his thought and work as a scholar. It is the medium and the content of his thought. More importantly, what is even more intriguing is the perspective of the child (as the *flâneur* in his quite telling obsession with the idea of space) that unfolds in the pages of the text. As a reader, the adult Benjamin recalls the child Benjamin and rediscovers the ways of connecting with space. So when Benjamin recalls seeing the places and cities he reads about, it becomes a testimonial to the cartography of/in the mind:

The distant lands I encountered in the(se) stories played familiarly among themselves, like the snowflakes. And because distance, when it snows, leads no longer out into the world but rather within, so Baghdad and Babylon, Acre and Alaska, Tromso and Transvaal were places within me. The mild air of light holiday literature which permeated those places tinged them so irresistibly with blood and adventure that my heart has forever kept faith with the well-thumbed volumes (59-60). When Benjamin recognizes these places within him, he is externalizing and internalizing a notion of lands as narrative. At the time of reading, they turn imagination into something spatial and at the time of the writing of the autobiography, they turn memory into a space. Benjamin retrieves them further in the form of further concrete images - that of the market hall, for instance, which is not described with the connotations of buying and selling but in terms of the women sellers who were no less than "priestesses of a venal Ceres, purveyors of all fruits of the field and orchard, all edible birds, fishes, and mammals" (70). The "Halle Gate" or the Gate Hall is an "illuminated grotto where [I] meet with the memory of a Berlin" (93). Or, the KrummeStrasse, the Crooked Street, is nothing other than the arcades Benjamin read about in the fairy tales as places of excitement and danger. Of course, the shops and their windows and the commodities appear in these memories as enticing places. These are highly charged with phantasmagoric way of thinking, imagining, seeing and most importantly, remembering. If *The Arcades Project* was the primal history of the nineteenth century Paris, *Berlin Childhood* almost becomes the primal memory of the nineteenth century Berlin. It is a highly detailed imagistic remembrance and very metaphorical at that. Benjamin turns the market hall into a place he discovered, a strategy not hugely different from the way he makes the distant lands his own. He is thus collecting memory, collecting in the very Benjaminian sense of the term with all the valences of *flânerie* and of collecting as a nineteenth century passion: "Finds are, for children, what victories are for adults. I had been looking for something that would have made the [Peacock] island entirely mine, that would have opened it up exclusively to me" (82).

To make something one's own, to own something, with all its implications of gaining access to the place of its origin and claiming it as personal, through possessing a part of it surely is a classic act in *flânerie*. That is one of the ways in which the concerns of *The Arcades Project* overflow into *Berlin Childhood* and *flânerie* overflows into memory. This comment of the bourgeoisie interior in the latter also resonates with the former: Here reigned a type of furniture that, having capriciously incorporated styles of ornament from different centuries, was thoroughly imbued with itself and its own duration. Poverty could have no place in

these rooms, where death itself had none. There was no place in them to die; and so their occupants died in sanatoriums (88).

The household and the furniture these essential places of dwelling-are strangely impersonal in Benjamin's rendering. Or perhaps, that is not very strange at the same time because this condition of not being comfortable in one's own place is an effect of industrial capitalism and commodity culture, as Adorno would put it in something of his memoir[7].It is a place of alienation.This constant pointing of similarities between Benjamin's texts, their textual strategies, the cities that they refer to is, as I hope to argue, not merely an argumentative tact, but a natural outcome of noticing Benjamin's similarities brings out:The gift of perceiving similarities is, in fact, nothing but a weak remnant of the old compulsion to become similar and to behave mimetically...I was distorted by similarity to all that surrounded me. Like a mollusk in its shell,I had my abode in the nineteenth century, which now lies hollow before me like an empty shell (978).

Seeing similarities thus becomes an optic for locating *flânerie* in memory and vice versa. It is through the medium of memory that Benjamin notices his past and the history as an empty shell and he has outgrown it like a mollusk. His ability to locate time (nineteenth century) in space (a shell) makes his outlook reverberate with a uniquely historical attitude. He connects with things by becoming similar to them. So while considering the sky or some jewelry or some book, he would become whatever he was engaging with. He also has a very private relationship with the city, close enough to be articulated on the lines of prosopopoeia:

The city would promise them[8] to me with the advent of each new day, and each evening it would still be in my debt. If they did happen to arise somewhere, they were already gone by the time I got there, like divinities who have only minutes to spare for mortals (105).

The way he asks the city for instance of a crime or a misfortune indicates the way he thinks he has a secret pact with the city. He urges the city to throw a tragedy or such an action here and there, which also suggests the *flâneur*/ detective way of looking and need to process his surroundings. The city disappointed him almost always because he would get access to the scene only after most of the traces of the crime or accident had been wiped away. In his mind, everything gains a poetic stature - an outbreak of fire accident becomes "the glorious, fiery bird" (109) that everybody would like to witness and that the city wants to withhold. These disappointments and these images have stayed with Benjamin as a part of childhood wisdom that underlies larger philosophical questions that Benjamin would deal with, or raise, in his writings:

Why is there anything at all in the world, why the world? With amazement, I realized that nothing in it could compel me to think the world. Its nonbeing would have struck me as not a whit more problematic than its being, which seemed to wink at nonbeing (117).

The "dreamy recalcitrance" (159) in Benjamin is brought out by the city in the way he resists being sucked into the nineteenth century and its bourgeoisie atmosphere. It also helps him understand eroticism in his way and this way of the libido being intertwined with the urban would recur in all his thinking about

the city, especially in the ways he 'sees' the urban environment. Benjamin explores his memories of Berlin when it was on the threshold of modernity. The form and the medium of the Denkbildevokes a photographic consciousness and vision throughout the text. Jennings[9] remarks: "This is a vision of a different order: we are preserved for all time in the thrall of myth, unredeemed, aware of a knowledge we can intuit but never attain, entombed, - in short photographed" (328). This photographic eye of the memory or the idea of memory as an optical apparatus is present in several sections of Berlin childhood including 'The Moon' which talks about the moonlight coming into the room through the blinds, the view is quite strikingly similar to the camera and that of the camera.

Memory becomes that very camera in his *Moscow Diary*. Benjamin arrived in Moscow on December 6, 1926 and left on February 1, 1927. His visit pertained to writing some articles for the official Soviet Encyclopedia and was financed by *Die Kreatur*, the literary quarterly journal. During his visit, he maintained a diary, which was published much later after his death as *Moscow Diary*. The diary contains his impressions about the city, an intellectual involvement with the city, and as a chronicle of an intellectual not at home.

Benjamin wanted to write something "comprehensive" about Moscow. His intention was to write a description of Moscow "in which all factuality is already theory" (132) without any deductive abstraction, prognostication and judgment. His attempt was to "render the physiognomy of its workday and the new rhythm that informs both the life of the worker and that of the intellectual" (134). The diary consists of plenty of material thanks to his constant observing and reflecting in a highly cinematized form. It is peppered with itineraries, descriptions of particular spots, visits and everything that Benjamin could soak in in his constant movement – through his walks and sleigh rides. The entries in "their unbelievable precision, an unusually intense blend of observation and imagination" (Scholem 6) [10] are not different from his supposedly non-autobiographical work in terms of intensity and intellectual context. In fact, Gary Smith finds it reductive to classify *Moscow Diary* with the autobiographical writings of Benjamin (137). The diary works more like the notes in *The Arcades Project* which make it "appear more paratactical and tentative than the 'Berlin Chronicle' of 1932 and much less ornate and hermetically sealed than the allegorical prose snapshots of the Berlin Childhood" (Richter 87-88)[11]. It is a travelogue, and a confessional document. As Gary Smith in his 'Afterword' to *Moscow Diary* says, it "exceeds the conventions of the genre" (137). Benjamin visited Moscow when Christmas preparations were in full swing. The text reveals the nomadological wanderer in Benjamin. He is plagued with restlessness, refusing to be still, and is always on the move, gazing, viewing, watching. His visit and his narration of the visit shows a *flâneur*-like conception of time: walk, eat, visit, watch, watch a play, read, shop and window-shop or watch a film.

Though 'Moscow' as a city portrait and an essay exists, it is interesting to read the material that formed the basis of the essay. Moscow is what happens in his walks and in his conversations with Asja[12] the time spent with her forms the erotic backdrop. Cold, snow and ice (like the commodities) are indispensible

parts of walking and the city. Sometimes the snow sparkles like the stars. The game of dominos recurs in the diary. There are also recurring details about the time spent in the company of Reich[13] and AsjaLacis, visits to Asja's sanatorium, visits to the theatre and the cinema, to the cafés and restaurants and street shops. Quite a few times, he fails to get tickets to the play. There is also a regret that he learned so much less about Russia than he had expected. His time is spent looking at the commodities in shops, enjoying the view and buying some stuff. He comes across several people some he likes instantly, the others he finds dumb. He visits the toy museums a lot and the Russian toys form the theme of one of his short essays on Russia.They show a unique relationship between wood and colour in that they turn something as ordinary as the orbs into an enchanted assortment of fruits. Benjamin appreciates the craftsmanship that goes into everything from a crude toy to lacquer work quite remarkable.

A lot of buying and talking about buying happens in the diary be it a pipe, some toys, a dress, a small doll, a glass dove for the Christmas tree, or a harmonica. "The inventory of the streets is inexhaustible" (58) so sale, sellers and saleable items keep recurring in the text.On sale are decorations made out of paper flowers that stand next to, and in contrast to, Lenin's portraits. The text is a record of how selling takes place-some are unlicensed vendors. Christmas goodies are on sale even after Christmas. Yet there is a human angle to the process. The women selling the goods resemble the figure of the grandmother: During the course of my long morning tour, I also noticed something else: market women, peasant women, standing next to their baskets of wares...You would think that some sweet grandmother had looked around before leaving her house and had picked out all the things she could take to surprise her grandchild. Having packed them up, she is now standing on the street, taking a short rest on the way (19-20).

Images and personalities like that of the saleswomen (and the beggars discussed below) give a glimpse of vibrancy to the otherwise silent city. With selling comes the practice of buying gifts, a not so exciting part for Benjamin because he does not have money. Asja is upset about the tearing of the silk blouse, which Benjamin gifted to her. She demands something expensive as a gift and finally makes Benjamin promise that he would buy her something that would last for long. She asks him to buy some tangerines, which he again refuses just as he refuses to gift her the expensive gift. She even once complains to him that he never has any money for her. He once takes a cake to Asja to make up for a fight. She requests Benjamin to buy apples for Reich. In fact, details like these about Asja concerned the publisher of *Moscow Diary* a lot and he did not let it publish during Asja's lifetime, probably assuming that it would embarrass her. But it cannot be denied that Benjamin gets to know the city in Asja's company and it becomes a context of love:

Asja wanted to hop on a streetcar - but decided not to. We were standing in the hustle and bustle of the large square in front of the theater. Animosity and love were shifting within me like winds; finally we said good-bye, she from the platform of the streetcar, I remaining behind, debating whether or not to follow her, leap after her (116).

A lot of Moscow happens in Benjamin's conversations with Reich, Asja and other intellectuals, journalists and artists he meets. They discuss about journalism in Russia and Germany, the piano[14], the intelligentsia during the French Revolution, or history of the educated and that of uneducation. They even conduct loud readings of articles for each other, to hear each other's comments. The text becomes a field of reflexivity about ideas and how they should be conducted. In one instance, Reich and Asja rubbish Benjamin's article; for another one (about the piano), Asja wants to partner with him to write but overall they accuse him of not having any zeal to pursue serious publication. Benjamin records all these meta-elements about his writing, these first critiques and produces a kind of context of reception of his ideas. He incorporates them in the form of hesitation and that in turn reflects upon his style of writing.

Benjamin found it pleasant to walk on the streets of walk – a pleasure that reveals itself in several of his works. He gets lost while watching a crew shooting a film. The description of the city, the meat of the diary, is a different matter altogether – in its gaze of the *flâneur*:

"Moscow is the most silent of great cities, and doubly so when there is snow. The principal instrument in the orchestra of the streets, the automobile horn, is rarely played here; there are few cars. Similarly, in comparison with other centers, there are very few newspapers, basically only one tabloid, the single evening paper that comes out around three every day. And finally the calls of the street vendors are also very subdued. The street trade is for the most part illegal and does not want to call attention to itself. So the vendors address the passers-by less with calls than with measured, if not whispered, words in which there is something of the pleading tone of beggars. Only one caste parades noisily through the streets here: the rag-and-bone men with their sacks on their backs; their melancholy cry traverses every Moscow street one or several times a week. There is one thing curious about the streets: the Russian village plays hide-and-seek in them... The street thus takes on the dimension of the landscape.In fact, nowhere does Moscow really look like the city it is, rather it more resembles the outskirts of itself" (67).

The above passage merely gives a bird's eye view of Benjamin's breadth of observations. Each of these the snow or the cold, the streets, the shops and the sales, the landscape finds a much more nuanced handling in each of the situations Benjamin records. It is a city that has more churches than one can initially gauge. It is a metropolis that looks more like a provincial city. The wares to be sold are just laid bare on the snow. There are no seating arrangements on the streets. People are used to standing and gossiping too. They huddle together in the cold. The shops are open till late giving the city an air of nightlife. The view of the city bursts out in any situation while narrating what happened during the day, Benjamin mentions what part of the city he saw and what it looked like. What is fascinating is not merely that Benjamin gets distracted in the social situation, but also that he remembers to mention it in the flow of his narration of the event. The one and two story buildings, he observes, are indicative of how the Russians are stingy with their pavements or sidewalks and generous with their airspace. The narrow roads

cause the zigzag pattern of walking. The luxury here is this "ailing" city is "like tartar in a diseased mouth" (22) – a view coming perhaps from the disgust for the commodity culture, and at the same time, from a clinical approach to the observation of the modern city or the city in modernity. This "hideous and frigid" luxury is in drastic contrast to the rampant begging in the city, which, in its persistence, manifests "a vestige of vitality" (22). The beggars are "a corporation of the dying" (22). They are dying because, like the Paris that Benjamin was to study later on, the spaces of the beggars which would get them their day's money, the arcades, no longer exist.Because begging and shopping go hand in hand, the arcades encouraged a guilt in the buyers for what they bought, in the display of what they could afford. The arcades as open spaces were doubly phantasmagoric – in their display of commodities and in the way they juxtaposed the bourgeoisie and the beggars. The beggars now manage by howling when they see a potential giver. They alone remain the same and the constant and the stationary in a city that keeps changing, whose shops and institutions keep changing their locations to rid of the air of coziness and melancholia.

Benjamin notices the uniform, proletarian appearance of the people. He sees Russian socio-political situation in a "conversion of revolutionary effort into technological effort" (82). He would like to resist the conversion merging the individual and the collective: "One is better off in a house that only has candles than in one that has electric lights that don't work because of constant power failures" (30-1). On the other hand, in art and art criticism, he notices an attempt at proletariazation not a superficial appreciation or contemplation of the masterworks but an engagement with ordinary people and their work. The eye is thus being educated differently to aid in the mission of taking possession of the cultural resources previously owned by the bourgeoisie. There is also a sense of fatalism of Russians: there are constant possibilities of accidents and nothing happens as per the plan or expectations. Despite having most number of watchmakers, the Russians are rarely on time. They are rarely seen to be hurrying unless they are bothered about the cold. The Russian films lack originality, are bereft of eroticism and value only technique. The concept of education has dubious records and in terms of information, Russia is isolated from the world.

In his quintessential understanding of the orientation of a place, Benjamin explores exploring a spot: One only knows a spot once one has experienced it in as many dimensions as possible. You have to have approached a place from all four cardinal points if you want to take it in, and what's more, you also have to have left it from all these points. Otherwise it will quite unexpectedly cross your path three or four times before you are prepared to discover it. One stage further, and you seek it out, you orient yourself by it (25).

This idea of doing and re-doing, visiting and re-visiting, strongly present in the writing and re-writing of his texts resound his textual strategy with his spatial one. This view also underlies Benjamin's reading of a painting: ...to the extent that one grasps a painting, one does not in any way enter into its space; rather, this space thrusts itself forward, especially in various very specific spots.

It opens up to us in corners and angles in which we believe we can localize crucial experiences of the past; there is something inexplicably familiar about these spots (42).

The dimensions of different corners or cardinal points for a spot or for a painting give a new territoriality to that spot or that painting. And in his process of territorializing everything, he cannot help but notice the maps (of SSR), which are being sold on the streets with a presence that gives them an iconic status only next to that of Lenin's portrait.

The concern with the dwelling emerges strongly in this text too: "If people manage to bear rooms which look like infirmaries after inspection, it is because their way of life has so alienated them from domestic existence. The place in which they live is the office, the club, the street" (26). On the other hand, the scarcity of good housing as visible in small houses with windows lighting them up makes them look like an illumination.

The signboards are filled with action – it may be shoes falling from a basket, or a dog running with a shoe in his mouth. Drawing references from primitive paintings to a great extent, they compete a lot with each other for the bourgeoisie buyer's attention. That drama plays out at a great height where only the industrial elite, esoterically rich can see them. The snow on the streets brightly reflects the lamps of the vendors and the headlights of the automobiles.

The erotic is intertwined with the urban. The passage about possibilities of a relationship with Asja is followed by a description of the city:

Life here in the winter is richer by a dimension: space literally changes according to whether it is hot or cold. People live on the street as if in a frosty hall of mirrors and every decision, every stop becomes incredibly difficult: it takes half a day of deliberation to go drop a letter in a mailbox, and despite the bitter cold, it takes an effort of the will to enter a store to buy something (35).

These musings emerge out of a loneliness or a solitude that in turn comes out of a vacuum left by the uncertainty with Asja. This sexual tension between him and Asja invites thinking about solitude: "even the person who feels fundamentally alone in the world only experiences his solitude when he thinks of a woman, even an unknown woman" (43).

Benjamin returns to Berlin with disappointment – there is no concrete possibility of a relationship with Asja and the Soviet Encyclopedia may not take off after all. But he also returns with the clarity that he would not join the Communist Party. Interestingly, after returning to Berlin, he finds it a dead city. Even a very little knowledge about Russia colours one's observation and judgment of Europe.

Both *Berlin Childhood around 1900* and *Moscow Diary* are extremely unconventional city texts or city portraits. Some of their subject matter exists in the proper essays, but these ones are remarkable in their way of becoming the material or fabric for those proper essays.

While the 'wishimages' or dialectical images are central to understanding the *flâneur*'s sensibility of the city, thought images or figures of thought are crucial to make sense of the *flâneur*-cum-exile in *Berlin Childhood around 1900*. These figures of thought or Denkbild constitute the 'small form' in which Benjamin narrates his childhood and he city of Berlin. If history is broken into images for Benjamin's Baudelaire essays and *The Arcades Project*, then it is memory which is captured in images in *Berlin Childhood around 1900*. Benjamin once again wanders in the city only this time the difference is that it is the city of his past. At the time of writing of *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, Benjamin was an exile in Paris. So his condition is that of an exile, but his strategy is nothing less than that of the *flâneur*. This is not to say that the ways in which the *flâneur* and the exile access the city are diametrically opposite but that they resonate with other's qualities. The exile in Benjamin uses these snapshots from his memory to discuss the private relationship he had with his city. In his imagistic writing, Benjamin recalls the spaces of Berlin that he remembers intimately – from the loggias or courtyards to the Market Hall. The Berlin that he recalls is the Berlin that was increasingly becoming modern. And passionate that Benjamin was about the *flâneur* and immersed that he was in the rootedness of the *flâneur* in the nineteenth century Paris, he, it could be argued, cannot help but transform his memory and his act of remembering into that of observing by the *flâneur*. The images that he recalls are vivid and the resonances that his memory images have with the act of wandering are unmistakable. The city's landmarks like the Crooked Street are the sites that Benjamin-the-child discovers and Benjamin-theadult-exile remembers. The idea is to refrain from any kind of direct attempt at theory, analysis or interpretation.

The entries in *Moscow Diary* are yet another example of such textual adventures in their impressionistic form. Benjamin here again is the *flâneur*: his strolls in the city, even though done with a touristy orientation at times bring out the *flâneur*'s gaze in him. In the way he wishes to write something very untheoretical about Moscow, Benjamin chooses to describe the city without any judgment. Benjamin merges Moscow and the people he is with in his diary. The city and its locations do not function as the empty space in which conversations take place. Instead, Moscow becomes an active intervention in the conversations about buying, shopping and gifting. Like Benjamin's Paris of the nineteenth century, and the Berlin of his childhood to some extent, Moscow is expressed in the commodities it has to offer – the toys that Benjamin writes about, the goodies that he buys for his son, the expensive stuff he is *not* able to buy for Asja. In this sense, it is probably the most personal of all texts considered here till now because it does not seek to contextualize capitalism in these commodities; it, on the contrary, shows genuine fascination with them, a craving to possess them and even a disappointment at letting go of them. The colourful goods stand in stark contrast to the otherwise cold and snowy landscape of Moscow. Unlike *Berlin Childhood around 1900* which is a native's experience of the city,

Moscow Diary is a foreigner's experience. While the former is about journeying into the past, the latter is about journeying into distance. Writing travel pieces such as the essay 'Moscow' brought Benjamin closer to an understanding of Berlin. Peter Szondi in his essay 'Walter Benjamin's City Portraits' observes that Benjamin did not write any travel pieces or city portraits after 1933[15] and was absorbed in his autobiography *Berlin Childhood around 1900* because the circumstances made his condition compellingly about distance in time: "With the loss of one's homeland the notion of distance also disappears. If everything is foreign, then that tension between distance and nearness from which the city portraits draw their life cannot exist. The emigrant's travels are not the kind one looks back upon, his map has not focal point around which foreign lands assumed a fixed configuration" (31). Thus Benjamin's Moscow is very important for an understanding of Benjamin's Berlin.

There are other city portraits too that Benjamin wrote before 1933. However, it is *Moscow Diary* and *Berlin Childhood around 1900* that work as interesting and relevant examples of Benjamin's study of urban modernity because they are the texts that form the materials for the essays that Benjamin really managed to get published,that is, they form the basis for his essays 'Moscow'and 'A Berlin Chronicle'.These larger texts constitute the breadth and sources of Benjamin's thoughts about Benjamin as the foreigner and Benjamin as the native. Though the cities are seen from these different perspectives, they retain Benjamin's textual approach towards the writing of the city. The textual adventures here are the thought images and impressionist diary entries the media that again carry a visual paradigm and the small form like the convolute that Benjamin used in *The Arcades Project*. Laced with the autobiographical, the theoretical execution of dealing with the city in these essays has a lot to teach about both philosophy and genuine scholarship at a personal level, and at the level of the thought. Both are textual ruins too in the way their capacity to talk about the city is neglected (and to be attributed and shifted to the wellknown essays).This idea of the self-oriented genre further marks on the being of the intellectual/exile and his engagement with space. It seeks to explore the intellectual/exile's idea of metaphorical location and how it opens up possibilities to generate a different streak among discourses of space.

References :

1) 'images of childhood' (37) as Benjamin calls them as against figures of speech
2) The reference here is to Jennings' essay 'Double Take: Palimpsestic Writing and Image
3) Character in Benjamin's Late Prose'
4) His objective however is to compare *Berlin Childhood around 1900* to *One Way Street.*
5) In his *Thought Images: Frankfurt School Writers' Reflections from Damaged Life*
6) in his *Minima Moralia.*
7) Tragedies or accidents
8) In his essay 'The Mausoleum of Youth: Between Experience and Nihilism in Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood'*
9) in Preface to *Moscow Diary*
10) in "The Monstrosity of the Body in Walter Benjamin's "Moscow Diary""

11) AsjaLacis (1891-1979), a Latvian actress
13) Bernhard Reich (1894-1972), an Austrian theatre director and critic, also a companion of AsjaLacis

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12) "Walter Benjamin's City Portraits." Trans. Harvey Mendelsohn. *On Walter Benjamin*: *Critical Essays and Recollections*. Ed. Gary Smith. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991. 18-52. Print.

1) Also a perspective expounded upon by George Devereux in his *From Anxiety to Method in Behavioural Sciences*
2) Peter Szondi too in his Foreword to *Berlin Childhood* remarks that 'true objectivity is bound up with subjectivity' (27)
3) Images of childhood' (37) as Benjamin calls them as against figures of speech
4) The reference here is to Jennings' essay 'Double Take: Palimpsestic Writing and Image
5) Character in Benjamin's Late Prose'
6) His objective however is to compare *Berlin Childhood around 1900* to *One Way Street*. [8] In his *Thought Images: Frankfurt School Writers' Reflections from Damaged Life* in his *Minima Moralia*.
7) Tragedies or accidents
8) In his essay 'The Mausoleum of Youth: Between Experience and Nihilism in Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood*' in Preface to *Moscow Diary* in "The Monstrosity of the Body in Walter Benjamin's "Moscow Diary""
9) AsjaLacis (1891-1979), a Latvian actress Bernhard Reich (1894-1972), an Austrian theatre director and critic, also a companion of AsjaLacis
10) Benjamin describes the piano thus: "a piece of furniture that functions in the petitbourgeois interior as the true dynamic center of all the dominant miseries and catastrophes of the household" (28) the year in which Benjamin went into exile to escape the Nazis.

Condemned to be Worthless: A Muslim Perspective

Zaheer Ali

At the start of the paper it is absolutely necessary to clarify that the term Muslim here refers to the adherents of Islam in India but it certainly does not denote the entire community for Muslims in India, as elsewhere, do not constitute a monolithic social construct. It is as much divided as any other religious community in India. Additionally, the acute sense of being worthless, deprived, alienated and shameful may also be a part of the psyche of the subaltern Muslims of the Muslim dominated nations but this paper focuses only the Indian Muslims. It must further be explained that since Indian Muslims do not constitute a monolithic community, its upper crust comprising about 25% of the total Muslim population of the country that goes by a fancy term *ashraf,*[1] is beyond the purview of the present discussion. *Ashraf* suffer from a divergent aberration, which for want of a better descriptor can be inaccurately called the superiority complex. They tend to think that at one time their ancestors ruled not only the independent India but the entire subcontinent and, therefore, rest of the Indians ought to be placed at a lower social status. Such an intense neurosis of past glory incited the Muslim political elite in undivided India to stir up Muslim separatism that caused an unbridgeable schism in Indian nationalist movement and the rest is, of course, history.

Contrary to the popular notion Islam arrived in India quietly with the Arab traders who were in control of the spice trade many centuries before the emergence of Islam in the Arabian peninsula. They would arrive on the western coast in their dhows and conduct the business in absolute peace. The coastal area of present day Kerala that was usually frequented by the Arab traders came to be known as Malabar, which is the Malayalam corruption of the Arabic word Ma'bar that means passage.[2] Islam, therefore, reached India almost at the same time it appeared in Mecca in the early seventh century. It was almost a century later a young Arab commandant, Muhammad bin Qasim conquered Sind.

The two routes of entry of Islam into Indian subcontinent are noteworthy because they had a bearing on the later historical developments and had also influenced the future relations of Muslims with the natives of the land. The more significant point was the manners in which the adherents of Islam came in the South and the North. In Kerala, the Arab traders were engaged in business for centuries and even after embracing Islam no significant change in their behaviour could be noticed by the local population except for the fact that they had stopped idol worship. Unlike this, the Muslims in the North entered as invaders. First it was Muhammad bin Qasim's conquest of Sind in the early 8th century and subsequently after a gap of almost three centuries Mahmud of Ghazna launched a series of expeditions in South Asia. During the course of his seventeen expeditions he looted and destroyed many wealthy temples including

the most famous one, the Somnath temple. Ghaznavid rule in Northwestern India lasted over 175 years. Thereafter, Shahabuddin Muhammad Ghori invaded India and in the second battle of Tarain defeated Prithiviraj Chauhan in 1192. This ultimately led to the establishment of the Sultanat Dynasty when after Shahabuddin's assassination in 1206 his general Qutbuddin Aybak declared himself the Sultan of India.

It is thus clear that the arrival of Muslims in Northern India was marked by violence and a pretense of a jihadist zeal that was too pronounced during Mahmud Gaznavi's expeditions. Compared to this the Arab traders' settlement in Kerala and some other coastal areas of the South was exceptionally peaceful. The consequences of the two conducts of arrival of Muslims in the South and the North are evident even now. The Muslims in South India are not, as a rule, blamed or persecuted for the historical wrongs despite the machinations of the RSS and Jamat-e-Islami. What is more significant is the fact that Muslims in the South could completely fuse themselves with the local cultures and social systems primarily because they never had the fixation of the rulers, which 25% Muslims of the North, the so-called *ashraf* always had. Muslims in the South like Christian and the Jew communities often married local women and got assimilated with the cultural ethos of their in-laws just like the Hindu sons-in-law. It is because of this reason that the Muslims in the South, particularly in Kerala are known as Moplahs which is an Anglicized corruption of the local term Mappila which means son-in-law.[3]

Hence , the term Muslim in this paper does not include the Muslims of South India as they are not usually made to feel the "others" and "worthless" by the Hindu majority. In the North, the Muslims when they first made their appearance were called the 'mleccha', a Sanskrit word that essentially means barbarian. The term was also used to denote 'another class of untouchables' or 'outer barbarians of whatever race or colour'[4].There are evidences that during the medieval period the term mleccha was used mostly to refer to Muslims not only because they were considered'barbarian' but they were also looked down upon by the upper caste Hindus as'polluted'.[5] "Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, also uses the term to refer to those of larger groups of other religions, especially Muslims."[6] In contemporary India when Sanskrit is almost a dead language and even the Brahmans hardly use it, the term mleccha was replaced by other pejorative terms of various Indian languages that are usually used to refer to Muslims. As per my knowledge the term which is used in Marathi is *landa* and in Hindi belt of the North it is *katwa*. Both the terms are used derogatively to refer to Muslims because of the custom of circumcision which is widely practiced by the Muslims.

The term Muslim here, therefore, denotes about 75% of Indian Muslims whom the sociologists divide into two sub-categories viz. *ajlaf*[7] and *arzal*[8]. The first point that must be brought into focus at present is that the cataloging of Indian history into Hindu period, Muslim period and the Modern age was deviously done by the British historians as it was very much a part of their imperialism's overall policy of divide and rule.

The period between 1200 and 1857, purportedly the *Muslim period* was in reality a phase during which various monarchs, who happened to be Muslims, ruled over large parts of India, in particular North India. To call this phase of Indian history a period of 'Muslim domination' is a delusory exercise. The 'Muslim' ruling elite, like any other ruling elite, had no empathy or sympathy for the teeming masses who were rampantly exploited by the landholders and their vassals. Most Muslims during the so-called Muslim period were part of the masses and, therefore, had to face similar social exclusion as was practiced with the Hindu masses. It is also a well-recorded fact that an overwhelming majority of the Indian Muslims comprises converts from the Hindu lower castes. Consequently, despite embracing an ostensible casteless faith, they could neither dispose of the social stigma nor run off social exclusion. Thus, the so-called period of Muslim domination for the overwhelming majority of the Muslims of North India was as much oppressive and forbidding as it was for the untouchables.

The Islamic jurisprudence that is in force in the Indian subcontinent distinctly upholds social ranking of Muslim groups taking into account birth and descent and the consequent social hierarchy that prevails is nothing but caste system.[9] It is true that the gravity of caste distinctions among Indian Muslims is not exactly similar to that of the Hindu caste system because of the absence of the concept of untouchability among the Muslims. Yet, besides birth and descent, occupation too helps determine the social ranking of a group in the hierarchical social order of Indian Muslims. This is exactly similar to that of Hindu *varna* system.[10] The Islamic scholars are divided in accounting for the reasons of social exclusion based on caste among Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. A group of scholars opines that it is the corollary of the Hindu caste system and that the Muslims of India living for centuries in a caste-ridden society have acquired the social practices of the Hindus. This is a flawed explanation because it camouflages two historical facts; a) social ranking of Muslim groups was firmly established in Islam immediately after the death of the Prophet and it was further strengthened by most schools of Islamic jurisprudence; b) the bulk of the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent comprise the local converts. Another group of scholars recognises that most Muslims of the Indian subcontinent are, in fact, Hindu converts to Islam and that despite embracing a new religion they have retained their social practices; caste system is one of those practices. The reasoning of the second group is congruent with historical facts. It also explains why most Muslim castes or *biradaris* are as endogamous as Hindu castes.

The caste-system among Indian Muslims got the official sanction in the thirteenth century itself during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq. A source that is widely cited by almost all the scholars dealing with the issue of caste based social exclusion among Muslims is *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* by Ziaddin Barni, a historian, who most probably stratified the Indian Muslims into *ashraf* and *ajlaf* for the first time. *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* may be described as a mishmash of Chanakya's *Arthashastra* and *Manusmriti*. Barni was vehemently opposed to the notion of egalitarianism and in order to justify his hierarchical structure of the Muslim community he even misinterpreted a Quranic verse viz.:

> "O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is knower. Aware."[11]

Firstly, the verse is not Muslim-specific. It is addressed to the entire humanity. Secondly, the noblest persons in the eyes of the Almighty are those whose conduct is best and not those who are born in the so-called noble families. Most commentators of the Quran endorse that the best conduct of a person has a direct correlation with her/his piety. So, one whose behaviour and manners are pious is noble in the eyes of Allah. Barni, nevertheless, interprets the verse on the basis of his skewed logic that a lowly-born and the one who is engaged in a lowly occupation is by nature incapable of pious conduct and, therefore, he should always be placed at a low social status. In order to keep the *ajlaf* permanently at the lowest rung of the social ladder, Barni recommends that the low caste Muslims should be denied access to education. His advice to the Sultan in this regard goes like this:

> "Teachers of every kind are to be sternly ordered not to thrust precious stones down the throats of dogs or to put collars of gold round the necks of pigs and bears-that is, to the mean, the ignoble and the worthless, to shopkeepers and to the low-born; they are to teach nothing more than the rules about prayer, fasting, religious charity and the hajj pilgrimage, along with some chapters of the Qur'an and some doctrines of the faith, without which their religion cannot be correct and valid prayers are not possible. But they are to be taught nothing else, lest it bring honour to their mean souls… They are not to be taught reading and writing, for plenty of disorders arise owing to the skill of the low born in knowledge. The disorder into which all affairs of the religion and the state are thrown is due to the acts and words of the low born, who have become skilled. For, on account of their skill, they become governors (wali), revenue-collectors ('amils), auditors (mutassarif), officers (farman deh) and rulers (farman rawa). If teachers are disobedient, and it is discovered at the time of investigation that they have imparted knowledge or taught letters or writing to the low born, inevitably the punishment for their disobedience will be meted out to them."[12]

Subsequently, the ulama, the elite and even some Sufis supported the caste based social exclusion among Muslims on a dubious notion known as *kufu'*, an Arabic term which literally means equal or comparable. According to this concept, social interaction, in particular, matrimonial relations, must be established between the Muslims of the same *kufu'* i.e. those who enjoy equal or comparable social status. As a scholar, Masood Alam Falahi, has pointed out in his well-researched work[13] that most of the 'revered' ulama of the subcontinent seem to have agreed upon the notion of *kufu'* that legitimises social exclusion among Muslims. Falahi, on account of authentic evidences, informs that prominent religious scholars such as Shah Waliullah, Mufti Muhammad Shafi Deobandi, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi, Maulana Syed Mehmood Madani, Maulana Qari Muhammad Tayyab Siddiqui Qasmi et al

have supported the concept of *kufu'* that consequently perpetuates caste stratification and social exclusion among Muslims. Maulana Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwi, as indicated by Falahi, respected Syeds so much that he declared that though Sheikh, Mughal and Pathan were part of ashraf they could not be kufu' of Syeds. Thus, Syeds came to acquire the similar highest and sacrosanct position among the Muslims that the Brahmans are supposed to enjoy among the Hindus.

Not that only ulama supported the notion of kufu' but even the modern social reformers such as Sir Syed too had worked only for the uplift of the *ashraf*. Falahi cites an excerpt of a lecture of Sir Syed that he delivered while laying down the foundation of *Madarsa-e-Anjuman-e-Islamia* in Bareli. The school was to cater to the educational needs of the children of *ajlaf*. Sir Syed believed that it was not necessary to teach English education to the children of low-caste Muslims but suggested: "It is better and in the interests of the community that they are engaged in the old form of study…It appears appropriate if you teach them some writing and math. They should also be taught small tracts on everyday affairs and through which basic beliefs and practices of Islamic faith."[14] It is shocking to note that even after the passage of six hundred years the opinions of the Muslim elite on the issue of education remained exactly the same as Sir Syed appeared to be just parroting the views of Ziauddin Barni!

The concept of *kufu'*, in no way, can be justified on the basis of the Quran but in actual practice it is supported by influential ulama of the subcontinent. In the view of a scholar, "Despite its egalitarian principles, Islam in South Asia historically has been unable to avoid the impact of class and caste inequalities."[15] Consequently, caste stratification persists among Indian Muslims. It is, however, argued that the caste differences and practices of social exclusion among Muslims are not as discriminating and domineering as they are among the Hindus. This contention is probably the offshoot of the display of egalitarianism within the precincts of a mosque where all Muslims, irrespective of caste and economic differences, can pray side by side. Once they are outside the mosque they reclaim their respective social positions and interact accordingly. The *ashraf*, by and large, mete out similar abhorrent and hateful treatment to the lower caste Muslims as the Hindu upper castes keep up with Dalits and Adivasis. In fact, in the opinion of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the social evils among the Muslims are "worse than those seen in Hindu society."[16]

As per an estimate *ajlaf* and *arzal* constitute 75 % of the Muslim population in India.[17] Nevertheless, the mainstream historical accounts of Indian Muslims do not reflect their lives, aspirations, sentiments or agonies; they merely portray the lives and actions of the *ashraf*. Political history from the conquest of Sind by Muhammad bin Qasim to the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, is evidently dominated by the adventures and achievements of the rulers whose foreign origin automatically puts them in the category of *ashraf*. The economic order that emerged during the medieval period was so exploitative that the common people that included an overwhelming majority of the Muslims were practically reduced to the level of slaves. Additionally, the *zamindars*, in order to maintain their so-called cultural superiority intact would not even allow

the Muslim landless peasants to christen their progenies with proper Muslim names; instead the *zamindars* themselves would name them as Kallan, Jumman, Buddan, Baban, Pathro, Bhiku, Raheeman, Shareefan, Sausan etc. What is true about medieval history is also largely true about the ancient and modern histories of India. If truth be told, we are still waiting for our own Howard Zinn to write a people's history of India.

Similarly, the substantially large body of theological literature that has been produced in India has been written by and for the protection of the interests of the *ashraf*. It has already been pointed out that almost all the leading religious scholars of India have overtly or covertly supported the concept of *kufu'*. The confrontation with the Western civilization and the loss of political power kicked the *ashraf* out from their palatial dwellings wherein they were ensconced leading a life of opulence at the cost of the labour of the toiling masses. In response, first they thought of regaining political power from the British by force that resulted in the disastrous adventurisms of Syed Ahmad Barelwi's Wahabi movement and later the uprising of 1857. Though the common people were used as cannon fodder on both occasions, the leaders were the *ashraf* and the purpose was to regain the lost glory of the upper castes. Likewise, the so-called socio-educational reform movement among the Muslims launched by Sir Syed, the *Aligarh Tahreek*, essentially catered to the needs and aspirations of the upper caste Muslims.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the *ashraf*, encouraged by the oblique support of the British masters established the Muslim League that institutionalised communalism in Indian politics. It was not accidental that the Muslim League remained an insignificant political force in the Muslim dominated provinces of Punjab, Bengal, Sind and North Western Frontier Province.The lower caste Muslim did not play any role in Muslim separatism or the movement for Pakistan.In fact,"they demonstrated against the two- nation theory propounded by Jinnah on 23rd March 1940 in Lahore"[18] .The moot point is that the Muslim separatist movement was carried out by the *ashraf* and not by the 'worthless' *ajlaf* or *arzal* but ironically after the partition of the country the lower caste Muslims who stayed put in the land of their ancestors because of various reasons have been facing the ire of the majority community for more than 65 years. In addition to the indignities heaped on them because of their low social status they are also accused of being traitors, fifth columnists and anti-India.

In the brief historical background mentioned above it has been revealed that the overwhelming majority of Indian Muslims belong to the lower castes. Their forefathers had embraced Islam with the hope of enjoying a better social status by joining a purportedly egalitarian faith. The second motive was to run away from the Brahminical oppression. However, they were hugely disappointed because the Muslim *ashraf* did not treat them as their equals; rather they were made to feel as wretched and polluted as they had been before conversion. Let alone getting any favours from the Muslim ruling elite, the newly converts were not even allowed to discard their traditional vocations. This was a godsend for the caste Hindus. Their initial fears that the untouchables would be empowered

by the Muslim rulers on embracing Islam and would become vindictive towards them to settle scores were proved unfounded. When the caste Hindus noticed that the upper caste Muslims hated the newly converts and treated them contemptuously they too continued to treat the *ajlaf* and *arzals* the same way as they were treating the untouchables. In fact, the caste Hindus added one more opprobrium to identify the Muslim Dalits i.e. they were called mleccha dalits that destroyed the self-respect of many of them. It was not accidental that the large number of Hindus who were employed and rewarded with huge estates by the Muslim rulers especially during the reign of the Mughals were all upper caste Hindus. There was hardly a member of *ajlaf* or *arzal* castes among the beneficiaries.

In independent India there is hardly any need to reiterate the fact that the Muslims who preferred to stay put in India, all of them irrespective of lower or upper caste, faced unprecedented hardships in every walk of life. One aspect of the problem should, however, be pointed out. Most of the ashraf from North India and Bombay Province migrated to Pakistan because they had the means and the motive in doing so. The overwhelming Muslim population of contemporary India, in particular of the North, comprises the *ajlaf* and the *arzal.* Though all the Muslims of India are victims of the discriminatory and often hostile policies of the state, the ajlaf and arzal are also facing the intra-community and inter-community detestation because of their lower caste status. These sections of the Muslims have nowhere to look to because they face state bias because of their faith and revulsion of the upper caste Hindus for being Muslims and that too lower caste Muslims and the intra-community social exclusion again because of their lower social status. These are the Muslims despised by almost all segments of Indian society and they are the ones who are condemned to be worthless.

In the Marxist parlance, alienation is a state of social estrangement of people when they are forced to lose their human nature (*Gattungswesen*, "species-essence"). Although the Marxist theory of alienation is for the most part deals with the circumstances that a worker has to face in an exploitative capitalist society, it does imply "that alienation is the systemic result of living in a socially stratified society". The stratification of a social order in Marxism is, nevertheless a class construct whereas in India the caste is the primary underpinning of social stratification. It, however, does not make a difference. The feeling of alienation in the sense of loss of the essence of their being is, in fact, more acute generally among all the lower caste people in India; among lower caste Muslims it is, particularly, far more intense. The point can be underline by citing a couple of everyday events from the lives of Muslims.

In Kolkata, a very popular food stall specialising in *paratha* is run by a man known as Rajib Mallick is in fact a Muslim whose real name is Rajab Ali Mollah. In order to be acceptable to his Hindu clientele and secure his small stall he has adopted a fictitious Hindu identity. It is the fear of rejection, resentment and violence of the Hindu majority of the neighbourhood that forced Rajab Ali to part with his 'species essence', to use the Marxist term, and lead a life of a fictitious identity.

Rajab Ali is, however, not the only Muslim in Kolkata to be condemned to feel worthless in his original Muslim identity. There are others too. Sohharab Hossain came to the metropolis with a Masters in English but very soon he realised that his Muslim identity was not worthy enough to get a toehold and find a means of livelihood in most parts of the city. He, therefore, took on a Hindu name Sourav Das that does not disturb his Hindu students. In order to perfect his Hindu persona, Hossain also keeps a small statuette of goddess Saraswati on his table.

Then there is Hasina Khatoon who is fish seller. Nevertheless, she cannot sell the fish in her original Muslim avatar. Her customers, who are mostly Hindus, will shun her. As a result, she has to masquerade as a Hindu by sporting a bindi or putting a vermillion powder mark on her forehead and dressing like a married Hindu women.

These are a couple of newspaper stories underscoring the dilemma the Muslims of Kolkata face because of their religious identity. The majority community of the metropolis not only makes them feel alienated but also worthless and discarded only because of their faith. However, such instances are not confined only to Kolkata or urban areas. The prejudice against Muslims is all pervading and ever increasing. In the city of Mumbai which is often trumpeted as the most 'cosmopolitan' mega city it is very difficult even for the well-heeled and well educated Muslims either to buy an apartment or take one on rent in most localities. They are simply shunned and consequently many of them suffer from an acute sense of self-denigration because of their Muslim identity.

I have deliberately left out the discrimination against Muslims by the Indian State because that would give a different drift and tenor to the issue. Suffice is to say that it is because of methodical and consistence exclusion of Muslims from all avenues of power by the state agencies since independence that Muslims in India have been reduced to be the most backward religious community. My focus here remains on social forces, to be precise, the so-called 'upper' caste Hindus who have always looked down upon the Muslims as mleccha, polluted, barbarians and in the post-independence scenario as traitors and terrorists. During the medieval period, it was the dalit segment of the Muslim community comprising ajlaf and arzal that were condemned, shunned and hated by the majority community because the Muslim rulers, the self-proclaimed ashraf, too treated them shabbily. Since 1947, the entire Muslim community has been the target of Hindu hostility and ridicule.

By way of conclusion it must be accentuated that for the majority community in India the poser-'who is a worthy being?'- has a direct correlation with the birth of an individual. For them worth of an individual in terms of education, achievements, excellence, creativity, talent etc. are not worth consideration to make someone a worthy being. Plainly speaking it is the caste, according to the dominant Hindu view, that determines the worth of an individual. No wonder caste is the most potent as well as the most exploitative institution of Indian society. The essence of Hinduism is, in fact, caste because we cannot imagine a Hindu without caste. It is all pervading. Consequently, the religions

like Islam which are theologically caste-neutral, have been socially stratified as rigidly as the Hindu varna system. In such a context the issue of 'worthy being' can never be ascertained objectively.

Work Cited:

1) Singular *sharif*. Arabic meaning respectable/ superior people.
2) See Asghar Ali Engineer's article, Islam and Muslims in India: Problems of Identity and Existence, 'Secular Perspective', March 16 - April 15, 2001
3) See P.R. G. Mathur's article, "The Mappila fisherfolk of Kerala: A Study in Inter - relationship Between Habitat, Technology, Economy, Society, and Culture" in *Anthropological Survey of India*, Kerala Historical Society, 1977, p. 1
4) Basham, A. L., *The Wonder that was India*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1954, pp 45-6
5) See for instance Al-Biruni's The Book of History of India (*Kitab Tarikh al-Hind*)
6) Vedabase
7) Singular *jilf*. Arabic, meaning boorish, rude, uncivilised people.
8) Singular *razil*. Arabic, meaning low mean, vile, despicable, contemptible people.
9) For instance, according to the Hanafi School to which most Indian Sunni Muslims adhere to specifies the rules of precedence of groups thus: "(a) an Arab was superior to a non-Arab; (b) amongst Arabs, all Quraishites were of equal social standing in a class by themselves, and all other Arabs were equal irrespective of their tribes; (c) amongst non- Arabs, a man by birth the equal of an Arab if both his father and grandfather had been Muslims before him, but only if he were sufficiently wealthy to provide an adequate *mahr* (marriage endowment); (d) a learned non-Arab was equal to an ignorant Arab, even if he was a descendant of Ali, 'for the worth of learning is greater than the worth of family'; a Muslim *kazi* or theologian ranked higher than a merchant and a merchant higher than a tradesman."Quoted in Imtiaz Ahmad(Ed.),*Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India,* Manohar, New Delhi, 1978, p. 14.
10) Though clannish affiliation was mainly the determining factor for social ranking in the Arab peninsula, interestingly, the word *zat,* from which are derived Indian terms such as jat and jati, is itself Arabic. The term *zat* in Arabic, however, does not mean a social group but it connotes 'being', essence/nature of a person, self etc.
11) *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran*, XLIX: 13, translated by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, Idara Isha'at-e-Diniyat, New Delhi, 2006,, p. 367
12) Quoted by Yoginder Sikand in the article 'Islam and Caste Inequality among Indian Muslims', www.dalitmuslims.com. See also his book, *Islam, Caste and Dalit-Muslim Relations in India,* Global Media Publications, New Delhi, 2004.. Cf. what Dr. B. R. Ambedkar observed about the British

reluctance to impart education to Dalits. He wrote that the British had a notion about education that, "Education and civilisation may descend from the higher to the inferior classes, but will never ascend from lower classes to those above them; they can only, if imparted to the lower classes, lead to general convulsion, of which foreigners could be the first victims. If we desire to diffuse education, let us endeavour to give it to the higher classes first." (See Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches, Vol.2, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai, 1982, p. 417)

13) Masood Alam Falahi, *Hindustan Mein Zaat-Paat Aur Musalman* (Urdu), Al-Qazi, New Delhi, 2007
14) Ibid.
15) Ayesha Jalal in her book, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia*.
16) Ambedkar, B. R., *Pakistan or the Partition of India*, Thackers Publishers.
17) Anwar, Ali, *Masawat ki Jung: Pasemanzar: Bihar ka Pasmanda Musalman*, (Hindi), Vani Prakashan, New Delhi, 2001
18) See Asghar Ali Engineer's article "Islam and Muslims in India: Problems of Identity and Existence" in Secular Perspective, March 16-April 15, 2001

Oroonoko: An Analysis of Treason in Behn's Anglo-African Sojourn

Tehreem Zehra

Introduction:

Every oscillatory movement of imperialist history has witnessed treason on the part of the natives. The marketing strategies of the West have always been successful in overcoming the moral as well as the patriotic spirit of the inhabitants. In fact, treason is no less than a demonic power that can dismantle the strongest pillars of trust among the people who belong to any specific place. It has a kind of serpentine-Satanic-lure in itself which drives a belonging member to leak the inmost sensitive secrets of his own comrades or country.

Traitors have been so rampant all through the epochs of history that there is hardly a nation or community or even a house where invasions, battles or disputes crop out without there being a traitor's hand in them. Even a fortress can seldom be demolished in a day or night but with someone inside it supporting the outsiders. Since time immemorial, every era has lamented the existence of traitors, deducting whom, houses and familial ties would never have been broken, friendship would never have been betrayed, communities would not have experienced breakdown and the mighty empires under legendary rulers would not have seen their downfall. While enemies and spies mostly probe our secrets and weak points to put us at check in case we go too far with our cunning policies, if any, traitors are a class which belong to us and instead of safeguarding our and their unified interests, go as far as shaking hands with our and at the same their enemy, first to destroy us and then themselves. After satisfying their selfish interests, the outsiders can never trust an inhabitant turned traitor who could not respect his own blood, race, gender or countrymen. When the game is over, the traitor either meets the same end as his own countrymen or is destined to become a puppet in the hands of his enemies.

> Treason has no specific religion, face, colour, or gender. It comes with a snake-like-glide and manipulates the matter with the cunningness of a fox. It has no self-respect, no sense of belongingness; just a fishy nature, poor moral character and a slimy attitude. History has witnessed traitors letting enemies into their own land, harbouring them as guests, hurting their own moral ethics in hope of acquiring some money and the so-called privilege. These fake friends creep deep into the land, arrest the inhabitants' emotions and psyche, take advantage of the internal trivial disputes and suddenly one day become the rulers, thereby the concept of imperialism and colonisation. In almost all the commonwealth countries, the first encounter was obviously violent and the natives met the outsiders with primitive as well as outdated weaponry. As a result, chunks of land were gradually occupied by the imperialists and the natives initially fought but

eventually surrendered, not being able to meet the innovative weapons and ferocious spirit of the colonisers. Mostly the inhabitants ended up nurturing deep grudge for their enemies but some gave in, attracted by the nominal favours promised by the attackers. Of all the commonwealth countries, Africa witnessed the most horrendous fate of its natives where millions were plucked out mercilessly from their motherland, transported in slave-ships in conditions worse than those of mishandled commodities and 'sold (auctioned) as wailing animals' in the 17th century American rustic auctioneering markets 'to grow cotton in the plantations and subscribed to christianity'. In Africa, 'venturing deep' inside the equatorial forests for 'seeking out just the right villages' where young blooming hot-blood would be available and worth capturing, was almost impossible for the foreign attackers. Certainly, some traitors or 'unscrupulous slave hunters' were at work. In the same way, more or less similar strategy must have been applied in other colonised lands such as India and Australia.

History, in one form or the other, has depicted images and cited fictitious examples from real events in concerned pieces of land. Art crafts such as domes, architecture, painting or written manuscripts take us back to the pre-independence time of the commonwealth countries when even the egoist rulers served the British or the French colonisers. Piles of literary work in shape of novels, short stories and even poems hold for us in store the depiction of sadistic nature of colonisers invading the native material, dignity, mind, spirit and values and crushing these under their feet.

Basically all colonisers have been synonymous with high profile dacoits who looted the traditionally prosperous places and treated them as chop-chop markets where even the insignificant soldiers had right to rob the defeated natives of their valuables and even common things such as swords, knives and armours of the dead in the battle. British and American youth boarded ships heading for the commonwealth countries with an intention to come back as terribly rich leviathans and which they did by stepping over the corpses of the natives and their national integrity. Moreover, this Herculean task was never accomplished without the collaboration of some cursed native souls who sold out their own brethren as well as nationalism for some cowries (shillings/cents).

Some writers have portrayed the above mentioned disloyal attitude in such a way, in their master pieces, that the very description leaves the eyes tearful and a heart choked with grief. In this paper, the author will analyse the efforts of a 17th century novelist who tirelessly attempts to evoke the shameful feelings for treacherous deeds of the traitors.

Behn's Oroonoko A Boomerang of Treason:

The crown prince of Abyssinia, the heart-throb of the kingdom, the only heir of the state, the terror of local wars is a very gallant warrior and Behn's pen knows no limits when it floats endlessly singing praises of this youthful moor, Oroonoko. This future king of the country of the blacks has been brought up just the way the Indian kings and princes were, during the British rule in

India. Oroonoko is tutored by the European instructors; he mingles freely with the European traders whose range of business varies from needles and combs to animals and human beings whereas in the battlefield he is a typical native African warrior but once any local war ends and Oroonoko is back home, his celebrations and flaunts of splendour are well known among the British slave traders who shamelessly demand their share from the war exploits and the prisoners-of-war from the overwhelmed victorious Oroonoko in lieu of a modest amount of money or some European products:

> Coramantien, a country of blacks so called, was one of those places in which they found the most advantageous trading for these slaves, and thither most of our great traders in that merchandise traffic; for that nation is very warlike and brave: and having a continual campaign, being always in hostility with one neighbouring prince or other, they had the fortune to take a great many captives; for all they took in battle were sold as slaves; at least those common men who could not ransom themselves. Of these slaves so taken, the general only has all the profit; and of these generals our captains and masters of ships buy all their freights. (*Oroonoko: TheRoyal Slave*)

The 17th century author, Aphra Behn seems to be well aware of the European mind-set towards the outsiders and she frankly acknowledges the strategies that the colonisers implement and take advantage of. *Oroonoko* is a story of barbaric nature, of the undeveloped mind of the colonised people, limited understanding, lack of foresight and a useless satisfaction in getting fake respect by the friends slowly turning into enemies. For instance, Oroonoko's grandfather (the present king) is an ancient man of 100 years and has plenty of old and young beautiful black wives. Of all the gallant sons he begot, none is left to life. Therefore, his immediate successor is his only grandson Oroonoko was given in teaching of one of the oldest generals of African wars when he was a teenager. Under the old general, Oroonoko becomes an expert fighter, ferocious conqueror and the 'darling of the soldiers'. It so happens that during one of the battles, in the midst of the clouds of arrows, the old general, trying to save Oroonoko, bears a fatal wound of an arrow-shot in his eye and dies. Apparently, the victorious crown prince pays a respectable visit to the general's only daughter Imoinda and as a homage to her deceased father, he gifts her with 'one hundred and fifty slaves in fetters', a part of the fresh exploits of the respective battle. In no time, both are deeply impressed by elegance and beauty of each other and an unspeakable love is born between them. Once Oroonoko is back at royal palace, every festive corner echoes with the sounds of courtiers delivering reports of Imoinda's charm. Very soon, a second visit by Oroonoko witness manifolds of love commitments exchanged between the youthful moor and the maiden. Before the couple can enter into wedlock, certain ceremony has to be observed which involves the elders on the both sides. This time, the guardian on Oroonoko's side is the hundred years old monarch and therefore he is to be given the absolute authority to handle the matter.

On the other hand, this old wavering soul hardly needs any reports about the beauty and character of Imoinda to glide all over her anatomy in his imagination:

> At this character, his old heart, like an extinguished brand, most apt to take fire, felt new sparks of love, and began to kindle; and now grown to his second childhood, longed with impatience to behold this gay thing, with whom, alas! he could but innocently play. (*Oroonoko: TheRoyal Slave*)

Before he confirms the extent of her beauty so as to call her to his private chamber he gets a courtier's report that she is about to be betrothed to the prince Oroonoko. Wasting no time, when the prince has gone for hunting, he sends the royal veil to Imoinda-invites her to honour her with his bed and to secure her for his own private use-the refusal of which means death for any maiden. Thus a pleading, tearful and wishing to resist Imoinda makes herself to suffer and to receive the caresses of the old king as he leads her into the richly prepared bath that he has ordered for this 'longed-for virgin'.

Any reader who is even partially aware of the native African semi-barbarism then, would not blame Behn for her description of the women's plight in Oroonoko's country. In those times, a man could have as many women as he could afford. With his women his sole job was to keep them 'turned on', not to abandon their intimate needs or subject them to shame. Behn regards these as 'virtues' when she compares them with the Christian countries 'where they prefer the bare name of religion; and, without virtue or morality, think that sufficient'. As far as the lusty old African monarch is concerned, he has secured for himself a large number of wives and concubines, the sight of whom is very hard to get because no males enter into the otan (dwelling for king's wives and mistresses) except when the king goes with his train of personal attendants to entertain himself with his wives or mistresses.This old African royal female dwelling is based on the hierarchy of the age and experience where loosening folds of skin are meant to teach the young flesh the arts of making love. No senior wife or mistress has any right to display her jealousy with the younger ones:

> ...the cast-mistresses of the old king; and 'twas these (now past their beauty) that were made guardians or governantes to the new and the young ones, and whose business it was to teach them all those wanton arts of love with which they prevailed and charmed heretofore in their turn...

(*Oroonoko: TheRoyal Slave*)

After much bawling at this personal conflict between a sense of respect for his grandfather and his rage at the possession of his lawful wife by the same grandfather, prince Oroonoko decides to exhibit some signs of slyness wherein he manages to show'a face not at all betraying his heart' in the presence of the king. Soon he gets an opportunity to accompany the old king to his otan where he should get a chance to behold Imoinda and he does. He develops a soft corner in the heart of a former old wife of the king, Onahal who in turn sighs for Aboan, a close friend of Oroonoko. Onahal feels neglected now that she is past her beauty and youth. Somehow, Oroonoko and Aboan manage to make Onahal their confidante and a plan is laid that both Oroonoko and Aboan may creep into the otan through its orange groove, around midnight. So, both of them do as

planned and each one gets his own chance with the appointed women. Imoinda and Oroonoko. Oroonoko is unaware of the king's spies who convey the course of events to his majesty but by the time the alarm is raised, it is early dawn and Oroonoko has already got the bliss of Imoinda's virginity and is more than satisfied at her "spotless" character. He returns to his camp and then to the battlefield against some local tribe. The enraged king is reported by Imoinda and Onahal that Oroonoko "unknown to her, had broke into her apartment, and ravished her." The furious king is caught in a tug-of-war in the idea of Imoinda's been ravished, been polluted and thus unfit for his use and her royal veil which meant liable for none except his own royal self. Initially he wants to kill her or possess her but again touching a woman who has already slept with a man from the family is the greatest crime in nature but he cannot hand her over to his grandson either, after she has received the royal veil. So, he decides for both the women a fate worse than death "with order they should be both sold off" as slaves to another country, either Christian or heathen "was no matter where." After the order is put into execution, the king somewhat feels guilty and sends a word to Oroonoko in the battlefield that Imoinda has been put to death because he knows that he should never obtain his grandson's pardon for the other.

Now here comes the typical twist in the story because Imoinda is to be shipped as a common slave to some other country similarly as thousands of those who have been shipped till now to the Christian countries after having been sold by the her lawful lord, Oroonoko. On the other hand, Oroonoko, in spite of his ultimate grief at the news of Imoinda's death, fights fiercely in the battle field because he wants a dignified death and that also only once instead of dying thousand times a day out of melancholy and despair. He wins the battle with huge profits, both for sale and use, just like every other battle. After much persuasion on the part of his grandfather, he returns to the court where he is received with all joy and magnificence. It so happens that as Oroonoko returns victorious from the war with an enormous booty of slaves and prisoners and explores an English ship of one of Oroonoko's acquaintance arrives at Abyssinia's port, its captain's mouth watering for fresh slaves.

> ... there arrived in the port an English ship ... The master of it had often before been in these countries, and was very well known to Oroonoko, with whom he had trafficked for slaves, and had used to do the same with his predecessors. (Oroonoko: The Royal Slave)

It is evident from the captain's knowledge that he must have spent a major part of his life at sea, that he recognises the sea routes as the streets of his neighbourhood and has a wide familiarity with 'glades and maps'. The captain has a good compatibility with Oroonoko because the more prince seems to him quite "civilised", better bred and educated with a handsome degree of dependency towards his own race. For the captain, natives like Oroonoko are the most profitable industries and quite apt for "European mode".

> To this captain he sold abundance of his slaves, and for the favor and esteem he had for him, made him many presents, and obliged

> him to stay at court as long as possibly he could. Which the captain seemed to take as a very great honor done him, entertaining the prince every day with globes and maps, and mathematical discourses and instruments; eating, drinking, hunting, and living with him with so much familiarity that it was not to be doubted but he had gained very greatly upon the heart of this gallant young man. (*Oroonoko, The Royal Slave*)

The captain never leaves Oroonoko's side and gets so close to him that one can hardly say anything about the racial difference between them. The captain, used to such slyness extensively, with his snake-like treacherous eyes, never lets anybody doubt his future plans. As a return gift, he invites the youthful prince to 'honour his vessel' at dinner before they set sail which Oroonoko gladly accepts. Accompanied by his French instructor and a hundred gallant youth from his own race, Oroonoko is received by the captain with great pomp and show as two boats are arranged with carpets and cushions and musical band to entertain the prince and his train. The treat is splendid with all sorts of wine and best quality food. The prince, in a fit pleasure, gets over drunk and greatly admires the ship as he has never been to a sea voyage before. Taking advantage of his curious nature the captain shows him many rooms and places beneath the deck. Care is taken that the prince and his warriors should be separated from each other while beholding its various parts. Once the prince arrives at the lowest part of the vessel, he jumps down to inspect it and suddenly, without any warning, he is tightly bound in shackles in such a way that every limb is far apart from other. His men also meet the same fate. It is such a perfectly laid plan that all the moors on board are captured at several places and almost at the same time:

> ... so that the captain, who had well laid his design before, gave the word, and seized on all his guests; they clapping great irons suddenly on the prince, when he was leaped down into the hold to view that part of the vessel; and locking him fast down, secured him. The same treachery was used to all the rest; and all in one instant, in several places of the ship, were lashed fast in irons, and betrayed to slavery. (*Oroonoko, The Royal Slave*)

Once the plan is over, all the whites set sail with a new spirit and full vigour 'with as treacherous as fair a wind'... 'with this innocent and glorious prize'. Deep inside the vessel, Oroonoko is left to struggle with his fetters, first in rage then in vain. Due to the extreme management of the chains he does not even get an opportunity for any suicidal attempt. Ultimately, he resolves to starve himself to death. After many negotiations with the prince and a promise to let him set his foot on the very next land they would approach, the captain manages to convince the prince to break his resolution.The prince is freed of his chains, given somewhat a hospitable treatment and taken to his own people where he pacifies them and conveys the captain's message.The moors also start accepting the food as long as their attitude will account for their lord's freedom. Oroonoko, from then onwards, is treated well on board but most of the time he is melancholic because he thinks it a punishment as he left Imoinda alone to her fate in otan that night.

After a tedious journey, the moor prince is dropped at the colony of river Surinam and is sold (with seventeen slaves from other lot including women and children) to an overseer by the treacherous captain.Oroonoko's new owner, a Cornish gentleman Mr. Trefry takes a likeness for him.Oroonoko's name is changed to Caesar and with that name he is received at the plantation after a three days journey in a boat. His mannish elegance is cordially received and fate gives him a chance to behold the kind of slaves that he had sold in the past to these western parts of the world.

Through Mr. Trefry, Oroonoko comes to know about a beautiful Negro slave, Christened as Clemene, delivered to the plantation six months ago and has not accepted any slave for a husband. She also refutes the advances of the Whites. Next morning Oroonoko is taken to Clemene's hut where to his greatest joy Clemene none other than Imoinda herself. Soon, both of them get married and embrace that slave plantation as their blessed universe. In a short time Imoinda conceives and Oroonoko becomes impatient for freedom. He begins to request Mr. Trefry to set him and Imoinda free in lieu of many slaves and gold from his own land as ransom but his request is delayed on some pretext or the other. In no time Oroonoko takes it as dishonesty and starts mistrusting the whites:

> ...and in a very short time after she conceived with child, which made Caesar even adore her, knowing he was the last of his great race. This new accident made him more impatient of liberty, and he was every day treating with Trefry for his and Clemene's liberty, and offered either gold or a vast quantity of slaves, which should be paid before they let him go, provided he could have any security that he should go when his ransom was paid. They fed him from day to day with promises, and delayed him till the Lord-Governor should come; so that he began to suspect them of falsehood, and that they would delay him till the time of his wife's delivery, and make a slave of that too: for all the breed is theirs to whom the parents belong. (*Oroonoko, The Royal Slave*)

Knowing that the slaves adore him, the Whites begin to fear a mutiny and the security is raised to observers and spies who accompany Oroonoko at plantations lest he should 'stir the men's blood' to rebellion. Oroonoko is accompanied by white people more than ever and several diversions are arranged for him including hunting expeditions, fishing and visiting Red Indians' areas to diverge his attention. As the time passes, Imoinda's belly begins to show and she bemoans the captivity of her future family. Aphra Behn's pen, even after mentioning Oroonoko's short comings as a warrior, leader, human being and an upcoming king, seldom stops to criticise him and she does it on purpose so that an evaluating eye could rebel and judge how tables were turned and the fortune had a different face, in store for Oroonoko, the moor prince. Once, Oroonoko also had a lot of slaves to serve him, he was the central figure for trafficking slaves to the western world never giving it a thought as to what would become of them at an unknown land, the pain they experienced while being separated from their loved ones and the soil of their own land. He had never concerned himself with the idea that the hands that

fought in any battle whether declared victorious or defeated, still did not give him any right to deprive them of their own birth land.

One Sunday when the whites are drunk more than the usual days, Oroonoko singles out around three hundred negro slaves excluding women and children and bellows with all his spirit to remind them of their quality as men and their lost freedom. Gradually his debate begins overpowering them and they agree to struggle for their families. Leaving their slave- town the same day, the Negroes make their way through the forest to the seashore where they expect to find a boat or a ship which could be overtaken by fighting.

It is not difficult to find these rustics in the forest by the signs they leave behind them; fire remains and chopped branches to clear their ways. A battle ensues with arrows, whips, clubs, knives and rusted guns in which the English easily overtake the moors and order them to surrender. All do except Oroonoko, Imoinda and another Negro, Tuscan. The Deputy Governor, enraged at this rebellion, seeks to avenge in a different way, so he negotiates with Oroonoko to return on his own terms and in the midst of heated exchanges between them, Mr. Trefry suggests that a contract should be signed for the same. This is done; all three are taken to their plantation where Imoinda is locked up in a house while Oroonoko and Tuscan are tied to several stakes and whipped in the most deplorable manner. Even the slaves are ordered to whip them and Oroonoko beholds his own race whipping him like a dog. After their lust for revenge is satisfied, to increase his pain manifold, Oroonoko's wounds are rubbed with Indian pepper.

When the author and some better friends go to see Oroonoko, they carry him to an apartment in Parham (Plantation) and send for a local man to take care of his wounds. Soon Oroonoko is able to eat and walk. Meetings are held to decide as to what should be the end of Oroonoko. It is decided that Oroonoko should be hanged but Mr. Trefry intervenes and drives the persecutors out. He says that nobody has any right to decide over the matters of slaves on his plantation. Eventually it is decided that the plantation shall admit only those who favour Oroonoko and sympathise with him.

After his wounds were completely healed, Oroonoko begs permission from Mr. Trefry to go for walk with Imoinda. Mr.Trefry thinks it would do Oroonoko some good after such an ordeal. Oroonoko advances with his pregnant wife towards the forest and after that 'long silent gazing' on her face, tells her his plan. With tears gushing from his eyes, he tells her that he must kill her first to save her from being a prey to the enraged multitude. Thereafter, he tells her, he plans to kill all his enemies and in the end, kill himself – better than destined to be entitled as slaves for generations unspecified. Imoinda, having understood him, pleads to be killed by her lord's hands to save her honour. Oroonoko embraces her with all the passion and she lays herself down on the ground while Oroonoko draws his knife and cuts her throat and severs it from her pregnant body. He then lays her corpse on a bed of leaves and flowers and covers her with more flowersleaving only her face exposed. But once he realises that he killed the angel of his heart, 'his grief swells up to rage' and he cries madly over Imoinda and several times tries to draw his knife over himself but retreats because his enemies deserve to be killed ruthlessly by his knife and

especially now that that he has slaughtered the dearest gift that Nature gave him. Apparently, out of grief and despair, he is not able to leave her side and before he can guess the length of time, out of depression first and secondly out of his numb and feeble limbs due to lack of food and water, six days pass.

Conclusion-A Memorable Royal Traitor:

A team of forty men is sent towards the direction in which Oroonoko went and after covering some distance, they start following the stink of a dead human body thinking that Oroonoko must have met some accident and died. Soon they find him hiding behind a tree from where he tells them that he killed Imoinda and had resolved to kill them but now his feeble body is scarcely supporting his heart's deed. With this he kills an Englishman and in a suicidal attempt, he cuts a piece of flesh from his throat and rips his own belly but is overcome by Tuscan, now a slave-turned-English supporter, and others and is taken to Parham for the Whites cannot afford to let a Negro die dignified.They prefer to take the slaves alive even if they plan to kill them afterward; a question of their ego! Attended by a local doctor, his wounds are somewhat healed but the doctor assures that Oroonoko will not live long.The Deputy Governor perceiving it a golden opportunity to take his revenge from Oroonoko, takes Mr. Trefry to some 'pretended earnest business' up the river and leaves some murderers behind him to execute Oroonoko in the most brutal way, by tying him to the post and arranging a fire in which to hurl his chopped body pieces. When this done then to make Oroonoko's vain courage an example for other slaves and his white supporters, his quartered body is carried to be shown around in several chief plantations. Aphra Behn also blames her own family who were present at the time of execution but none of them stirred to oppose or object at the murderers' behaviour. Through her pen she has spent a tough time relating the ordeals of a slave and has left her blood curdled reader to judge the fate of a 'royal slave' or a 'royal traitor'.

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Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*: An Ironic Quest

Khamis Khalaf Mohammad

This research paper aims to explore the nature of modern man and his ironic fate through a study of John Bickerson's 'Binx Bolling' search and escapism to avoid the existential pressures and resultant despair in Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*. The quest in this novel is much more an inner quest rather than the physical. Percy unfolds the concealed reality of life and warns of the devastative consequences fits deviations and digressions. The modern man is devoid of genuine romantic love. His love-relationship, like any other relationship, ruthlessly governed by his narcissistic attitudes and selfish motives. Money, in fact, remains his central concern. Entire modern culture is tarnished because of the priority accorded to money and materialistic well-being. Through Binx's daily business, Percy reveals how businessmen deceive each other and play deceptive foxy tricks for raising money, no matter how inhuman they become.

Percy introduces Binx Bolling as a model citizen of Gentility with all the modern personal belongings like, identity cards, library cards, and credit cards which are quite essential to live in such an advanced world. Binx is a stock and bond broker from a middle class family nearing the thirtieth of his age. He also "purchaseda flat olive-drab strongbox, very smooth and heavily built with double walls for fire protection" in which he keeps his "birth certificate, college diploma, honorable discharge, G.I. Insurance, a few stock certificates.... and a deed to ten acres of a defunct duck club down in St. Bernard Parish."(*M*.8).Binx, however, is not happy with the minimum requirements for his life. Therefore, he takes pride in possessing the luxurious amenities like "a first-class television set, an all but silent air conditioner, and a very long lasting deodorant." (*M*.8-9).He loves watching TV and going to movies. To reflect and assert the importance of the modern mass media in such a material world, Percy gives frequent references to TV programmes, films, radio, film actors and newspapers. Lewis A. Lawson remarks that

> During the eight days of the novel proper, he refers to the twelve specific and several unidentified movies, and to thirty seven actors and eight actresses.During the same time, he goes to the Movies no less than four times, including a drive-in on Sunday night. (Lawson 26)

Percy depicts Binx's fascination forluxuries and comforts. But step by step as the reader proceeds further in the sequences of events one can find that Percy loosens the threads of Binx's life through an endless search and escapism. It is a kind of search which focuses on the plight of an individual in the contemporary world. It is, as observed byJohn Desmond, Binx's" connection to the exilic search…" that underlies Percy's exploration of community in *The Moviegoer*. (Desmond53).On the other hand Percy reveals how mass media,

especially TV and movies, plays anessential role in the life of the viewers by creating illusory images in their minds. The characters enact these images which at the end lead to a conflict, both:on the extrinsicas well as intrinsic level. A self continually feels strangulated, haunted by dejection and despair. Therefore the individual's life becomes ironical and his failure to be true leads him to despair. *The Moviegoer* portrays an age "in which an exhausted humanism and devitalized scientific objectivity produced a silent and secret despair." (Gary M. Ciuba 131).Mass media plays an important role in shaping the life style and cultural directions. Oblivious to the spiritual integrity, it focuses on the present and its pressures on the psyche of an individual and his yearning for materialistic well-being:

> One of the most telling effects of the electronic media has been the creation of a persuasive sense of and eternal present, a now. So powerful is the hold of the image and the rapid shift sequence, so mesmerizing the juxtaposition of contents, that the watcher is gradually seduced away from the causal historical habits of mind. (SvenBirkerts23)

Consequently, one can therefore logically feel that Binx Bolling is a real representative of the twentieth century, particularly in the lower South of America. Movies and T.V. programmes create an imaginary world for Binx to live in. He frequently attends to different movies and T.V. programmes and gets himself spiritually involved in the movie world. He makes confession in the very beginning of the novel: "In the evenings I usually watch television or go to the movies. The fact is I am quite happy in a movie, even a bad movie." (*M*.9) The life of Hollywood actors and actress attract him so much that he feels their lives as real and expects to follow the same. On several occasions Binx says that he is posing as a particular movie star, particularly in his attempt to seduce Sharon. He utters the names of several film actors and pretends to act like them, but, in fact, he never succeeds in acting or in living his life like them as he fails to attain the reality of their lives. Percy believes that the problem is not when he/she lost hope but the worst part of it was losing hope and hiding it from him/herself. Binx's hope to find a girl, and to" live the life of Rudolfo on the balcony, sitting around on the floor and experiencing soul-communications" (*M* 244),in fact, it is a kind of defeat to himself, a jump ten miles ahead of himself.

Hence through the use of different modern electronic devices Percy cleverly exploited the modern electronic media to manifest the inner conflict of the protagonist. "Percy is hardly the first novelist to appreciate the profound influence of the films on the development of all other fiction in our time." (John Edward Hardy11). But the fact remains that it is film alone that operates as a refuge for him; it operates as a strong foothold to protect him against the onslaught of depression and despair, how sever temporary it is.

Binx Bolling, being born and brought up in the material world of the modern age, shares the banalities of this age. For example when aunt Emily tells him the bad news of his brother Scott's death, it reminds Binx of a similar

scene in a movie which describes "a great tragedy" in the life of a man who, in a boat accident, loses his memory. Binx recollects this image because of its resemblance with one of the happenings in his life. That is why Percy builds the body of this novel as an account of Binx's pilgrimage from New Orleans to Chicago and back. Throughout the week's journey Binx's eyes work like a camera which goes on taking snap shots of different individuals who came in the rangeof his vision "... for he is as much movie camera as moviegoer." (Ciuba66).Binx' scamera snapsminute details of the changing appearances of people and their surroundings. It enters the houses and churches to snapshot discussions of the dining-table and the performance of religious rites. He is so unrooted that he interprets his everyday life with the eyes of a film-goer and regards films as enhanced reality. Therefore, he is betrayed by possibility and lives a dream-like life. It is the film that helps him with stand the banal and insipid realities of the everyday life. One can easily notice the irony that strongly functions beneath his act of interpreting the quotidian. He is, in fact, portrayed as being reduced to the status of a camera. Accordingly, Binx Bolling is anything 'but heroic or exemplary', as Jack Schwandt observes, Binx is:

> …floating through life and entertaininghimself with its possibilities, ironically keeping family and others at a distance, looking at themin their everyday life with a certain aesthetic detachment and disdain. He is so unrooted that heinterprets his everyday life in terms of the unreality of the movies he constantly escapes to. He isbetrayed by possibility and lives a dream-like life. (Schwandt 178)

His frequent visits to movies yield him no fruitful resultsin terms of mitigation of his pains of the mundane, nor does it accord him any sustainable foothold.Binx has other activities. Apart from the work of a stock broker he performs the work of a searcher. He goes onan internal search rather than physicalto find out something mysterious, the ultimate truth of life. He goes on observing the world around him. He finds that men in America move with masks over their faces. They try to deceive others by hiding their real faces, while the true face is revealed only during the minute ofmisfortunes. While he is on his return journey from Chicago to New Orleans,Binx watches the behaviour of a person. After careful observation of this person:"How does he sit?"… "How does he read…?" and "what does he read?"Binx comes to a conclusion that he is pretending to be reading just to get other's attention; he is longing for his recognition by somebody. (*M*242). It is a scene of hypocrisy thatreflects one of the familiar daily lives of the modern people lost in the labyrinth of materialism.

Binx also observes the religious hypocrisy and snobbishness of people from all walks of life. For instance when he witnesses one of the religious functions carried outin Biloxi he realises that people attend such agatheringjust to put on a show, absolutely unmindful of the delicate demands of religion.If somebody asks them about religion they get embarrassed: "eyes are averted, throats are cleared, and there occurs a murmuring for a minute or two until the

subject can be changed."(*M*.180).He finds that church going is no more than a weekly routine and a big show. He believes that the church's role in the life of people has degraded to "a post office" (*M* 181).The world of Biloxi, the novel ironically establishes, is the world of hollowness and hypocrisy. Spiritual stability and moral integrity is far beyond the targets of religion.

In the beginning of the novel, however,Binx is shown searching for clues to know God's existence in this world, but he finds no signs.Modern man's dilemma is intelligently pinpointed:"...it is impossible to rule God out....the only sign is that all the signs in the world make no difference." (*M*165-166). Accordingly, if all the signs do not make any difference then his going in search for the clues is meaningless. Thus the paradoxical nature of Binx makes him a complex figure in this novel. This complexity of Binx reveals the complexity of man's life in the present time: "The complexity of human exchange has always fascinated Percy." (Sven Birkerts 193).Desmond remarks that through Binx's search and escapism Percy diagnoses the common despair of the modern individual. This diagnosis is carried out through ludicrous and ridiculous, through ironical and comic situations. Percy's vision, therefore, is basically a comic vision"...in which the threatened social upheaval is counterbalanced by signs of the real divine presence in the world-the mystical-semiotic community signified by the sacrament-a possibility for those whose hearts and wills are open to it." (Desmond 81).

In his worldBinx finds people generally possessed by money and devoid of moral values and any romantic love. And though he sees in Sharon Kincaid, the pure romantic love,"…one of those village beauties of which South is so prodigal." (*M*. 74), but he feels that no one cares for such beauties, "No one marvels at them; no one holds them dear...and no one misses them. Even their men pay no attention to them, anyhow farless attention than they pay to money.But I marvel at them; I miss them; I hold them dear."(*M*74).Binx loves SharonKincaid but his materialistic mind treats her as "an item on a list, higher than the janitor, lower than the rent."as he too is not different from the people of his world. (*M* 77).

Percy portrays how the modern materialistic people in general, and Binx in particular, use their human love for the benefit of their business-love, and how such a kind of love affects each other. Business-success and material well-being is juxtaposed with love. Binxreveals that "If ever my business should suffer because of my admiration for Sharon, then my admiration for Sharon would suffer too." (*M*.115).It is 'Money Madness'in the words of D.H.Lawrence that governs the modern mind. Lawrence's critique embodies a message, underscoring the absolute obsession with money and negligence of the other more important aspects of his existence.Even in the matters of love money gets precedence. The ridiculous natureof modern love that can be altered or substituted with money.One is, at times,led to believe that money alone is the pivot of life,all other values and passions and emotions are subservient. Success in money matters is the ultimate success:

> The trick, the joy of it, is to prosper on all fronts, enlist money in the service of love and love in the service of love and love in the service of money. As long as I am getting rich I feel that all is well. It is my Presbyterian blood.(*M* 115-116)

The consequences are obvious.Binx feels that his life has been a "dark pilgrimage on this earth".(*M* 256). He"…is afflicted with a mordant world-weariness, strikingly like that of the romantics, that he refers to variously as the malaise and everydayness."(Tharpe 50).Therefore at the age of thirty he becomes sure that the world in which he lives is:

> ... the great shithouse of scientific humanism where needs are satisfied, everyone becomes an anyone, a warm and creative person and prospers like a dung beetle, and one hundred percent are humanists and ninety-eight percent believe in God, and men are dead, dead, dead, and the malaise has settled like a fall-out and what people really fear is not that the bomb will fall but that the bomb will not fall-on this my thirtieth birthday, I know nothing and there is nothing to do but fall prey to desire. (*M*. 256-257)

Binx understands now that in such a world nothing remains important; everything is dead except desire which "comes howling down" on man like the cold wind from north. No wonder then if Binx compares the American society with "The little pagoda of aluminum and glass…is trim and pretty on the outside but evil smelling-within." (*M*. 257).Binx feels his self not in communion with himself and with the world around. He lives with a strong inner conflict and he has to undergo mental illness. Step by step Binx comes to realise that in this spoiled, corrupted, faithless and deceptive material world no new life is possible. It is possible only to those who survive, like rats, in the end creeping themselves out of the underground finding the whole past world in ruins.It is gloomy, valueless and barbaric age as described by Ciuba that"humanity has increasinglycome to exist as flesh devoid of spirit, scientific intelligence divorced from body."(Ciuba 138).

As a natural consequence, therefore,Binx fails in his vertical search and gets absorbed in horizontal one where he has been almost lost. He does not bother for what happens to him, ironically though he concentrates on what is happening outside around him.His objective relation with the movie world reduces him to a mechanical man. His watching movies leaves him alienated in an empty world. Percy makes clear the bad effects of the electronic media on the fate of man who makes every effort to hide the reality of his life by pretending to be what he is not by getting lost into the unreal world of make belief.

In fact, the defeat of Percy's protagonists lies in the failure of their search and in accepting suffering as the reality of life. Thus according to Percy, the Americans, in this so called civilized era, are the victims of this ironical situation; they are physically alive but spiritually dead; they are at the mouth of death but they are unaware of it.

Like most of his other protagonistsPercy portrays Binxparadoxical in nature.Binx is not what he looks like as a man of the material world, and a younger stock-broker; he also has a religious turn of mind. While he keeps relations with Sharon, his secretary, to achieve worldlinessby taking her out to a business dealing in which he finally succeeds in making much profit,he also keeps relations with Kate, the twenty-five-year old stepdaughter of his aunt Emily Cutrer, who promotes honesty and faith in his life. He succeeds only in

keeping limited and superficial relations with his secretaries as the actors keep relations with the actresses in movies. He seems dissolved in and abstracted by the world; but in reality he stands erect on the occasions of catastrophic events. He lives in the society but he does not belong to it; he feels himself a man without identity.He tries to weave movie life and the real life in New Orleans into one pattern but in the end he realises the futility of his attempt. He acknowledges the failings of his search. He knows nothing, exceptthat his search has led him to a belief that the whole world of everydayness is worthless. He has to come to terms with the everyday and learn to live a contented life, even if it is an average life, a mockery oflife in its real sense.

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Stigma to Freedom: De-casting Identity in Twenty First Century

Chandrasheel Tambe

Background

In the first half of the 20th century large number of Marathi speaking population belonging to Scheduled Castes[1] from the neighboring areas migrated towards Mumbai (Pradhan). Some of them found employment in organized public sector establishments like Municipality, Port, Railways, B.E.S.T. Co. Ltd.; private sectors like factories, workshops, Mills and companies as unskilled or semi-skilled manual labourers. Many were engaged in an unorganized sector, mainly in less rewarding occupations like hamals, loaders etc. The search for livelihood with dignity and self-esteem were key motivating factors behind migration of this destitute section of Indian society who attempted to escape from the caste yokes at their villages of origin. Inspired by the movement of Babasaheb Ambedkar many amongst them educated their children with the hope of social and financial mobility. In the second decade of twenty first century their next generations are either graduate or are in the process of becoming one. Journey of this class of the Indian population from traditional village bound caste based hierarchically ordered society to the modern urban cosmopolitan liberal space of Mumbai is not just the story of struggle for material gains. It is an account of transformation of social self, embodied in inner self, from birth ascribed stigma of untouchability to the self-constructed identity of freedom and humanity. Indeed, it is the chronicle of their efforts to de-caste their identity.

The present paper is an attempt to look into the identity issues of young generation among the scheduled castes. For the purpose, selected poems from the anthology titled '*Delete Kelele Saare Aakash'* (All of the Deleted Sky[2]) by Vaibhav Chhaya are selected to serve as a gateway into the socio psychological temperament of the scheduled caste youths situated in the beginning of the twenty first century. The period is characterized by tremendous fluctuations in the political and economic life of the Indian society. Amidst the progress of globalization, the forces of communalism, casteism, linguism are gaining the center of the politics and society. The context in these early decades of 21st century has fashioned ground for the interplay of multiple social identities. Youths like Vaibhav are dealing with the issues of such multiple identities by retaining their ideological linkages with the movement of Babasaheb Ambedkar and thereby positioning themselves in the constantly fluctuating socio-political environment. Vaibhav's poems are seen here as a social document. The paper consciously ignores the aesthetics of his poetry and looks into the reflections on society, politics and economy of globalization and eventually reaching out to the identity position that his poems signify.

About the Poet:

Vaibhav Chhaya is 1988 born Marathi poet-columnist. He was encouraged to put together his first anthology of poems on caste, exploitation

and society, *Delete Kelela Saara Aakash* (All of the Deleted Sky), by Namdeo Dhasal[3] himself (Pawar). His anthology published in 2014 at the age of 26 is popular. He is a media professional and is active on social media of Facebook where he regularly posts his prose and poems. In his blog *Samyak Samiksha* he writes on language, culture and politics. He understood social media as an instrument of change in today's globalized world (Bhatkhande and Chandrasekharan). He acknowledges roots of his deviance in his childhood memories of abuse. He lived in a ghetto in Vitthalwadi, suburb of Thane. His father was employed in Indian Railway as Class IV employee. He was alcoholic who used to beat Vaibhav's mother, who bore him nine children. Only Vaibhav survived of them. Sufferings of his mother are deep in his subconscious mind. His father left the family when Vaibhav was two year old. His whereabouts are not known since then. Vaibhav gives all credit to his mother for his education and career, who took job as a booking clerk with the railways. Vaibhav dropped his last name in 2010 and adopted his mother's first name Chhaya.

Problematic of Caste Identity

Caste is ubiquitous in India. As early as in 1916, Ambedkar warned of global consequences of the caste problem in India. In his words, "as long as caste in India does exist … if Hindus would migrate to other regions on earth, Indian caste would become a world problem (Ambedkar)." So, the spread of caste has been across time and space. More than hundred years of scholarship and heaps of ideological reasoning from Right, Left and Center did not wipe out this system from the society. It continued to regulate social, economic and political behaviour of the people. Construction of social identities and continuation of practices of identification are integral to the process of perpetuation of caste as a system of social organization. Identity appears to the link between individual and social structure. In another way status of individual in the social structure can be understood by the social identity the individual carry in given society.

Caste is a system of differential rewards to individuals with cultural sanctions depending upon their birth in particular groups which are hierarchically ordered and culturally distinct (G. Berreman). The hierarchy determines differential evaluation, rewards and association. It is not merely the division of labour but is essentially the division of labourers (Ambedkar). There are thousands of such birth ascribed castes in India and the hierarchical arrangement among them is highly contested. Still there is a consensus that those who were treated as untouchables are attributed with lowest status and rest all are ascribed the higher status in social hierarchy. Borrowing from Goffman (1963), caste is an oppressive system which imposes stigmatized identity to the members of untouchable community/castes. It deeply discredits them and ascribes intrinsic unworthiness relative to other touchable castes in the society. It is the identity of oppressed which implies 'deprivation, denigration, subjugation and exploitation'. Berreman (1979) argues that despite of all the religious, economic, social or political rationalization of this oppressive system by the upper castes, lower castes in India never confirmed to their ideology and maintained the culture of resistance and resentment against inherited deprivation and subjection. Therefore

there are consistent attempts by the lower castes to escape the implications of their inborn stigma and put in their efforts for mobility and emancipation. This accounts for the universality of mobility and emancipation efforts in such groups. It is in the light of this theoretical framework of interactionism the paper is addressing the issues of identity in Vaibhav's anthology of poems.

Poems:

Vaibhav's poems are part and parcel of the emancipatory anti-caste movement in India commonly known as the dalit movement. From 19th century critique of Brahmanism of Jotiba Phule to Dalit Panther movement of 1980s, Vaibhav inherits legacy of nearly 150 years of resistance. This movement of resistance was not disassociated from the social, economic and political development in the country. Colonial rule, liberal education, industrialization, urbanization were the major components of the context in which dalit movement took shape since 19th century. In Mumbai this context is more visible owing to distinct place the city occupies in the economy. Today in the 21st century too the context is playing crucial role in shaping the dynamics of the movement of Dalits.Globalization, post-industrialization of economy, growth of fundamentalism, aggressive nationalism and terrorism are among the major elements of this context.One thing that remained constant amidst changes in last 150 years is Caste with its robustness and resilience. It continued to be the least common denominator of society in India. Therefore, this young poet Vaibhav pens his experiences in his poems and admits in the prologue of his collection,

> "My poem is my political act. My introduction is my every action that transcends my caste and class character and takes me closer to humanity[4]" (Chhaya 7).

True to the argument of Berreman (1979) the Dalits steered historic anti-caste movement in Maharashtra. And it won't be an exaggeration to claim that it is the most successful social movement in India which pressed the agenda of social change on the mainstream and maintained the pressure for more than 150 years. In such a long span of one and half century the Dalits contested the stigmatized identity ascribed by the Brahminical Social Order. Today dalit youths are at the crossroad of identities. Attempts to escape from social stigma is forcing them either to align and coalesce with other available identities or construct them a tag of their own which will not only free them from unwanted memories of past but also maintain their hopes of future alive. This direction links them to the goals of modernity which identifies every person as a human being and celebrates humanity devoid of any religious or primordial identity. This dilemma is visible in Vaibhav's poem, *Identity Crisis.* Poet asks to himself,

Who am I?
Being 'educated' or mere stamp as 'educated'?
Ideology or dominion?
I am lost in the quest (24)

Here self in the poem is enquiring about his identity and getting lost in the quest for the answer. Education is questioned as an identity marker. One can

take this in two senses. Firstly, being educated is personal identity not so salient where strong identity markers like caste and religion easily overcome it (Vryan). Secondly, the poet says that if education is not empowering the individual to identify himself then it is only façade. True freedom is to unmask him and carry real core in the world which is consistently attempting to impose their ideologies over you (James and Jongeward). True educated one is the one who is liberated.

In the next stanza Vaibhav exposes markers of social identity and how different ideologues are trying to capitalize those markers and trying to attach to him political identities. He writes,

Name proclaims my caste
Body offers exhibition of my crushed ancestors
My words are highlighting my ideology
On my rear
On my white shirt
Everyone attached labels
You are our Communist
You are our Marxist
Ambedkarite, Socialist, Atheist
Extremist, Naxalite

My identity
A complex thing
Or it must be
A mask imposed by somebody
Real but severely injured
Or fake like plastic plant (24)

Speech, dress and adornment, manners, life-style, and physiognomy are the indicators by which people are identified as members of social categories (G. D. Berreman). Vaibhav is conscious about his social identity markers. Name, body and words are few that are named in the poem. As he maintained they all indicate his lowly and broken social status. Although he resents this labeling him as 'broken one/depressed', what annoys him more are the efforts to tag him as Communist, Marxist, Ambedkarite, Socialist, Atheist, Extremist and Naxalite. A social identity determines what should be expected from the identified persons and where he should be fitted within various interactional network level, and sociocultural structures (Vryan). All these are in a way the ideologies of resistance and for them depressed identity of the Dalit which reflects from the identity markers is an opportunity to incorporate him in their network.These ideologies acquired meaning as rebellious, revolutionary and hence attempted to construct solidarity network of all the oppressed. Although the poet does not reject them altogether but maintains his own stand with conscious decision. He is aware of the complexity of this identity recognition, and at the same time he is aware of his exploited past and not denying it altogether. He retains the capacity to reason, to question and to decide independently without any enticement of his right to search his identity. He proclaims this in following lines.

In this journey to search the identity
My wisdom has retained
My right to freedom (25)

Vaibhav's quest for the answer to his identity is rooted not only in the past which is history and is full of narrations of subjugation, degradation but also in his day to day experiences. In his poem, *Tevha Pasun* (Since Then) he narrates his experience of morning walk and his interactions with various persons to whom Vaibhav denote through symbolism of names and greetings. First he met Maharashtrian Brahmin women, he greeted *Namasker*, and she smiled. Then he said *Salaam Walekum* to Usman Chacha, a Muslim, he reciprocated; he greeted *Ram Ram* to a Police Officer, Maratha by Caste; *Jay Maharashtra* to political workers of a political party in Mumbai, Shiv Sena, which claim to protect interests of Marathi language speaking people of Maharashtra*; Good Morning* to the Christian, James who is corporate employee; *Red Salute* to Comrades gathered in the Union Office. Finally he greeted a transgender Shabnam,

While returning from walk I saw Shabnam
120, Kachha Pakka Ilaichi[5],
Stuffed in the mouth,
He came spitted
We hugged each other
I clapped for him
He too thundered *Jay Bhim* at me

I can't understand
Since then Allah, Jesus, Ram, Marx
All of their devotees turned their back to me
Why are they angry with me? (10-11)

Here, Vaibhav brings two things for the readers. Firstly, Two most stigmatized identities a Dalit and a Transgender brought together to display the exclusionary behaviour of the so called cosmopolitan society in Mumbai, and secondly, which is most crucial for Vaibhav is the identity as Ambedkarite, which is asserted by his greeting of *Jay Bhim*, is not received by others with same meaning which Vaibhav constructs for it. Here for others Vaibhav's Dalit identity is transmitted to his newly acquired selfhood. Being Ambedkarite for others is similar to being Dalit and hence equally stigmatized. Vaibhav draws commonality between being transgender and being dalit and figures out the exclusion and discrimination as common factors between them. He also exposes hypocrisy of modern cosmopolitan social life of people in Mumbai. Despite of these experiences of discrimination he is not perturbed by the fact of sheer existence of atrocious social structure which degrades the existence of fellow humans.

Vaibhav writes on the vast canvas of contemporary civilization and reflects upon large number of issues through which he connects with everyone who is victim of one or the other form of exploitation. He elaborately sketched the details in the poem, '*Manasane Jagave Manus Mhanun*' (Human Should Live as

Human) (Ibid, 44). In this long poem Vaibhav prescribes humanism as remedy for all sorts of exploitation. He emphatically argues against war and advocates destruction of nuclear weapons and disarmament. He challenges patriarchy rooted in prevalent institution of marriage and feudalism by asking for return of land of indebted farmers and freedom from the yoke of money lenders. He expects impoverishment of capitalists, asks for destruction of drug and liquor mafia. He wishes to restart all the Mills of Mumbai. He wants to spread education among the deprived masses. He desires to punish the Doctors involved in sex selective abortions, dowry seekers, corrupt bureaucrats, those who discriminate on the basis of caste and rapists. He extends his support to those who are resisting. At the same time he wants to punish those who are stealing sand for civil constructions and wants to stop atrocious behaviour of police with social activists. He demands for the audit of NGOs, for job security and permanent employment for contractual workers. He demands Corporate Houses to be held accountable of unbridled destruction of environment, corruption in Spectrum/oil/gas allocation. He seeks clarification from Media about news behind news, shares in advertisements, editorial policy and politics of opinion polls. He expects slum dwellers should be free from the inhuman living conditions. He expects to demolish ghettoes, to give access to the deprived ones in the sky scrapers. He wants to break cultural censorship over food and expects humans should learn how to crush riots and destroy brokers lobby. Humans should challenge fiefdoms of religious bodies and distribute all the wealth equally among all. They should teach not to pray before stones. He expects humans should construct the semantics of revolt, to design ornaments of love, to develop new enterprises. They should build hospitals with affordable treatment and medicines, new dams, irrigation canals, roads, new universities and will develop the software of new society where they will teach new lessons of humanity. Finally he says that to live like human, they should revolt against everyone who are destroying the values of Non-violence.

Vaibhav delineates list of issues which are of greater concerns for humanity today. And therefore do not want to restrict him to single identity. There is complex matrix that develops by identification with every form of exploitation like dalit, women, labour, environmentalist and so on. For Vaibhav exploitation is universal and thus need to expand borders of his identity to encompass humanity as a whole. This web of identities pose serious dilemma for him. At this point his own exploitation became one part of the universal presence of exploitation. He rejects his identity as a Dalit as he wrote in the poem *Shabdani Sangitlay Amhala* (Words Have Told This to Us).

> Amidst the carnival of *Buddham Sharanam Gachhami*
> Amidst the lyrics of *Bhimraom Sarami*
> We are reborn
> We have thrown the shackles of serfdom long before.
>
> Identity of this revolt cannot be Dalit
> *Dalitatva* cannot be an honor for me
> My war cry is Ambedkarite revolution

It does not emboss impression of *Dalitatva*
But engages with open dialogue in the ground of inequality
It proclaims true duty of accountability to humanity
And prepares for construction of new world (56)

Vaibhav has firm stand on his rejection of the term dalit. He likes to recognize himself as Ambedkarite than Dalit. He is rejoicing conversion to Buddhism, and singing songs of Babasaheb Ambedkar and celebrating his rebirth as a free human being. For him this newly found identity cannot be Dalit, he no more accepts depressed state as a state to be proud of. His identity is Ambedkarite by means of which he now openly challenges inequality and proclaims his accountability towards humanity and prepares for construction of new world. In the telephonic talk with the author he cleared his views,

> "Lot of self-victimization happened by the use of the word *Dalit.* In order to progress we should not indulge in self-victimization. The term is derived from *'Dal'* means depressed or oppressed. When we challenge the depressed status and oppressive structure we in a way reject *'Dalitatva'* also. Moreover it is stative word, and we should leave the state of being depressed. (Chhaya, Telephonic Conversation)

With rejection of the term Dalit he enters into the debate which was rigorously held in the literary circles of anti-caste movement. Dalit Panther movement of 1970s popularized the term. It caused greater political awareness among the scheduled castes and created new identity for the downtrodden (Sirsikar). It was concerned with identity formation and its assertion to redeem the self-confidence and self-worth of the marginalised sections (Punalekar). The term was not acceptable for many writers and at least six different terms were used by them in Maharashtra, mainly Dalit Literature by Keshav Meshram, Dr. Sharankumar Limbale, Daya Pawar; Ambedkarite Literature by Dr. Yashvant Manohar, Dr. Yogendra Meshram; Non-Brahmin Literature, by Sharad Patil; Buddhist Literature by Vijay Sonawane, Bhausaheb Adsul; Literature of Phule-Ambedkar Motivation, by Raja Dhale, Prof. Gautamiputra Kamble; and Bahujan Sahitya, by Baburao Bagul, Anand Yadav (Ratnakar).

From Dalit Panthers of 1970s to the present, things have changed considerably and Vaibhav is conscious about those changes. Globalization has brought paradigmatic shift in the politics, economy, society and culture in India. Innovations in Information Technology swiped earlier assumptions about human behaviour. State entered into laissez faire mode. Many agendas of social transformation undertaken during post-independence period remained inconclusive. Rise of service sector and increasing privatization drastically reduced bargaining capacity of labour unions. Primordial identities of caste, religion and language have resurfaced.

Failure of dalit politics in Maharashtra weakened morals of the activists. Dalit leaders are either coopted by other political parties or formed separate political parties and failed the efforts of unity of Dalit Politics in Maharashtra. Atrocities on Dalits continued unabatedly. It is in this context Vaibhav, as a poet, is carving the path of liberation. His poem *Samajun Ghe*, (Try to Understand) addresses to the activists of the Ambedkarite movement. He is

realistic in his understanding of problems of earlier generation of activists. He appeals them to shed off the old stereotype of activist. Enough of the *Shabnam* bag on shoulder, shirt torn in armpit, dusty pant, high power spectacles, grown beard and wrinkles on face. He advices to change the method of struggle or else, he cautioned that their loss will be ultimately be the loss of movement. Therefore he suggests them to,

Feed yourself first
Take off tattered vest
Check your bones and ribs
Make them strong
People may call you capitalist
They will insult you as traitor
But you keep on walking (98)

All this he advices with the intention of strengthening the movement. His observation of the movement at grassroots level is minute. He knows that if activists are not financially independent then they may fall into trap of cooptation by the dominant sections resulting into their loss of autonomy and freedom to think. This results into slow death of the movement. Hundreds of police cases, false FIRs, subsequent arrests, neglect of family life all this results into weakening the morale of activists. Therefore he counsels,

Try to understand
Economy of the movement
Compose new definitions of economics of movement
And revolt
Against that rope
Which you have weaved
To tie against your neck once you get demoralized.
(99)

Vaibhav speaks in the times when 150 years of movement resulted into gains for the dalits in terms of space and sense of empowerment. He wishes to capitalize those gains for the sake of the movement itself. Since he has seen the movement from close quarters and is also part of it he is aware of plight of those hundreds of dalit social workers whose selfless service to the community ultimately destroyed their personal growth and neglect of family. As the goal of the movement of dalits is the upliftment of the lot of exploited sections of the society, it is imperative that activists should financially secure themselves. In his title poem, Delete Kelele Saare Aakash, (All of the Deleted Sky), Vaibhav proposed the strategy of the movement in the age of globalization. The sky in Vaibhav's poem signifies the history, the memory, the past, the life world of the dalit. It comprised of the lost ground in the battle towards the end of caste notified existence. Days of dalit mobilization when Ambedkar stirred the conscience of the upper caste brought the issue of exploitation on the national platform. Vaibhav offers subtle observation of the old instruments of the movements that were used by Ambedkar very effectively as a strategy to fight

for the cause of dalits. Three fronts of struggle deserve mention here, academic scholarship, diplomacy and political mobilization of masses. More than twenty two volumes of his writings and speeches published by the Publication Division of Government of Maharashtra comprised of essential writings of Ambedkar on diverse topics ranging from sociological, political, economic, cultural, religious are evidence of the strategic employability of knowledge, its production and spread for the advancement of the cause of the movement. On the diplomatic front his relationship with Gandhi, Congress and other political leaders of the country at one side and with British Government and other anti-caste movement leaders on the other exhibit his highly skilled maneuvers in very hostile social and politically context of early 20th century. Despite of limited resources his strategy of mass mobilization tested the time during numerous agitations he carried out not only on the issue of untouchability but also for the labour class in Bombay Province as a founder of Independent Labour Party.

Babasaheb Ambedkar and his life is the major component of the identity of dalit movement. Dalit Panther movement too employed the strategies of writing, mobilization effectively in 1970s. It brought the wave of dalit literature and produced generation of aggressive activists who were inspired by the Black Panther movement of America. Ambedkar's were the days of pre independence colonial phase of industrialization in India and Dalit Panther born in the post-colonial welfare state era. In the 21st century, Vaibhav is decoding the situation in the globalized India where global market is more powerful than ever and instruments of knowledge, mobilization and context of diplomacy has changed completely. Therefore in the poem *Delete Kelele Saare Aakash* he urges to modify the instruments and adopt new strategies of resistance.

> We have to design our own softwares
> And computers to run those softwares
> And antivirus to protect them
> We only have to design for ourselves
>
> Strength of wrist
> Now let's reach to fingers
> Fire from the eyes should enter into Brain
> See, now demand is more for software than
> Hardware
>
> Let's change the language of movement
> And centers of knowledge
> Overthrow the monopoly over intellect
> Like oxygen in the air
> Free knowledge as well
> Then only will be free the human from within the human (58-59)

Software symbolizes strategy, planning, attitude, ideology; computer implies the activists who are motivated by the desire to serve the community; and antivirus is the ultra-software meant to protect the former two; it is the identity

which is the need of the hour. Power in the wrist symbolizes agitational tactics of movement, the dangers of which are already highlighted by Vaibhav in early poem *Samajun Ghe;* therefore he expects that now dalits should write on Facebook wall, they should write blog. He is aware that print media and electronic media of television and radio are already monopolized by upper castes; hence it is sensible to use social media of Facebook, Blog, WhatsApp and Twitter. He appeals to the young generation of Ambedkarites to use Information Technology as their new instrument of struggle.

In order to deal with the problematic of identity as positioned in Vaibhav's poems, I shall summarize my understanding in three themes; firstly, caste is integral to social interaction in the cosmopolitan city of Mumbai. It is lived and experienced by the people in overt and covert forms. Secondly, the present generation of the dalits desires to assert themselves in positive way as 'being something' rather than 'not being something'. This position indicates ideological orientation of their acquired identity which is inseparable from the thoughts and life of Babasaheb Ambedkar. Thirdly, there is a visible continuity in the way dalit panthers defined the term 'Dalit' in 1970 and the position that Vaibhav's poems are adopting vis-à-vis universal presence of exploitation in this 21st Century. The poem indicates aligning of the political self with other exploited sections and 'being human' is the inclusive identity that it resorts to fulfill the purpose.

If coping up with the stigmatized identity associated with untouchability is the problem in caste ridden rural society then negotiating with multiple identities is the inevitability of urban context. As compared to the rural society, the urban environment offers the individual certain amount of freedom to pursue its own capacities. Deciding which identity should be prioritized over other identities - although in limited sense - is possible in urban environment. The free space offers potential to de-caste the identity that the generation of Vaibhav is looking forward. But the process of de-casting is not as easy as it appears to be at first glance. The problem is inherent in the clash between personal identity and social identity. By personal identity one may think of 'one's characterization of oneself in the light of the beliefs the one may own', and social identity connotes 'one's identification by others based on the stereotypes associated with the one's ascribed social status'. Here identity acquires political domain as contested ground, within the mind of the individual - between nurtured self and ambitious or ideal self that one aspire to build on its own. Similarly, it also engages in the politics of identification where social identity as ascribed by the social structures engages into confrontational mode with the self-constructed identity crafted by the individual himself[6].

In such a complex situation newly defined identity may get trapped into in-group and out-group differentiation (Tajfel). Almost every social identity thrives on such differentiation where association with those who share similar positioning and antagonistic or confrontational relationship with those who differ in such identification does exist. Any attempt to free one's self from the burden of past - that is to relieve oneself from the stereotypes of stigmatized identity - is pregnant with the possibility to alienate in-group members. On the other hand if out-group members continued their discriminatory behaviour with such individual

then there is a possibility of the crises of identity for the individual. Accumulated negative experiences (a dystonic outcomes[7]) (McKinney) of others behaviour affects identity formation among the persons. An attempt to de-caste can therefore be such a complex phenomenon. This does not mean that de-casting is impossible at all. Here we enter into the domain of ideology. Ideologies carry potential to influence both in-group as well as out-groups, means it can develop its followers in both the sides. If more people believing into particular ideology coalesced together, in such a situation it is quite possible that de-casting will get legitimacy and the situation may avert the identity crisis for such individuals, for whom ideological comradeship may work as buffer to avoid the crisis of clash of self-defined and socially ascribed identity.

Now we can get back to three themes derived from Vaibhav's poems and look at the dynamics behind the de-casting process of the identity, and conclude hereafter. As the caste, overtly or covertly, is the part and parcel of daily experiences of the dalits in one of the most cosmopolitan urban space in the country, the continuity into their shared existence is the matter of fact. Therefore the effort to negate those experiences, carving our own niche, is also integral to their struggle to survival in the city. In order to do that present generation of the dalits expects to move away from 'escaping stigma of untouchability' to 'de-caste their existence' and to move towards greater freedom as human. Ambedkar's imagery, his ideas and philosophy is the reference point for these youths who are acquainted with them through their socialization. In the age of globalization their individualistic position should not be interpreted as capitalist in classical form. They see into it the new possibility to close their rank with other victims of exploitation. This may contain the possibility of obliterating the in-group and out-group differentiation based on caste, based ascribed status and frees them to acquire the identity which is more accommodative and universal in nature.

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1) The term Scheduled Castes is constitutional term used for the section of population against whom practice of untouchability was prevalent in India.
2) Translation of the title is borrowed from report published in DNA (Pawar)
3) Namdeo Dhasal was Marathi poet, writer and Dalit activist from Maharashtra, India. He was the founder member of Dalit Panthers, prominent organization of young Dalit authors and activists in 1972. His notable works are *Andhale Shatak, Golpitha, Tujhi Iyatt a Kanchi* ? and *Priya Darshini.* He was awarded with Padma Shri by Government of India in 1999 and with Lifetime Achievement Award by the Sahitya Akademi in 2004.
4) All the poems quoted in the paper are liberally translated by the author of present paper.
5) A mixture of Tobacco, Arecanut, Cardamom and slaked lime which is chewed for its stimulant and psychoactive effects.
6) Psychosocial identity depends on a complementarity of an inner (ego0 synthesis in the individual and of role integration in his group (Erikson).
7) According to Erikson, each stage of psychosocial development culminates in a balance of both syntonic and dystonic outcomes. A syntonic outcome is a positive experience through which the individual strives to attain and consequently maintain the experience in the overall ego structure. A dystonic outcome is a negative experience where by the individual strives to avoid and consequently rectify the experience of in the overall ego structure (McKinney 723)

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Literature as Protest: A Study of Poetry by Women during the Islamisation Campaign in Pakistan

Urvashi Sabu

Women across the world have used poetry as a means of expressing themselves and women poets from South Asia are no exception. The difference from their western counterparts, however, is one of overt subjugation in the name of religion, culture and society,and a systemic lack of opportunities for growth and expression. So different are the terms and frames of reference for women of developing countries that one should be cautious while applying the same definitions of feminism or even, for that matter, of oppression, to their experiences of and struggles against patriarchy. As Rukhsana Ahmad points out:

> The term feminism is vague, elusive and relative. As someone living in the West, who is constantly faced with the challenge of resolving the tensions between two quite diverse cultures, I am aware that it is a term that can straddle widely divergent attitudes.[Feminism in the Third World can be understood]… as an awareness of the disadvantages and constraints faced by women in a traditional society and a recognition of their need or the desire for freedom and change. (7)

Despite this stifling scenario, there has been a rich tradition of poetry in various languages by women from South Asian countries like India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Malaysia. Women poets like Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Das, Uma Parmeswaran, Suniti Namjoshi, Eunice de Souza, (India); Yasmine Gooneratne, Anne Ranasinghe, Jean Arasanayangam (Sri Lanka) Benju Sharma, Manju Kanchuli (Nepal) and Nalla Tan (Malaysia/Singapore) have been the progenitors of a rich literary harvest. They have addressed a variety of themes like those of love, life, death, marriage, religion, politics, resistance, rebellion, along with the more problematic issues of self and identity, home and belonging etc. Like their counterparts from South Asian countries, women poets from Pakistan have also been using poetry extensively as a mode of creative expression. In an interview to N. K. Agarwal in Asiatic (Vol.3, 2009),

Fawzia Afzal Khan, noted Pakistani writer, had the following to say when asked about what causes Muslim women to write: 'It is a combination of male prejudices from within their societies against which women creatively militate, and also western ignorance and prejudice against Islam in general and Muslim women in particular.' (97) The perversity of subsequent socio-political conditions in post-Partition Pakistan has impelled women to express themselves in verse. The over-arching hold and reach of religion in the socio-political domain of the state has prompted women to use poetry as an instrument of denunciation and struggle against restrictive social, political and religious norms and policies. The statement that the personal is political and the political, personal, could nowhere be more appropriately applicable than in the case of poetry written by Pakistani women.

According to Anita Anantharam, 'Poetry facilitates intimate self-expression as it allows the author to explore sensitive issues like identity, kinship and marriage through the protective blankets of metaphor, symbolism and literary convention.' (211) The journey of creativity, especially for the women poets of Pakistan, has been fraught with familial opposition, social rebellion, self-doubt, and a constant struggle against the all-powerful patriarchal structures that define and enclose their lives. The persistent intrusion of politicized religion and repressive governments in their personal and professional lives has further inflamed their creative imagination. They have been eloquent in giving voice to the motivations that compel them to write against all odds in the face of political persecution, social ostracism, and even considerable damage to their personal and familial lives. Even though Pakistan has been a remarkable location of intellectual inquiry since its creation, it became all the more problematic during the military regime of Gen. Zia ul Haq (1977-1988). This decade saw the promulgation of the Hudood Ordinances which led to the writing of intensely feminist poetry by a host of women poets. Unprecedented suppression and exploitation in the name of faith resulted in the rise of rebellious attitudes which could be witnessed in art and various other aspects of day-to-day civil life. Women's organizations like the Women's Action Forum, Shirkat Gah, Women and Development Association were formed and they struggled extensively for the repealing of the Hudood Ordinances. Successive governments tried to give better opportunities to women and to bring them to some level of equality but only with limited success.

Even the first and the only woman Prime Minister that the country has had could deliver little despite her talking about women's rights in her election campaigns all over Pakistan. The continuing volatility of the socio-political situation in Pakistan has in fact been instrumental in the creation of a rich poetic harvest by women, which expresses contemporary issues in a critical tone, not just in Urdu, but also in other languages of the land.

The role of Pakistani women poets in such a grim scenario takes on epic dimensions when one considers their conscious engagement with the political situation of their country. This paper attempts to study how they have lashed out vociferously against the political volatility of Pakistan, its contradictory dialectical positions and its discriminatory political tenets. They have not been mere paper messiahs content with mouthing harsh words against their repressive and insensitive governments. Most of them have been at the forefront of the struggle for rights and empowerment for women. The poets under consideration in this paper, such as Kishwar Naheed, Fehmida Riaz, Saeeda Gazdar as also several others have held government positions either as officers or as editors of government or literary publications. They have founded or been actively involved with women's organisations, often undertaking serious field work to map and chart the condition of women across the country, particularly in the hinterlands and the far flung tribal areas. They have suffered house arrest, imprisonment, tear gas shells and lathi charges, court cases, police interrogations, political ostracism, and even long periods of exile for their allegedly

'inflammatory' and 'seditious' work. Yet, this persecution and violent suppression has only served to strengthen their resolve and make them more intrepid in their quest for rights, equality, and the expectation of ordinary human consideration from the dictatorial regimes of Pakistan. Even when they have not been actively involved at the forefront of political affairs in Pakistan, they have engaged in a conscious and conscientious dialogue through their verse, expressing effectively and clearly their experience of confinement and bondage, of political discrimination and persecution, and of their frustration, despair, and loss of hope.

The promulgation of the controversial Hudood Ordinances during the military regime of Gen. Zia ul Haq (1977-1988) brought into sharp focus the plight of women in Pakistan. Although women have been subjugated for centuries in the subcontinent, Zia's regime decided to use the women's issue to control society in a much more repressive grip. Rukhsana Ahmad quotes Nawal El Sadawi's definition of fundamentalism to place in perspective the case of Pakistan. It is a world phenomenon which '...operates under different religious slogans, but is a political movement using God to justify injustices and discriminate between people, nations, classes,races,sexes,colours and creeds...' (Ahmad 9)

The Islamisation policy which was initiated in small measures by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the 1970s was carried forward with alarming persistence by Gen. Zia in the eighties. Women were barred from participating in or being spectators at sporting events. The practice of purdah was vociferously promoted. A nation-wide campaign called chadur aur chardiwari (the veil and four walls) was launched to impose seclusion of women. An anti-pornography campaign curtailed the participation of women in media and entertainment. A grim attempt was made to deny educational opportunities to women and young girls. The infamous Hudood Ordinances, promulgated by the Zia regime on February 10, 1979, were the tip of this iceberg. These dealt with drunkenness, theft, bearing false witness, and Zina (adultery) which also included zina-bil-jabr (rape). Rape required the same testimony as adultery, that is, four Muslim men of good repute who testify to have seen the act of penetration. This made prosecution for rape impossible under this law. Pakistani women, who had with great difficulty secured some rights pertaining to marriage and family laws through the Family Laws Ordinance (1961), passed during the regime of Gen. Ayub Khan, were now faced with the bleak prospect of having their few rights not just curtailed, but also violated blatantly in the name of political Islamisation. Pakistani poet Kishwar Naheed was amongst the few women who came together in September 1981 in Karachi to oppose the Hudood Ordinances on the ground that they were seriously prejudiced against women. It was during this period, as she narrated during a personal interview with the researcher in New Delhi in February 2011, that she wrote her scathingly defiant poem 'We Sinful Women' after a protest march in which the slogan shouting protesters, mostly women, were beaten up by the police and not allowed to continue their peaceful march. As she recounted during the interview, 'The procession had barely walked a few steps. All we wanted was to get to the gates of the High Court. For that, the police rained lathis upon us.' The poem is ironic, fearless and defiant. It is an iconic example of defiance against the subjugation of women in

society. Although it was originally written in protest against the imposition of the Hudood Ordinances promulgated by the regime of Gen. Zia as part of his Islamisation programme, the poem transcends its topical significance to become a statement of feminist agency and new found confidence:

It is we sinful women Who are not awed by the grandeur of those who wear gowns Who don't sell our lives Who don't bow our heads Who don't fold our hands together. (WSW 31) The poet's purposeful use of the word 'sinful' is biting in its sarcasm and conveys her fearless apprehension of what society thinks of any woman who dares to raise her voice against tradition. She further accounts for the rampant suppression of women and their rights when she says; 'It is we sinful women/ who come out raising the banner of truth/up against the barricades of lies on the highways/ who find stories of persecution piled on each threshold/who find the tongues that could speak have been severed.' (WSW 31) Her understanding of the repercussions of such an act however, does not deter her from an unflinching opposition of the laws and practices that propel women to perpetual slavery in the name of societal tradition. A note of determination, of breaking free from suppression infuses the last few lines of the poem, 'Now, even if the night gives chase, these eyes shall not be put out./ For the wall which has been razed, don't insist now on raising it again.'(WSW 31) Naheed's anger at the curtailment of the freedom of expression and the intellectual strangulation that is endemic to any oppressive dictatorial regime is visible in this poem.

In comparison to the overtly political protest inherent in Naheed's poem, Fehmida Riaz's 'Chadur aur Chardiwari' relates more to the social oppression of women on the pretext of the veil and four walls. It is a scathing indictment of the enforcement of the law of Chadur and Chardiwari (seclusion of women within the house) as part of the Islamisation programme of Gen. Zia. This poem deals more specifically with the societal repercussions of the programme mentioned above. In this context, it would be worthwhile to consider a passage from the Koran wherein the codes of modesty for both men and women are laid down in unequivocal terms: 'Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest...and tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosom.' (Surah 24:30-31, Pickthall) There is no consensus amongst the ulema regarding the nature or extent to which women should cover themselves in public, move out of their houses, or expose themselves to an outsider. Zia's regime subtly promoted purdah as an Islamic virtue. Directives were issued from 1980 onwards, requiring female government employees to dress 'modestly', even as the definition of modest varied from covering one's head to wearing a chadur.

(Syed 252) Fehmida Riaz takes up this issue of forced purdah and confinement within the four walls of the house in the poem mentioned above. In a tone infused with irony she states that she is not in mourning that she should wear the chadur to display her grief to the world. She continues, 'I am not a disease that needs to be drowned in secret darkness/ I am not a sinner or a

criminal/ that I should stamp my forehead with its darkness.' (WSW 91) Courageously and fearlessly, she opines that the chadur should be used to 'cover the dead body/ in your Highness's fragrant chambers…/ Who knows how long it has been rotting?' (WSW 91) The poem goes on to state that the 'shroudless body' belongs to the women who are 'the handmaidens/ they are the hostages who are halal for the night.' (WSW 93) The use of the word halal, which in this context means 'permissible', is significant for its consciously religious overtones, as Islam has distinct parameters for what is halal and what is haraam (prohibited). In regarding these concubines as 'halal for the night', Riaz presents a sordid reality in ironical terms. In a rare feat, she compares these women of the night with the 'bibis', an address commonly used for the Prophet's wives, daughters, and female saints. This comparison takes the poem to the highest level of defiance and protest. It juxtaposes the Koranic implications of the sanctity and stature of the women in the Prophet's life with the patriarchal and chauvinistic derogation of women. The sexual exploitation of women within the four walls of the house and the hypocritical assumption that women are to be cloistered within their homes as a means of protecting them from the external male gaze are thus brought into collision by Riaz in this ironic and fearless poem that takes on Zia's Islamisation programme by the horns and turns it upside down in contemptuous tones. It presents Riaz's most trenchant criticism of the Hudood Ordinances. She enjoins the perpetrators of the custom and the law makers who made it compulsory for the women to be covered in public in cold and clear words to first cover the 'rotting carcasses' of the women whom they have used, abused, and exploited within the four walls of their homes. Fearlessly, she goes on to say that it is not she, and women like her, who needs the veil; it is the perpetrators of crimes upon women who should be covered and restricted to the four walls of their homes. The poem ends on a confident note. 'In the open air, her sails flapping, my ship races ahead/ I am the companion of the new Adam/ who has earned my self-assured love.' (WSW 95) Riaz thus takes her destiny in her own hands and forbids any government from having a say in how she chooses to govern and live her life. The poem boldly breaks the silence that women are expected to maintain in the cloistered imprisonment of their homes and the veil. The new woman, as Riaz portrays herself to be, no longer submits to this enforced isolation. She has learnt through experience that this seclusion is a euphemism for sexual and domestic exploitation. Speaking defiantly for herself and her sex, Riaz refuses to have anything to do with the chadur, or to be shut within the four walls of the house. She thus breaks new ground by not just highlighting women's sexual experiences but positing them as worth mentioning in her verse. In her bold appraisal of women's physicality, Riaz asserts her defiance of patriarchal strictures that seek to subjugate women and denigrate their sexuality as immoral and evil.

Among the poets discussed in this study, Zehra Nigah, the senior most and the most popular amongst the women poets of Pakistan, in the least aggressive when it comes to denouncing repressive and discriminatory laws. Yet, for all the visibly simplistic tone of her poems, she presents the feminist angle at its most

poignant, highlighting the human and emotional aspects of exploitation rather than just its political or social ones. Zehra Nigah's 'Hudood Ordinance' is a thought provoking and saddening account of a young girl wrongly imprisoned under the Hudood Ordinance, a practice that had become common during the Zia regime. The practice continued even after his regime came to an end as unscrupulous family members exploited young girls and had them implicated on false pretexts for zina (adultery). Numerous studies of such cases in Pakistan have brought to light the plight of these girls who were falsely accused of adultery by male relatives, or who, having been raped, couldn't prove that the crime was indeed committed and therefore were incarcerated for adultery. The poem is an expression of profound protest that incorporates no agitation or violence. Rather, it conveys, through the wrongful incarceration of a young girl, the damning effects of a law that was more misused for self-serving interests than put to good use for curbing immorality. The poem speaks of the complete disillusionment and destruction of spirit of a young woman who has been falsely accused and jailed for the crime of adultery. The girl in the poem is stoic in her acceptance of the punishment. The poem expresses the complete demoralization of this innocent girl who is 'both fettered and free' in her tiny prison cell. Put under solitary confinement, she has only the fleeting glimpse of the rays of the setting sun on which she forms a mental path that takes her home in her imagination. She acknowledges with a deceptive resignation the fact that life goes on without her outside the four walls of her prison cell. There is a telling reference to her brothers, who 'still go to the mosque to study all of God's commandments- / They hear and then repeat.' (WSW 137) These terse lines contain in them the entire patriarchal ethos that permits only its men to interpret and understand the Koran. The irony is that while her brothers read God's commandments every day and have by now learnt them by heart, they are unaware and unconcerned about the suffering of their sister who has been jailed on account of one skewed interpretation of the Holy text. Her mother who spends her days 'talking to the birds' feels that 'when these birds understand/ what she is telling them/ they will pick pebbles in their beaks/ grasp stones in their claws to hurl.' (WSW 139)

Like most believing women, she is confident that the daughter will get justice some day because of what the Koran has promised, 'and such a storm shall rage/ that every judge and every pulpit/ will shatter into smithereens.' (WSW 139) The girl's statement at the end of the poem, 'And he shall be my witness/ who rules the world/ who is both just and gracious.' (WSW 139) is not so much an affirmation of her faith in God as an ironic comment on the fact that if God indeed was just and gracious, she would never have faced such torture and degradation. The dead, unemotional tone in which the girl describes her days in the prison cell indicates not just a sense of complete despair but also the more troubling realisation (for the reader) that she has internalized societal oppression to such an extent that she is unable to retaliate against the gross injustice being meted out to her. It is the mother of the girl, herself a sufferer, who relies only on the final judgment of God to alleviate the suffering of her daughter, knowing fully well that society and its insensitive, discriminatory laws

will not ensure justice for her child. The imprisoned girl however, harbours no such hope. Nigah is not a vociferous feminist like Kishwar Naheed or Fehmida Riaz, but the subtle irony inherent in her linguistic style foregrounds the repression of women as effectively as the incisive language used by Naheed and Riaz. In an interview to the researcher in New Delhi in March 2011, Nigah said, 'I write what I think and feel in my heart.'

Saeeda Gazdar's 'Twelfth February, 1983' is a both a literary as well as a historical record of the fateful day when police tear gassed and beat up women protesters who were on a peaceful march against the Hudood Ordinances, particularly those related to the Law of Evidence, which halved a woman's testimony as compared to men. In its original form, this law was derived from a verse in the Koran which

States:

Ye who believe! When ye deal with each other in loan transactions involving future obligations for a fixed period of time, reduce them to writing…and get two witnesses out of your own men, and if there are not two men, then a man and two women, such as ye choose, for witnesses so that if one of them falters or errs, the other can remind her. (Surah 2:282, Pickthall)

It was thus assumed that a woman's testimony is worth half that of a man. The passage of the bill by the Majlis-e-Shoora brought forth strong protests from women's groups such as the Women's Action Forum etc. Gazdar's poem is angry, indignant and defiant. Significantly, it is addressed to the three most evered and influential women in Islam: Maryam, Khadija, and Fatima, the mother of Isa (Jesus Christ), the wife of Prophet Mohammad, and his daughter through Khadija respectively. Through this invocation, it contextualises the derogation of women who have been deprived of the right of equality because of the male centered interpretation of a Koranic injunction. It expresses anger at the forcible imposition of a law that ostensibly seeks to 'protect' women and promises them their 'right to a pedestal and a heaven' (WSW 177) but actually denies them a valid individuality and an independent identity. It goes on to question the current regime's understanding of Islam: 'These hollow moral rules and restraints/ why do you explain them to me? / Is Islam that difficult? / Did people never pray before now? /… Did they not believe in the Koran and the Kalima?' (WSW 181) Anger emanates from almost every line:

Are you afraid of a woman's truth?
Am I numb?
Or is my mind so paralysed
that standing next to me
another person of my sex should remind me?' (WSW 183)

She refers to the most important role assigned to women by the laws of nature, that of childbearing. Assuming control over her destiny, she speaks for all women when she proclaims defiantly, 'I refuse to give birth to you.' The poem incites all the women of Pakistan to come together as one and 'testify against this tyranny and cruelty hurled at our heads/ in the name of the law of

evidence.' (WSW 185) he poet thus expresses her right to an individual affirmation of her faith as opposed to forcible and misinterpreted imposition of religion by the state.

Through a discussion of these poems, I have tried to foreground the fact that poetry is an effective and essential means of creative expression especially in situations that circumscribe fundamental rights. . In that sense, the poets under consideration in this study have not merely been writing history in their erse, they have been an inextricable part of the history that they write. It becomes an even more potent tool of protest as it enables them denounce repressive and exploitative regimes through the protective covering of metaphor and symbolism. These poems serve not just as examples of women's expression of their unique 'self' experiences as opposed to those of the male 'other'; but they also become synonymous with what can be termed 'history in/as literature', as they are vocal, lucid and unflinching accounts of the historical events that have exerted a profound influence on them as women, as also on their nation.

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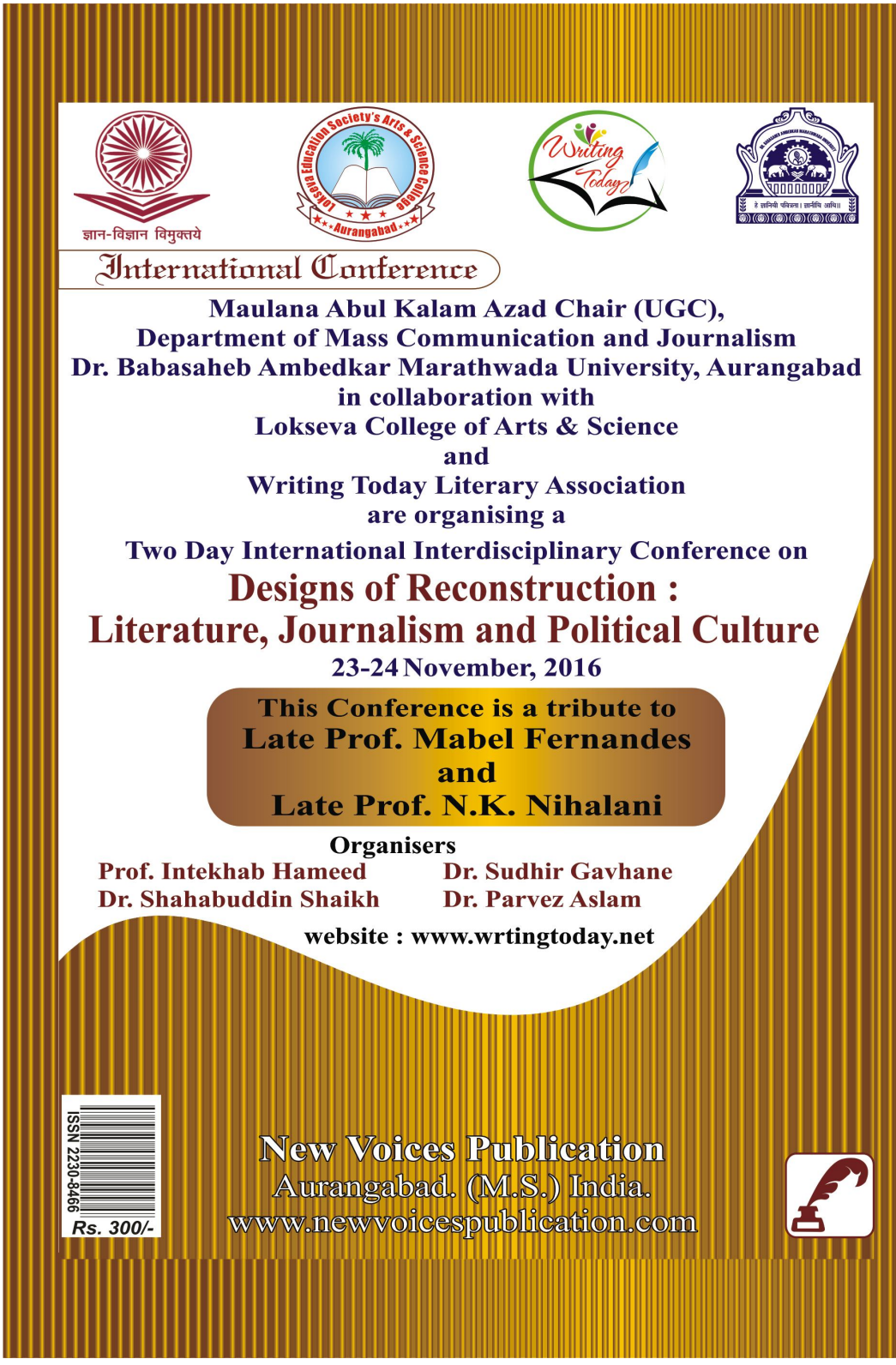
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