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TRIPLE STREAM

MATURITY OF THE INDIAN DEMOCRACY

I. V. Chalapati Rao

The 15th parliamentary election to the Lok Sabha was conducted in five phases involving 714 million voters, 4.7 million polling staff and 2.1 million security personnel. India being the largest democracy of the world it was an unprecedented management exercise which was peaceful except for sporadic minor incidents. Its success was largely due to effective security arrangements and the use of modern technology like Electronic Voting Machines, foolproof monitoring by Videographers (74,729) and digital cameras (40,599). We do not think such a massive exercise was ever smoothly completed in any other country. Credit should go to the Election Commission which has scripted history by electing 543 members from a plethora of political parties.

Obviously the Election – 2009 is a verdict for stability, continuity and growth, especially in the context of the present global fiscal crisis and economic slow down. The handsome majority that the UPA had obtained is a guarantee against the obstruction from the smaller parties and opportunist alliances which indulge in bargaining for hefty ministerial berths. Having overcome the anti incumbency factor the Congress party is in a comfortable position. Of course the success of the Congress was partly due to its performance in different states – Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Kerala and West Bengal. This is a signal that the Left parties which lost heavily even in their

traditional strong holds, will no longer be a dictating force they were at the center from 2004 to 2008. It is unfortunate that while the whole world including the Left had changed, our Indian Left got left behind.

The choice of Dr. Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister is the expression of a general desire for stable government, administrative ability, financial expertise and personal rectitude. They wanted a performing government under a tried and tested leader. He is the first Prime Minister after Jawaharlal Nehru to have second term after completing five years. Now the country can expect a renewed thrust for reforms with an adequate regulatory mechanism and a sharp focus on infrastructure for sustained development and social welfare. The economy should regain its growth trajectory.

The Bharatiya Janata Party that led the National Democratic Alliance was graceful in conceding defeat. Unfortunately ‘the party with a difference’ developed differences among its leaders. Let us hope in the 15th Lok Sabha, highest parliamentary traditions will be followed when the defeated parties will play a role of responsible opposition and the ruling party will keep the interests of the whole country in mind, instead of being vindictive and partisan. Their united efforts in a spirit of accommodation should make India occupy the pride of place in the comity of nations. It is a decisive moment in history. *

AMERICA RESPONDS

Dr. Michael K. Miovic

A friend of the United States once famously said that one can always count on America to do the right thing – after she has exhausted all other possibilities. As history would have it, on January 20, 2009, she finally exhausted her other possibilities, and did the right thing. The inauguration of Barack H. Obama as the 44th President of the United States was a day of victory for the American people and for the ideals of democratic government everywhere. All who witnessed the event, whether in person or by television, could not help but feel the spiritual power of the moment. And not only Americans marked the making of history, but indeed one felt the collective soul of all watching humanity swell and breathe in the hope-filled air of a new dawn and a greater day.

We know the glow will fade and the world's problems resist any quick or easy solution; that the new President is just one human being standing against a huge and obstinate machinery of inertia both at home and abroad. We also understand that the evolution of consciousness is slow and difficult; that, as Sri Aurobindo has explained, this world of conflict we see with physical eyes is only the outer expression of an inner battle between supra-physical forces of light and darkness that must be seen with spiritual vision if ever this life is to reveal its divine potential. Even more reason than plumb this remarkable occasion for its full measure of meaning, so as to fortify ourselves for the long path ahead.

That a black President now lives in a White House once built by black slaves for white masters, is self-evident proof that

America continues to advance towards the ideals of liberty and equality enshrined in her founding documents. This aspect of the inauguration was writ so large on the day that no observer missed it, and President Obama himself chose wisely not to distract from the point with an excess of words. Many also commented on the marvel of a peaceful transition of power, which we have come to take for granted but still merits periodic awe. Yet what was not said explicitly, but was implicit behind all the expressions of the day, was that this peaceful passing of power to a leader whose forbearers were powerless, was America's real response to the terror of September 11, 2001. For the essential criticism that Osama Bin Laden has made of the United States—if we may translate his primitive violence into articulate statements—is that the nation is an oppressive empire, that it may speak with a silver tongue but rules with an iron fist. During the height of the Bush administration one had to wonder if there were not, in fact, a kernel of truth to this allegation, and one did begin to doubt whether America's lights were waning.

However, the election of Barack Obama to the highest office of the land reminded America—and the world—that the answer to this gray doubt is a resounding “no.” This exceptional man gave voice to the many millions of ordinary Americans who every day keep the aspiration for human unity alive with the small things they do to build towards high ends. January 20, 2009 was the day that the American people stood up en masse and said, “No, we are not oppressors. We are not

perfect, but we can disagree without bloodshed, we can correct mistakes without killing those who made them, and we can progress. We will judge human beings not by their creed or the color of their skin, but by the quality of their character. And we will practice freedom no matter how difficult the circumstances. We choose to leap courageously towards the future, rather than cling fearfully to the past.”

To arrive at this transformational moment, America had to endure the attack of those dark and anti-divine powers that seek always to slay the evolving soul in humanity. There can be no doubt that Al-Qaida is the visible, material instrument of hostile invisible powers that stand behind this material world and seek to control it. America’s initial response to the attacks of September 11 was to project her energies outward in a premature and misguided war in Iraq, and to look for what in the Muslim world needs fixing rather than putting her own house in order first. But the wisdom of yoga teaches that we must respond to hostile attacks by taking them as an indication that something in our own consciousness is amiss, has allowed the attack to occur or perhaps even invited it. This spiritual lesson holds as true for communities and nations as it does for individuals.

In the case of the United States, a series of inner errors and weaknesses needed correction. First, the American public had become uninformed and passive in the political process, and unconcerned about the pressing problems that attend the birth of the 21st century. The “stolen” election of George W. Bush awoke America to the fact that even she cannot rest on the laurels of her democracy, and his divisive leadership ultimately hastened the advent of change by creating the

counterpoint of conditions from which Mr. Obama could emerge. Second, Mr. Gore’s loss forced him to turn within and heed the voice of his soul’s calling. After a fruitful period of self-reflection, Mr. Gore went on to awaken the American public to some inconvenient truths about global warming and the country’s responsibility to protect the environment. Had he been President, he would not have had the time to accomplish this essential work as effectively. And thirdly, the financial system of the United States had become over-inflated and corrupt. This aspect of the country’s internal disorder was the most concealed, and when it was finally revealed emerged precipitously. Seven years after the fall of the World Trade Towers, almost to the day, the American financial system imploded on Wall Street, at the very feet of the fallen trade towers. Seven years – one for each chakra or plane of consciousness. Seven years for the spiritual defects of the United States to become materially visible, *exactly* where the hostile forces pointed a dark finger on that fateful day in September, 2001. It is impossible to grasp the full meaning of September 11 without recognizing this connection.

Impossible, as well, to understand the full import of September 11 without recalling the original and luminous sense of that day. All history is but a slow and ignorant search of the human for the Divine, and constantly the asuric forces delay and deform the evolution by casting a cloak of darkness over every movement towards the Light. For most of recorded history the Western world sought the treasures of the East, taking these in the most literal and material sense. But the greatest treasure of the East, especially of India, is something impalpable and immaterial–

the inner wealth of her spiritual consciousness. This cannot be bought, stolen, traded, or controlled. September 11 was the extraordinary day when Swami Vivekananda delivered the real jewels of the East to the Western world, freely and with a heart full of brotherhood, at the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago. Heralding the dawn of a new age of spiritual unity among the peoples of the world, he greeted his “sisters and brothers of America” with the glorious and all-embracing knowledge of the Upanishads and the Gita, not the grotesque mistranslation of Allah’s will handed to us 108 years later by Osama Bin Laden. Fitting, -then, that the same soil of Chicago that bore Vivekananda’s call to global harmony in 1893, in 2009 sent her junior Senator to the White House to renew America’s commitment to her highest ideals, and to the eternal aspiration for human unity. As well the great Swami could have spoken these words at the inauguration of President Obama, as when he first uttered them on the only September 11 the world will honor as

sacred and true:

“The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world, of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita: ‘*Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me.*’ Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization, and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.”

*

GOOD OLD DAYS!

Prof. G. Surender Reddy

In good old days when things were very
pleasant
It rained quite so often and summers too were
cool
Teachers taught in their classes
Mothers sang lullabies
Kids made the paper planes
Neighbours smiled at you
Hawkers were soft and polite
Milk was fresh and pure
Food was plenty, fridge wasn’t needed

There was no television, but theatre was
creative
Festivals were celebrated
Guests were gently entertained
Doctor was a family friend
Shopping was an event
The habitat had lots of trees
The sky was blue and full of stars
But, the good old days can never comeback
So, let’s look for great new days!

*

CONTACT VERSUS COMMUNION

M. Bhimasen Rao

The Wise tirelessly repeat that the Life-Spark in all of us is verily the 'Atman' or the Self described in our scriptures. It is the deepest Reality, the causal Essence behind our conscious existence. We are what we are as intelligent human beings because of that Reality which is of the nature of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.

When this truth about our real nature is communicated to us by a competent teacher of Self-Realization with rational analysis, logical and cogent explanations and apt illustrations, we readily appreciate the teaching without any hesitation. And yet, when it comes to the point of actualisation of that perception in daily life we are out and out a miserable failure. The honest one cannot but discover with distress that the entire teaching proved like water poured on a soft-surfaced rock. It had no impaction at all on the deeper psychological constitution.

We, no doubt, heard the teaching; but we have not opened up our mind and heart for the teaching to course through or penetrate into our entire personality. Normally, we hear with our ears. Seldom do we listen with all the energies of all our senses, mind and heart in unison integrally. In this connection, it may not be out of place if I quote the words of the philosopher-sage Sri J. Krishnamurti who pin-points the exact defect in our act of listening: "It is important to know how to listen. Most of us do not listen; we come either with a tendency to resist or refute what is being said, or we compare it with what we have previously heard, or learnt from books. In this process, obviously, there is no listening,

because when you are thinking of what somebody else has said on a subject your mind is merely going back to various memories – merely trying to compare what is being said with what you have heard or read already. We are not aware of the truth, nor do we see the false as the false. As long as our mind is occupied in any way with effort (to listen) or with comparison, with justification or condemnation true listening is almost impossible. Listening should itself be a complete act, so that, that very act brings its own freedom and understanding."

These observations really emphasise the importance to lift ourselves into a state of acute attention where the mind is poised in a state of utter quietude and alertness besides being sensitive. In such an order within alone, can we make a right approach to learn the truths of Vedanta for gaining Self-knowledge. The spiritual preceptor may help by constantly encouraging to sustain our zeal and also explain the logistics to ignite our dormant spirit to become conscious of our hidden potentialities and powers, latent talents and faculties and higher possibilities that await exploration and manifestation. In and through his inspiring, dynamic discourse he unravels the theme of Self-awakening with absolute clarity and certainty.

When the teacher, thus, puts us on the course of 'SRAVANAM' or listening, we on our part must adjust and tune up our inner organ known as 'ANTAHKARAN' to arrest every possibility of dissipation of attention. Vigilance, diligence, extraordinary alertness and deep silence are of paramount importance

in order that the very process of 'listening' turns itself into an effective instrument to break the walls of age-old psychological conditioning and fetters of slavery to the factors of not-self. Thus when the flame of attention becomes brighter and brighter, the other processes known as 'MANANAM' (Reflection) and its corollary 'NIDIDHYASAN' (Meditation) come into being effortlessly as a natural unitary movement towards Self-knowing; without Self-knowledge there can be no God-Realisation. Maharshi Ramana says in his 'UPADESA SAARAM' that the revelation of the vision of one's Self is itself the vision of the Lord of the Universe (Swaatamadarsanam is Ishadarsanam).

Let us, therefore, come to listen for a while a few aspects of what our scriptures have declared:

The Truth behind all existence is One without a second, Infinite, All-full and Eternal –PURNA. The entire visible universe of myriad names and forms is conditioned and 'Finite' –APURNA, a mere panoramic spectacle of manifestation of the ONE Truth. All manifestation implies the sense of having a beginning and an end. We are all, therefore, bound within the law of manifestation right now. Nevertheless, the fact that needs to be ever remembered is that at the heart of this manifested spectacle of universe lies the causal Essence, the truth of the Infinite Being acting not only as an eternal substratum but also as an interpenetrating current of Pure Presence in every particle of the structure of the universe. This explains the reason why we are advised to enshrine God in our heart as the enlivening luminous Presence without which the whole structure of the personality crumbles

to dust. This CONSCIENT PRESENCE verily marks the birth of God in Man. The Sastras, therefore, declare that there exists a definite and distinct possibility for man to consciously strive and evolve and rise to the pinnacle of Godly-Perfection while living in the present embodiment. Nevertheless, it is incumbent on the spiritual aspirant, to find out with extraordinary circumspection from moment to moment the various obstructions caused by subjective ignorance and eliminate their influence through appropriate means of firm Knowledge.

Our different modes of worshipping the chosen deities and also our regular meditations have the singular purpose of dissolving this deep-seated ignorance about our godly nature of being. The essential modus operandi, as we have stated earlier, consists in consciously bringing about the act of invocation in a spirit of utter devotion and supplication so that the auspicious characteristics of the object of worship or meditation flow freely into our being in their wholeness.

Actually, the word 'invocation' means the calling up of the Higher Energy and Force represented by the deity to preside over our bosom and fill our personality. In ritualistic parlance, it is called the act of 'NYASA' which forms part of every kind of ceremonial worship. The priests and pundits who conduct worship in temples and those who perform daily worship in their Puja Rooms know what this 'NYASA' means. It is a Sanskrit word which means, resurrecting, invoking, stabilizing, placing and fixing etc., All these meanings are implied in that word.

Thus, in this act of Nyasa, every part, every aspect, every conceivable characteristic

spirit of the Divine Being is consciously, tenderly invited and located or installed in every corresponding part of the aspirant's personality. Intense feeling of love for the Lord engulfs him. Unaware of his usual self he heaves forward into a peaceful state of communion with the Divine within. It is perhaps more correct to say that the silent state of communion with the Divine sweeps over the entire personality of the aspirant. It is a state as though one is possessed of God at that point of time. One becomes a sort of an Avatar to put it in a meagre sense. The word 'Sanyasa' has its roots in this act of 'Nyasa'. A real 'BANYASI' is one who is possessed of the refulgence of Godly Perfection irrespective of his outward appearance in dress and his way of living. Thus, the 'Art-of-Invocation' throbbing with the purest form of devotion and silent dedication unravels the hidden energies and powers in the aspirant and sets him on the sacred path of deep communion with the indwelling Reality or God.

Nevertheless, the successful entry into the portals of deep communion is often beset with the difficulty emanating from the mind. The mind, by its very nature, is afraid of 'Communion'. That very word acts like a cudgel that seeks to beat and break the mind's incorrigible tendency and irresistible habit to wander into the world of glamour to quench its pleasure-thirst. This being so, the mind never wants to come into communion with anything in the world at any time because of its inherent fickle, flighty and flippant nature. It always likes and longs just for contact rather than communion. Nurtured to move about in restlessness through long evolutionary process, unsteadiness has become its dominant trait. Likes and dislikes govern and

direct its unsteady attention. It, with its coterie of senses move from one interest to another, jump from one set of objects to another for survival through low and vulgar pleasures of dissipation. Thus survival through contact is the general habit of the mind in its search for enjoyments.

But, in our spiritual enterprise of invocatory worship and meditation our aim is not to contact the Divine within but to come into vigorous, vigilant and yet absolutely quiet, silent and enduring communion that establishes a steady vision of the Divine within. This is indeed the purpose of NYASA.

It is of importance for us to see the difference between CONTACT AND COMMUNION IN THE CONTEXT of our discussion.

In Contact, you really do not imbibe the characteristics of the object. Secondly you are not in possession of the object. Thirdly you do not receive into yourself the power of the object and therefore you cannot truly enjoy the object. And lastly nor can you have any control over it. If this much is understood, we come to appreciate the generally unknown fact that our daily exertions to possess and aggrandize wealth and objects for real enjoyment is an utterly futile effort. What one comes upon is pain, frustration and sorrow.

The Bhagavad Geeta says (Chap-V-22):

“YE HI SAMSPARSAIAA BHOGAA
DUHKHAYONAYA EVA TE
AADYANTAVANTAH KAUNTEYA
NATESU RAMATE BUDHAH”

The pleasures born of sense-contact are wombs of pain, for they have a cradle and a

tomb. Every contact that is fleeting in its very nature brings only pain and suffering and ultimate ruin of oneself. So, the spiritual aspiration of the soul does not long for a contact with God or the Divine, but a steady communion with Him. In those rarefied moments of indescribable depth-communion with the Divine during one's worship or meditation, one simultaneously comes to establish a communion with the whole of creation, because the entire creation is the cosmic body of the Divine.

Thus to worship God is to worship the whole world; to serve God is to serve the whole humanity and vice versa. That is why it is said 'JANATAA JANAARDHANAH'; Maanava Seva 'MADHAVA SEVA.' These simple looking sayings we often hear have

actually a great significance behind them. JANATA and JANAARDHANAH; MAANAVA and MADHAVA cannot be identical except in terms of the perfection or POORNATA of the Divine Being or God. To be in communion with God means a simultaneous communion with everything in the world. This is a vast, comprehensive, illumining state of experience (if I may call it so) that one can have through true form of ardent worship and meditation which ensures in its turn prosperity at every stage in any walk of life. Peace within and harmony with the world around is indeed the life Divine.

Hari Om!

*

APRIL

K. V. V. Subrahmanyam

'April is the cruelest month'
Said the bard of the waste land
-Weather hasn't improved a tenth
For it isn't done by magic wand.

Toxic fumes and exhaust gases,
Of snarling autos spread allover,
These seem endless running races
Nature has turned into an arid flower.

Winter is warmer, summer hotter,
Greenery dwindling day by day,
Cities face scarcity of water,
Escape from crisis seems no way.

Science and high teck berserk gone,
Will there be a twist or turn?
Out of darkness, for emerging dawn,
Let one and all pine and yearn.

*

Greenhouse gases are waxing,
Depletion continues in ozone layers;
-Patience of people gets taxing,
Despite Varuna and other prayers.

*'A poem is not what you think
It is not finding but trembling on the brink
of finding
It is not the where, But the road to there'
- Edsel Ford*

A FREEDOM FIGHTER'S EXPERIENCE

Hazara Singh

It was an awfully cold evening of early December in the city of Rawalpindi. The piercing gusts of wind were worsening the weather. Everyone seemed to be in hurry to return to the protection of home. Even the court chose to rise for the day a bit early. Shortly before that I was taken into the courtroom, where the grounds of detention were read out to me. In the morning the police, in a swoop, had arrested me on my arrival at Rawalpindi from Lahore. I had come to preside over the annual session of Punjab Students Congress. The mounting resentment of people to the I.N.A. Trial* seemed to be making the government feel nervous. The district authorities were not inclined to give me an opportunity to address the gathering. Perhaps they had been forewarned by their counterparts at Lahore.

After that formality in the court, I, with handcuffs on, was taken to the nearby Central Jail by a brief guard of police. As I was well-dressed and my face, too, reflected the cultivation of higher education, every passer-by, in spite of his being in hurry, halted impulsively to see me being escorted thus. He pondered in bewilderment as to what offence might have been committed by me. Thus puzzling the lookers-on we reached the jail gate. As it had been my third arrest in connection with my political activities, I had been used to hardship of confinement in jail. But during that brief march from the court to jail, under the police escort, my mind had been somewhere else. That was the time when I was to be taken in a procession to the venue

of the conference, but instead, I was being led to the jail. An inlet in the iron gate opened with a bang. I with the police party entered the porch.

A jail warder, dressed in a drab brown uniform, was standing there. He held a worn-out pen on an untidily kept register. He stared at me assuming artificial strictness. He cried, "what is your name?". I told him politely my name.

"What are you?", he shrieked again.

I pondered as to what to say appropriately in reply.

"Why do not you bark?", he howled.

I said in a low tone "A human being."

He flew into a rage and so screamed. "How dare you misbehave? Will you tell?" He raised his hand as well, but withdrew after a disapproving look from the police guard. He explained his query, "Are you a Hindu, a Muslim or a Sikh?"

I kept mum. He himself recorded something in the register.

"What is your offence?", he cried again.

The police official got me rid of him by telling,

"Detained under Defence of India Rules."

Putting down the pen, the warder stretched his hands towards me to search my dress and person. When he felt satisfied that I carried nothing objectionable, he directed a prisoner, wearing a black-waistband**, to take me to the courtyard. The handcuffs were removed after I had been entrusted to judicial custody.

In the courtyard a prisoner clerk, sitting under the central tower, noted my name and parentage. Handing over a cardboard ticket to me he cautioned, "Keep it carefully with you. If it is misplaced, you may invite trouble."

Then he asked the attendant to have me issued the requisite blankets and vessels. He led me into "a high-walled barrack. Many inmates were either loitering about or were preparing themselves for the night lock-up. They watched me eagerly as if I were a messenger from the outside world who would convey some good news. Many asked in a chorus,

"What offence? How long sentenced? Which district?"

Three questions were showered at me again. I replied to their queries. They could not understand my offence, because I was a political detenu. Almost all the prisoners acquire a perverted knowledge of various provisions of law. The important sections of Indian Penal Code are at their fingertips. But neither they could comprehend the offence I was charged with nor were able to reconcile themselves to the fact, as to how a person could be punished without a trial. It got added to their knowledge that the inmates of a prison included detenus in addition to the convicts and undertrials. They evinced no interest in my replies to their first two questions, because central jails are packed with criminals sentenced under I.P.C sections 307, 302 and the ones dealing with other heinous crimes. Longer the term of one's sentence, the warmer ovation one is given. They do not try to develop acquaintance with the convicts who are to serve brief terms. The fellowship with a person, whose sentence is sufficiently long, is a source of considerable solace and is ardently

sought. This attitude is justifiable. If the pangs of separation continue to be inflicted every now and then, the jail life becomes doubly afflicting.

When I told about my district, the curiosity of a few of them got aroused further. They surrounded me and enquired about the police station and the village I came from. I was admitted there and then to the fraternity of the district. As I was a political detenu, I was to be kept in a separate cell.

Reflecting on these three questions asked so sympathetically and the ones hurled, contemptuously by the warder, I followed the attendant carrying a few dust-laden blankets and two iron vessels. I realised that the jail life had imparted him a lot of practical wisdom. He exhorted me,

"Young friend, I salute you. Only the guilty and the upright are sent to the jail; the former for being punished for their misdeeds, and the latter for being cowed down for raising voice of protest against tyranny and oppression. We are ordinary people. Even Lord Krishna's mother gave him birth in jail, Guru Nanak, too, had to grind corn in detention...."

With a keen ear to his interesting sermon, I reached the allotted cell.

* Trial of the officers of Indian National Army in the Red Fort, Delhi in the later half of 1945;

** Prisoners with a good record of their Jail term are not put to hard labour, but are used as attendants; those who act as message boys wear black waistbands, while, the seniors among them, entrusted with supervisory duties, put on the yellow ones.

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ON AGING

T. Padmanabhan

There is a possible view that the theme is worn thin by reason of excessive attention thereto. It can never be held to have become hum-drum in significance. Humanism and gerontology will see to it. Everyone of us is being relentlessly pushed towards or into old age. As most of us will have to - will-we, nill-we - spend a considerable part of our lives there, and as no one knows what 'experiential universe' will hold for him in that stage of life, the theme is sure to hold perennial fascination for us. The vast and not easily exhaustible variety of points of view about and angles of approach to the subject will ensure that it will never fail to present the student of human affairs with ever novel aspects.

It is said that to resist the frigidity of old age, one must combine the body, the mind and the heart. What if the body turns out to be the victim of neglect (by others even though they have their near and dear), the mind by very reason of such neglect becomes a suppurating sore and the heart loses its essential characteristic viz. resilience, suppleness? All the problems attendant on old age may be found to have their origin right there. There is a remark: 'The golden age is before, and not behind us.' In the case of most of the old, the remotest resemblance even of the golden age will be behind them. All too easy is the advice 'to look at life through the wind-shield and not through the rear-view mirror.' Both of course serve a well-defined purpose. To how many is it given to look forward to a care-free life and to allow their minds to revert to a pleasant past? When the despair that is sure to result in the case of many

with every retrospective dart of the mind is tinged with fast-failing hopes, what is there to wait for except the stretch of time ahead, with apprehension born of past experience putting up a stiff fight with frail hope, reducing man to the unenviable position of two headed Janus, with hopelessness only presenting itself to his 'forward and reverted eyes?' Erich Fromm makes a significant observation about man in general, but to a surprising extent it is applicable to the old/the aging: 'NEVER IS HE FREE FROM THE DICHOTOMY OF HIS EXISTENCE; HE CANNOT RID HIMSELF OF HIS MIND, EVEN IF HE SHOULD WANT TO; HE CANNOT RID HIMSELF OF HIS BODY, AS LONG AS HE IS ALIVE - AND HIS BODY MAKES HIM WANT TO BE ALIVE.' Can the tragedy of the normal run of old/aging people be described in any better way, pregnant as it is with poignancy? In one sense, the last few words require modification. In an ever-increasing number of cases, people in such circumstances, might be willing their way toward the end, the end of care, of anxiety, of forlornness. It is held by some that the gray of the hair need not be a means of assessing the age of the heart. But in a real sense, it will be, where the aging people view with dread the prospect of retirement from work, when to the infirmities of age will be added the bleakness of the prospect of having none to care for them, their very offspring turning out to be self-centred, wrapping themselves up in their own concerns, reluctant to spare a thought even for the comfort of the authors of their being. Thus runs a stanza in

Vairagyasataka: 'Gathram sankuchitham gathirvigalitha bhrashta cha dantavali: / Drishtirnasyathi vardhathe badhiratha vakthram cha lalayatha/ Vakyam nadriyathe cha Bandhavajano Bharya na sushrushathe/ Ha kashtam purushasya jeernavayasa: puthropyamitrayathe.' Age sets him apart from his own family, though he is physically still part of it. Adi Sankara says: 'Jarjara dehe, vartham kopi na prichchathi ehe.' It is farewell even to enquiries about health when old age has laid its blighting touch on man. Another interesting view demands equal attention: 'At sixty, a man has passed most of the reefs and whirlpools.' Alas that it is never so, in the case of a majority of the aged and the aging. It is thought of the reefs and the whirlpools ahead that will put a term to their peace of mind. A whole range of fears, now possessing the aspect of vague apprehensions, now of well-defined alarms, now of troubled thought, now of dismay, now of terror saps energies that should go into confident living. 'The saddest sight to see,' said a poet, is 'an old man faithless in humanity.' It will be a heart-rending finding, how many such sad sights will be there in real life. Not a crown of glory, but one of thorns will be upon the heads of a good many old people. Of them it will be true to say, with the poet: 'No snow falls lighter (we may have to give the word 'lighter' the meaning more imperceptibly) than the snow of age; but none lies heavier, for it never melts.' Theirs will never be the lot 'to enjoy the best of what is, and be the first to find the best of what will be.' Never is a greater untruth uttered than when it is said: 'The young live by intensities that the elderly have forgotten.' Evidently small allowance is made for the possibility that viewed against the intensities that several of the old and the aging suffer, 'the intensities the young live by'

will pale into insignificance. The intensities the young experience will bear the traces of promise; those the aged and the aging suffer will bear the imprint of hopelessness. And of helplessness, it is said: 'Our youth and manhood are due to the country but our declining years are due to ourselves.' To what end? 'Self-torment?'

Never has a greater truth been uttered than that 'Old age never comes without a large cortege of griefs and infirmities.' Among the infirmities not the least powerful will be the psychological ones of alienation, aloneness and so on. To be alone is said to be no different from being in bad company. Of the lonely aged and the aging it will be true, for they are left in the company of thoughts of what might have been had they been different in their attitude toward themselves in the past, and of thoughts of the ingratitude of those for whom they had toiled. 'That time of year thou mayest in me behold/ When yellow leaves, or none or few do hang/ Upon those boughs which shake against the cold.' Don't we see in these lines a telling description of the tragic lot of the old'? When will man learn to provide against the possibility - which through insistently repeat experience shades off into certainty - of the interest others of his family take in his welfare waning with the first onset of age with its inevitably debilitating effect on the mind and the body alike, the onset of age which reduces regularity of access to material resources?

How many of the younger generation will choose to be guided by these lines of well-meant advice "speak gently to the aged one;/ Grieve not the care-worn heart;/ The sands of life are nearly run;/ Let such in peace depart.'

And what can religion do to compensate him for the losses described in the foregoing

paragraphs, particularly perhaps when he offers to God 'the devil's leavings,' as such may not be unlikely? Truly it is said: 'Some people's religion is just like a wooden leg; although it helps them to hobble along, it never becomes a part of them, but has to be strapped on every morning.' There is an interesting description: 'Dressing ourselves for heaven.' In the case of how many will their sadness leave them patience enough to take to such dressing? Will the intensity of bitter

experience, the persistence with which their minds fasten upon recollections of such bitter experience leave them in a state of mind to ensure proper preparedness for 'the meeting of life's shadows with eternity's day'?

Are we not left wondering whether old age homes are to be looked upon as so many comments on those of innumerable families who have made them necessary or as so many beacons of hope for the friendless and the forlorn? *

THE TIMELESS

Dr. R. M. V. Raghavendra Rao

At the beginning there was a 'word',
 At the beginning there was 'the Om'
 From the stirrings of sounds and feelings
 And from the harmony of the syllables
 And from harmony to harmony
 As the Divine music sanctified the atoms,
 Breathing life and light into them
 Came personified beauty as human-
 As the embodied Truth, Goodness and Love
 Filling the universe with space
 As vast as the boundless Peace.

But, the annual deluge's darkness
 Begets the beam of nature's resurrection
 As the perennial Peace's self-incarnation.
 From the terminal beds of deadly desires
 There sprouts a minute a new birth
 Of yet another infant of Infinity
 Proclaiming again Nature's eternity
 In its diurnal rounds of Love's Divinity-
 In me, you and the timeless Humanity. *

But then, as though there is a dire need-
 Shoot up, with the senses beyond heed,
 Carnal waves of human greed.
 When Nature, the pendulum of God Itself
 Totters, tumbles and raucously clamours,
 As the 'Ark's' wailings of appeal
 Are drowned in that greed's gory roar.
 Once, the entire creation in all its serenity,
 Now Man's 'tooth and claw' only in its
 atrocity!

*'If you were to destroy in mankind the
 belief in immortality, not only love but
 every living force maintaining the life of
 the World would atonce be dried up.'*

- Dostoevesky

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

N. Seetharambai

It is generally believed that women's issues and their development began to attract the attention of the world at the end of 18th century with the advent of feminism. However women's issues were discussed even before that in the fourteenth century. French Woman Christine de Pisan wrote about the rights and duties of women. Mary Astell of England stressed the importance of providing knowledge to women so that they can make rational choices. She opposed Rousseau's idea of different types of education for women and men. Feminism is the belief in the political, social and economic equality of women.

Empowerment is the process of obtaining basic opportunities for the marginalised who have no opportunities for self-sufficiency at a minimum and are denied and deprived of the pride of accomplishment. Empowerment helps in developing confidence in their own capabilities. Women's empowerment is the process by which they can acquire ability to make strategic life choices which they have been denied so far.

Gender discrimination, unequal access to resources and opportunities, lack of basic services and violence against women, low representation of women in politics and business and power imbalances hamper the progress of not only women but the society at large. Empowerment of women and the achievement of gender equality became matters of human rights and social justice. However women are not a homogenous group. There are vast social, economic,

cultural, educational differences amongst them besides urban and rural divide. Hence the need for adopting multiple approaches to empower them.

Though economic dependence, the prime cause of women's oppressions and struggles for economic independence, is important, this alone cannot solve the problems of women. A holistic approach is needed to change the perception of people about the image of women.

The UN convention on the 'Elimination of Discrimination Against Women' was a major step in setting international standards of gender equality. The International Women's Year 1975 and International Women's Decade 1975-1985 tried to focus on Women's issues and to develop strategies for improvement. Everyone knows that improvement never comes without change. Any change has to face many hurdles and women's empowerment movement is no exception.

The UN was engaged actively in women's issues from 1945. It established mechanisms to ensure that women's agenda was incorporated in various spheres of activity both in and outside of the UN system. In 1946 the Commission on the Status of Women was created as subsidiary body of Economic and Social Council with the objective of formulating guidelines and actions to improve women's status in the economic, political, social, cultural and educational fields. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

was set up in 1982 as the treaty monitoring body for the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Convention sets standards for countries to improve the living and working conditions for women. Its articles cover civil, political and reproductive rights of women.

It was realized that women play a critical role as leaders and community members in reducing poverty and providing good governance. Women in politics and in decision making positions in government and legislative bodies provide opportunities for 'transformative leadership' by redefining political priorities, placing new items on the political agenda that reflect as well as address women's gender specific concerns, values and experiences besides providing new perspective on important issues. However prevailing social customs, religious practices, financial dependence, limited training opportunities, limited exposure to political processes, family and child care responsibilities are acting as limiting factors for women's participation in politics.

Women's participation in public life was prominent amongst the aboriginals. In modern democratic world, however the role of women in public decision making was minimal. Mrs. Srimavo Bandarnaike was the first elected Prime Minister of not only Ceylon (present SriLanka) but in the entire world. The first popularly elected female head of state in the world is Mrs. Vigdis Fingadottir, President of Iceland in 1980. In the later half of twentieth century a strong consensus emerged for laying emphasis on political empowerment of women. Active participation of women in public life is essential for sustained economic and social

advancement of women. As a step forward to achieve this objective in the World Conference on Women held in 1995 at Beijing 189 governments committed themselves to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision making. The governments also pledged to set goals of gender balance in government bodies as well as committees and in public administrative entities in the judiciary.

Women's participation in managerial and technical fields is showing considerable progress whereas the same is not true in participation in politics. This is the reality throughout the world. In many countries reservation of seats for women in various forms are introduced to encourage women's participation. It is observed that women's participation in local government has considerably improved compared to the national level involvement. Many reasons are cited for this. Participation in local government is easier for women to balance with the double burden of household responsibilities and governance. Also issues decided at local level are mostly educational and social which are easy for traditional women to understand and play an active role. On the other hand in the prevailing social structure, lower status of local political offices makes party leaders to support female candidates. The women also feel confident to face the local electorate and meet the limited expenditure involved for election process.

World Scenario:

There is a general belief that the women's participation in developed countries is better than in the developing nations.

However the facts are otherwise. At the beginning of this millennium globally only 11 women were Heads of State out of 193 countries and 27 women are presiding officers of 187 existing parliaments. According to the Inter Parliamentarians Union (IPU) women constitute 16.3% of the world's Parliamentarians i.e. only 195 out of 49396 parliamentary representatives. Rwanda, a young African country, has 39 women out of its 80 MPS (48%). Women held even 34% seats in Upper House. The Rwandan government achieved this by adopting a triple balloting technique for general, women and youth. In Nordic countries this constitutes 40%. Norway, considered to be the most feminised democracy in the world, has 36%. However almost half of its cabinet, Prime Minister and heads of the three major political parties were women. Sweden tops the list of countries with 38%. In 1993 Sweden had more female ministers than the men. Women's representation in Arab countries has gone up from 3.7% in 1997 to 8.3% in 2000. In Afghanistan and Iraq women's share was 27% and 25% respectively. During 2008 in UK and USA women members constituted only 20% and 17% respectively. In China also it is only 22% in New Zealand it is 29.2%, in Australia 27% and in Canada 21%.

Due to the reservation policy followed by some national political parties or the government, women's participation in local governments is much better. African National Congress Party in South Africa reserves 50% of local government candidates for women. National laws of Latin America, Argentina, Brazil, Panama, Peru reserve 20% to 40% of candidates for women. Surprisingly in Costa Rica 72% of councilors are female.

Bangladesh, Tanzania, Eritrea and India also have laws reserving seats for women in local bodies.

The Indian Scene:

In the Indian Freedom Movement most outstanding women leaders and workers at all levels were visible. Sarojini Naidu, Aruna Asaf Ali, Durgabai fall in this category. Unfortunately after independence many of the veteran women politicians were sidelined by the political parties or could not enter the parliament / assemblies.

In spite of adopting universal franchise which offers voting rights to women from the very formation of Republic of India, its rank is 119 according to Inter Parliamentary Union whereas China's rank is 48. It has become necessary to have political patronage in the respective political parties to gain foothold in politics. Majority of the present day women politicians belong to the families of prominent politicians or have entered due to social compulsions of the government for selecting candidates from weaker sections. For example for the 13th Lok Sabha 284 women contested. Out of these 78 were independents. Total women elected were 49. Out of these 35 were from national parties who fielded 104 candidates whereas 11 belong to regional parties who fielded 55 women. Criminalisation of politics and the expensive electoral process are cited as other reasons for inhibiting women stepping into the electoral fray.

The Government of India set up 'Committee on the Status of Women' in 1971. The committee suggested to increase women's representation in political institutions, especially at the grass roots level through a policy of reservations. In 1998 National

Perspectives Plan for women suggested to introduce 30% quota for women at all levels of elected bodies. After long deliberations the Constitution Amendments 73 & 74 enabled the reservation of one third of elected members to Panchyats and Urban local bodies to women. The reservation was extended to the heads of local bodies also. This paved the way for participation of women in decision making at local level on a large scale. However in effect in most of the cases the real decision making power is in the hands of men due to the illiteracy of women or the fact that they are elected on behalf of the male members of the families due to the reservation policy. In some cases women members were elected as family members of deceased male politicians on sympathetic considerations.

From 1985 onwards the government of India has been trying to pass the Bill on Women's Reservation in Parliament and State Assemblies, but successive governments could not get it through. The reason attributed for the need to have reservation is that winnability of women candidates without reservation is difficult. But the statistics reveal that success rate of women who contested Parliament Elections is higher than that of men.

At the same time the presence of women in public life does not mean a better deal for women. Their visibility and ability to influence the policy making and political culture are important. Unfortunately most women MPs did not have women's issues high on their agenda. Limited interaction between women representatives and women's movement is affecting the effectiveness of women MPs. One has to acknowledge the fact that due to pressure extorted by social groups and to some extent by women activists, a number of

Acts towards achieving equality and protecting the rights of women were passed by the Indian Parliament. Some of the rights covered by these Acts include Hindu Marriages as well as Special Marriages Act, Child Marriages Restraint Act, Dowry Prohibition Act, Equal Remuneration Act, Maternity Benefit Act and the latest addition is Prevention of Domestic Violence Against Women. It is a well known fact that legal and constitutional rights themselves will not have impact on social attitudes.

In order to fulfill the goal set at 2005 World summit 'Progress for Women is Progress for All' affirmative steps need to be taken by governments as well as NGOs. They include:

- Universalisation of Education
- Including the rights and legal remedies available to redress their grievances as part of the curriculum.
- Providing training in political and legislative affairs, government programmes.
- Reducing the cost of contesting elections.
- Decriminalisation of politics.
- Democratic selection of candidates by political parties rather than giving reference to kinship.
- Prescribing minimum qualification for the contestants.
- Reservations of seats on the model of Rwanda.
- Building up an effective modern communication system to address the grievances of the people whom they represent.

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ANNAMAYYA LAKSHA GALA SANKEERTHANARCHANA

Rayaprolu Eswar Kumar



Mr. Raymond Marshall, representative of the Guinness Book of World Records, handing over the World record citation to Sri. K. Rosaiah, Finance Minister, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, in the presence of other dignitaries on the stage and sea of humanity in the audience

Divine Inspiration, they say, comes only to the chosen few but when it comes, it changes not just the life of an individual but of generations to come. One such who has inspired myriads and breathed bhakthi into our very essence is the great singer-saint, Annamacharya. Weaned away from the transient pleasures of the body to the one of permanence, Annamacharya dedicated every minute of his life to the service of Lord Venkateswara. The result: The Telugus have found **a melodious path to divinity**. Today, we hear the world waking to the lilting music

of Anamayya. It is, in fact, an awakening of our souls to the omnipresence of God. Many have found a new meaning in their lives and a sense of direction as a consequence.

'Padakavitha Pitamaha' Annamacharya was born on May 9, 1408, traditionally known as Vaisakha Poornima in the year Sarvadhari at **Tallapaka**, a remote hamlet in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India. It is widely believed that Annamayya is an amsa or incarnation of Lord Venkateswara himself. The Lord's sacred sword 'Nandakam' has descended on to Earth to destroy sin and to show the right

path to mankind. During his 95 year sojourn on this planet, Annamayya, as he is fondly referred to by many, created a virtual 'Bhakthi Samudra' with over 32,000 waves in the form of Keerthans touching and awakening human consciousness. Annamayya wrote these on palm leaves and subsequently, his son Tirumalacharya got them engraved on copper plates. The unique feature of Annamacharya was the **primacy of Sahitya** over other elements. Most of his keerthans were written in common man's Telugu. Yet, there can be no doubts about his scholarship. Some of his keerthans are a mirror to his command over Sanskrit and some, to his philosophical depth and others, to his **sense of social reform** advocating equality and justice for all. The famous 'Bramhamokkate.....' is an epitome of Annamayya's outlook.

Yet, it was not in our good fortune to awash ourselves in the full glory of the saint's dispensation. It took almost 400 years for his keethans to see the light of the day after the British Officer, A.D. Campbell who first came to know of them in the 1860s during his effort to compile a Dictionary in Telugu sent one of his men to search for any information on Telugu Grammar in the said copper plates. It was reported to him that there was only a single book on grammar among the plates found in the custody of a devout family in Tirumala, presumably the descendents of Annamayya. This is reportedly one of the earliest references to Annamayya's works. Fortunately, in the 1920s, 2500 copper plates containing about 14,000 keerthanas were found and transported to the Office of the Devasthanam at Tirupathi. Since then, the Annamacharya Project has done a lot of

research and brought the Sankeerthanas into the lives of the Telugus under the auspices of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams.

SILICONANDHRA, an organization formed in August 2001 by a group of Telugu immigrants to the USA, founded by Anand Kuchibhotla, has been organizing various activities promoting Telugu culture, music, dance, drama and literature. With a history of organizing programmes on Annamacharya Keerthans simultaneously across many cities and countries all over the world, SILICONANDHRA embarked on a unique way celebrating the **601st Birth Anniversary of the Saint-Composer** this year in collaboration with the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, the Dept. of Culture, Govt. of AP and Andhra Bank in Hyderabad.

The event was aptly named '**LAKSHA GALA SANKEERTHANARCHANA**' as it was a collective prayer to the Lord with **emphasis on Bhakthi** over music. On May 10, 2009 over 1,60,000 voices came together singing with their hearts and souls the glory of Lord Venkateswara at the Secunderabad Parade Grounds. It was, indeed, the event of a lifetime for many. The capital city of the state transformed itself into the capital of Bhakthi Samrajya.

The effort was supreme yet the goal was simple – to make every household ring with the sacred chanting of the keerthans. Indeed, it has been achieved. The sacred keerthans have found voices ranging from the 4 year old grandson of yours truly to octogenarians. The venue was one breathtaking ocean of devotion transcending all barriers of age, sex, caste and even religion in the divine-inspired effort to be a part of the Archana to the Lord in one

cosmic experience. People from far off places like Behrampur in Orissa, Pune, Mumbai, Chennai and from various towns and villages in the state gathered at great personal expense and physical effort. Not even physical disability could stop one.

Seven compositions popularly known as ‘**Saptagiri Sankeerthanas**’ were sung with each song varying from 5 minutes to 6.5 minutes for a total duration of about 45 minutes. The tunes were based on the Indian classical music tradition with a fixed tune (Raga) and beat (Tala). The choir was led by the reputed composer and singer Sri Garimella Bala Krishna Prasad accompanied by musical instruments, the Violin, the Veena, the Mridangam, the Flute and the Tabla.

A festive atmosphere prevailed in and around the Parade Grounds with many children and youngsters dressing up as the composer-singer Annamayya and Lord Sri Venkateswara. The stage was beautifully decked up to suit the occasion and the Lakshagala Sankeerthanarchana began with Agama pundits from the TTD invoking divine inspiration and benediction. Every participant was a beacon of Telugu culture adorned in the traditional Telugu dress mode – Dhothi and Uttareeyam by men; colorful silk Sarees by women. It was indeed a rare sight to see so many ‘Telugus’ in the true sense of the term. There was a traditional welcome with every participant welcomed with gandham, paneer and vermilion. The crowd, to their great credit, behaved impeccably well. Of course, their cherished desire to be a part of the great event had that effect on them. Surely, the entire team of the organizing committee, especially the hundreds of volunteers, deserve a pat for making the event such a grand success.

The Carnatic music legend and maestro, Sri Mangalampalli Balamurali Krishna lent his ageless and mellifluous voice to the enactment of a few Sankeerthanas by the artists of ‘**NATYA VIPANCHI**’ led by Kalimamani Dr. Saraswathi, Chennai. The evening’s program was brought to a musical conclusion with a concert of the violinist-singer couple Dr. L. Subramaniam and Smt. Kavitha Krishnamurthy who were accompanied by their children.

The highlight of the evening was that a **new Guinness World Record** was set. In the process of rendering the keerthans, the participants set a new World record surpassing a 72-year-old record set in Germany by a choir of 60,000 in 1937. The new record was announced by the representative of the Guinness Book of World Records and adjudicator for the programme, Mr. Raymond Marshall amidst a huge roar of applause from the audience. The venue reverberated with the chanting of “Govinda, Govinda” when the Finance Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Sri K. Rosiah received the Guinness World Record Certificate. TTD Chairman Sri Adikesavulu Naidu, TTD Executive Officer Sri Ramanachari, BJP State President Sri Bandaru Dattatreya and many eminent singers and instrumentalists graced the event.

Overall, it was a transcendental experience **combining the mysticism of the past with the empiricism of the present** transforming the masses gathered at the venue into **an idealistic embodiment of a single cosmic psyche** singing Annamayya’s keerthans in praise of Lord Venkateswara.

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GLOBALIZATION (THE OTHER SIDE)

Dr. V. Kondal Rao

Dad, in America,
 Mom, in India,
 Husband, in Africa,
 Wife, in Australia,
 Brother, in Malaysia,
 Sister, in Arabia,
 Son, in Alaska,
 Daughter, in Canada,
 Son-in-law, in Russia,
 Daughter-in-law, in Scandinavia.

Parents, in "Home for the Aged,"
 Children, hostel caged,
 Home, mortgaged,
 Job, here and there chased,
 Address, to be devised and revised.

Talk of elders, a waste,
 Talk of youth, a toast,
 Talk of fast life, the most,
 Talk of wealth, the utmost,
 Talk of welfare, the least,
 Talk of values, the last.

Talk, as you please,
 Walk, as you choose,
 Wake, only after the effect of booze,
 Do anything, only after the cricket craze,
 Gaze at anything, only after the wealth daze.

Relationship, confined only to lip,
 Friendship, limited only to togetherly sip,
 Culture, only slimly, trimly to step,
 Fellowship, only to communicate with pep.

Love, only a wish, a promise,
 Truth, a myth,
 Honesty, knows no berth,
 Loyalty, in utter dearth,
 Gratitude, not a penny's worth,
 Credibility, long back lost its birth,

Dependability, long ago lost its girth,
 Stability, long past lost its mirth.

Information, full stock,
 Knowledge, half stock,
 Enlightenment, quarter stock,
 Vision, no stock,
 Wit, no talk,
 Wisdom, no walk.

Hard skills, sour, bore,
 Soft skills, not so sure,
 Intellectual skills, rare,
 Emotional skills, bare,
 Dart skills, here and there,
 Art skills, rarely glare, -
 Smart skills, galore.

Scientific temper, hardly a flare,
 Social temper, hardly a wear,
 Humanistic temper, hardly a swear,
 Democratic temper, hardly a care,
 Secular temper, hardly a dare.

Outlook, least cared, look most.
 Image, least rated, wage most.
 Relationship, least valued, ownership most.
 Health, least minded, wealth most.
 Peace, least coveted, ease most.
 Values, least bothered, skills most.
 Social good, least interested, private good most.
 Standard of life, least craved, standard of living most.

That is globalization,
 That is its moral core,
 That is its ethical pore,
 That is its spiritual indoor,
 That is its cultural outdoor.

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ACADEMIC UNDERWORLD: HEADING TOWARDS MEDIOCRITY

Sanjay Kumar

The spectre of mediocrity is haunting Indian universities. Universities are supposed to be the breeding ground for talent and teachers are supposed to provide role models for society. But the way the academic world has been functioning doesn't augur well for the future of our country. It is no longer in a position to maintain its holier than thou approach as the mask of hypocrisy is falling off very fast. In many universities, selections are made very often before the vacancies are announced.

Interviews are held as stage shows to project a few favourite candidates where the selection committee indulges in the crudest form of sadistic pleasure by torturing "other" candidates with ridiculous questions. Sometimes specialisation required for a post is manipulated in such a way that only one particular candidate will fit into it. Others are automatically eliminated. If that doesn't work, then selection is cancelled on some flimsy grounds. Techniques of this dishonest practice vary according to different past masters of the art of rigging interviews. Interviews are no longer level playing fields.

Lack of transparency

Some academic goons have hijacked the sacrosanct academic space and have been consistently promoting their own protégé who in turn inherits the skulduggery to contribute in the formation of a clique. In the selection process meritorious candidates with a far more teaching experience, research work and

publication are rejected in favour of mediocre charlatans who distinguish themselves by their loyalty to a particular academic gang. This immoral practice is accompanied by a discourse justifying the "extraordinary performance" of a particular candidate witnessed by a few within four walls. Is there no other parameter for judging the most eligible candidate for a post — qualification, teaching experience, research experience or publication? Those who do not possess the essential qualification of unconditional surrender of their soul to academic Mephistopheles are demoralised, harassed and left out.

Some senior lecturers are rotting at the same post as a punishment for their upright posture. Let us accept that the essential qualification to get selected for a university post has become the wheeling and dealing and the serious academic work has been pushed to the back burner in many universities.

Intellectual dishonesty

Interviews have become the battle ground of different political parties. Many genuine scholars and reputed teachers keep on working without any permanent position till their dreams are killed or they commit intellectual hara-kiri by staying silent in the backwaters of the academic life. In most of the universities, there are academic gangs who organise seminars and conferences in order to extend their clout. The culture of free debates and discussions is getting replaced

by flourishing intellectual stooges who gain positions and power by surrendering their critical faculty.

Intellectual dishonesty is the order of the day. There have been several cases of ghost writing where senior professors publish works in their own name even when the substantial part of it has been done by one of the research scholars under their supervision doing M. Phil. or Ph. D. These research scholars abstain from raising their voice as they fear vindictive moves from their all powerful supervisors. But those who deliver sermons on democratic values and talk about ethics on the stage and read research papers on ideological commitments must pass the litmus test of honesty for without

honesty there can be no ideological commitment whatsoever.

As long as we talk about democracy in public and practise fascism in private there is no respite from the fast growing epidemic of mediocrity in Indian universities. Lecturers and professors, whose dreams have been killed by this corrupt system should come out openly against this seeping decadence and voice their concern.

Courtesy – The Hindu (Open Page)

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DOES GOD HAVE AN ADDRESS?

Manju

In search of God's abode
I climbed up the hill
To a golden temple.
Stepped inside a mosque,
Entered a church,
A synagogue..
I tried to find Him
In a prayer
In the chants
In an Azaan...
I traveled far and wide
Across deserts
And oceans
But these were only
His transit lounges.

Where is O Lord
Your permanent abode?
A wind of Hope
Touched my being
I heard a throb within
I heard a silent call
I danced ecstatically
To the celestial music of the Spheres.
The journey of discovery ends here.
He is seated within my heart
My heart is His Home

Courtesy Sri Aurobindo's Action – April 2009

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THE UGLY SIDE OF INDIAN FESTIVALS

Lalitha Ramadurai

India is often referred to as the 'land of festivals and fairs'. There are festivals for rain, spring, harvest and even to celebrate plants and animals. There are others that celebrate religious occasions. Thanks to the cultural diversity of our country, each of these festivals is celebrated in different ways in different states.

One thing common to all the festivals, however, is that they often have unintended and undesirable effects on the environment. Every festival these days brings one or more of the following undesirable consequences to the public of the area.

- Greater noise levels
- Traffic congestion, and
- Waste accumulation

In fact, Indian festivities have begun to contribute to the degradation of the natural environment.

Ganesh Chaturthi – the festival that celebrates the foremost God of the Hindu pantheon – kick starts the festive season in India. Several weeks prior to the festival, the mass production of the elephant God begins. Traditionally, these idols were made from mud and clay and were coloured using plant based dyes. But in recent times huge idols are made using Plaster of Paris and are decorated using chemical paints. As a result, after their immersion, the idols take several months to dissolve and in the process release toxic heavy metals, including lead and cadmium, resulting in deterioration of the water bodies.

To add to the problem, devotees often carelessly dump plastic flowers, thermacole accessories, etc. along with the idol, and these

completely choke the water bodies. This causes the death of fish and other aquatic creatures.

Another serious impact that the festival has on the environment is, when gigantic idols of the Lord are taken for immersion in large processions, accompanied by drum beating and dancing, the processions not only increase the level of air and noise pollutions, but also cause massive traffic jams.

Each year, during the months of September-October, comes the festival of Dussera that celebrates the Mother Goddess in her many manifestations – as Durga (Goddess of Valour), Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth) and Saraswati (Goddess of Wisdom). In West Bengal, and by Bengalis across the globe, Dussera is celebrated as Durga Puja. Enormous pandals are erected to house beautiful images of Ma Durga. The puja culminates with immersion of the idols of the Goddess in water bodies and this has similar impacts as Ganesh visarjan.

Next comes the festival of Deepavali – the most important as well as the most polluting festival. Though the festival is supposed to bring light and happiness into our lives, the fire crackers pose serious health hazards. A comparative study of the pollution levels before and after the festivities indicates a steep increase in air and noise pollution levels. Air pollutants, such as sulphur, nitrous oxides and Respirable Suspended Particulate Matter (RSPM) released by the fire crackers, increase the incidence of respiratory ailments and allergies. In 2007, Chennai recorded a 64 percent increase in the levels of RSPM on Deepavali day, ranging between 131 and 132 micrograms per cubic metre (Source: <http://>

www.thehindu.com//2007/11/15/stories/2007111560570400.htm)

The festival also generates enormous quantities of waste, including cardboard boxes that store fire crackers, burnt scraps of paper, blistered flower-pots, chakras and rockets. In Chennai city alone, 600 tonnes of additional garbage was generated during the festival in 2007 (Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/2007/11/10/stories/2007111059650300.htm>)

Holi is yet another festival that turns into an environmental disaster almost every year (not to mention the deadly effect that it has on people's skin). The colours of Holi in recent times have become metallic and fluorescent in nature, unlike earlier times when people used to play with natural colours. Studies point out that the dyes used in the present day colours contain lead oxide, copper sulphate and aluminium bromide, among other chemicals (Source: <http://www.toxicslink.org/>). All these chemicals are toxic and can cause skin allergies, eye irritation and much more. When washed, these chemicals enter the ground-water and soil and, ultimately, the food chain. Also, on the eve of Holi, tonnes of firewood are burnt (to symbolize the burning of demoness Holika), causing even more pollution.

Then, there are other festivals meant for the worship of the plants and animals. But rituals born of ignorance often tend to torture the objects of worship.

A typical example is the festival of Nagpanchami – a festival earmarked for the reverence of cobras and other snakes. Unfortunately, in present times, hundreds of cobras are captured by snake charmers during Nagpanchami. The snakes are extracted from their burrows, their mouths stitched, their poison sacs punctured and their fangs broken. On the festival day, milk is fed to the snakes,

resulting in severe diseases and allergic reactions. Although the snakes are set free after the festival, many are left behind dead or dying and mutilated.

The sport of Jallikattu (bull snaring) in Tamil Nadu during Mattu Pongal (cattle thanksgiving) is yet another example of cruelty shown towards animals in the name of tradition.

Festivals are occasions meant to bring us joy. Unfortunately, in recent times, the festivals bring with them many problems. The reasons?

Firstly, most of our festivals today have become ruthlessly commercialised (greeting cards, partying, etc.) and involve spending of a great deal of money, energy, as well as other resources.

Secondly, some of the age old customs do not suit the present. For example, the first day of Pongal is celebrated as Bhogi. A major activity on this day is the burning of old items that are of not much use. In earlier days, the event was limited to the burning of farm waste, but nowadays people residing in cities burn plastics, rubber tyres and other non-biodegradable materials, causing widespread pollution. In fact, in January 2008, flights at Chennai airport were delayed by more than three hours due to the smog caused by Bhogi bonfires (Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/2008/01/15/stories/2008011557810200.htm>)

While it is important that we continue celebrating festivals in order to keep our cultural identity, it is also time we rethink our ways of enjoying them and stop mindlessly destroying the environment in the name of rituals and religion. (courtesy: *Eco News*, journal of C.P.R. Environmental Education Centre)

Courtesy Sri Aurobindo's Action - April, 2009 *

ARVIND ADIGA - MAN BOOKER 2008

Prof. D. Ramakrishna Rao

Thirty three year old Chennai born and Mumbai based journalist, Arvind Adiga won the prestigious Man Booker prize for his outstanding first novel "THE WHITE TIGER." The award carries with it fifty thousand pound prize money.

Born in Chennai in 1974 he had his schooling in a hundred year old ST. Alosyious High School in Mangalore and higher education in Columbia University and Oxford University. Returning to India in 2003, he became a journalist and a writer for Time magazine as its correspondent and also to many other British newspapers. As a correspondent he travelled widely in India, Pakistan, Nepal, Srilanka and many other countries where he had the opportunity of closely observing the living conditions of several strata of society, their social and economic conditions. More importantly his visits to various parts of India including some places, whose backwardness and illiteracy shocked his sensibility provided enough material for his novel.

Adiga is the fourth Indian writer to win a Booker after Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai and was the youngest of the six shortlisted writers.

Adiga's "THE WHITE TIGER" was shortlisted along with six others, Sabastian Barry's "THE SECRET SCRIPTURE", Amitav Ghosh's "SEA OF POPPIES". Linda Grant's "THE CLOTHES ON THEIR BACKS", Philip Hensrer's "THE NORTHERN CLEMENCY", Steeve Toltz's "A FRACTION OF THE WHOLE".

The booker judges chaired by Michael Portillo complimented this year's short list as intensively readable and page turning. The novel impressed the judges." It knocked my socks off" said Mr. Portillo. "The novel is in many ways perfect". It is quite difficult to find any structural flaws in it, he commented. The novel explores the underbelly of India's economic boom. The theme and the content impressed the judges who hailed it as an extraordinary portrait of modern India". It also explores the unpleasant reality of contemporary Indian society of "Millionaires in their air conditioned tower blocks and on the other the unfortunates who are suffering in their poverty, "catering to their whims". "The novel is a rebuke of the cheerful and false notion of a new transformed India."

The whole novel is in the form of letters addressed by Balram Halwai, the hero and the protagonist of the novel to the Chinese Premier. He also describes the poverty of rural Bihar which he calls by the name of 'darkness' and the evils and atrocities perpetrated by feudal landlords, the migrant Bihar workers who return to the villages after the hard labour in the cities.

According to the reports Arvind Adiga donated a part of his prize money to his alma mater. Alosyious college in Mangalore as gratitude for the fine education he received and the money will be used to start a special scholarship or for higher education of under privileged children residing in its boys' home. What a noble gesture!

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GANDHIJI'S SATYAGRAHA - ITS RELEVANCE TO RAJA RAO'S KANTHPURA

Kalavathi Tiwari

Indian National Movement and the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi had left an indelible imprint on the writings of not only the pre-independence writers like Raja Rao, K. Natarjan, Mulraj Anand, R. K. Narayan and many others but also on the post-independence writers like K. Nagrajan, Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Balachandra Rajan, Kamala Markandya, Anitha Desai and others. Their writings echo with the Gandhian principles like truth, non-violence, non-co-operation, village uplift, spinning wheel, khadi and protest against untouchability.

The impact of Gandhiji's satyagraha on the Indian people is portrayed in Raja Rao's first novel *Kanthapura*. No other book of this scope and size on this theme pictures so vividly, truthfully and touchingly the story of the resurgence of India under Gandhiji's leadership. It was written in 1938 in France, thousands of miles away from India and yet it gives a most graphic and realistic account of the Gandhian freedom struggle in the 1930's and its impact on the masses of India.

Gandhiji wanted India to be free so that 'if need be', the whole country may die, so that the human races may live. Many like Socrates or Jesus have proved the worth of non-violence in the past. Gandhiji only tried to extend the same technique to larger bodies

of man. He believed that those who are subject to a particular wrong should alone offer Satyagraha for the sake of remedy.

Satyagraha according to Gandhi is active love, expressed through persuasion, pleading, appealing and accepting cheerfully self-imposed suffering for punishment meted out by the adversary. Satyagraha is a way of conducting 'war' by means of non-violence. If Satyagraha is a priceless and matchless weapon with which brute forces can be combated, then a satyagrahi is one who fights only for a moral or just cause. The aim of a satyagrahi is to convert an opponent and not to coerce him. A satyagrahi had to struggle against abstinence and restraint in order to be worthy to offer the sacrifice.

Gandhiji's Satyagraha is relevant to the novel *Kanthapura*. The scene is set at *Kanthapura*, a remote, slumbering south Indian village in Mysore in the province of Kara. Moorthy, is the satyagrahi in *Kanthapura* who is the leader of the non-violent movement. He forms the *Kanthapura* Congress Committee, maintains contact with the city Congress, brings in newspapers, and keeps the people informed of the stirring events taking place elsewhere. He goes about from door to door; carrying the message of Charkha and Swadeshi. He, a Brahmin, but a Gandhite, goes even to the Pariah Quarter with the

message of the Mahatma. He is a mysterious power to move the people. Influenced and inspired by Gandhi, Moorthy, the Kanthapurian Gandhi preaches Gandhian philosophy of non-violence, love of mankind and abolition of untouchability to the people of Kanthapura. His message of truth and non-violence is carried out to the remote part of the village. He is the centre of action, dharna, picketing, satyagraha, tumult and sufferings.

The main plot deals with the impact of the Gandhi-movement on a remote south Indian village, called Kanthapura. As Srinivasa Iyengar says, "Kanthapura is India in microcosm. What happened there is what happened everywhere in India during those terrible years of fight for freedom". The subplot deals with the happening on the Skeffington Coffee Estate in the neighbourhood and throws a flood of light on the exploitation and brutality to which the Indian people were subjected by the foreign rulers. Though the Skeffington Coffee Estate is not actually a part of the village of Kanthapura, Raja Rao included its depiction in the novel because he wanted to include an instance of large-scale economic exploitation of Indians by Britishers and the depiction of the coffee estate enabled him to do that. Later in the novel, as soon as the call comes from the city Congress, the Kanthapurians, lead by Moorthy, march to picket the toddy plantation, with shouts of 'Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai' and 'Inquilab Jindabad' There is a cruel lathi charge, even women and children are beaten

up, and a large numbers are arrested. Next follows the Satyagraha outside the Toddy Booth near the gate of the Skeffington Estate. When the workers come to drink, the Satyagrahis lie down in their path, the lathi blows are showered on them. The entire atmosphere resounds with shouts of 'Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai'. There are countless arrests, and Moorthy is also arrested. They are compelled to flee their native place, and are obliged to seek shelter in Kashipur where they are welcomed as "the Pilgrims of Gandhi". Satyagrahis in Kanthapura with their priceless Gandhian weapon of satyagraha combated the brute forces and proved that they followed the Gandhian principal of non-violence.

Raja Rao is able to bring out vividly and effectively all the plans and programmes of Gandhi through Moorthy, who becomes the spokesperson of Gandhian idealism and ideologies in Kanthapura. The novelist interweaves skillfully Satyagraha in microcosm (Kanthapura) and Satyagraha in macrocosm (India). It is this interweaving of microcosm and macrocosm that lends beauty to Raja Rao's Kanthapura, a realistic presentation of the impact of Gandhian movement on the masses of India, hence a great work of art.

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In the whole world there is no study more beautiful and more elevating than the study of Upanishads. They are the solace of my life and will be the solace of my death.

- Shopenheur

THE PROBLEMATICS OF HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE IN THE SELECTED NOVELS OF GAYL JONES, PAULE MARSHALL AND ICE WALKER

K. P. Ruth

“The Problematics of Historical Experience in the selected Novels of Gayl Jones, Paule Marshall and ice Walker” deals with “Black feminist thought” and the representation of black women’s history in fiction. Gayl Jones’ *Eva’s Man* (1976), *Corregidora* (1975), Paule Marshall’s *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983), *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969) and Alice Walker’s *Meridian* (1976), *The Color Purple* (1982) will be discussed now.

The term “problematics of historical experience” refers to the representation of familial, cultural and social complexities of black women’s lives in the United States. The novelists deal with the abuse and violence of blacks both on a physical and psychological plane.

The three novelists Paule Marshall, Gayl Jones and Alice Walker are representative writers of the black female experience. They present in their fiction traditional “black values” and the cultural and social dimensions of their community. These historical experiences presented in the novels are rooted in the personal destinies.

These slave narratives inspired many activists who became writers like the novelists in quotation. Black literature of such novelists includes experiences of women who have played significant roles in the Civil Rights Movement and in the struggle for equality. The problematics of historical experience is not confined to the embarrassment or humiliations due to enslavement, oppression and exploitation by men, but it can also be

extended to the plight and sufferings of black women.

Gayl Jones’, *Corregidora* and *Eva’s Man* illustrate the concept of the union of ritual and dream of the annihilation of gender problems. She presents sexual violence in *Eva’s Man*. The central figure, Eva Medina finds herself in a psychiatric prison owing to a strange crime. She is accused of committing an inhuman crime and was declared mad. A series of recollections of problematics of her experience leading to the murder of her lover, Davis Cater, is presented.

The Black feminine literary tradition in Paule Marshall’s *Praise Song for the Widow*, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* is investigated. The writers were activists who participate in the Civil Rights movement. It was a heroic struggle for freedom and feministic fight for equality.

Black women are in fact doubly oppressed. They have to struggle for freedom from a colonial power on one hand and for their personal freedom from their own men. Gayl Jones, Paule Marshall and Alice Walker use fiction as a vehicle of presentation of their powers. They seem to liberate themselves from the two oppressors at the same time. Sexism, racism and oppression are recorded in the novels studied. The importance of tradition to avoid identity crisis in blacks is emphasized here. *The Chosen Place* deals with this problem using folklore, and oral tradition.

Alice Walker’s *Meridian* and *The Color Purple* reveal her understanding of the

sharecroppers' problems and female bonding skills makes these novels interesting. They also focus on the problematics of historical changes in the colonial societies. The survival problems touch on black feminist theory in these novels.

In *Meridian*, folk tales at Louvinie and mothers' gardens are suggested as a solace to wounded women. The Magnolia tree is glorified as the Sojourner, which houses the grave of "Wile Chile" during the Civil Rights Movement. Walker emphasizes the need of the family and also depicts the trauma of the abandonment of a family.

The *Color Purple* also deals with racism, sexism and oppression of the blacks. Walker considered mothers dynamic and revolutionary because they are rebels, victims and the survivors of mothers' gardens.

The novels of Gayl Jones, Paule Marshall and Alice Walker share common issues of sexism, racism and oppression of black women.

The writers studied express the feeling that "the memories that one carries in one's flesh signify differently the different contexts." Black Studies have identified certain "oppressive structures" and the trauma of certain ethnic living. Gertrude Stein and Gayl Jones examine the inter and intra-racial violence of much humiliated tribes. The abuse is emotional, physical and on the mass scale.

Gayl Jones, Paule Marshall and Alice Walker do not argue on fictive basis. They portray the actual physical experiences as slaves. Their discourse is based on reason and innocence. The images conveyed in their fiction are meaningful, communal, familial and personal.

In fact, history has been a record of negative aspects and cruelty of the imperialist forces. So these writers use myths to assert

their pastoral and creative ceremonies. These are descriptions of their dress, rites of events, singing and dancing. Gayl Jones' *Corregidora* illustrates this concept. Northrop Frye called it as "the union of ritual and dream in a form of verbal communication."

Gayl Jones' *Eva's Man* (1976) and *Corregidora* (1978) describe the pain and conflict due to violence, emotional silence, disharmony and love making. *Eva Medina* Canada poisons her lover, Davis Carter and castrates him with her teeth.

Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brown Stones* (1959) presents a Brooklyn girl's growth through unreal feelings and prejudices of an oppressive society. *The Chosen place*, *The Timeless People* (1969) deals with Caribbean Africans. *Praise Song for the Widow* (1983) presents an eccentric, middle-aged black woman and her problems. She uses the circle dance and the Ring Shout in *Praise Song for the Widow* as experimental techniques.

Alice Walker in *Meridian* (1976) and *The Color Purple* (1982) presents the historical and psychological strands of black life. Her myth of *Gardens* (1983) presents her "joy and strength to depict the lives of black women." A black girl unable to menstruate has to struggle for life. *Meridian* depicts the condition of blacks who resolve their problems by adopting African folk tales at Louvinie. The magnolia tree is a symbol of their life and she presents her development during the Civil Rights Movement.

Most of the findings of this research are conceptual and novel.

In Gayl Jones' *Eva's Man* and *Corregidora*, sexism has been identified as Jones' basis of struggle and protest. Sexism refers to the gender concern and politics men

play with women because they are women. Eva's Man highlights sexual violence. Eva at forty three is a psychiatric not because of her mental sickness; but because of her crime in killing her lover, Davis Carter. She castrates him with her teeth and so she is declared mad. Gayl Jones uses the technique which has been called as the flash back technique in study. Some have called it a series of recollections.

Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* deals with black identity crisis. She creates a discourse using folklore, folk elements as a class room creative writer.

In this sense, she is close to Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. Marshall likes to portray winning women. Food rituals and bathing rituals are given importance in the description because she considers that the weapon for women is their body.

This study notes that Walker has a basis in black feminist theory and discourse. She is more academic and thoughtful compared with Gayl Jones and Paule Marshall. Her prose style focuses the survival problem of black women. Meridian is the mouthpiece of Walker. *

THE BENEVOLENT TREE

Kalavathi Tiwari

Ornamented with gems of leaves and flowers,
Showers beneficial to people, fruitful favors,
Parches in torrid, scorching sun,
Drenches in terrible, torrent rain,
Though beaten by cruel weather and tempest,
Stands firm in tribulations toughest.

Apes leap, hang and trapeze,
Birds amidst foliage build their nest,
Serpents make holes to hide in deep,
Merciless man stone hard for the yield free,
Though bees make honey comb on its leafy
arm,
Never resents, it is hilarious at every harm.

Hundreds of delicious fruit cheerfully bears,
To consume even single one it never cares;
Provides serenity to great saints and sages,

Served man selflessly since long ages,
Though offers every one shelter and shade,
Slain it is ruthlessly with saw and spade.

Its precious presence protects the entire environment,

To prevent pollution, we need its armament,
Ozone layer depletes due to its disappearance,

In solidarity, let us realize its significance,
Let 'Chipko' movement of Sundarlal

Bahuguna

Be recalled to safeguard the flora and fauna. *

*A tree that looks at God all day
And lifts its leafy arms to pray
A tree that in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair...*

- Joice Kilmer

GO ON FOR EVER!

T. Shyama Krishna

I was there at the Gymkhana grounds, watching the Republic Day parade. I witnessed the armed battalion going past the dais. The tableaux from a few of the government departments followed suit. The Pragathi Ratham tableau of the state transport corporation caught my attention with 'The Chariot of Progress' passing at a slow pace down the procession. I was amused further by the slogan it carried 'Hitting the target, faster'.

But it was the next day that I could really comprehend how fast the 'ratham' indeed was and the connotation of the motto it had carried. I was going down the Bank Street, when, suddenly, a city bus rushed past me at great speed. The next moment, it hit a vehicle. Crash! Incidentally, I found the ratham maintaining the same tempo even in its day to day flights – true to its promise – stopping ahead of the bus-stop, making the public gasp for breath, as they try to catch up with it. Well, I find it surprising that in spite of the buses running fast and prompt on the roads, the Corporation should be running into losses. The reason soon struck me: The buses may be hitting the set target (of profits, of course) faster, but, alas, they are the targets of the ire of the agitating public – students, unionists or even politicians. The pity is, they look upon them as representatives of the authority to vent their anguish right away. The irony, however, is, that when the Corporation seeks to increase the fares intending to cover up such losses,

they readily throw brickbats at the buses, the target of their ire.

Transiting on the Delhi buses regularly, it was Nirad Chaudhury who found the city buses to be the microcosm of the Indian society. He got to observe people with different psyche and gives us an amusing account of the people on board the bus during his passage. I ventured to see through his eyes, but alas, we have come a long way since Chaudhury wrote the piece. I hardly find scope for scanning the entrails of a bus, for the buses are seen packed to full capacity these days, not allowing even breathing space between commuters. What all I get to see here in a crowded bus is – someone wailing for his lost cell, some other for his lost purse and yet another for his lost stage where he should have alighted, having stuck up in the melee of crowd! And the bus moves on, oblivious of the commotion going on within and without.

Even as I miss the Bharath, the Indian life in miniature on the wheels – envisioned by Chaudhury – I certainly didn't miss the lore from the Maha Bharatha or even Bhagavatha in its symbolic form on this public transport system. It occurs to me that a few of the epic characters are condemned to relive the curse in the Kaliyug that was laid on them! Firstly, I found there on the bus, the replicas of the duo Jaya and Vijaya, the divine sentinels who guard the abode of Lord Vishnu – day in and day out. In a crowded bus, I find at least two youths clinging on to the sides of the foot-

board, blocking the way for the passengers getting in and off. They change guard, but they never relent in their duty, rush or no rush! Next, I find the conductor, the reincarnation of Abhimanyu, forcing his way through the packed crowd, the 'padmavyuha' on the move, not once but scores of times, in the discharge of his duty. And there are Shikhandis, the male passengers, adamant at not vacating the seats allocated for women-passengers, in a rush hour!

With the city footpaths occupied by vendors and hawkers, people spill on to the road. The driver of the bus, the modern day

Vasudeva, wades his way through the river Yamuna of crowds, reaching for the other bank with the passengers intact. This, of course, is the 'testing time' for the driver, having to check on his speed! When I watch all this, I get the feeling to sing with Seline Dion, in tune with her theme song of The Titanic:

"Every night in my dreams,
I see you I feel you,
.....
Go on far across the distance..."

*

"INDIA OVER THE MOON!"

M. G. Narasimha Murthy

Undaunted by strong protests
And alliance breaking Leftist threats,
Our Prime Minister goes through crucial tests
And promise of nuclear fuel, he finally gets.
"India deeply loves you" he tells George Bush
For giving the nuclear deal a clever push.
Generous France offers Uranium
To usher in a bright millennium.
Our Chandrayaan touches the silver moon
And transmits knowledge rare, a precious
 boon.
All this is fine and inspiring,
Yet, the poor man's struggle is never-ending.
A paradox, strange and perplexing:
Global Banks tumble, markets fall and prices
 soar,

Yet, the F M assures our system is strong to
 the core.
We seem to dwell in our own paradise
In which, daily, a farmer or weaver starving,
 dies.
Our leaders talk of equal rights and secularism
And promise tougher laws to crush terrorism
While bombs exploding and hidden landmines
Take frequent toll of innocent lives.
Mosques and churches, terrorists target
And rapid action men arrive too late.
Religions teach us love, yet fanatics love to
 hate.
-On the far off moon, man can land,
Yet, he can't live well on his native land;

*

DELINEATION OF HUMAN SUFFERING IN GIEVE PATEL'S POETRY

Dr. Sudhir Nikam

A doctor by profession, Gieve Patel was born in Mumbai in 1940. A Parsi poet like Daruwalla and Jussawalla, he shows a keen observation of human suffering in his poems. The suffering and poverty of humble folk always inspired him to write. The imagery in his poems is drawn from his medical experiences with the patients. Although there is a tone of detachment, he has a great concern and compassion for humanity. Most of the imagery in his poems comes from the world of lepers, servants and beggars.

One of the well-known poems of Patel is 'On Killing a Tree' which metaphysically pleads to look at the trees as human beings. Outwardly, though the poem seems to be about an act of felling a tree, the poet gives the impression of being influenced by the act of removal of disease through operation. Symbolically, he tries to prove that mere cure of the disease is not adequate. Just as the tree has to be uprooted, likewise the cause of the disease has to be removed to cure it. Patel compares the killing of a tree to a surgical operation. However, he thinks that felling a tree is as cruel as killing a human being. Just as the human being has to undergo a lot of pain, the tree goes through suffering. The images like jab of knife, leprous side, bleeding bark, consuming the earth etc. link the tree to the human being. Thus, Patel raises his voice against cutting of a tree and appeals for compassion.

Another touching poem of Patel is 'Servants' in which he focuses on the poverty, helplessness and dehumanization of the servants and creates sympathy and pity for them. The servants described are from poor families in the villages who come to the city in

search of jobs for the survival, staying on the foot-paths. At night, after dinner they sit together smoking beedies. The lighted end of the tobacco shows their thin and hard hands. Their skin is dark and fingers are hard. These uneducated servants are compared with animals resting in the stalls:

I have seen
Animals resting in their stall,
The oil flame reflected in their eyes,
Large beads that though protruding
Actually rest.

While comparing men with animals, the poet mentions, 'I mean no offence'. The servants neither think of the past or future; they have only the present. They are not practiced to look at longer distances. The poet intends to describe the miserable plight of the servants and create sympathetic picture of them.

In the longer poem 'Nargol', Patel describes a beggar woman Nargol who is a victim of leprosy. The poet considers himself as a representative of the public who feel a dry sympathy for the beggars but do nothing to help them. The gap between feeling and doing is brought to limelight. The poem reflects the tension in our society which creates a guilty conscience. Although the poem deals with an individual beggar woman, it goes deeper beyond the surface meaning. Although the poet has pity for the beggar woman, his mind is not prepared to help her. He criticizes himself when he says, 'Four annas for leprosy'. The conflict in his mind compels him to think it as his personal defeat. Nargol's skin is described as pendulant and her smile cringing. Standing

at the bus stand, she begs for alms. Knowing the poet as a son of a wealthy man, she follows him. He considers her as a pest, a trouble and a torture. Being educated, he hates giving alms to beggars. Although he gives her a rupee, he considers it as his personal defeat. When on a second occasion he does not find her, he thinks that she might be dead. Although he feels free, it makes him sad. The poem is full of irony. The beggar woman becomes a type rather than an individual. The undertones of irony raise the significance of the poem. The poet shows the grim reality in the society.

‘Naryal Purnima’ is a poem about a Hindu festival which is celebrated in Konkan at the end of monsoon. Fishermen offer coconuts with devotion to calm down the angry sea in the monsoon season. This festival is held at full moon during August-September. In this season, everywhere there is a happy mood and a joyous atmosphere. The poet says that the rich and the poor take part in the festival. They come to the seashore, scrub their bodies and bathe in the waters. He feels that these folks are ignorant and poor who face financial problems throughout the ages. Thus he asks two questions:

Do I sympathize merely with the underdogs?
Is it one more halt in the search for identity?

Patel tries to find out his own identity as a human being. At the same time he expresses sympathy for the oppressed in the poem. He becomes a casual commentator while watching the scene at the Marine Drive:

The rains may truly fail this year.
Our prayers may go unheard.

These lines show that the intellect denies God but the heart hankers after him. The fishermen think that there would be no rain

anymore that year. However, they have faith in God. The poet feels that the celebration may be useless and the prayers may go unheard. This is an ambivalent attitude.

The poem ‘O My Very Own Cadaver’ depicts a situation in which the poet imagines what would happen to his body when the breath is gone. Fearing death, he wants to cling to life as long as he can. However, the living body which seeks competition with others will one day leave this world for good. Even then we blunder our ways into oblivion and self-recognition comes too late. Patel emphasizes that death is vital to human beings and nobody escapes from it. Though painful, we have to accept it. When we are alive, we enjoy so many pleasures but after the last breath, everything is over. Nobody would think of circular ecstasies or carnal pleasures after death. The living body has to leave this world which is a universal truth.

Gieve Patel’s poetry shows that the people of all walks of life attract his attention. A leper, beggar, labourer, and pavement sleeper in Mumbai - all appeal to him and he describes them in a cool detached and matter of fact tone. His expression results in an ironic observation of reality around him. The theme of human suffering in Patel’s poetry has its correlates in the life around him. Being a doctor, he gained first-hand knowledge of the poor and underprivileged, particularly the common masses in Mumbai. He has a feeling of tenderness and sympathy for the downtrodden which prompted him to portray their suffering in poetry. An attempt is made by him to bring out the subtle cunning and naked truth of life. With a penetrating insight into human suffering, and such a touching presentation of its various facets, Patel has carved out for himself a niche in Indian English poetry.

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FASCINATING DETECTIVE STORY - EDGAR ALLAN POE

Girija

Crime appears to have always fascinated the human mind: tremendously, fascinated and attracted. Myth, legend and fiction in the literature of every language and culture abound in incidents of crime. In fact, they are, by and large, hinged upon the incident of crime: a prince (ss) kidnapped; a heirloom (diamond) stolen; havoc wrought by ferocious and cruel dacoits or some strange species of cruel beast; and so on. Enters a brave and intelligent young man who rises up to the challenge of the situation and restores normalcy and happiness.

Thus, though we find epics and folklore of different cultures steeped in the motif of crime in different perspectives – crime and punishment; crime and retribution; crime investigation; crime hunting; etc. we do not ever consider these tales to be crime detection stories. This is because their canvas has a larger framework in which crime is but one tiny segment. Their ultimate focus is not the adventure of crime or its detection, but to illuminate a truth of life valid for all times. Whether Iliad or Mahabharat or the Bible - they are full of deeds of crime at each turn of events. The very beginnings of the Bible introduce us to an incident of crime: of Cain killing Abel. Yet it would be shocking to hear either the Bible or any of the epics called stories of crime; it would confound even the crime story lovers. And rightly so.

What then makes a piece of fiction essentially a story of crime detection? Precisely this: the explicit and express purpose of a detective story is to portray the committing or the occurrence of a crime, in presumably mysterious and baffling circumstances. The

hero-protagonist (usually male) enters the picture, just as the knight errant does in a folktale or mythical legend, solves the mystery overcoming the numerous misleading obstacles, finds the truth. This is the reason why scholars have often likened the detective, the knight in Pursuit of the Holy Grail. Thus, in a detective story all through, the act of crime and the investigation of the truth of its circumstance comprise the dominant elements, which is not the case with other kinds of story consisting of incidents of crime as part of their body. In epics and fairy tales the focus is on the purport, the message of the story. This is not to say that the detective story has no moral or message to convey. As already mentioned, it does implicitly proclaim that CRIME DOES NOT PAY. In fact the detective story is essentially a moral tale. The scholars are themselves agreed upon this.

So, the motif of crime alone is not sufficient for a story to be called detective fiction, nor the hunting down of the criminal. However, since folk legend and mythical stories as well as the modern detective fiction share the common feature of pursuit - pursuit of truth - together they are called stories of quest.

Generally speaking, a detective story revolves round the questions of how, why and who, with relation to the incident of crime focused in the story. Any one of the three mysteries or any combination of them may keep the plot moving and sustain the suspense. That is why, often detective stories are loosely referred to as the whodunnits; because, mostly in a detective story, the power of mystery is

loaded into discovering the identity of the criminal.

The history of the detective story informs us that it was Poe, yes, the very same Edgar Allan Poe, the famed one; the poet; the same Poe who gave us such blood curdling horror stories as *The Masque of the Red Death* and pulse-racing crime stories as *The Tell-tale Heart*, has gifted us the detective story, as a distinct form of fiction. Historians of detective fiction call him the father of the detective story. Poe himself, however, called them tales of ratiocination. The detective hero he created, the ratiocinative adventurer M. August Dupin, became a legendary prototype. Over the years Dupin's character and personality have been subjected to intense study; his behaviour and psychology have been put through a very high power microscope; and theories have been built and portraits drawn of him, of fascinating variety.

Poe wrote actually only four, nay five, tales of ratiocination. Of them, one showed no crime at all, only detection (*The Gold Bug*). Incidentally, this story did not feature the famed hero Dupin either.

The very first 'ratiocinative tale,' as Poe called it, *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, was an instant success, and launched the hero Dupin right away on the pinnacle of fame as a mysterious haloed intellect. The story is also an unmatched mystery of its kind, the locked room mystery as it is called, has remained so till today. This story was first published in the *Graham's Magazine* in 1841.

The other two ratiocinative tales written by Poe are: *The Mystery of Marie Roget* and *The Purloined Letter*.

The first of these two is said to be based on factual account of a woman's murder. The story appears to have caused some degree of

social embarrassment as the story was serialized while the police investigation was still in progress. In the end, Dupin only suggests a possible solution without actually solving the mystery, and the police could not resolve their case.

The Purloined Letter is much anthologised and often cited as an example of structural symmetry. This story is a delightful one, featuring Poe's Dupin, and involves no such horrendous crime as a murder. The story revolves round the extreme embarrassment a noble lady had to face because one of her very personal letters had been stolen, with political motives. The 'whodunnit' answer is known beforehand for a certainty. The adventure involves only in recovering the document from his repertoire, which is not an easy task, for he is a noble man of high rank, and cannot be disturbed without proper warrant. Dupin takes over the case and recovers the document using his delicate prescience and fine deduction.

It is a homage to the father of the genre that down these 150 years since that first story of his, scores of writers have created hundreds of variations of his prototype mystery, some of which met with dazzling success and some fell into the dust of oblivion. And dozens of versatile sleuth heroes have been moulded after Dupin, some of whom became trail blazers themselves, more brilliant than the prototype, while some others have been miserable failures.

It is to the credit of the master that with a single stroke, he had created an unforgettable hero on the one hand, and a story type and a literary genre that would become immensely popular and delightful on the other.

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GET PEACE – TRANQUALISE YOUR MIND

Siluveru Sudharshan

Every Body wants peace in Life. Peace is not something which can be got from outside. Nobody can give it to us. We have to discover it in our own hearts.

Man is not an isolated creature. He is part of the world around which constantly affects him. The world is made up of the various forces of Nature and the five great elements of Nature like Sun, Moon, Earth and Wind which are in constant turmoil and which sometimes suddenly become violent and cause havoc. There is also the society with all its problems, commotions and disturbances. All these have their effect on our lives and mental peace. Added to this the human mind itself is in a state of constant flux with the continuous flow of thoughts, desires and feelings. There are also the three gunas Satva, Rajas and Tamas, which are always trying to influence our minds and control our lives. All these factors disturb our peace of mind and create restlessness.

Living amidst these disturbances we want to have peace in our minds. Peace can be of different kinds. In the cremation ground there is dead peace; in deep sleep there is a lifeless peace; when a desire is fulfilled there is a contentment which is a temporary rest from the restlessness of the desire; with the use of tranquilisers one gets a negative peace in the mind which is temporary and becomes harmful in the end. This is not what we want.

We want a positive peace, a living healthy peace in our minds – a peace which leads to happiness, prosperity, creativity and progress. Many problems are solved only when the mind is rested and at peace. All the great revelations occurred to sages only when their minds were in a state of peace in meditation. When the mind is tranquil with peace one can get a glimpse of God in one's

own mind, say the Upanishads.

To live in peace amidst all these disturbing factors is within the reach of every person. Only we must have a strong desire for it and make the necessary effort in the proper direction.

There are three basic aspects in which we have to take care to cultivate the necessary attitude in our life. Firstly we must keep the body physically healthy with proper nourishing food and regular exercise. This body is the instrument given to us by God for efficient living and work. Second, we must regularly and sincerely discharge our duties in the society, as members of the family and citizens of the country keeping in mind the prescribed do's and don'ts. And while discharging these duties we must keep in mind that first and foremost we are human beings and should temper our actions with humanism, kindness and concern for other's welfare. Thirdly, control the desires and thoughts that always crowd the mind and create anxiety. Fill the mind with devotion, faith and trust in God and love towards our fellow beings.

This will bring a remarkable change in our relationships with people. A relationship based on trust and mutual love is lasting and leads to peace. Relationships based on material considerations do not last because each person's material benefits are different from and clash with those of others. Man is related to man through God. And relationships based on higher spiritual values are lasting and lead to peace and prosperity for all.

In short, our mind is responsible for all our anxieties and problems. Take care of the mind and we get lasting peace. Peace in our mind radiates to others and creates peace all round.

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A LETTER FROM THE BATTLEFIELD

Satendra Kumar

O Mom! Thy womb must be adored,
For mothering a valiant lion;
And thy embrace deserve crown,
For dandling combatant son.

Thy affection was boundless,
Caring care beyond tongue;
Thy lullaby was soothing,
And love untold unsung.

Today I can acclaim aloud,
I had conquered my demise;
And inevitable decease conferred,
Downpour of immortal prize.

Death rattle at this trice,
Is witness of thy concern;
Thou art so great O' Mom,
How to pay debt as a son.

I had not been unworthy,
Of thy broad bosomed breast;
Had taken adversary bullet,
Boldly at stern chest.

To my younger dear sibling,
Bestow my share of filial love;
Never let them feel a while,
Undeprieved of my living love.

I am not ingratitude,
For thy milk and affection;
Thou must be proud of,
Bearing a patriot son.

I beckon and pray to God,
For my life of next birth;
Gift me this very mother,
In the cradle of India earth.

Be not unbecoming *sepoy* mother,
By wail and lament wear;
Neither should thou grieve, repent,
Nor mourning shed tear.

Recur me all occasion,
Adore with the deities row;
I shall hover around thee,
To clash, combat family woe.

I had lost battlefield,
But won the warrior war;
I dazzled till last breath,
Like the enduring star.

Bid my beloved parting, adieu,
To all kiths now forbidden;
I may dwell in reminiscences,
With offences forgive.

*

MAHASWETHA DEVI'S VICTIM CONSCIOUSNESS: A PERSPECTIVE

Dr. M. Umar

Presentation of victims in ancient literature arouses a sense of pity and sympathy in people. The victims pass through a process of purgation that creates a catharsis in the people. They are doomed to such conditions with their own weaknesses, frailties, follies, fate and circumstances. But, in modern literature, realism modifies the trends and brings a new approach to victims and victimization. The victims and victimization are used to convey a social purpose. This literature with a purpose is wrought to bring a social change in the society. It mirrors the lives and problems of the people. It is the process of enlightening the public to know themselves and others and act to change their odd situations and circumstances.

Victimization may be of different kinds. Society abounds in various instances of victimization and tyranny. Tyranny of a few over many, of the rich over the poor and the mighty over the meek. This has been the unchanging condition of human life. As this demoralized and dehumanized terror and detestation continue, the victim consciousness is bound to end all such tyranny. Committed writers like Mahaswetha Devi shoulder the burden and cry out to transform the world of such monstrosity and coercion.

As a writer with a social cause, Mahaswetha Devi expresses and exposes the injustice, agony, pain and victimization the meek undergo at the hands of the privileged and the mighty. She brings to light the areas of people's sufferings, which are unnoticed and ignored. She draws sympathy for the victims and wages a relentless war against the oppression. She evokes sympathy in the

people for the victims who suffer incessantly and awakens in them a consciousness of repulsion.

Albert Camus in his 1957 Nobel Prize speech claims that, "the sympathy of the artist lay with the victim." Mahaswetha Devi demonstrates the veracity of the statement and brings before us the victims who have undergone undue suffering for no fault. She adopts the medium of literature not only to explore the anguished consciousness of the oppressed and exploited, but also to focus the indifference of the people in power and riches towards these sections.

Mahaswetha Devi's preoccupation with the motif of victimization in her works becomes the most appreciated task she has taken to document everything accurately to enlighten the people. Her splendid presentation of the suffering poor has won her a good recognition.

Writers like Daniel Defoe, Richardson, Henry Fielding, Ibsen, Brecht, Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya endeavour to depict reality and victim consciousness in their works. They deal with different classes of victims suffering under different kinds of victimization. The social realists, Ibsen and Brecht are with a different approach. They depict the predicament of a common man in the society and his quandaries with which he is entrapped. They make their literature a vehicle to mirror the ills of society.

Like Ibsen and Brecht, Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya project the social evils and fight against them. They are humanists and they show 'the fumes of man's inhumanity to man' in their works. Mahaswetha Devi, with the same spark, diagnoses the evils prevailing

upon the poor and destitute and penetrates deep into their pathos and awakens us to the realities. Her works unfold the untold agonies of the poor.

In Aajir, Chotti Munda and his Arrow, and Douloti The Bountiful Mahaswetha Devi portrays the suffering of the bonded labourers. These works throw light on the exploitation of the poor by the feudal mechanism and show that the system of bonded labour is operated beyond law. They depict the tyranny and crudity of the landlords and the privileged, under which the slaves are crushed. The feudal lords' authority and monstrosity are unquestioned. The slaves undergo inhuman subjugation and torture. The slaves' pathetic position makes them repulse every moment against the treachery of the feudal system. These works also bring to light bonded prostitution and contract labour which consume the lives of poor girls.

Titu Mir, Chotti Munda and his Arrow, Seeds, Water, Draupadi and Mother of 1084 present revolutionaries as victims. Mahaswetha Devi focuses on the revolutionaries who fight against injustice and exploitation. The revolts they lead are born out of continuous grief and long suffering they have experienced in the hands of the oppressor. They revolt against corrupt and exploitative mechanism to liberate people from the clutches of exploitation and to bring social, economic and political changes in the society. In their relentless war, they are injured and they even lose their lives. Mahaswetha Devi in these works covers several revolts - Sanyasi revolt, revolt against ex-orbitant taxation, revolt against Indigo plantation and Wahabi Movement during British regime, Peasants' revolt, revolt against feudal lords and Naxalite revolt in independent India. They all evoke the invincible revolutionary fervour of all revolutionaries who fight and die for a

cause.

Rudali, Dhouli, Breast-Giver and Aajir unveil the dimensions of poverty and dwell on the consequences of it. All the protagonists in these works are the victims of poverty. They struggle for existence and suffer much to survive and exist. For their survival, they take up odd and bizarre professions like mourners of the dead, breast feeders and bonded workers. These works concentrate on the effects of poverty which reduce a human being to an inferior level. They reveal that it is not caste system that makes a man submissive, but poverty. They all explicate the agony of the poor and their straits of livelihood.

Mahaswetha Devi in Bayen, The Witch, The Armenian Champa Tree, Aajir and Statue delves deep into the superstitions of people and explores to show how superstitions act on a person and reduce him to a mere beast. She exposes the effects of these terrible age-old maladies that are inveterate in the rural folk and make them ignorant of facts. She discloses the tyranny of feudal mechanism and the deceit of fraudulent Tantriks in subjugating the innocent by encashing the gullibility of the people for their selfish motives. All these works speak of the effects of superstitions on the innocent people, afflicting horror and reducing them to sub-human, outcast and alien status.

Mother of 1084, Bayen, Douloti The Bountiful, Draupadi, Behind the Bodice and Outcast explore the Women's anguish in all depth and variety. They articulate with both physical and psychological torment experienced by women and study women as victims. They portray the agony of mothers for their separation from their children and speak of women's anguish for the sexual assault and harassment they experience. They emphasize on how a woman is treated and subjugated in the patriarchal and male-dominated society and how she is entangled

and cornered by the ignorant norms and ideals of the society. They elucidate the cruelty of men who look down upon women as inferior human beings, curtailing them freedom and liberty, they ought to enjoy as men. They also expose the monstrosity of the police in harassing the women physically.

Mahaswetha Devi's presentation of victims and their endless suffering, is a selfless and unflinching urge and commitment in her to unfold the untold agonies and harsh realities of the poor and exploited in the contemporary society. She makes a vow of her sympathies for the exploited. Her compassion and her effort to modify the existing social conditions reveal her personality and idealism. Her treatment of the victims would bear out the intrinsic fascination she has for the suffering underdog. Her insight into their pathos and above all her complex awareness into the existing realities and experience in the things by her own vision reflect her social vision, concern and perception of the repressive authority of the poor. And it is her altruistic interest and sympathy for the suffering that makes her perceive deeply and write to transform their existing conditions. She projects what goes on in the mind of the victim and shows the growth process by acknowledging its encounter with the world outside and inside. Thus she explores to expose the bare realities of tribal life.

Many writers like Tarasankar and Satinath Bhaduri have already dealt with tribal life, but, they differ a lot from Mahaswetha Devi. Her outlook, her documentation of facts and realistic approach outdo everyone. Her accurate depiction of tribal suffering and feudal oppression bring a naturalist vision and due attention. And they become main aspects of her treatment.

Urmila Chakraborty even says that her works are structured throughout on binary

opposition: between the rich and the poor, the oppressor and oppressed, simple innocence and cultured opportunism. This statement indicates the main concern of her works and their growth. All the neglected and ignored matters by the mainstream Indian life become her strong points of exploration. The consciousness of a creative writer is moulded by a sort of value system, perception and imagination. Mahaswetha Devi has groomed her writings with the social consciousness to change the tribal world of agony to a world of happiness. Her purpose is to arouse social awareness in the minds of people and bring a change in the social and human values. She says that a creative writer, "should have a social conscience . . . a duty towards society," to understand and write about the people. Thus, all her creative writings hold a social conscience, which deals with a sense of sympathy for the suffering humanity.

Though her themes, characters and situations are a repetition, it must be admitted that she mobilizes and motivates the inner mind of the people by reminding repeatedly to react to them. Even the ubiquity of oppression and the suffering of the individuals in the society continue as they are. Her demands for a changed social and economic structure are always appreciable and that is why, she stands to be one of the prominent social writers. About her repetition of themes, she says: I am often asked how long am I to bore my readers with the same themes. My answer is as long as hunger, poverty, naked exploitation by the rich and the landed, oppression by the government machineries continue, I will continue to write the same things.

All her works voice a protest against the existing system, exploitation and oppression of the poor in the society. Her works act as an effective instrument to voice her protest. This voice of protest is not new. Many classics

from Russian, French, German, and English literature have voiced their loud protest against social inequalities and inequities. Many writers express their sense of dis-satisfaction with the pathetic conditions of contemporary society. For instance Dickens protests against vicious men and institutions in his Bleak House, Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby. Steinbeck's masterpiece, Grapes of Wrath, is a powerful indictment on the heartless treatment of poor in American society.

Like Mulk Raj Anand, Mahaswetha Devi in all her works protests against the social evils faced by the downtrodden. She is committed to the amelioration of their pathetic conditions. All her works are powerful expressions of her burning conscience deeply touched by the grief of the suffering poor. She strongly feels that it is the social and moral responsibility of a writer to voice a protest against the injuries, deceits, insults and exploitations of the oppressors of the world.

Like Anand's social anger, tempered with the 'yoke of pity', the source of inspiration in all her works seems to be "an anger, luminous, burning, and passionate directed against a system that has failed to liberate the people from these horrible constraints." To release the human soul from all kinds of oppression and liberate the people from the horrible conditions, she makes her protagonists rebel against the existing system. She seems to suggest that the solution to the age-old oppression and exploitation lies in the hands of the oppressed. She seems to say if the protests fail, they may have to be violent sometimes. She shows her protagonists taking to violence when they realise the futility of their protest against repressive system. Infact, she feels that violence is necessary to quicken the process of social transformation.

About protagonists in her works, G.N. Devy observes that, "they face exploitation in

the hands of the landlords, Government officials, policemen, money lenders. Almost invariably her protagonists turn violent towards the end of her stories. Theirs is the progressive kind of violence." To achieve their ends and for the better future of the mankind, she pushes the oppressed to rise, get organised and fight back. She portrays her protagonists in the same manner. A few of her protagonists even lose their lives during their revolt and that becomes inevitable to defend their inalienable rights to freedom and liberty.

Taking the predicament of the poor into consideration, she presents all the social evils that prevail upon them, voices a protest against them and tries to give solutions to those problems.

Besides her writing, she is more a social activist, who stands a model to all. She goes herself to the doorsteps of the poor, stays with them, eats with them, knows them and their problems and solves their problems. For this purpose, she has established an organization for tribals to bring awareness and make them know themselves and their rights. She goes along with them to any government office, and to any feudal lord to solve their miseries. Her work Dust on The Road is a record of all these. It reveals her confrontation with the poor, the landlords, the exploiters and the government officials in various places. It records her vigorous work to know the poor, their problems and her solutions to their problems.

It can be stated that Mahaswetha Devi is not just a woman of words but actions. She is recognized by all and is given the most prestigious and honorable 'Padma Sree' award for her social work. Thus, she occupies a pride of place among all-social realists and social activists for motivating the people to fight against the social evils and ills of the day that eat away the vitals of Indian society. *

ON MY DAUGHTER'S VISIT TO LAKE DISTRICT

G. Soma Seshu

Dear Daughter! Blest art thou indeed to see
 The holy dwelling of the eminent bard
 Of nature born in nature's lap, and trod
 On grassy plains surrounded by the valleys
 green
 Grasmere, the very sound evokes untarnished
 beauty
 With country pleasures still alive unscarred
 By urban ways; A real pastime you had;
 The clear blue sky and lakes with verdant
 scene

May flash upon your visionary mind
 Cute Daffodils, Reaper's song and Leech-
 gatherer's skill
 The slopes of Rydal Mount and Alfoxden
 Where the noble poet enjoyed and bliss did
 find.
 The rural hospitality you tasted with thrill
 A feast indeed - no doubt - beyond pollution's
 ken.

*

ORPHAN

Dr. K. V. Raghupathi

When the mother leaves
 the child's world falls apart
 like a broken winged bird from the sky.

"I am sorry we are parting upset"
 the note said on his chest,
 his boyish body hanging from a neem tree
 like a dry fish in the filtered sunlight.

Frustrated with his mother
 who met another man in a far away land
 never returned like a fairy woman.

He chose the path after his pained efforts
 broke like an adorned vase on the marble floor
 to prevent his mother from migrating
 like a bird in search of Eldorado.

"You don't have to worry about my funeral"
 the note in his pocket screamed
 "because a man owes us money for timber.
 My sister you should study hard
 not to flee like mother.
 Mom, you should take care of yourself
 because you are caught in Maya.
 Please, take care of my puppy
 the only loser and lover".

*

*According to Vivekananda the gods to
 be worshipped:*

Daridra Devo Bhava

Rogi Devo Bhava

Moorkha Devo Bhava

*(The poor man, the sick man and the
 illiterate man)*

VALMIKI AND VYASA

M. S. Srinivasan

A literary creation like Mahabharatha or Ramayana reflects the psychology, temperament and consciousness of its author. These psychological factors related to the author's personality colour his observations and perceptions and therefore consciously or subconsciously influence the nature of the historical and cultural narrative. So a comparative study of some of these literary and psychological factors may perhaps help us towards a deeper and better understanding of the historical and cultural factors revealed in the epics.

Valmiki is the master of pathos and in depicting the refined, delicate, sensitive, noble and beautiful thought, feeling and the act. Vyasa on the other hand is a master of the heroic rasa and in conveying the strong, forceful, passionate courageous and also the turbulent and the rude aspects of human nature and life. He is also a master in bringing out the deep thought or soulful idea in dialogue and story. The epic of Valmiki is predominantly ethical and aesthetic. The epic of Vyasa is predominantly intellectual or philosophical with a greater mental and spiritual depth and a more comprehensive vision of life. The poetry of Valmiki flows direct from his heart, sublimated by a highly refined ethical and aesthetic sense and inspired from the deeper spiritual light of his soul in the depth of his heart. The creation of Vyasa proceeds from a vast spiritual intelligence centered above the head, using other faculties like the poetic or philosophical

from a luminous wideness above them.

Valmiki is an inborn poet and a saint who seems to be, to a certain extent, limited by his poetic and saintly nature. On the other hand Vyasa gives the impression of an accomplished spiritual man with a many-sided personality but limited by none of them. Vyasa is not only a poet and a sage but also a deep thinker, statesman, ethical and religious innovator, scholar and observer of human nature and life. As Sri Aurobindo sums up the personality of Vyasa: "A wide searching mind, historian, statesman, orator, a deep and keen looker into ethics and conduct, a subtle and high aiming politician, theologian and a philosopher." (SABCL, Vol. 3, 164)

Valmiki is a conservative idealist harking back towards an ideal society based on the old, traditional and established values of the past. Vyasa is also an idealist but a progressive and pragmatic idealist with a keen insight into the realities of the present and a foresight into the future. Valmiki's idealism is predominantly ethical, aesthetic, religious and traditional. But Vyasa's idealism, basing itself on a strong intellectual and moral foundation rises beyond the ethical, mental plane into the supraethical spiritual transcendence. Vyasa accepts and respects all the traditional values of the past. But he is not a traditionalist who glorifies the past and confined to the limited boundaries of the past traditions. His ideals are not of the past but of the future. Vyasa's spiritual ideal of Karma Yoga is yet to be rightly understood

and lived by humanity. Vyasa is also a cultural innovator who has considerably extended the religious and ethical horizons of the Indian civilization. As a religious, ethical and philosophical innovator, Vyasa's contribution far exceeds that of Valmiki. Valmiki and his epic is a great force in shaping the ethical,

aesthetic and literary genius of India. Vyasa and his epic is a major factor in moulding the intellectual and spiritual genius of the post-vedic India.

- Courtesy Sri Aurobindo's Action -
December 2008

BEYOND MANY BENDS

P.K. Joy

I've passed many a bend, but I'm nowhere near the end
Although my opponents predicted every bend as my end!
If at all there's an end, it will be beyond many more bends
And after every bend the road will be good for long extent.

At my every fall, my adversaries rejoiced and shouted
That I was down and out and my good days have ended.
Disproving them, I have proved every fall as a bend,
One of the many usually found far before the real end.

With robust optimism and balanced mental posture
I strove hard not to accept any bend as my closure.
When I admit an end and meekly surrender to it
I'll cease to be a man possessing manly grit to resist.

After every fall, I sprang on my feet, persisted in my pursuit,
And found beyond the bend the road was smooth and straight.
The race after a bend was always faster and safer,
As the memory of past pitfalls has acted as a fender.

At my death-bed, they might say "this is surely his end."
No! No! For me, even death will be a bend, not the end.
Death will only force me to take an interval.
The workload here will compel God not to keep me in heaven or hell.

I'll return soon. Then the men who were under my care
Will rush to me with joy like lambs to homecoming mother.
My opponents will see the sight and become dumb and stunned,
And mumble sadly "Oh! Even death was not his end!"

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MARRIAGE CARNIVAL IN O.P. ARORA'S "THE SILKEN TRAPS"

P. V. Laxmi Prasad

It is well said that marriage unites two families hitherto known or unknown to each other apart from uniting souls in waiting. Marriage is also defined as a three-ring circus: engagement ring, wedding ring and finally suffering. But marriage in O.P. Arora's "The Silken Traps" becomes an interestingly stylish but satirically realistic study of cross-cultural relationships. It is, at once a big *hungama*, a grand spectacle, a real *Tamasha* and a carnival of extravagantly expensive event heralding the union of diverse cultures. Its again a marriage – drama of the most spectacular show. This is what O.P. Arora calls a cumbersome procedure of any Indian marriage irrespective of class distinctions. A marriage involving thoroughly two different cultures i.e., America and India spiritedly representing a global village of "Cosmopolitanism". "you not only bring American money but also American bride"- Cosmopolitanism (23). Further, it is a marriage of glamour, festivity, ceremonious rituals, expenditure, feasts and gifts in Indian society. It is a celebration of a truly globalised world in which all the national and religious barriers disappear. In the words of the novelist "this is real globalisation when two human beings, from two continents separated by not only thousands of miles but also the value system, prejudices, history, accept each other as husband and wife against all odds – and try to create a new world where instead of rejection, there would be acceptance (144).

Marriage in "The Silken Traps" centers around the families i.e, the *Melhotras* of India and the *Josephs* of America. It is a marriage of two mutually loving buds between *Vikas*

and *Jasmine*. All appreciative persons attending the ceremony commented that *Jasmine* was a real beauty and anybody could fall for is reflective of how Indian boys are trapped by the bewitching beauty of white girls. As the novelist rightly remarks "Vikas is a boy who has braved all the orthodox and traditional forces, helped bringing closer not only India and America but also Hinduism & Christianity "The actual ceremony got off to a spectacular start and it was simply bewitching with hundreds of guests as escorts under the dazzling lights of video cameras presenting a truly contemporary India of 21st century and marriages on a grand scale. Evidence of the mega event could be seen in the make-up of the beauty parlour, wedding garments, colourful photographs, *Mehndi*, *Shagun* and ladies' *Sangeet*. All of them give a feel of the Indian marriage. Different Indian, Chinese and continental delicacies are a special feast to watch out for. All these focus on physical activity, boisterous enjoyment, lavish and garish display of wealth and thought. Still, hundreds of relatives, arranging "Kothies", wonderful cooks, big "Pandal" or stage – all giving glimpses of the glamorous world where *Jasmine* is the chosen fairy with her finery and Jewellery (142).

All merry - making activity that marks the event "Mehndi" brought moments of happiness to *Jasmine* whose eyes twinkled whenever she was led from one ritual to the other in the Indian tradition. The grand and the most eagerly cheered and welcomed event that truly symbolise north Indian marriages i.e., the *baraat* that greeted everyone at the gaily

decorated gates, with arches, curtains, flowers and luminous lights, with garlands – all supported ably by the band in the lead. All the relatives involved in the ‘milni’ were extremely jubilant and feeling the crisp and hard currency” (144) Later, the baraat entered the huge pandal that was very well decorated and profusely lit up and a buzz of serious activity with the guests geared up to get themselves photographed with the Melhotras. Shagun, the envelope was the most important task for most of the guests with whom the Malhotras exchanged pleasantries. The moment of moments arrived with Vikas having tied the nuptial knot amidst the chanting of vedic hymns and the sacred fire followed by the pundits. Later on Vikas hugged Jasmine to the thunderous applause of the guests. It was followed by the showering of flowers on the couple.

The marriage had been solemnized in the Hindu tradition. Impressed by the grand Spectacle, the Josephs comments in wonder: “Well, Mr. Malhotra, we are really impressed by this grand spectacle. We are happy that we got a chance to see it, Otherwise, I would never have believed that anything of this kind could happen for the sake of a marriage. And let me confess it, nothing of this Kind, on this scale, happens in America”. (146).

To conclude, O.P. Arora, the novelist, shows how the marriages of 21st century become intercontinental in tradition and variety. Marriages mark and symbolize the meeting of culture and religion – a marked and distinct transformation that culminates in the successful but extraordinarily arranged event. The novel is thoroughly an excoriating picture of the contemporary institution of marriage.

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India with its diversities, pluralities, complexities and contradictions has become a classic consensus country, demanding the old-world qualities of patience, deep thinking and strategic compromises. There is perceptive increase in the power of man in every field except over himself. Man lacks harmony within and without and our earth has become a discordant orchestra with each member playing a different note.

As the future is full of challenges, uncertainties and opportunities, the youth are constrained to look before they leap. Even their parents ponder what use is our long littleness of life, getting and spending, begetting children, targeting fleeting pleasures, regretting mistakes and forgetting the real purpose of life.... Society is in ferment.

- *From Living Through Changing Times by I. V. Chalapati Rao*

SHORT FICTION AND INDIAN ENGLISH WRITING: A PERSPECTIVE

Ms. R. Meghana Rao

Short story can be defined as “briefer than a novel.” The setting, action and dialogue are common to story, novel and drama. According to *The Dictionary of Literary Terms* by Harry Shaw, a short story is “a relatively short narrative (under ten thousand words), which is designed to produce a single dominant effect which contains the elements of drama [...] a good short story consists of a character (or group of characters) presented in a setting involving mental or physical action.” Explaining the short story Louis Stevenson says, “There are only three ways of writing a story [...] you may take a plot and fit characters in it; or you may take a character and choose incidents and situations to develop it or you may take certain atmosphere and get action and persons to express and realize it.” H.G Wells says it may be horrible or pathetic or funny or profoundly illuminating, provided it would take from fifteen to fifty minutes to read aloud. According to Hugh Walpole, a story “should be a story; a record of things happening full of incident and accident, swift movement, unexpected development, leading through suspense to a climax and satisfying denouement.”

In the West, the form of short story emerged in Russia. Alexander Pushkin and Nikolai Gogol, two great novelists and short story writers turned from the art of writing of novel and drama to the art of writing a short story. Pushkin initiated it and later Gogol and Turgenev moved it in a certain direction. Gogol is the first known ‘realistic’ short story writer. Realism in short story was further enhanced and intensified by Ivan Turgenev, Leo Tolstoy

and Fyodor Dostoevsky.

In America, Edgar Allan Poe, being inspired by the narratives of Nathaniel Hawthorne, was the first person to take to the writing of short fiction. Poe makes a mark in short fiction through the recreation of an atmosphere of intense horror, suspense and mystery. Later Brete Harte, O’Henry, Stephen Crane and Sherwood Anderson followed.

From America, the short story traveled to France. This is a remarkable phenomenon in Turgenev’s *The Sportsman’s Sketches*. Its passionate nationalism and sympathy for the underdogs appealed to most of the writers. He influenced the art of many English writers such as George Moore, Joseph Conrad, John Galsworthy and Sean G.Faolain and the French writers as well. In France, the majority of writers adhered to the trend of ‘naturalism’ in fiction, the minute and scientific presentation of all its realism with psychological detachment of the author. Balzac, Flaubert and Zola, the great masters of European fiction, also exerted their influence on the French short story. It produced the great short story writer like Guy de Maupassant who began a new tradition of fiction.

Frank O’Connor argues that the plot is insignificant and it is not always necessary in short story. He says, “[...] it deals with the problems and it does not have solutions to offer. It just states the human situation. A few writers deserve to be mentioned – T.F. Powys, Rhys Davies and Elizabeth Bowen who have practiced writing of short story with immense gusto and great success.

The story-telling is an ancient art in India.

The classical and regional languages have made a great contribution to the development of the short story. The short story as a literary form made its mark in the beginning of the 20th century. A.R. Wadia says: "Indians have adapted the art of short story to Indian conditions and used it as a vehicle of new ideas and means of accelerating reform." The ancient narrative works as well as western writers influenced and enabled the Indian English short story to emerge and develop in the different magazines and periodicals with the necessary background. Furthermore, this has given rise to a number of short story writers in the corpus of Indian English Literature.

Rabindranath Tagore's short stories are *The Hungry Stones and Other Stories* (1959), and *Mashi and Other Stories* (1966). Speaking of his stories, he says that they describe the 'multifarious life of Bengal seen through the window of his moving boat.'

Mulk Raj Anand wrote seven collections of short stories – *The Lost Child and Other Stories* (1944), *The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories* (1944), *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and Other Stories* (1947), *Reflections of the Golden Bed and Other Stories* (1953), *Power of the Darkness and Other Stories* (1959), *Lajwanti and Other Stories* (1973) and *Between Tears and Laughters* (1973). He not only fuses 'social' realism with political commitment but also shows deep sympathy for the poor and the downtrodden in contemporary society.

R. K. Narayan, one of the 'triad' depicts the pastoral life in South Karnataka with a great sense of wit and humour. The centre of his short stories is Malgudi, an imaginary village. He has seven collections of short

stories to his credit – *Malgudi Days* (1943), *Cyclone and Other Stories* (1943), *Dotu and Other Stories* (1943), *Astrologer's Day and Other Stories* (1947), *Lawley Road and Other Stories* (1956), *Gods, Demons and Others* (1964) and *A Horse and Two Goats* (1970).

Raja Rao lends philosophical and mystical dimension to the short story. His stories are published in two collections – *The Cow of Barricades and Other Stories* (1947), *The Policeman and the Rose* (1978) which manifest two distinct stages in the development of his fictional art. The short stories are on the freedom movement, the miserable plight of the harijans, etc.

The other important short story writers are – Manjeri Isvaran, Manohar Malgonkar, Kushwant Singh, K. A. Abbas, G. D. Khosla and Manoj Das. Manjeri Isvaran discusses his theory of short story in his 'Preface' written to nine story collections *Naked Shingles* (1941), *Shiva Ratri* (1943), *Angry Dust* (1944), *Rikshawallah* (1946), *Fancy Tales* (1947), *No Anklet Bells for Her* (1949), *Painted Tigers* (1950), *Immersion* (1951) and *A Madras Admiral* (1959). His stories consist of a variety of themes drawn from the middle and lower classes.

Manohar Malgonkar is a major historical novelist who is relatively an uncomplicated writer. His published three collections of short stories are – *A Toast in Warm Wine* (1974), *Bombay, Beware* (1975) and *Rumble Tumble* (1977). His stories mainly deal with palace life, school life, army life, domestic life, sports, hunting, intrigue, etc.

Kushwant Singh, a prolific short story writer, shows special mastery over the form

of short story. His well-known collections of short stories are – *The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories* (1950), *The Voice of God and Other Stories* (1957), *Bride for the Sahib and Other Stories* (1967) and *Black Jasmine* (1971). In his stories, Kushwant Singh gathers the potent elements of caste, religion, communalism, bigotry and sexual exploitation.

K. A. Abbas has four collections of short stories – *Rice and Other Stories* (1947), *Cages of Freedom and Other Stories* (1952), *One Thousand Nights on a Bed of Stones and Other Stories* (1957) and *Black Sun and Other Stories* (1963). His stories have a tinge of bitterness about freed India, producing a new bureaucracy and a society full of exploitation and hypocrisy, selfishness.

Manoj Das is the most gifted of Indian short story writers, with an uncanny perception of the broad spectrum of life and its mysteries. His collections of short stories are – *A Song for Sunday and Other Stories* (1967), *Short Stories* (1969), *The Crocodile's Lady* (1975), *Fables and Fantasies for Adults* (1978) and *The Vengeance and Other Stories* (1980). His stories delightfully expose the vulgar values and the evils of the contemporary society.

Bhabani Bhattacharya is a major novelist and story writer. He wrote a single collection of short stories *Steel Hawk and Other Stories* (1968). The dimensions of hunger, affirmation of life, freedom and feminine principles are the dominant themes of his short stories.

Vivek Adarkar, S.R. Adinarayan, Ahmad Q. Kazi, Purasu Balakrishnan, Hamdi Bey, Ruskin Bond, Margaret Chatterjee, S.K. Chettur, S.P. Mani, L.N. Gupta, Vanchinathan Sudarshan and Ramesh K. Srivastav are the writers of short fiction in later half of the 20th

century who deviate from the art modes and devise their own narrative structure and models of presentation. Their short stories seem to have been conceived as the streams of thoughts and feelings flowing through their main characters.

The contribution of women writers to the development of the novel has been of great significance. Though they have contributed less to the short story it has got its own important place in Indian English Literature. The themes that the women writers used are their own bitter experiences as women. Of them Alphonso Karkala observes, “They tried to tell the world the obstacles women faced and the disadvantages they suffered in an orthodox Hindu world.”

Cornelia Sorabji, one of the early writers, has three collections – *Love and Life behind Purdah* (1901), *Sub-Babies* (1904) and *Between the Twilights* (1908). “Her stories reveal the continued practice of evil customs and the impacts of early widowhood on young women.

Krishna Huthee Singh says that her characters and situations in *Shadows on the Wall* (1948) were drawn from real life. They deal with the agony and sufferings of prison life of the important imprisoned politicians. Her stories are written with certain embellishment in language but without which no story can adequately convey complex personalities.

Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, in her four collections of short stories, *Like Birds, Like Fishes* (1963), *An Experience of India* (1966), *A Strange Climate* (1968) and *How I Became a Holy Mother and Other Stories* (1976) exposes the Indian scene with its trials

and tribulations, the predicament of widowhood and the role of woman in an uncongenial domestic situation.

Shashi Deshpande has written a large number of short stories in four collections – *The Legacy* (1978), *The Miracle* (1980), *It was Dark* (1986) and *It was the Nightingale* (1986). Her main focus is on housewife who sacrifices whole of her life at different stages, accepting the cruelty, violence, unhappiness and harshness with meekness within the four walls.

Atthia Hussain's popular work is *Phoenix Fled and Other Stories* (1953). Sujatha Bala Subramanian's *The House in the Hills and Other Stories* (1973) deals with the diverse subjects of the socio-cultural life around her. Bharathi Mukherjee's single collection of short stories, *Darkness* (1985) focuses on violence, guilt, frustration and radical discrimination of Indian women in North America and India.

Veena Adiga and Sunita Jain are good writers.

Jai Nimbkar has so far published two collections of short stories, *The Lotus Leaves and Other Stories* (1971) and *The Phantom Bird and Other Stories* (1993). In her short stories the common themes are love, sex, marriage, parenthood and illusion versus reality.

Kamala Das, known widely as a poet, attempts her hand in composing short stories. She has two collections of short stories *A Doll for the Child Prostitute* (1977) and *Padmavathi, the Harlot and Other Stories* (1992). Her stories throw light on the dark realities of a woman's private life, based on her personal experience of being a woman in male-dominated society.

Anita Desai, a major woman novelist, has published a collection of short stories *Games at Twilight and Other Stories* (1978). Like Virginia Woolf, she often uses the 'stream of consciousness' technique. Her stories mainly deal with the Indian sensibility focusing on the painful and pitiful aspects of woman's life in particular.

Nergis Dalal, Sadiqa Peerbhoy's, Romilla Thapar and Prema Sastri produced a few short stories.

Nergis Dalal's single collection of short stories *The Nude* (1977) focuses on situation of woman in a family. Sadiqa Peerbhoy's single collection of short stories, *Faces in Crowd* (1985) is most appealing. There are women characters that suffer in domestic circles. Prema Sastri in *The Blue Convertible and Other Stories* (1983) writes about superstition, belief, man-woman relationship, political juggleries, personal encounters and character studies.

I have given a few examples. However, the future of the Indian English short story rests mainly in the hands of minor practitioners as C. V. Venugopal says:

Thus, if the folk tale tradition and journalism have given the short story writer the virtue of clarity and vividness, they have also kept him away from other equally essential virtues of objectivity and suggestion and economy by encouraging him to be sentimental and descriptive.

The analysis shows that the Indian short story writers lack the variety, complexity and subtlety of their western counterpart, however, they seem to have mastered the traditional technique of direct narration with humour or pathos, irony or allegory.

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BOOK REVIEWS

MUSE OF MURMUR – Art and Poetry Collection – 2008 – May-June Edition. Published by Silpi Banerjee for group – Shahar Dilli, C. R. Park, New Delhi, Price Rs. 700/- Pages 356.

Subroto Brondo, the honorary editor of Muse of Murmur in his comprehensive editorial discusses modern art and poetry in general and contemporary Indian artists and poets in particular. Among the eminent poets he includes late Sri Gunturu Seshendra Sharma and Prof. Shiv K. Kumar of Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

The editor discusses at length poetry and art with reference to the concept of ‘modernity’. Modernity according to him lies in searching its meaning. We are modern compared to medieval times and perhaps the middle ages of future modernity. The critic further states that there are as many types of modernity as there are societies. Poetry for him is a search for ‘real reality’ and paintings are ‘words on canvas’. Elsewhere he says “art like poetry, is really about a moment of time, a thought, a feeling, a fleeting second that remains beyond reach.” He is worried at the profound mediocrity passing as art and poetry today.

The volume abounds in photographs of the poets and artists and a number of colour plates of paintings. Muse of Murmur will be of special interest to artists and poets. The scholarly introduction by the artist-poet-critic, Subroto Brondo, keeps the readers musing over his critical appraisal.

This aesthetically pleasing book should be treasured in every library.

D. Ranga Rao

Sattiraju Krishna Rao Centenary Volume, Compiler: Smt. S. Rajyalakshmi, No. of pages: 207, Publisher: Kalyani Publications, Basant Nagar, Lingampalli Barkatpura, Hyderabad – 500027

Sattiraju Krishna Rao Centenary Volume is a well got-up Souvenir brought out by Mrs. Sattiraju Rajyalakshmi, his devoted wife, on request from close friends and relatives. He was recognized and respected by everyone as an ideal teacher, counsellor and a self-denying philanthropist. His life is a saga of relentless pursuit of knowledge and practice of humanitarian values.

The book consists of two parts – (a) articles and scholarly essays written and published in journals and (b) opinions and tributes from his numerous friends, students and relatives.

The volume is bi-lingual – English and Telugu. We have a few photographs illustrating the subject’s family life, social relations, career contacts and friends’ circles.

The articles present his pleasing personality and his total commitment to values and his knowledge of linguistics, methodology of teaching, astrology, medical astrology and educational psychology. He helped many poor people, particularly students. Many students could obtain good jobs because of his counselling or financial assistance. For example there was the instance of pledging his own silverware to raise money for examination fees for a student who later became a successful medical practitioner.

It is interesting to read the opinions of his relatives, friends, colleagues and those who came into contact with him. In these degenerate times of the breaking of the

institution of joint family and the near-extinction of the family itself, it is heartening to note that S.K. Rao's house was always full of visiting relatives every one of whom had a word of praise for him. For this harmony in familial relations credit should go to Mrs. Rajyalakshmi, his partner in life. In fact, this Souvenir is a celebration of human relations.

Sree Devi Iyyanki

MAN OF THE SEVENTH HOUR by Manas Bakshi, published by Script, 61, Mahatma Gandhi Road, KOLKATA-700009. Rs. 80/-, Pages 64, Jan-2006.

Incidentally, Bakshi has named his seventh collection of poems as **MAN OF THE SEVENTH HOUR**. Though it was published in 2006 by the poet himself, it has drawn my attention only recently as I have included his poems in my anthology of recent voices in Indian English Poetry, being published and is likely to be released in two months from now. Bakshi, unlike in his earlier collections, is more concerned with man's predicament in the context of fallen values, his anguish and existential dilemma in search of the meaning of life. The volume starts with victory of man's creation and presents the deadly sins in six hours, each hour represented by a particular sin with a prelude in its sweeping description. These sins include: Desire, Greed, Fear, Rage, Conflict, and Destruction.

Gradually, as time went by, this very man who pondered over the mysteries of life has been overpowered by "a grabbing attitude/tarnishing and slurring/bit by bit/all human sanctity".

Third Hour is represented by "Greed and

craze/entering/human destiny's third phase!" (P.23).

The result of it is 'Primitive beauty/lost in/today's global consumerism.'"(P.26). In this context, the poet raises the question: "Does twenty first century man know/what he really needs/to satisfy himself?"(P.26).

Fear represents the Fourth Hour. Here the poet presents the real Sartorean existential dilemma:

The fifth Hour is Rage. It is presented in the form of extremism and terrorism that has gripped man and put him to the very question of survival. The rage is irrational and self-destructive.

Conflict is presented in the sixth Hour, The loss of values is seen in this section.

The seventh and last hour is Decadence. The poet asks: "Does Time/always demand/sacrifice/of innocent blood?" May be the poet himself answers after seeing and experiencing "human carnage," "Hemlock for Socrates/Ambrosia for hypocrites". Man, the poet contemplates ruefully, is "relentless, remorseless from Auschwitz to Tiananmen Square" (P.57). In the seventh hour, the poet says, "everyone is sin-grown/everyone is sin-prone!"(P. 58).

In the last part of this section the poet captures the degeneration in nerve-racking images: "It's all dark/All inane/wind/passing through/denuded trees: spectral whimpering"

The book is elegantly printed with an artistic image representing the theme on the jacket cover.

**Dr. K.V. Raghupathi
Kadapa.**

READERS' MAIL

The cover page of the latest issue is superb and praiseworthy, matching with the title of the journal. Sir, there is no exaggeration lying in the fact that you are an inspiration not only to the existing generation but also to the coming generation. May God shower His blessings on you to be always hale and healthy.

Kalavathi Tiwari
Narsapur

Thanks for Triveni's Jan-Mar, 2009 Issue. My pick of the issue besides your 'India Today' and articles by V.V.B Rao, Atmaram Shamrao Gangane, Aejaz Fatima, Dr. I. Satyasree, P.V. Laxmi Prasaad, G. Sankara Bhanu, Vani Devulapally & M. Koteswar Rao and I. K. Sharma's poem, among poems, besides Ram Sharma, Prof. Hazara Singh, P.K. Joy, H.V. Murty's poems.

Shaleen and Kehoe's reviews are also illuminating.

D.C. Chambial
Maranda.

I have read your article, Kundanlal Saigal, the immortal singer whose songs thrilled millions of people. One day I stopped at a street corner and heard his song 'Soja Rajkumari.' I was just 12. I thank you for taking several readers like me to that remote past which is a sweet remembrance.

D. Surya Rao
Vijayawada

Literary living legends like you are quite inspiration for us all who are devoted in Indian English writings. Your editorial piece: Triple Stream: Remembering Golden-Voiced Saigal is superb. Many of us do not know much about this legendary singer. We are happy that we get an opportunity to know about Kundanlal Saigal a great singer of India.

Pronab Kumar Majumder
Kolkata

Glad to go through Triveni of April, May, June, 2009. In addition to the Editorial, I like the articles on 'Vedik Ecology and Eco Criticism' and 'Plato and Aristotle on Poet and Poetry'. I find marked improvement in the quality of the paper and the get-up.

M. Shravan Kumar
Lucknow

The Schumacher article is indeed thought provoking. The views of the author of 'Small is Beautiful' are relevant to the present time. It is good that you printed the picture of the Indian Parliament to suit the time of General Elections.

S. P. Shinde
Mumbai

The latest issue of Triveni is simply beautiful.

N. S. Dutt
New Delhi

WHO'S WHO

Dr. Michael K. Miovic	Psychiatrist, Author, Boston, USA, is Connected with Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.
Prof. G. Surender Reddy	Advisor, APSFC, Hyderabad
M. Bhimasen Rao	Scholar, Writer, Berhampur, Orissa
K. V. V. Subrahmanyam	I.P.S (Retd.) Former Home Secretary, Govt. of A.P.
Prof. Hazara Singh	Poet, Writer, Ludhiana, Punjab.
T. Padmanabhan	I.C.S. (Retd.), Writer, Hyderabad
Dr. R. M. V. Raghavendra Rao	Assc. Prof. of English (Retd.), Bhavan's New Science Arts & Commerce College, Hyderabad.
P. K. Joy	Poet, Chennai
N. Seetharambai	Chairperson, Literacy House, Andhra Mahila Sabha
Rayaprolu Eswar Kumar	Senior Lecturer in English, Secunderabad
Dr. V. Kondal Rao	Educationist, Writer, Poet, Hyderabad
Prof. D. Ramakrishna Rao	Retd. Principal, Govt. S.R.R College, Karimnagar
Kalavathi Tiwari	Lecturer, Y.N.P.G. College, Narsapur
K. P. Ruth	Lecturer in English, good Research Scholar, Hyderabad
T. Shyama Krishna	Junior Lecturer in English, Jangaon
M. G. Narasimha Murthy	Retd. Principal, Hindupur College
Dr. Sudhir Nikam	P.G. Dept. of English, B.N.N. College, Bhivandi, University of Mumbai
Girija	Writer, Hyderabad
Siluveru Sudharshan	Writer, Hyderabad
Satendra Kumar	Head, Dept. of English, Govt. P.G. College, Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand
Dr. M. Umar	Assoc. Prof., ACE Engineering College, R. R. Dist.
G. Soma Seshu	Retd. Principal, Hindupur
Dr. K. V. Raghupathi	Asst. Prof., Yogi Vemana University, Kadapa.
M. S. Srinivasan	Frequent contributor to Sri Aurobindo's Action
P. V. Laxmi Prasad	Lecturer, Govt College Peddapalli, Karimnagar
Ms. R. Meghana Rao	Research Associate, Kakatiya University, Warangal.