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**Hindi Vishwavidyalaya**

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D I S C O U R S E  
W R I T I N G

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**Mamta Kalia**



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Editor : **Mamta Kalita**; e-mail : [editor.hindi@gmail.com](mailto:editor.hindi@gmail.com)

Editorial Assistant : **Madhu Sexena**

Cover Design : Vazda Khan

**Editorial Office :**

C-77, Lajpat Nagar-I, New Delhi-110 024

Mob. : 9212741322

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Publication in charge : Dr. Birpal Singh Yadav, e-mail : [bpsjnu@gmail.com](mailto:bpsjnu@gmail.com),

Phone : 07152-232943/08055290240

Circulation in charge : Mr. Ram Prasad Kumre, e-mail : [ram.kumre81@gmail.com](mailto:ram.kumre81@gmail.com)

Phone : 07152-232943/09552114176, 09406546762

All enquiries regarding subscription should be directed to the Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya, Wardha

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# हिन्दि

## LANGUAG E DISCOURSE WRITING

July-September 2013

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## Editor's Note

*A few days ago I participated in a multilingual literary conference. Many authors of regional languages presented their papers in their language but they also read out its English translation thereafter. I depended on the conviction that Hindi does not require an interpreter at least in India. I was right. Among authors and audience of several languages like Assamese, Bangla, Oriya, Tamil, Malayalam and English, Hindi was well understood by all. The brainstorming session amply proved the point that Hindi did not require any translation. That Hindi is comprehended and accepted through the length and breadth of the country is heartening for promoting it not only as our national language but as an international language. A U.S. report entitled 'Language use in the United States 2011' has stated that nearly 6,50,000 people in the U.S. speak Hindi, while over 8,00,000 people speak different regional Indian languages. The unique dynamism and energy of Indians has carried our languages far and wide.*

*People, all over the world feel that India is a global powerhouse. Hence the need for learning India's salient language, Hindi. The National Flagship Language Programme in Hindi and Urdu initiated by the University of Texas, Austin is another significant project. There are any number of teachers who are busy imparting Hindi lesson to curious Americans in Sunday classes and holiday courses.*

*The internet has also come in handy for this movement. Students like Ryan Spencer are learning Hindi or Hindustani on skype by engaging teachers from India. Ryan Spencer's father says, 'Hindi lessons will come in handy when Ryan grows up.'*

*Ten years ago when U.S. Hindi department named Hindi as a 'must learn' language, it was mainly, aspiring government servants who were keen to learn Hindi. Hindi gave them some bonus points in the U.S. Foreign Service*

*Exam. But with India becoming a global powerhouse, the demand for Hindi has shot up dramatically. Hindi has become a gateway into developing markets and economy. It also promotes better understanding of Indian culture and civilisation, Global interest in yoga, Hindi films and film music has also popularised Hindi learning. Afterall watching a dubbed movie is only half the fun.*

*Friends with this issue, I wish to take leave of you. Past five years have been devoted to the cause of Hindi though it is a lifetime pursuit. I feel indebted to Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalay, Wardha and especially its honourable Vice-Chancellor Shri Vibhutarain Rai for giving me this unique opportunity to work for him. I am also indebted to our typesetting teams of Beena and Atul Maheshwari for their co-operation, to dear Madhu Saxena for being of immense help and to Shri Kanti Sharma of Ruchika Printers, Delhi for maintaining the regularity of the journal. I thank Dr. Birpal Singh Yadav for his patience and goodness. Our authors and translators will keep writing for other journals and we can always hope to read them elsewhere.*

*Years ago when I was speaking at the farewell function of our M.A. Final batch at Hindu College Delhi University, I had said 'Every parting is dying a little.' I was naive and sentimental. Today instead of saying good-bye, I wish to say au revoir (till we meet again). Like Peter Pan, I'd like to add 'never say good bye because saying good bye means going away and going away means forgetting. We may meet again in any clime or chunk of time. Until then.*

*Mamta Kulkarni*

## Usne Kaha Tha

(She Had Asked Me)

Chandradhar Sharma Guleri

Translated by  
Ravi Nandan Sinha

To people whose backs are wounded by the tongue lashes of the big-city coachmen, and whose ears are filled with their abuses, my humble advice would be to use on their wounds the ointment of sweet words spoken by the bamboo-cart drivers of Amritsar. While the big-city coachmen, looking as if they were an incarnation of all the regret, despair and irritation in the world, drive their coaches straight ahead on the wide roads of the city, whipping the backs of their horses, at times establishing intimate physical relationship with the horse's grandmother, at times showing pity for the pedestrians for not having been given eyes, at times driving the wheel of their carriage over the pedestrians' toes, but complaining at the same time that they are the most tormented people in the world, their brethren in Amritsar, pausing for each hawker with the ocean's patience, say, "Save yourself, Khalsa ji", "Wait a minute, brother", "Let me pass, Lala ji", "Step aside, my king", picking their way through the narrow, winding lanes of Amritsar through a jungle of white turbans, mules, ducks, hawkers, sugarcane-sellers, and porters. It never happens that a pedestrian is asked to step aside without being addressed with the respectful 'ji' or 'sahib'! It is not that their tongue does not cut, but it cuts like a sweet knife. For instance, when some old woman, despite being asked repeatedly to let them pass, continues to walk in the middle of the road, they say to her,

“*Hut ja jeene jogiye, hut ja karma waliye, hut ja puttan pyariye, bach ja Iambi umara waliye*” Roughly translated, it means, “You deserve to live, you are fortunate, you are loved by your sons, and you have a long life ahead of you; so why do you want to die under the wheels of my cart? Please let me pass!”

Picking their way through such bamboo-cart drivers, one day a boy and a girl met at a shop in the market square. His long hair and her loose *suthna* (trousers) indicated that both were Sikhs. He had come to buy some curd for his maternal uncle, who needed it to wash his hair, and she had come to buy *badis* for the kitchen. The shopkeeper was arguing with an outsider, who was not prepared to leave until he had counted all the still-wet *papads* in a bundle weighing a *ser*.

“Where are you from?”

“From Magra—and you?”

“I’m from Manjha. Where do you live here?”

“With my *mama* (maternal uncle) Atar Singh.”

“I’ve also come to my *mama’s* house. He lives in Guru Bazaar.”

Meanwhile, the shopkeeper was done with the customer and gave them what they wanted. After purchasing their things, the two of them began to walk together. After they had walked some distance, the boy asked her with a smile, “Has your *kudmai* (engagement) happened?”

The girl frowned a little, and ran away saying “*Dhatt*”. The boy just stood there,

watching her.

After that, every two or three days, they would run into each other at the vegetable shop, or at the milkman’s. This went on for about a month. During that period, two or three times the boy asked her the same question, “Has your *kudmai* happened?” and received the same “*Dhatt*” in reply. One day, in order to tease her, when the boy asked her that question, against his expectation she answered, “Yes.”

“When?”

“Yesterday. Don’t you see this silk embroidered *salu*?”

The girl ran away. The boy set out for home. On his way home, he pushed a boy into the drain, threw a hawker’s basket on the ground ruining his day’s earning, hit a dog with a pebble, and poured all his milk over the wheelbarrow of a cauliflower seller. He also ran against a *vaishnav* woman returning after her bath, and was called blind by her. Only after all that, he reached home.

## 2

“*Ram, Ram*, what kind of war is this! Our very bones have become stiff being cooped up for days in this bunker. It’s ten times colder here than in Ludhiana; it has been raining and snowing, and on top of it, we are sunk up to our calves in the slush. Here you can’t see the enemy, but almost every hour you hear such an ear-splitting explosion that the entire bunker begins to shake, and for hundreds of yards around, the land trembles. How can anyone fight



against these unseen shells? We'd heard about the earthquake in Nagarkot but in this place there are twenty-five such earthquakes everyday. If a bit of your turban, or a part of your elbow, sticks out of the bunker even for a second, it is hit by a bullet. No one knows where those rascals are hiding on the ground, or behind the grass."

"Don't you worry, Lahna Singh, now only three days of this duty are left. We have already spent four days in this bunker, and the relief will arrive day after tomorrow. Then we can take a break for seven days. Then we'll slaughter a goat with our own hands, eat well, and go to rest in that white Frenchwoman's garden where you have green grass growing like velvet. She piles you with fruit and milk. And she does not charge anything for it, no matter how much you insist. She says, you are our kings, you have come to protect my country".

"These four days I did not have a wink of sleep. You must have heard the saying that without exercise soldiers and horses become worthless. I wish they would order me to put my bayonet on my rifle and march ahead! After that, if I did not return without killing at least seven Germans, let me never be able to bow my head on the threshold of Darbar Sahib. These rascals—when they see tanks and bayonets, they cry for mercy, although when it gets dark they fire shells, each shell weighing thirty *muns*. Do you remember our attack that day? For four miles we did not leave a

single German alive. The General Sahib ordered us to return, or else..."

"Or else what? You think you would have marched straight up to Berlin?" Subedar Hazara Singh smiled and said, "Wars are not managed by Subedars or Jamadars. The senior officers have to take everything into account. It is a three-mile long front. If we march forward at one point, what will happen to the rest of the front?"

"You are right, Subedar ji", Lahna Singh said, "But what can we do? This cold has entered our bones. The sun is nowhere to be seen, and water keeps seeping from the sides of the bunker, as if streams from the ponds of Chamba were flowing into it. Let there be just one campaign and we'll feel warm."

"Udmi, get up and put some coal into the brazier. Vazira, take four men with buckets and ask them to throw the water out of the bunker. Maha Singh, it is evening now, so change the guard at the entrance", after giving instructions the Subedar began to make his usual round of the bunker.

Vazira Singh was the clown of the unit. He filled a bucket with the bunker's muddy water and throwing it out said, "Look, I have become a *padha*. This water is being offered to the dead king of Germany." Everyone broke into laughter; the clouds of depression disappeared.

Lahna Singh filled another bucket and handing it to Vazira said, "Imagine that you are watering the melons in your fields.

Nowhere in the entire Punjab can you get such manure-filled water.”

“Yes, what a great country it is, just heaven! After the war is over, I’m going to ask the government to grant me ten *gunas* of land here so that I can plant a fruit orchard.”

“Then will you also ask your wife to join you, or will it be that white woman who gives you milk...?”

“Shut up! You know these people have no shame.”

“Well, different countries have different customs. I have never been able to explain to her that Sikhs do not smoke. She is always trying to push a cigarette into my hands, or place it between my lips, and when I refuse it, she thinks that the king is angry, and so he will not fight for her country.”

“All right, all right. How is Bodha Singh now?”

“Much better.”

“You talk as if I don’t know what’s happening here. Every night you cover him with both your blankets and sit close to the brazier trying to ward off the cold. You also do guard-duty for him. You give him your dry wooden boards to sleep on, and you go to sleep in the mud. You know, I’m really worried about your health. Actually, this cold is death, and those who die of pneumonia here are not given any *murabbas* (land near the new canals) by the government.”

“Don’t worry about me. I will die near that pond in Bulel. My head will be on

brother Keerat Singh’s lap and the shade of that mango tree I planted with my own hands in my courtyard will be over me.”

Looking angry Vazira Singh said, “Why should you talk about death? Let Germans and Turks die!”

“Yes brothers, let us sing a song.”

Who could have imagined that those bearded and married Sikhs would sing such an obscene song? Soon the entire bunker rang with the sound of their singing; the soldiers felt refreshed again, as if they had been resting and enjoying themselves for four days.

### 3

Half the night had passed. It was dark. Bodha Singh was sleeping on three empty biscuit-tins placed end to end. He had spread the two blankets given to him by Lahna Singh and was sleeping on them. He had covered himself with two blankets and an overcoat. Lahna Singh was on guard-duty. Occasionally, he cast a glance at the bunker’s entrance, and sometimes at the thin body of the sleeping Bodha Singh. Bodha Singh groaned.

“What’s it, brother Bodha?”

“Water, please.”

Placing the water-mug against his lips Lahna Singh asked, “How are you feeling now?”

After drinking water Bodha Singh replied, “I’m shivering. I feel as if an electric current is passing through my entire body. My teeth are chattering.”

“All right, take my pullover and put

it on.”

“But what about you?”

“I have this brazier to keep me warm. See, I’m actually sweating.”

“No, no, I won’t wear it. These last four days you have been doing so much for me...”

“O yes, now I remember. I have another woollen pullover. It came this morning itself. Women in England are knitting these pullovers for us and are sending them here. May the Guru bless them,” Lahna said and began to take off his coat to remove the pullover under it.

“Are you telling the truth?”

“Yes, of course,” he said, and though Bodha kept protesting, Lahna made him wear his pullover. Wearing only a shirt made of coarse cloth and a *khaki* coat he went to the bunker’s entrance and stood there, guarding the entrance. The story about the pullover sent by an English woman was only that, a story.

Half an hour passed. Someone called from outside the bunker, “Subedar Hazara Singh!”

“Who’s that? O, Lieutenant Sahib? Yes, sir!” the Subedar replied, standing at attention and saluting him.

“Look, we have to attack immediately. There is a German bunker just a mile east from here. There aren’t more than fifty Germans in it. Move under these trees and you will reach the bunker after crossing two fields. You will see two or three turnings on the way. I have put fifteen soldiers near one of the turnings. Leave

ten men here, take the rest with you and join them. Take the bunker from the Germans and stay there. I’ll take care of this place.”

“Yes Sir.”

Without making a noise everyone got ready. Throwing off his blankets Bodha also got up to join the raiding party. Lahna stopped him. When Lahna Singh stepped forward, Bodha’s father, the Subedar, pointed to Bodha with his finger. Understanding what he meant, Lahna Singh said nothing. This was followed by a great deal of argument about which ten men should stay back. No one wanted to remain in the bunker. The Subedar somehow managed to persuade ten men to stay back and then left with the others. Standing close to the brazier facing it, the Lieutenant took out a cigarette from his pocket and began to light it. After about ten minutes he offered a cigarette to Lahna and said, “Take this, you can also smoke.”

In a flash, Lahna understood everything. Keeping his face straight he said, “Yes sir, thank you very much, sir.” As he extended his hand to take the cigarette, he saw the Sahib’s face and hair in the light of the brazier. He knew immediately that there was something wrong. How were Lieutenant Sahib’s sideburns replaced by a close-cropped haircut in just a day?

“Perhaps the Sahib is drunk, and he also seems to have had a haircut,” thought Lahna Singh and felt that he should probe further. Lieutenant Sahib had been in his

regiment for five years.

“Sir, when are we going back to India?”

“After this war is over. But why? Don’t you like this country?”

“No, not at all, sir. Here one gets no opportunity to hunt the way one did at home. Don’t you remember, last year after the battle exercises were over, you and I went to Jagadhari district on a hunting expedition.” “Yes, of course I remember it.” “Then you were riding a donkey and your cook Abdulla had stayed behind in order to offer water to the deity at the temple.” “Yes, yes, I remember that scoundrel very well.” “And then we saw such a big antelope as I had never seen before. And how well you shot it—your bullet entered through its shoulder and came out of its neck. It is really a pleasure to hunt with an officer like you. Do you remember that incident? The head of that antelope was sent to Shimla for stuffing. You said that you wanted to hang it on the wall of the regimental mess.” “Yes, I wanted to, but later I changed my mind and sent it to England”. “What big antlers it had! They must have been at least two feet each, weren’t they?”

“Yes, Lahna Singh, they were two feet four inches long. You haven’t lighted your cigarette yet?”

“Yes sir, I’ll light it; let me get a matchbox,” Lahna Singh said and went into the bunker. Now he was sure. Very quickly he decided what he had to do.

In the darkness his foot touched someone sleeping.

“Who’s that?”

“Vazira Singh!”

“Yes. What’s the matter, Lahna? You look as if the sky has fallen. Let me sleep.”

#### 4

“Wake up, man. The sky has indeed fallen and it has come down wearing the uniform of Lieutenant Sahib!”

“What are you saying?”

“Lieutenant Sahib has either been killed or captured. A German has put on his uniform and is right here. The Subedar could not see his face clearly, but I did. The bastard speaks chaste but bookish Urdu. And do you know, he also offered me a cigarette?”

“Then, what are we going to do?”

“See, we have a problem here. We have been deceived. Out there Subedar ji is wandering about in the slush, and here the Germans will attack our bunker. And they will attack him also because he is exposed. Get up and do as I say. As quickly as possible, try to catch up with our unit, following their footprints. They must not have gone very far. Ask the Subedar to return to the bunker immediately. That yarn about another bunker is just crap. Leave the bunker from the other side. And do not make a noise. Hurry up.”

“But our orders are to remain here...”

“To hell with your orders! These are my—Lahna Singh’s—orders; at the moment, I am the senior most officer here. Meanwhile, I will take care of this Lieutenant Sahib.”

“But you have only eight men here.”

“We’re not eight men, but ten lakh. Haven’t you heard that a single Akali Sikh is equal to one and a quarter lakh men? Now hurry up.”

Returning to the entrance of the bunker Lahna Singh stood pressed against the wall. He saw that Lieutenant Sahib took three bombs out of his pockets, each bomb the size of a wood apple. The Lieutenant Sahib pushed them into the mud-wall of the bunker at three different points and connected them with a wire. At the end of the wire there was a ball of thread which he placed near the brazier. Moving towards the opening of the bunker, he was about to light the end of the fuse when moving like a flash of lightning, Lahna Singh hit the man’s elbow with the butt of his rifle. The Sahib dropped the match stick. Lahna Singh hit him again, this time on the neck. Crying “O, my God”, the Sahib collapsed to the ground. Pulling out the three bombs from the mud wall, Lahna Singh threw them out of the bunker. He dragged the Sahib close to the brazier. When Lahna searched his pockets he found three or four envelopes and a diary. He put them in his pocket.

After some time the Sahib recovered. Laughing Lahna Singh said to him, “Why, Lieutenant Sahib, how do you feel now? Today I have learnt many new things. I have learnt that a Sikh smokes cigarettes, and also that there are antelopes in the district of Jagadhari. I have also learnt that Muslim cooks offer water in temple and

that our Lieutenant Sahib rides a donkey. But tell me, where did you learn such good Urdu? Our Lieutenant Sahib cannot speak even five words without saying ‘damn’.

Lahna had not searched the Sahib’s trouser pockets. As if to save his hands from cold, the Sahib pushed his hands into his trouser pockets.

Lahna Singh continued, “You are clever, but this Lahna of Manjha village has spent years with Lieutenant Sahib, and to deceive him you need four eyes. Three months ago a Turkish *maulavi* came to my village. He distributed talismans among women claiming that it would help them have children, and also gave medicines to ill children. Smoking a hookah, he would sit on a cot under the Chaudhari’s banyan tree and say, ‘The Germans are great scholars. They have studied the Vedas and have learnt from them the art of flying planes. They do not kill cows, and when they come into India, they will stop cow slaughter.’ He misled the shopkeepers of the market asking them to withdraw their money from their post office savings accounts, because the reign of this government was coming to an end soon. Polharam, the postmaster, was also scared. I shaved that *maulvi*’s beard and drove him out of the village saying : if you ever set foot in the village, I’ll...”

The Sahib fired the pistol from inside his pocket. The bullet hit Lahna’s thigh. Two quick shots from Lahna’s Henry Martin blew up the Sahib’s head. Hearing the shots, everyone ran in.

Bodha shouted. “What happened?

Lahna Singh said, “A scared dog had strayed inside the bunker and I killed him.” He asked him to go back to sleep. Then he narrated the incident to others. Everyone picked up his rifle and was ready for anything. Tearing off a piece from his turban Lahna tied it around his wound. The bullet had not reached the bone. When he bandaged his thigh, it stopped bleeding.

In the meantime, seventy Germans, shouting loudly, attacked the bunker. The volley of shots fired by the Sikhs stopped the first assault, then they resisted another attack but they were just eight (Lahna Singh was firing accurately; he was standing while others were in a lying position) and the Germans were seventy. Stepping over the corpses of their dead brethren the Germans kept coming. In a few minutes they would have...

Suddenly shouts of “*Vah Guru ji di fatah\ Vah Guru ji da Khalsa*” were heard. Bullets began to rain on the backs of the Germans. It was as if they had been caught between two grinding stones. From the back, the jawans of Subedar Hazara Singh were raining bullets on the Germans, and in the front, the bayonets of Lahna Singh and his soldiers were busy. When the soldiers at the back came closer, they too began to attack the Germans with their bayonets.

Then once again there was a cry of “Here comes the army of Akal Sikhs! *Vah Guruji di fatah! Vah Guruji da Khalsa Sat*

*Sri Akal Purush*” And the battle finally came to an end. Sixty-three Germans were either killed or were lying on the ground, groaning. Fifteen of the Sikhs lost their lives. A bullet had gone through Subedar Hazara Singh’s shoulder. Another one had hit the ribcage of Lahna Singh. He filled the wound with the wet mud of the bunker and tied his turban around his chest like a bandage. No one knew that Lahna Singh had been injured a second time—and that too grievously.

While the battle was raging, the moon had risen, it was the kind of moon whose light gives meaning to the term *kshayee* used by Sanskrit poets. A light breeze had risen, the kind of soft and sibilant breeze that has been called ‘*dantvinopadeshacaryya*’ by Banbhatt. Vazir Singh was describing how the sticky lumps of the heavy French earth stuck to his boots when he went running after the Subedar. When the Subedar learnt from Lahna about what had happened and had also received the papers recovered from the imposter, he praised him for his presence of mind and said that had Lahna not been there that day everyone would have been killed.

The sound of that battle had been heard by men in a bunker some three miles on the right side of it. They telephoned the base camp from where two ambulances with two doctors started immediately and reached there in an hour and a half. The field hospital was nearby. They hoped to reach it before dawn and so after some first aid, the wounded were put into one

ambulance and the bodies were placed in another. The Subedar wanted to get the wounded thigh of Lahna Singh dressed, but Lahna told him that it was not a deep wound, so it could be taken care of in the morning. Bodha Singh had high fever and was in a state of delirium. He was put in an ambulance. The Subedar was not ready to leave Lahna behind. Lahna said, "For the sake of Bodha and the Subedarni, I pray to you to go in this vehicle with him."

"And you?"

"Send a vehicle for me when you reach there. And then other vehicles will be coming for the German corpses also, so don't worry about me. I'm all right. Don't you see—I am standing? And Vazir Singh is with me, so don't worry about me."

"All right, but still..."

"Bodha is already in the ambulance, you also get into it. And also, when you write a letter to Subedarni ji, please convey my respects to her. And when you go home, tell her that I have done what she had asked me."

The vehicles had begun to move. The Subedar got into one of them and continuing to hold Lahna's hand said, "You have saved Bodha's life and mine too. Why write her a letter? We'll go home together and then you can say to your Subedarni what you want. What had she asked you?"

"Now please get into the ambulance. And don't forget to write to her what I have told you, and also say that to her when you meet her."

The moment the vehicles left, Lahna collapsed to the ground, "Vazira, give me water, and undo my bandage. It is covered with blood."

## 5

Just before death, memory becomes clear. One by one the incidents in a person's life cross before his eyes. The colours of each incident are sharp; the mist of time is washed away.

Lahna Singh is twelve. He has come to his maternal uncle in Amritsar. At the curd-seller's shop, at the vegetable vendor's, everywhere, he comes across an eight year old girl. When he asks her, "Has your *kudmai* happened?" She only says "Dhatt", and shyly runs away. One day when he asks her the same question she says, "Yes, it happened yesterday, don't you see this silk-embroidered *salu*?" When he heard it, Lahna Singh felt sad. He became angry. Why did he feel sad and angry?

"Vazir Singh, give me water."

Twenty five years have passed. Now Lahna Singh is a Jamadar in 77 Rifles. He has forgotten about that eight year old girl. He does not even remember having met her. On a seven days' leave, he has come home in connection with a case related to land. There he received a letter from the commanding officer of his regiment informing him that troops were moving to the front, and so he must return immediately. He also received a letter from Subedar Hazara Singh saying that he and his son Bodha were also going to the front.

He asked Lahna to come to his village from where they would travel together. The Subedar's village lay on the way, and he was also very fond of Lahna. Lahna Singh reached the Subedar's house.

When they were about to leave, the Subedar came out of the inner quarters of the house and said, "Lahna, Subedarni knows you. She wants to see you. Go and see her." Lahna Singh went inside. The Subedarni knows me? Since when? The Subedar's family had never lived in the regimental quarters. When he reached the door of the inner quarters, he called out his greetings and heard her blessings. Lahna Singh waited without saying anything.

"Do you recognize me?"

"No!"

"Has your *kudmai* happened?—*Dhatt*—See, it happened yesterday— don't you see this silk-embroidered *salu*?—in Amritsar..."

The clash of emotions brought him to consciousness. He turned on his side. The wound in his side had begun to bleed.

"Vazira, please give me water!" he said.

The dream continues. The Subedarni is saying, "I recognized you the moment you came here. I want you to do something for me; I am so unlucky. The government gave him a medal for bravery, and a plot of land in Lyalpur, and today we have a chance to show our loyalty. But why didn't the government raise a battalion of us women too, so that I too would have gone with Subedar ji? I have a son, and it has been only a year since he joined the army.

I had four sons after him, but none of them survived." The Subedarni began to weep. "Now both of them are going to war. How unlucky I am! Do you remember how one day the horse of that carriage had gone berserk near the curd-seller's shop, and you had saved me? You'd picked me up and put me on that shop's veranda, and yourself came under the horse's legs. Please save these two men as you had saved me that day. I spread my *aanchal* before you and beg you."

Sobbing the Subedarni went inside. Lahna too returned, wiping his tears.

"Vazir Singh, give me water," he said.

Vazir Singh is sitting with Lahna's head on his lap. When Lahna asks for water, he gives it to him. Lahna remained silent for half an hour, then said, "Who is it? Keerat Singh?"

Understanding, Vazira said, "Yes."

"My brother, raise my head a little. Place it on your thigh."

Vazira did what he was told.

"Now it's better. Give me some water. This *ashadh* the mango tree will be laden with fruit. Both of you, the uncle and the nephew, must eat its mangoes, sitting under it. That mango tree is as old as your nephew. I planted it in the month he was born."

Tears were flowing from Vazir Singh's eyes.

x x x

A few days later, people read in the newspapers—France and Belgium—68<sup>th</sup> list—Died of wounds in the battlefield—



No. 77 Sikh Rifles, Jamadar Lahna Singh.

**Glossary:**

*Aanchal*: that part of the sari that is in front covering the chest.

*Ashadh*: a month in the Hindu calendar corresponding with the rainy season.

*Badis*: dried lumps of ground lentil used in Indian cooking.

*Darbar Sahib*: In Amritsar. A very important temple for the Sikhs.

*Dhatt*. interjection indicating shyness.

*Mun*: a measure of weight equal to about thirty-seven kilograms.

*Padha*: one who performs the last rites.

*Papads*: pappadoms, an Indian food-item.

*Subedar*: a junior commissioned officer in the Indian Army.

*Vaishnav*. worshipper of the Hindu God Vishnu.

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**Chandradhar Sharma Guleri (1883-1922)** : Chandradhar Sharma Guleri's ancestors belonged to a village called Guler in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. He was born in Jaipur where his father was the Principal of a Sanskrit College. In 1908 he joined Mayo College, Ajmer as a lecturer, where he taught Sanskrit for twelve years. Later, he became the Principal of the College of Oriental Learning and Theology, Varanasi. Guleri knew a number of languages and was a scholar of archeology, philosophy and linguistics. Guleri is said to have written seven short stories but only three of them are available today. They are *Sukhmaya*, *Jeevan*, *Buddhu Ka Kanta* and *Usne Kaha Tha*. His *Heeron ka Heera* remained incomplete. His short stories belong to the earliest phase in the genre. They are mature in terms of style and treatment of subject. *Usne Kaha Tha* was first published in *Saraswati* in June 1915. It is one of his finest short stories, and is among the most well-known love stories in Hindi. Written against the backdrop of the First World War, it covers a period of twenty five years. It uses the modern technique of flashback.

**Dr. Ravi Nandan Sinha** : has published poetry and literary criticism in India and elsewhere. He has also translated poetry and fiction which the Sahitya Akademi and National Book Trust India have brought out. He is the founder-editor of *The Quest* (ested. 1987), a journal devoted to Indian literature and translation. He has been a member of the awards committee of Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. Presently he is the Head, Postgraduate Department of English, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Ranchi. Email: [questranchi@gmail.com](mailto:questranchi@gmail.com)

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## Khoyi Hui Dishayen

Lost Directions

Kamleshwar

Translated by  
Jai Ratan

Chander stood leaning against the railing at the street turning. In front and on all sides, people milled past. It was evening and the lights of Connaught Place had begun to twinkle. He was so tired that his feet were giving way. He had not walked much today yet he was utterly exhausted. Weariness descending from his brain and his heart seemed to seep into his entire body. He had wasted the day. He stood there brooding over it. He was in no mood to return home he could not even whip up an interest in the passing women. The sight added to his weariness.

Hunger...He could not decide whether he was hungry or not. He taxed his mind. He had left home at eight in the morning after having just a cup of coffee—and nothing to go with it. At this thought he felt vaguely hungry, his brain and stomach acting in consonance with each other. Generally he felt hungry only when he thought about it.

He looked up and his gaze remained glued to the sky. There were kites wheeling in the sky and the formation of the clouds made the sky look like a huge pair of stocking. He could see the dome and the minarets of the Jama Masjid under the grey sky. The minarets tapering into sharp points stood silhouetted against the sky, looking somewhat odd.

The shop behind him displayed an advertisement for blouses. Leaves slowly fluttered down from the acacia trees growing near the Regal bus stop. The buses came roaring up, stopped for a moment and sped away after disgorging passengers at one end and devouring them at the other. The traffic lights at the crossing blinked red, and yellow. Hundreds of people passed by but not one among them gave him a look of recognition. Everyone passed by, man or woman, ignored others as if they were non-existent or strutted along with a false arrogance.

And then Chander recalled his hometown which he had left three years ago. There even if he came across a stranger on the lonely banks of the Ganga he would nod to him politely.

And this Capital city! Here everything belongs to us, to our country, and yet nothing is our country.

He can walk along any road to these but they lead nowhere. There are houses, whole colonies, situated on both sides of these roads but he can't enter any to them. The gates outside these houses have small notice boards warning all and sundry to 'beware of dogs'. And not to pluck flowers. One must ring the call bell and wait patiently for a response.

Back home, Nirmala would be waiting for him to return. When he entered the house, he would awkwardly settle down in a chair like an outsider because all the stuff in the room would be kept on the bed and

she herself would become busy cooking on the electric heater. He couldn't enter the house like a gust of wind and throw his arms around her because Guptaji would not have returned from the mill and Mrs. Gupta, having nothing better to do, would be gossiping with Nirmala or learning a knitting pattern. He would have to behave with proper decorum, exchange a few polite nothings with Mrs. Gupta. Then Nirmala would discreetly bring up the question of dinner which Mrs. Gupta would take as a signal to leave.

After that he would draw the curtain of the big window and on some pretext close the window that opened on to Khurana's house. He would turn to the dining table, and on the pretext of asking for a glass of water, call his wife to him. Then he would take her in his arms, and finally be able to say : 'I am very tired'.

But that point would never be reached. Before completing this long process he would find so exasperating, he would straightaway be forced to say, "Is the food ready? What's the delay?" Gone would be that feeling of oneness with her. His voice would sound so standoffish. In the nearby bakery shop the radio would be doling out mournful songs and then the heavy tread of Gulati's tired feet on the stairs.

A Scooter would stop in the lane and an unknown man would disappear into a house. The Sikh owner of the motor repairs shop would linger on till midnight, the bunch of keys in his hand, because he does not trust his mechanic even after fifteen years of service.

Then he would hear the faint scrape of Bishan Kapur's footsteps. For the past two years just the nameplate—Bishan Kapur... Journalist. All he knows about him is that when the electric lights filter through the front window and when the cigarette smoke curling against the window bars gets lost in the dense darkness then a man by the name of Bishan Kapur is in the house. And in the morning, When he finds egg shells, a bread wrapper, cigarette stubs and burnt matchsticks strewn under his window then a man by the name of Bishan Kapur has left the house.

Coming out of his thoughts Chander becomes conscious of the fact that the stench of his socks has become insufferable, making it difficult for him to stand by the railing any more. He takes out his pocket diary and goes over his next day's engagements.

First thing in the morning a phone call to the English daily and an appointment for a meeting. He has also to drop in at the Radio Station. His previous cheque has to be cashed at the Reserve Bank and a money order sent home. That would account for the whole day. The Editor not being quiet familiar with him, might keep him waiting endlessly before asking him in; there were always endless delays, at the Radio Station too, and at the Reserve Bank he knew no one to expedite matters; This was not Allahabad where the counter clerk would help Amarnath encash his cheques at once. As for the post office, there would be a

glut of businessmen's peons at the money order counter. They tendered as many as ten money orders each. Being engrossed in calculating the commission on each money order and totalling it up, the clerk would have no time for him.

There only interaction with any one might take place when he was asked for the loan of a pen. The borrower would return the pen with his left hand without glancing at him, and mumbling thank you would continue reading what he had written on the sheet of paper while moving on to the stamp counter.

Chander was feeling so ruffled. The diary still in his hand, his gaze travelled to some high-rise buildings looming in the distance, crowned with shimmering neon signs. He was not familiar with any of those names. At least in Allahabad he knew that the leading cloth merchant was a very poor man and hawked cloth, carrying bales of it on his shoulders. And now he was so wealthy that his son had gone abroad for his higher studies. He himself was pious who adorned his forehead with sandal paste while he raked in the profits and prepared to fight the municipal election. But in this big city one didn't get to know anything about anyone.

There was one good thing about Connaught Place. It had such wide, open lawns, studded with trees under which the corporation had placed public benches. Tired people sat on these benches while Children sported on the lawns. Chander felt the children's faces and their antics were

familiar to him but the gulgappa-eating mummies, seemed unfamiliar because their eyes lacked the innocence and pride of motherly affection. Their bodies too lacked the beauty and dignity of motherhood. They exuded a meaningless, stale challenge which one could neither refuse nor accept—a challenge that sounds in the ears of all passersby who pass on as if they are deaf.

Chander felt like sitting in the lawn for a while. But then he abandoned the idea, for he felt he had no place there. Yesterday water had crept up on him silently like a thief through the grass and had soaked his clothes.

Trees stood around in splendid isolation and there was a strange vacuity in the darkness which had gathered under the trees. At least this loneliness gave him a feeling of intimacy. But even this loneliness was disturbed because every ten minutes or so a policeman passed by on his nightly round. Discarded ice cream wrappers and empty packets of parched gram were entangled in the bushes and shrubs. Or a homeless man would depart after emptying his liquor bottle and dumping it among the shrubs.

His glance again went back to his diary. He felt so lonely in the din created by the deluge of on-rushing traffic. He felt that in these three years nothing of any consequence had happened, nothing had become part of his being, nothing had touched him, or left a feeling of joy a pain. This loneliness was like an aid, sandy waste; it was the silence of an unknown sea coast

where the noise of the crashing waves only deepened the silence.

The vaulting sky shaped like a stocking, kites wheeling round the minarets of the Jama Masjid; women chased by flower papers—the evening was still full of life.

It suddenly occurred to Chander that an age had gone by in which he had not even encountered himself. He hadn't had time even to ask, 'How are you getting along?' Not to talk of having a tete-a-tete with himself. A faint smile appeared on his face. Taking his diary he jotted down against each successive Friday : "To meet myself from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m." Today was Friday and he resolved that he must make a start today. He looked at his watch, it was seven. But his mind played truant. Why not first have a cup of tea at the Tea House? It seemed he was not keen to meet himself and he wondered why he tried to run away from himself?

Just at that moment he saw Anand coming in his direction—the last person he would have cared to meet. Anand was a jerk, and he wanted to keep away from that infection. And he was always on the look-out for a friend, not a close friend but one he could sit and talk to for a while. His talk was marked by a strange artificiality of a bookish kind. That artificiality. Chander felt, had also become ingrained in him. Like Anand, he had also imbibed it from books during his college days.

Now he felt that he had wantonly thrown that time to the dogs. He had spent

it in the ruins whose descriptions trip off the half-baked tourist guide's tongues and are repeated by rote to successive batches of tourists... This is Diwan-e-Khas. Just look at the etchings on the walls. Here there stood a gemencrusted throne...This is the ladies' bath...and this is the place where the king used to give a royal audience to his subjects. This is the Winter Palace and this the Monsoon Palace and this one the Summer Retreat. Now please step this way. Be careful. Just watch your steps. This is the place where the gallows were fixed.

Chander felt as if he had wasted twenty-five years of his life with tourist guides in the midst of ruins whose life-stories he had never got to know. He was shown only the Diwan-e-Khas and its carvings. After taking him round the ladies both the guides had left him in the dark and stinking cellar where the gallows were fixed, where bats hung upside down from the ceiling. There was also a discoloured rope dating back to historic times, which entangled one's neck, till one swung to death and than only corpses remained flung into a dark well.

Was there any difference between him and those rotting bodies?

And Anand too was no different from them.

Chander wanted to give him the slip because he knew Anand would say in his studied way, "Well, Pal how good your hair looks. Do you use Brylcream? The girls must be gone on you."

Anand had really stopped in front of Chander. 'Hello, you here? What are you doing standing here? Driving those girls raving mad for you.' It made Chander laugh.

'Where are you coming from?' Chander asked, putting his diary in his pocket.

'Today I had a hell of a time. Not of my doing though. Come, let's have a cup of coffee.' Anand paused for an instant and then added, 'Or you want something else?'

Chander knew what he meant and dismissed the idea with a brusque 'no'. But Anand would not give up so easily. 'What else is there in life?' He said. 'Does it add up to anything? All right, let it be coffee then', he said resignedly, giving a forced laugh. Then he pressed Chander's hand and said. 'Please, if you don't mind, do you have some money to spare?' His voice was completely uninhibited and unembarrassed. Evidently, he was short of money.

'Well, partner, I think I can manage it elsewhere', Anand said as an after thought. 'Wait for me. Don't go away.' And off he goes but does not return.

Chander knew this game.

After some time Chander went in to the Tea House. Walking past some tables, he went to the counter where he bought a packet of cigarette and then settled down at a table.

'Hello! It was a vaguely familiar face. I'm seeing you after ages'. The man sat down in a chair next to Chander. They were silent for a while, at a loss how to start of conversation.

The Tea House was very noisy. Full of hollow laughter. There was a clock on the wall which was always fast. There were three passages, marked, 'Entrance' and 'Exit'. The fourth led to the toilet, choked with naphthelene balls. A mirror hung in the gallery. Everyone who went to the toilet looked at himself without fail in the mirror.

At Gaylord preparations were on for the dinner-dance. Three rows of chairs had been shifted outside to make room for the dance floor. The Volga was mostly patronised by a foreign crowd.

Just then a couple entered. The woman was nicely decked up, a flower tucked in the coiffure. The man's face was marked by a strong superciliousness. They sat down opposite each other in the part of the hall set aside for familiars. Before they sat down there had seemed to be no acquaintance between them, except that when the woman stepped up to a chair, the man gently placed his hand on her back as a matter of courtesy. Helping her to sit down. They sat rather withdrawn from each other as if there was no common topic of interest between them.

The woman looked around, her hand going to her coiffure, while the man stared at the glass of water lying in front of him at the table. They looked around not from any interest in what was going on. They looked merely because they had eyes. They both must look around only because they must. Had they concentrated their gaze at one point perhaps their eyes would have started smarting.

The bearer served them, and they started eating without a word. After finishing, the man started picking his teeth while the woman took out her handkerchief and dabbed her lips, fixing her lipstick which had got smudged while eating.

The bearer served them, and they started eating without a word. After finishing, the man started picking his teeth while the woman took out her handkerchief and dabbed her lips. Fixing her lipstick which had got smudged while eating.

The bearer came back with the change. The man left some coins in the tray as a tip, the woman assessing it intently. Then they both pushed back their chairs and moved out disinterestedly, the man allowing her to precede him. Then he caught up with her and walked abreast of her for the first time giving an indication of some sort of relationship between them.

Chander's heart became heavier, making him feel all the more lonely. He gazed at that vaguely familiar face which had given him a nod of recognition, no small consolation in a sea of unknown faces. Finding that he was being singled out for attention, the man was on the point of speaking but hesitated as if memory were playing tricks with him. Then he said, 'Er...you...you are perhaps working in the Ministry of Commerce. I have a feeling...he abruptly trailed into silence.

Chander's body tingled. Draining the remaining tea in the cup he said in a steady

voice, 'No, I was never in the Ministry of Commerce.'

The man made no effort to make amends. As if sealing that chance contact, he said, 'All right, partner, we shall meet again sometime later'. And he got up, lighting a cigarette.

Coming out, Chander proceeded to the bus stop. There were four or five people at the bus stop behind the Madras Hotel. A policeman was sitting under the bus shelter, smoking a cigarette.

Chander went up and stood next to him. Everyone wanted to know when the bus would come but no one cared to ask. Chander silently moved away and stood under the darkness of a nearby tree. The dry leaves crackled under his feet when he shifted his weight from one leg to the other. Their sound took him back to many years. There was a deep sense of belonging in that sound. He felt reassured.

Yes, they were similar leaves, dry and yellow. He was walking along that path with Indra many years ago. He had no definite goal before him. He was just squandering his life among ruins. Then Indra had said, 'Chander, you are cut out for big things in life.' That familiar voice again rang in his ears, 'you are cut out for big things in life'. And her eyes shone with irrepressible faith in him.

Looking into those love-lorn eyes. Chander had said, 'What have I got? Indra, I myself don't know where life will take me. I don't want you to ruin your life

because of me. I don't know what will become of me. I may die of starvation. I may even go mad.'

Indra's eyes had glowed with love. 'Chander, why do you say such things?' She had said, 'Whatever you are, wherever you are, I'll be happy with you.'

Chander had looked at her intently. Her eyes had become moist. Even her eyebrows seemed to express an innocent faith. He had felt like touching her lock of hair on her brow. But he had hesitated. The ear-rings in her ears had sparkled like fishes swimming in water. He had said, 'Come, let us sit under that tree.'

There was a cement bench under that rosewood tree. Walking over the dry, yellow leaves that lay underfoot, they had gone and sat down on that bench. It was the same sound which he had heard a short while ago—the same familiar sound.

Both had sat down on the bench. Chander had held her hand and gently drew lines on her wrist with his fingers. They sat there silent although they had much to say to each other that they could not say. Then Indra had stolen a glance at him and blushed. 'Chander, why do you keep thinking in this vein?' She had repeated. 'Don't you have faith in me?'

Looking deep into her eyes, Chander had said, 'I have great faith Indra but I am afraid I will keep wandering all my life like a nomad. I can't drag you into it. The very thought of it horrifies me. You are made to lead a happy and comfortable life. I have a shroud over my



head. Who knows where I may end.'

'Whatever you may end up as, good or bad, you will remain dear to me. How I keep waiting for you but you just don't have time for me.' After a brief pause she added, 'Have you written anything lately?'

"Yes', he had said in a low voice.

'Show me.'

With perspiring hands, Chander had handed her his diary. She had hidden it among her books and had told him she would return it the following day. 'At least that will give you a reason to call on me.'

'No, no, I can't leave my diary. I must take it with me. Give it back, please.'

Indra had given him a mischievous smile and the love in her eyes had deepened.

The next day Chandra had gone to get his diary back. 'I've also written something in it', Indra had said. 'Tear it up after reading it'.

'No, I won't tear it.'

'Then I'll stop speaking to you.' Indra had said with child-like simplicity. How lovely the childish words sounded from her lips.

And one day...

One day Indra had come to his house. After spending some time with others she came to Chander's room. It was the first time he had felt so close to her. He put a vermilion bindi on her forehead and watched her in fascination. Then he bent down and put his lips on her forehead. Indira's eyelids had fluttered and a pleasant smell had arisen from every pore of her

body, her fingers trembling on Chander's arms while he soaked up the sweat on her forehead with his lips. In the heat of the moment they had together taken a vow—a vow which was wordless and soundless, which did not rise to their lips.

Since then he had always remembered these words—"You are cut out for big things.'

Just then a No. 2 bus came and sped away after halting for a brief moment. Chander suddenly realised that he was standing at the bus stop. A shock of recognition—one who was once so close to him was not living far from here. Indra too was here, living in Delhi.

He had met her only two months ago. The intimacy of four years ago was still in her eyes.

'I know Chander very well', she had told her husband, 'His fads, indiosyncracies and all.'

'Then he deserves to be entertained lavishly', her husband had said with great bonhomie.

And smiling as she used to four years ago, Indra had said in a testing voice, 'Chander is allergic to milk. He swallows coffee as he inhales smoke. And if you add a second spoon of sugar to his tea it does havoc to his throat'. She had chuckled, and his memories of the past were revived—Chander really could not take two spoons of sugar in his tea.

The bus was nowhere in sight.

Standing there Chander realized that in this vast city of unknown and half-

known people there was a person by the name of Indra who really knew him and still recognized him after the lapse of so many years. He felt exhilarated at the thought. He pined to meet her and to demolish this wall of separation between them.

An auto came charging in his direction. 'Gurudwara Road,...Karolbagh. Gurudwara Road!' Chander advanced one step. Giving him one sweeping glance the Sikh auto driver proceeded towards him with great alacrity as if he had recognized him. Chander felt pleased. At least there was someone who had at last been able to place him. Chander knew the Sardar by face. He had so many times travelled to Connaught Place in his auto.

Chander got into the auto and three more passengers got in with him. Within minutes the auto had deposited Chander at the Gurudwara Road Crossing. Chander took out a four anna coin and placed it on the driver's palm. Giving him a friendly nod, Chander was about to depart when the Sikh driver stopped him. 'Saheb, how much money are you giving me? Chander turned to look and saw the Sardar coming after him 'Saheb, make it two annas more'.

'But I always pay four annas, Sardarji,' Chander said giving him a knowing look. But the Sardar was adamant. There was not a trace of amiableness in his eyes. Chander reminded the man that he had travelled by his auto rickshaw scores of times and had always paid him four annas per trip.

'Sir, it must have been some other auto rickshaw. I always charge six annas...' This time the Sardar had spoken in Punjabi and had stretched out his hand before Chander in a demanding manner.

It was not merely question of two annas. There was more to it. Chander felt hurt. Without further ado he paid the man another two annas and proceeded towards Indra's house.

She received him warmly. 'Must have strayed this side by mistake,' She joked, a note of intimacy floating in her eyes. She was waiting for her husband. 'It's going on to be nine'. She said. 'Generally he is back home by eight—the factory's closing time. I don't know what has held him up today. You will have tea, of course.

'I can't refuse tea', Chandra said enthusiastically, comfortably stretching out his legs. His tiredness had vanished and he was feeling buoyed up.

The maid-servant brought in tea. Indra poured out tea and he watched her arms and face. She was just the same—known and familiar. 'How much sugar?' she asked.

With a jolt, all his thoughts were dispersed. He felt his throat constricted and his weariness returning again. He began to sweat. Trying to revive old links he said, 'Two spoons!' Hoping that Indra would remember everything and would ask whether two spoons of sugar wouldn't affect his throat?

But Indra put two spoonful of sugar in his cup and held it out to him. He forced the tea down like so much poison,

to the accompaniment of inconsequential talk. But there was a tinge of formality in Indra's talk and Chander felt like bolting away from her and striking his head against a wall.

He finished his tea and left, wiping his perspiration. He had not the slightest idea what Indra had been talking of.

Coming on the road, he sighed and stood there for a while. His throat was parched and there was bitter taste in his mouth.

At the taxi-stand at the crossing, a few drivers deep in their cups were abusing one another lustily. He saw a dog running away in the distance. Fish was being fried at a wayside stall and its smell leapt up to his nostrils. A few young men were standing at the betelnut shop, bottles of Coca-Cola held to their mouths. People were speeding away in scooters and the late stragglers, who had to go to the suburbs were anxiously looking into the distance for the arrival of their buses.

Cars, taxis, buses—the traffic had again picked up and the traffic lights at the crossing still blazed red and yellow.

Tired out, Chander was on his way back home. His shoes had started hurting his toes and the foul smell rising from his socks had become unbearable.

At last, he reached home, tired and weary and sat down on a chair like an intruder. There was nothing new in this. Nirmala greeted him with a smile. 'Tired?' She asked, placing her hand on his arm.

'Yes', Chander gave her a loving look.

His heart singed within him. Even that rented house made him feel at home and gave him a sense of belonging.

'Have a wash', Nirmala said arranging the food on the table.

'Don't feel like eating just now', Chander replied.

'Why, what's the matter?' She asked lovingly. 'In the morning you ate nothing. Did you eat in the afternoon?'

'Yes, I did', he said his eyes still fixed on Nirmala. She hesitated and then sat down beside him.

In the light falling from behind her, her hair had a silken sheen and her eye lashes looked like soft needles. The shadows falling under her eyes were so intimately familiar. She had pushed her bangle half-way up her arm.

Chander's eyes were probing her body for that old familiar touch of intimacy. Her nails, fingers, the lobes of her ears covered with a feathery down.

He got up, drew the curtain and lay on the bed. He felt he was no longer lonely nor a stranger. The flower vase lying in front was his and so were the clothes lying over there in a heap. He was familiar with their smell.

Their familiarity was ingrained in him. Even in the dense darkness of the night his groping fingers could recognize them. He could walk through any of the doors without bumping into them.

Just then he heard the thud of Gulati's tired feet on the stairs. It made him uncomfortable. Silently, he called Nirmala

to himself, made her lie down next to him and placed his hand on her bosom.

For some time he kept listening to her breathing and feeling her rising and falling bosom. He wished every part of her body and every heart beat to serve as a witness to his deep sense of oneness with her.

In the dark his fingers groped for her nails and touched her eyelids. He put his mouth on her neck, wanting to lose himself. The familiar smell of her washed hair seeped into every fibre of his body and his hand slid over her, searching for recognition. Nirmala's breathing grew heavier.

He felt her fleshy arms and rounded shoulders. Every part of Nirmala's body was drawn to him with a unique attraction. Every pore of her recognized him, every joint grew tense, the hot blood rose in her, and every breath was constricted. A deep recognition in every part...

Just then light came up in Bishan Kapur's window and they saw cigarette smoke curling around the window bars and disappearing into darkness.

Chander's lonely heart leaping out of the layer of loneliness was drowned in that familiar breathing, that familiar odour, that touch. He did not want anything else. One needs familiarities and in that darkness there was in him a longing to be recognized, he was looking for an old revelation in that breath, that odour in every part of that body.

Stillness reigned.

He felt secure in that silence. He

clasped her in his arms, feeling the tide rise. Bodily heat increased and a sea of oneness surged through every pore.

Gradually Nirmala's quick breathing slowed down. The magnetic pull weakened and the passion ebbed away.

But Chander did not loosen his grip on her arms. The ebbing tide left him alone again, like a shell on an unknown shore.

Extracting her arm from under his body, Nirmala heaved a deep sigh and lay relaxed. Gradually everything drifted into sleep and the pall of night enveloped them. No sound, no voice anywhere. Nirmala turned on her side as she descended into profound sleep. Chander watched her languidly. He had again started feeling lonely. He placed his hand on Nirmala's shoulder to make her turn towards him but his fingers seemed to have become inert and lifeless. Defeated, he lay back and did not know when he fell asleep.

After a long time the police station clock struck two bringing Chander out of his sleep. He felt as if he had been startled out of his drowsiness. The room's stillness frightened him. In the darkness his hand groped for Nirmala, fell on her hair which lay sprawled on the pillow. He felt the silken softness of her hair and bent down to smell it. His hand slid over her body and over the curves of her shoulder. He tried to recognize its intimacy and hear the sound of her soft breathing which was so familiar to him.

Lying on her side, Nirmala moaned in her sleep, Chander's heart missed a beat

lest she should come awake and give a start like a stranger, breaking that spell of intimacy.

Nirmala's breath caught, as if she were afraid, were having a nightmare. Chander felt paralysed—did she not recognize his touch?

Then he shook her up. 'Nirmala! Nirmala' he cried frantically.

As he had feared, Nirmala woke up with a start and rubbed her eyes, trying to get the hang of things.

Turning on the light, he shook Nirmala by both shoulders.

'Do you recognize me?' He asked in a terrified voice. 'Do you recognize me, Nirmala?'

Nirmala gazed wide-eyed at him and then asked in a low, surprised voice : 'What is the matter?'

He kept staring at her. His eyes were searching for something in her face.

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**Kamleshwar (b.1932)** : born in Mainpuri in Uttar Pradesh, he held a place of eminence in Hindi literature having distinguished himself as a short story writer and novelist. He was also associated with films. He was the first editor of the Hindi magazine. *Nai Kahaniyan* and subsequently also edited *Sarika*, *Katha Yatra*, *Ganga* and the daily *Jagaran*. He also held the position of Additional Director General of Doordarshan. He received many national honours and awards including Sahitya Akademi Samman. Some of his famous books are 'Kitne Pakistan', *Khoyi Hui Dishayen* and *Ek Sadak Sattavan Galiyan*. He lived in several towns including Mainpuri, Allahabad, Mumbai, Jaipur and Delhi. He passed away in the year 2007 in Delhi.

**Jai Ratan (1917-2012)**, scholar of Hindi and English who devoted a life time to translation. He worked as P.R.O. in a prominent business firm in Kolkata and was founder member of Writers' Workshop. Hindi owes him a tribute for numerous prestigious English translations including Premchand's *Godan* way back in 1955. Last year he passed away in Gurgaon.

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## GANIT

(The Calculation)

Namita Singh

Translated by  
Pramila Garg

Ramlal had bought and reared a buffalo. He had the work of milking it in the morning and evening. There were some regular customers whom he would supply milk.

Ramlal would mind only his own business, he never liked unnecessarily talking about this and that thing. He talked only whatever was needed and would do only what was beneficial to him and whatever he thought was right for him. Thoughts and feelings were beyond his comprehension.

Mostly Ramlal would remain silent. He would ring the doorbell of his customer's house, someone would come out and he would measure the milk and pour it in his utensil and start going back. If somebody would complain about the poor quality of milk, he would shake his head but would not contradict. He would listen to whatever was being said, if he was told not to mix water with milk he would nod agreeably. Once in a while when someone scolded or abused him he would tighten his jaws with anger, look down to control his anger and would go quietly away. In such situation when he returned home and if he found the buffalo standing under the thatch or ruminating near its food bowl or sitting and dozing quietly on the floor, he would release his anger by beating it with a staff mercilessly. The stunned buffalo would get up crying ban...ban... Thus releasing his anger he would enter his cottage and after getting ready he would go out for work as usual.

The buffalo would get the same merciless beating if it didn't give milk, he would make it almost half dead with beating. Hardly ever did Ramlal pat the buffalo or caress its head or neck with love. It gave him so much of milk. Never ever he had shown any obligation towards it. According to him it was the buffalo's job to give milk as it was his job to milk it and to sell milk and earn money. Except this there was no relation between them. The buffalo was stupid to expect love and affection with its big pitiable eyes, it tried to understand something and make him understand something through its eyes. But Ramlal had no time to look at the lines of somebody's face or eyes.

Once the he-calf of the buffalo died, the buffalo was almost mad with grief jumping and crying ban...ban...or tearing the rope from its peg. It never looked at the food or gave any milk. Ramlal became mad with anger and started beating it with a thick staff, the buffalo jumped all the more and stomped its hoofs in the ground. Ramlal employing his whole strength continued beating it as if nothing would stop him; the buffalo was half-dead for beating but still did not give milk. Ultimately he took it to the village market on the market-day and sold it off.

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Ramlal shifted to a small town from the city. On the road near a garden he opened a small eatery. In the beginning he was doing everything by himself—lighting the grate, cooking food, making the dough and

chapattis and serving the customers. After sometime it became almost impossible for him to handle the work alone, he tried to exert more, still at times the customers would go back without taking food. He employed a man from the nearby village. Now mostly that man cooked food and Ramlal was only helping him. He would serve food and take care of the money. His helper would come in the morning, remain with him throughout the day and would go back by the night time. While going he wouldn't forget to collect his daily wages, how could he depend on a man whose temper was bottomless?

If Ramlal had to give any special order or direction he would tell otherwise he would reply only in monosyllables—'yes' or 'no'. Most of the time both of them would be busy in their own work. After sometime each work and its method of doing was decided. Some unspoken laws were made. By evening the helper would prepare the food for the night he would keep the dough for the late night travelling customers, and then he would cook chapattis for himself, eat and after washing his hands burp loudly. He would stand in front of Ramlal who would take out his wages for the day from his cash-box and put it on his hand who would deposit it in the folds of his loin cloth at the waist. Then he would take his bicycle and go away. Ramlal could deal efficiently by himself all the late night customers. Such customers were not many so Ramlal would sleep on a stringed cot at the eatery only.

One day Ramlal kept sleeping and the

thieves took away some of his utensils. The cash-box was locked in the cottage but rest of the things were lying in the open only. He was very unhappy for the loss of his utensils. Once as he was returning after his morning ablutions in the fields a little puppy came along with him. This was the best solution for his problem, though someone had suggested a watchman but that was an expensive proposition. He believed that if a work is done efficiently without any expense that is the best—no salary nor any expense of food nor any problem of bickering or absenteeism, it would live on the leftover food of the customers. Even if each customer gave one morsel of food that would be enough for him and it would be guarding the shop twenty four hours. In a few months that small puppy became a big strong dog. As was expected he did his job faithfully. Throughout the day he was either roaming about or lying under the benches. After so many months of living there and getting Ramlal's scolding he came to realize which customer would take food and tea also, if he barked at him it would be a loss to the master and then he would get severe scolding from him. By evening he would be very alert and active and after the departure of the helper his activities and alertness would be doubled, almost in the state of red alert. The customers who appeared shady he would be ready to pounce on them. The moment his master slept he would become all in all, roaming here and there like a tiger. If any vehicle passed or there was some noise he would

be barking loudly. Even the known customers at late night would be calling out loudly to Ramlal while still sitting in their vehicle. Ramlal would get up and silence the dog by scolding him only then the customer would get out and come inside. In such situation the dog's ears would drop down in guilt and would go to Ramlal wagging his tail probably asking forgiveness as if he was saying, 'Forgive me I didn't know, I shouldn't have barked at him.' In such situation Ramlal would push him with his leg on one side and would get busy with his work.

It was more than a year since the dog had come but Ramlal never touched him even once with his hands, he would use only his legs, perhaps he had an aversion to the breed of dogs. Sometimes when the dog was in a loving mood he would lie down on his back putting his feet in the air in front of Ramlal hoping that his master would caress him at least for once. On the other hand Ramlal would be very much annoyed to look at the dog lying on his back and putting his feet up in the air, will he guard my shop with such a posture of surrender? With anger he would hit him forcefully in his stomach with his foot and a big dog like him would go and sit away crying kun... kun... and would start licking the stomach where he was hit.

Ramlal knew that the dog was only an animal and his job was to guard. Once a customer asked the name of his dog, he was taken aback, how could a dog have a name?



“O brother, you must be calling him with some name.”

‘Why to call? He remains here only, where is he going that I have to call him, besides he keeps charging at me without any rhyme or reason. Sometimes he licks my feet, at others he likes to lick my face. He is the one who needs to be chased away,’ thus thought Ramlal.

“O Ramlal give a name to the dog, he is very cute and more faithful than man...”

Ramlal kept on thinking and thinking then one name came to his mind ‘Bahadur’. There was a watchman in his village his name was Bahadur. He thought this was the most appropriate name for the dog, whether the watchman is a man or a dog both of them do the same work so their name should be the same. ‘Bahadur’ means watchman.

There was no dearth of bravery in Bahadur. One day Ram was inside his cottage, the helper was sitting out. No other customer was there except a motor-cyclist, the motor-cyclist started talking with the helper. He had made and served him the tea and started chopping the vegetables. That young man did not seem to have good intentions, perhaps he was in a mood to escape with the cash-box.

As the helper noticed the mal-intentions of the young man he became alert. The man tried to lay his hands on the cash-box. By the time the helper could reach him, coming out from the corner bench Bahadur pounced on him and caught his leg. The young man screamed

loudly as Bahadur’s teeth sank in his leg. He left the cash-box there and then and screaming loudly started running away. Bahadur kept on chasing him for quite some time, with great difficulty the motor-cyclist could save himself from his clutches.

After sometime Bahadur came back panting with a look of victory, he was very thirsty so he rushed to drink water collected in the small hollow under the tap. At that time he sighted Ramlal who had come out hearing the hue-and-cry outside and securely keeping the cash-box he started counting the money. Bahadur was very happy and proud of his achievement. He wanted a pat from his master so wagging his tail and moving his back he rushed towards his master proudly. He was sure that his master would definitely give him a pat with affection. Ramlal was counting money; Bahadur was rushing towards him with uplifted face and pushed his arm with his nozzle. Actually he wanted to show his love by reaching up to his master’s face. Ramlal became very angry. The moment he saw him jumping at him he tried to ward him off with his hand but he didn’t stop so he gave him a wild shove with his leg.

No one could say whether or not Bahadur was troubled by the unexpected behaviour of his master but after getting the shove he was thrown back and he hit a table. Its corner hurt his eye and the eye started bleeding. Don’t know how long he screamed and supplicated meekly. After sometime his crying subsided, he was tired. Stumbling he went to put his mouth in

the water in the small hollow under the tap and fell down there only. The moment Ramlal saw the helper looking at the dog he scolded him to continue with his work and he himself started doing his own work. Ramlal never liked wasting time in useless things.

Ramlal's small eatery was doing well, his whole arrangement was fine, some of his customers were regulars. Some of the bus drivers would bring all their passengers along with them, hence suddenly there would be great crowd and it was difficult to manage them. The work was increasing day-by-day. He felt like hiring one more man but his big salary would silence this thoughts. Was the earlier help not enough? He has been polishing off a big amount of money but it was Ramlal's helplessness; he cooked very delicious food. His regular customers came only because of his delicious food.

Ramlal kept thinking how nice would it be if he got somebody who would work for free. According to him the expense he would have incurred on the second man was not fitting in any of his calculations. But the crowd of the customers was constantly increasing. Sometimes all the passengers of a bus would come down. There would be heaps of plates and glasses to be cleaned by him as rest of the work the helper would take care of. Now, should he wash cup and plates or get things ready or serve the customers quickly. Had there been a boy at least he would be washing cups and plates.

One day Ramlal went to his village

and returned in the evening. He had with him a nine or ten years old boy. The boy started working from the next day. He would be washing utensils from morning till evening; he would pick up used plates also. After a month an old man came and took away his month's salary. It was different thing that he received almost half of what was agreed upon, rest of the salary was deducted in compensation of the breakage of some plates, cups and glasses which he broke during washing. Then Ramlal had the complaint that the boy was eating too much. The old man bickered a lot while taking the money and accused him that after taking full day's work he doesn't give enough food to the boy. He also threatened to take away the boy and get him to work for somebody else; he was earning much more in the village itself by doing labourer's work.

Ramlal kept quiet but he understood that the boy wouldn't stay long. Every month the old man would present himself like a devil, would quarrel for money besides threatening him. In such situation even the boy would be roaming about arrogantly showing his unwillingness to work. So, next month when the old man came he fired the boy after giving half month's salary. But the problem continued.

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Ramlal discussed the problem with some of the bus and truck drivers who had been his regular customers. All of them consoled him and promised to find some solution to his problem; they would find some boy

who would work for him. Once Ramlal's helper took four days' leave. He was to be married. 'Marriage' the word rang in his ears, he can also get married. Nobody had ever bothered to get him married.

He asked his bus and truck friends, took their advice. All of them patted his back and told, 'marriage is a gamble Lala, just close your eyes and jump into it.' After this Ramlal kept on investigating his cash-box and calculating the plus and minuses, also measuring the height of the cottage and the length of his stringed cot. Thus he assessed the idea of marriage.

Ramlal continually discussed his difficulties with many of his customer friends; they made him understand things in a better way. Ultimately he came to understand that getting a wife is not a losing proposition nor it would be. The wife would take over all the chores from cooking food to washing utensils. Neither there would be any bickering for salary nor for work. Only you have to give food and clothing and you would get all the comforts that a woman could give. Besides, the number of customers would increase because of her. Ramlal understood the mathematics of the whole thing and his eyes started brightening. One day he took a wad of notes and went away sitting with a truck driver.

After some days Ramlal returned in the same truck and there was a woman with him. Her face was mostly covered by a veil drawn up to her nose. The fingers of her dark brown stout hands with dirty nails were painted red and her feet with pink

colour (aalta) were covered with dust and her plastic slippers were making chut...chut...noise.

Coming down from the truck Ramlal entered the eatery with quick steps; he removed his warm shawl and went at the back and started washing his hands and feet at the tap. He had worn a new coat under the warm shawl so he was trying to save the coat from getting wet from the spray of the tap water. That woman hesitated while getting down the truck, but the truck had already left. In the open she felt even colder, she wrapped her colourful cotton saree more tightly around her back and shoulders. Lifting her veil with her two fingers she looked here and there. Bahadur was lying near the grate enjoying its heat but he got up the moment he saw the woman. The helper was sitting on the raised wooden platform getting ready to season the dal, stopping it he welcomed the new bride, "Come sister-in-law come, I touch your feet."

There was slight movement in the line of that woman's lips, perhaps she smiled. Seeing her talking with the helper Ramlal called out to her, "Come here, this side, here is the cottage." The woman went through the tables and benches with deliberate steps towards the back. The helper laughed, 'Lala has brought a woman but didn't get her a single warm clothing'

Ramlal was scrubbing his feet under the tap but his mind was engaged with some other problems. He took out the remaining notes from his pocket, counted them and put them back in the pocket.

The woman was inside the cottage. There was noise of putting and moving things from one place to another to make some space. Then she came out, her veil had gone up from the nose to the forehead. Ramlal was sitting near the cash-box. The moment the helper saw her coming out he offered her the glass of tea he was holding in his hand. The woman kept standing there for some time, she was holding a staff, it was the same staff with which Ramlal used to beat the buffalo, she asked Ramlal that what was to be done with the staff... where should she keep it? She wanted to know which was the place of the staff in the cottage. Ramlal produced a roar in his mouth, but after a few moments he only said, "Keep it where it was."

The woman understood him and went inside.

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Ramlal was worried since he had to decide what type of work should be given to the woman. With all the calculations this way and that he could hardly find any difference, though he thought of using all his faculties to reach a perfect solution. Then in one corner of the eatery he opened a shop of betel leaf and cigarettes.

Now that woman would be the first one to get up in the morning, did all the cleaning, fire the grate, cut the vegetables. Thus she became an assistant to the helper. The helper who was always asking for a raise in his salary now stopped because of this woman.

Ramlal would take care of the cash-box, also take care of the betel leaf shop and serve food to the customers. Ramlal was immensely satisfied with the constant increase in his business and also about the role the woman played in the routine work.

Sometimes he would be worried as the helper would cook only his own chapattis. That woman would cook his and her own chapattis and serve in two plates. She would carry identical two plates and sit by Ramlal on the bench. Ramlal didn't like this, once he told the helper, the helper immediately replied, "Will you keep your wife on the leftovers."

One day the limit was crossed. Ramlal came back early after his morning ablutions. He was stunned to see that the woman was holding a big glass of tea in her hand. It was hardly tea, most of it was milk—the whole leftover milk of the previous night. She was eating a bread bun by dipping in the tea; Bahadur was sitting near the raised wooden platform and looking up to her. A few morsels of bread buns were being thrown towards him and he was catching them alertly. His other eye was shining with satisfaction and with the expectation of getting more he was moving nearer to the platform and that woman... she was eating greedily as if it was free of cost. Stunned Ramlal was standing at a distance... as if he was not there, nobody remembered him and there was not even a sign of recognition.

"Bastard... ill begotten... you are polishing off other's earnings merrily..."

The woman turned to look at him,

Ramlal was standing with the thick staff ready to beat her on the back. The woman kept on looking at him with hatred and turning back took a long sip of the tea and emptied the glass. Looking at the staff in Ramlal's hand Bahadur dropped his ears and stood wagging his tail.

Ramlal was really in great anger.

The woman snatched away his staff with her strong hands and looking in his eyes she hammered each word, like a nail,

in cold voice, "Mind your language, nothing is ill-begotten. Each day I do back breaking labour... and all this...." And jumped down from the raised wooden platform and threw the staff in the burning grate.

Ramlal could do nothing except look at it with horror. This had never happened earlier. He never ever thought that this could happen. Once again his mathematics got jumbled up.

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**Namita Singh** : born 1944 Lucknow, is a well known author of short stories and novels. She has been a student and professor of science and deeply interested in progressive literature. She edits a monthly journal 'Vartman Sahitya' from Aligarh where she lives. Her famous works are 'Nikamma Ladka', Curfew Aur Anya Kahaniyan, Jungle Gatha, Apni Saleeben and Ladies Club.

**Parmila Garg** has been teaching English at a College of Delhi University and is currently associated with GGSIP and Auburn University, U.S. She has translated Surendra Verma's famous novel 'Mujhe Chand Chahiye' into English. Besides this she has also translated a book of political history 'Undaunted Israel'. She lives in Delhi.

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## Comrade Ka Ghar

(Comrade's House)

Jaiprakash Kardam

Translated by  
Ravi Nandan Sinha

Every Sunday they had their meeting at the house of one member or the other. For the last few months that had been their regular practice. Those meetings were held in a sequence at the houses of different members. First, there would be a meeting at one member's house, then at another's and then at a third's. They were pioneering a new culture in the world of literature. Till now the practice had been to organize conferences at hired venues at the Press Club, Constitution Club, Gandhi Shanti Pratishtan, Rajendra Prasad Bhawan, and so on. It was not that in the city of Delhi there were no cheap places available for holding literary conferences. From M.P. Club in South Avenue to community centres, there were many places where a conference could be held at a very reasonable cost. But instead of such economical places, such conferences were usually held at expensive venues. There was a reason for it. There was a perception in the literary world that holding a programme at such expensive venues would lead to better media coverage, or at least there was a possibility of it. This is because the Press Club and almost all offices of major newspapers including news agency offices like Univarta etc., are located near those auditoriums. So it is easier to send the press releases of the programmes to newspaper offices and agency offices and also that it is convenient for the journalists to come to these auditoriums located at a central place. In this

age of publicity, every organization and every person desires to get the report on his programme published in newspapers. That is why some people with enough means throw parties to the journalists where drinks too are offered and give them a report of the programme before it begins and such reports are published. It is not necessary that reports on every programme organized at such auditoriums are published in newspapers. Reports of a few programmes are published but those of many others do not get published anywhere. But because there is a probability of a report getting published, and the world of literature lives on probabilities, most literary programmes are organized at these auditoriums. But for many writers and organizations holding their conferences at such auditoriums is very expensive. Secondly, in programmes held at the auditoriums the discussions are formal. So some writers who believed in the Marxist ideology and who called each other 'comrade' began to hold their meetings at their houses in order to discuss literature in an informal atmosphere.

The comrade at whose house the meeting took place had to make arrangements for seating and drinking water only. Often the comrade would also offer tea, but that depended on his wish. They had taken a considered decision that if there is arrangement for tea at a comrade's house, he would be thanked for it, and if such an arrangement is not made, it would not be taken otherwise in any sense.

The idea behind such a decision was that because of such meetings, there should be no disturbance to the family of the comrade, nor should there be any burden on him.

Some comrades were professors in colleges, some worked in newspapers, and some others were freelance writers. Economically almost all of them were well off. That is why the host comrade would make arrangements for tea etc. Although each comrade brought some food from his house, the host comrade too had something cooked for them, and then all of them ate together.

The last meeting was held at Aslam's house. In the meetings before that, the host comrade usually had a vegetable dish or rice, whatever was convenient, or was considered necessary, cooked. But when the meeting at Amarnath Tripathi's house ended and it was decided that the next meeting would be at Aslam's house, Abhay Tiwari said to Aslam, "The *koftas* of Tripathi were not much. Aslam, yaar if you get anything cooked, let it be something nice."

"Tell me, what do you want to eat? I will get that cooked," Aslam said.

"You are a Muslim. You eat *murg mussalam* (a chicken dish). Get that cooked," Abhay Tiwari said.

"If all of you want to eat it, I have no problem. I will get that cooked," Aslam replied.

"Yes, all of us will like that. Who does not like delicious food?" Abhay Tiwari said

and looked at other members. In loud or low voices, everyone agreed with Abhay Tiwari.

“Then, tell me, will you like chicken or mutton? I will get that cooked for you,” throwing a glance at other members Aslam looked at Abhay Tiwari as if Abhay Tiwari’s opinion was the most important.

“No, not mutton, chicken would be better,” expressing his opinion Abhay Tiwari looked at others to get the stamp of their approval and said, “Why, it will be all right, won’t it?”

Barring one or two, who were not non-vegetarians, everyone said in one voice, “Yes, chicken will be fine.”

Aslam had two young chickens slaughtered and got them cooked. Although Aslam’s wife and Aslam himself were experts in cooking meat, thinking that there should not be anything lacking in the dish, Aslam decided not to cook that dish himself nor get it cooked by his wife but requested his mother, “Amma, some of my friends are coming home. They will have a meeting here. They will eat here. They want to have chicken. If you cook that dish it will be very good. Although we too can cook it, but when you cook that dish, it has a very special taste.”

Aslam’s mother was about seventy years old. She did not do any household chores. But when Aslam asked her she immediately agreed to cook chicken, “Yes, yes, why not? If your friends are coming I will surely cook for them.”

And in fact Aslam’s mother had cooked

the dish very well. Everyone ate it with great relish. Abhay Tiwari liked the chicken so much that he took three servings of it. Thus after they had eaten, they praised it greatly but the greatest praise came from Abhay Tiwari, “It has been a long time since I ate such delicious chicken.”

Aslam informed his friends, “Today’s chicken was cooked by Amma, so she should be given the credit for it.”

Of all the friends, Abhay Tiwari was the closest to Aslam and was also well known to his family. Leaving the drawing room, he went inside and said to Aslam’s mother, “Amma, today you cooked such a delicious chicken dish that it seems I will have to come here again and again to eat it.”

Aslam’s mother liked what Abhay Tiwari said. Being overwhelmed with affection and motherly love she said, “Come here every day, son. This is your house. Whenever you say, I will cook chicken for you. You are Aslam’s friend. You mean more to me than Aslam. What can give me greater joy than to cook chicken for my sons with my own hands and feed them.”

Abhay Tiwari was so moved by that love and indulgent tenderness that he could say nothing. He just gazed at the face of Aslam’s mother.

The next meeting took place at Abhay Tiwari’s house. At the appointed time, all the comrades assembled there. First of all, there was a discussion on some articles published in newspapers and magazines



since the previous meeting, which also included a discussion on contemporary literary writing, after which one comrade read his latest short story. Other fellow writers offered their comments on the story's theme, craft, its relevance, and so on. After that, the poets read one poem each. Then taking out his food everyone sat down to eat.

Abhay Tiwari had *paneer* curry and some rice cooked. Putting those two things in bowls, he placed it before everyone. Each member opened the food he had brought from his house. Almost everyone had brought a curry of some kind. That day egg curry had been cooked in Aslam's house. He had brought that egg curry. As Aslam opened the cover of his food box and Abhay Tiwari saw it he said to Aslam, "Aslam, *yaar*, close the lid of your bowl."

"But why..." Aslam could not understand why he was asking him to keep the cover of his bowl closed, while everyone's food hampers and bowls were open. He looked at Abhay Tiwari with surprise.

"See, how delicious this *paneer* curry is, try it," without replying to Aslam, Abhay Tiwari tried to change the topic.

But Aslam did not like this vague reply of Abhay Tiwari. "Everyone's bowl of curry is open, and the *paneer* curry has been cooked for everyone, then why is Abhay Tiwari asking me only to keep my curry bowl covered?" He thought and then said to Abhay Tiwari, "We'll all have *paneer*. But what I have brought from home should

also be shared by everyone," and he pushed his bowl of curry towards others.

"Man, nothing will happen if you don't eat your curry for one day," saying this Abhay Tiwari covered Aslam's curry bowl.

Aslam found this behaviour of Abhay Tiwari strange and mysterious. One or two other comrades also found this behaviour odd. They looked at each other with surprise. They wanted to know what was happening. But no one said anything. It was Aslam who said, "Abhay, I cannot understand what you are doing. When everyone else has his curry bowl uncovered, why are you asking me only to keep my curry bowl covered?" There was a note of displeasure in Aslam's voice which everyone felt, including Abhay.

Abhay Tiwari tried to reason with Aslam, "Aslam, what a good friend you are, this you and I both know. But, *yaar* I have a problem because of which I am asking you to keep your curry bowl covered."

When he heard that there was some problem, hiding his displeasure Aslam asked in a friendly voice, "What is the problem? Let us also know that."

"Actually the thing is..." bringing his face close to Aslam's ear Abhay Tiwari said in a very low voice, "Except me everyone else in my family is a vegetarian and my mother is a very religious woman who prays both in the morning and the evening. She does not eat onion or garlic, nor does she allow anyone in the family to eat it. If the smell of your curry reaches my mother,

there will be a problem. That is why I am asking you to cover your curry bowl.” Although Abhay Tiwari had spoken in a very low voice, almost all the friends present there heard that.

When he heard that, Aslam was speechless for a moment. He looked at his fellow comrades. All the friends were silent, trying not to meet Aslam’s eyes. They only looked at one another.

In a voice lower and more dignified than Abhay Tiwari’s, Aslam said, “You eat meat and eggs everyday with us. Does your mouth not give them a bad smell?”

“No, after eating I first rinse my mouth well. And when I come home, I brush my teeth and instead of going to my mother I go to my room.”

“But this is pretention. In this way you not only keep orthodoxy alive but are also encouraging it. Marxism does not teach us this. Marxism teaches us to rise above orthodoxy. And again, being religious should not be linked with what you eat. This is a kind of bigotry and sham,” countering his argument Aslam said.

“You and I understand these things but what can I do about my family who believe in tradition and orthodoxy? My mother is very orthodox so...”, thinking that saying anything more was not necessary, Abhay Tiwari fell silent.

Aslam continued to argue, “Marxism teaches us to fight exploitation and contradictions. But if we cannot convince our families, and if we cannot change their thinking, what kind of society shall we

create and how? Today you are saying all this about eating. Tomorrow you will say something similar on the question of communalism. If we cannot protest against unscientific and wrong things, what kind of comrades are we?

What is the point of sitting like this and having heated discussions? If this is our character, I at least am ashamed that I am a comrade.”

Saying this, Aslam put the cover on his curry bowl and returned his rotis to his bag. He then got up to leave, “You all can eat, I’m leaving.”

When Aslam stood up like that, everyone was shocked. All of them tried to stop him in one voice, “Wait, Aslam, don’t go.” Leaving their meal many comrades got up and tried to make Aslam sit down by holding his shoulders.

Aslam removed the comrade’s hands from his shoulders and looking them in their eyes said, “Why should I stay here, to water Hindutva?” He paused for some time and looked at the face of each comrade. No one had anything to say to him. Addressing everyone he completed what he was trying to say, “There is no point in my staying here any longer. I thought that all of you are really progressive and are honest about your determination to change things. That is why I’d joined your group. But you are completely in the grip of Hindu orthodoxy, and are secretly trying to protect it. In this situation, it is futile to expect anything from you. The difference between your principles and your

behaviour has disappointed me. I cannot support this hypocrisy,” Aslam said and once again looking at each one of them and began to walk out of comrade Abhay Tiwari’s house.

No one liked the way Aslam had left. Everyone wanted him to stay back but no

one had the courage to ask him not to go. Abhay Tiwari too stood silent on one side. Each head was hung in shame.

#### Glossary:

*Paneer.* cottage cheese; *Yaar.* friend.

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**Jaiprakash Kardam** : Jaiprakash Kardam has given a powerful expression to Dalit consciousness in literature. He is a versatile and prolific writer who has written poetry, novels, short stories, books for children, criticism and scholarly books on questions of social justice. His poetry collections include *Goonga Nahin Tha Mein*, *Tinka Tinka Aag*, *Rahu and Bastiyon se Bahar*. He has written novels like *Chhappar* and *Karuna*. He has two collections of short stories, *Talash* and *Kharonch*. His non-fictional works include *Bauddh Dharm ke Aadhar Stambh*, *Ambedkarwadi Andolan* and *Dr. Ambedkar, Dalit aur Bauddh Dharm*. He has published four books of criticism, namely, *Ragdarbari ka Samajshastriya Adhyayan*, *Ikisavi Sadi Mein Dalit Andolan : Sahitya Evam Samaj Chintan*, *Dalit Vimarsh : Sahitya ke Aaine Mein* and *Hindutva aur Dalit*. Since 1999, he has been editing *Dalit Sahitya* and has also edited three special issues of *Naya Mandand*, a quarterly research and critical journal. A number of books on his writing have also been published. He is the recipient of a number of awards from various organizations. He lives in Delhi.

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## Aatank

(The Terror)

Harjendra Chaudhary

Translated by  
Gauri Mishra

There were two consecutive calls on my mobile within a span of ten minutes. The first one from my younger brother Amarendra's number.

An unfamiliar voice said, "Hello, Sir, who is speaking?"

Thinking that Amarendra's phone has been stolen or misplaced, I replied sharply, "Never mind who I am, who are you?" I was getting annoyed about being called and then being asked to identify myself.

Realising that I was angry, the unfamiliar voice spoke with a hesitation and in a harried tone.

"Sir...sir, I ...am constable Anil Kumar, Delhi Police. Sir, the person to whom this phone belongs to, has met with an accident. Yours is the last dialled number, that's why I called you".

It was my turn to be nervous, "What happened, where? How serious is it? Is he injured badly? He is my younger brother and a Major in the army..."

"It happened at Brar square Janaab, between Dhaula Kuan and Naraina..." he said.

"His house is very close...in Kariappa Vihar officers' flats..." I was rambling on.

"In that case Sir, we'll take him to the Army base hospital; you come straight to the hospital..."

The phone got disconnected after this hurried suggestion. I was in turmoil, caught between dilemma and curiosity.

“Please God! Keep my brother safe.” I prayed silently, the way I had done when Amarendra was posted to Kashmir and the North-east and during his stay there. Even now he was posted in the Kashmir valley and had retained his KariappaVihar flat, where his wife and mother-in-law were staying. His wife was expecting. He was on leave in anticipation of becoming a father.

I was in Safdarjung Hospital, with my aunt. My sole, childless Bua (paternal aunt) was admitted to the Safdarjung Hospital just a couple of days back. She had a stone in her kidney and was to be operated on. She was inside the ward, and I had come out to take the call, on the porch outside, near the stairs. Both Amarendra and Bua were extremely close and often he would leave his wife under her mother’s care to look after Bua. At night, it was either me or my wife who took care of her needs. Tonight, it was my turn to stay at the hospital.

It was almost five in the evening. Amarendra had said that he would go to Kariappa Vihar to freshen up, have his dinner and then would bring mine too, to the hospital. I advised him to stay at home and take care of his wife and not to worry about my dinner. But he was adamant and insisted on being back by nine-nine-thirty P.M. with my food. In reality, my house and his are in opposite directions at an almost equal distance from

Safdarjung Hospital. I had told Amarendra that my son would bring the food. But he said, “No, let him study for his engineering entrance test, he’s got his AIEEE next week.” I am PGT Sanskrit at a school in Saket. Amarendra is well aware of my ambition that I want my son to become an Engineer.

I had to agree to his affectionate defiance. As always, I told Amarendra, “drive slow, don’t be in a hurry. Let the scooter be here, and take my car.” Taking the car keys out of my pocket, I offered the bunch to him.

He did not take the keys and insisted that it made more sense to take a scooter or a motor cycle to negotiate the traffic jams, and one can move even if a little space is there. A car needs full space.

I started repeating my advice, “All right, take the scooter, but do wear the helmet properly and don’t use mobile phone while driving. Delhi traffic is always terrific...” using the word ‘terrific’ lightly and making it sound less like an instruction.

He tried to calm me down, “Bhai Saheb, why do you worry? I was in the ninth class when you took me to Delhi from the village. I am much older now. I have stayed here in Delhi for almost 15-16 years. I know the city well.”

However, my inherent nature is not to be calm. I used a humorous tone, “Major, I agree on what you say, but Delhi city has changed a lot in recent times. The roads here are a synonym of terror.”

“Bhai Saheb, the person who has taken part in ‘Operation Thunder’, ‘Operation

Ghaatak' and 'Operation Safaayaa' and returned safe and whole, he would not bother about any danger anywhere on this earth. The terror on Delhi roads cannot be bigger than the terror of Kashmir and the North-East, can it be! We army men get used to playing with danger. If we have to sacrifice our life for a purpose, we never hesitate to do so! ...Till you die, keep your head high! Always be ready to be a martyr. Tan...trrann!" mouthing an army tune, he saluted me and smiled, and dangling the helmet in his right hand, he strode down the hospital stairs.

My heart was filled with apprehension and I was tense. "My brother, Delhi is the city of murders, not martyrdom..." I whispered to myself.

Now, I have just heard about his accident from a police constable. But no, it is not possible. Maybe bhai's phone has been stolen or fallen down somewhere? Maybe this is a fraud, a crank call? Wanting to dispel my own fears, I dialled Amarendra's number. It was engaged. Immediately, I went to the nursing station and told the sister, "I am going outside for some important work. Please take care of Bua ji. I'll try to be back soon..." I went down the stairs as soon as possible and hurried towards the parking lot.

Just before starting the car, I dialled again. It was still engaged. I started the car and came on to the Ring Road. I wanted to reach the Army base hospital with lightning speed and was going to dial for the fifth or the sixth time when my phone rang. I was at the Sarojini Nagar

red light. Feeling frantic, I took the call, "hello!"

"Namaste ji!" I was wondering at the voice at the other end. It was a female voice, sounding a bit formal and hesitant. It definitely wasn't a sales girl's tone; still I posed my greeting like an enquiry about the identity of the person to avoid asking directly.

"Namaste !"

"I am Neeta's mother calling, Amarendra's mother-in-law." She replied.

"Yes, namaste ji, what is the news?" trying to suppress all my apprehensions, I tried to sound enthusiastic. I thought that perhaps Amarendra's wife had given birth to a baby.

"Ji, we just got a call from a policeman that Amarendra has been injured and they have just reached the Army Base hospital. He has to be admitted." Her voice sounded tense.

The light had turned green and the cars behind had started honking...I tried to reassure her hurriedly, "Ji, I am on my way to the Army hospital. There's not much injury. Don't worry! And don't tell Neeta." The phone got disconnected.

There was heavy traffic and it was slow. Thankfully, it was moving. As it moved down the Moti Bagh flyover, it became slower and turned into a jam as it neared the Gurudwara. The vehicles were stuck and honking away. Everyone was in a hurry. Everyone was angry. There was an ambulance in the middle with its blinking red light and honking but no one seemed to be giving way. Each one was ready to

outrun the other. The humid, stifling April evening was slowly turning unbearable. I rolled up the windows and turned on the AC, mainly to escape the rising heat and smoke. Traffic was standstill. To dispel my inner tension and discomfort, and to distract myself, I turned on Radio Mirchi. All I could hear on that was the latest situation of traffic all over Delhi and the various jams—Between Shadipur and Punjabi Bagh, between Model Town and Shalimar Bagh, from ITO till Vikas Marg, in the midst of Bhikaji Cama Place and Dhaula Kuan and between Piragarhi and Nangloi, heavy traffic was reported. I started mulling over my inner voices—thoughts-experiences...This is Delhi. Delhi, the capital of the world's largest democracy! Here, at any given point, somebody is trying to outdo the other. This is the character of this city.

Crowds, jams, irritation, boredom, claustrophobia, this is the fate of the common man! Head start...charge ahead...ahead, the race to beat everyone else is the prevailing smell of this city, which gives a square meal to the common man, but oftentimes snatches away his peace and self-respect. This is where the big fish swallows the smaller one, even when it's not hungry...this is Delhi!

The driver of the car behind mine honked loudly, breaking my reverie. Alerting myself, I moved my car forward in the empty space in front for three-four feet. Traffic had started moving slowly. Scooters and motorcycles were cramping and inching wherever they could find some

place. A song was being played on Radio Mirchi—'Hum hain naye, andaaz kyun ho purana...' (We are from new generation, why should we observe old manners)... A young boy sans helmet on a scooter moved my back-view mirror inwards to make way, dragging himself out from the side. Moving forward, he leaned and settled his left elbow on the right headlight of my car, and stood there, with his engine off.

Indian culture has always talked about self-control and patience praising it to the hilt, but is it visible in the new generation?

My thought process broke when this scooter-riding guy without the helmet moved forward to start his engine which promptly emitted a cloud of smoke. I would have had a bout of cough, if my windows hadn't been rolled up. He moved ahead a little and blocked the way for me. I switched off my radio, opened the window to adjust the back-view mirror, and loudly addressed the young fellow, "This earth, this world, this city will remain here. A few minutes don't matter!" He was too overjoyed to get a headstart and replied with just a smile. Taking out his mobile from his front pocket and somehow perching it between his right ear and right shoulder he started to chat. As the car in front of mine moved a little ahead, he craned his neck to adjust the mobile and continued to talk. With both his hands on the handles of his vehicle, blocking my way, he went off. Maybe, he had to go towards the South Campus, and maybe he too was suffering from the royal disease of getting ahead. This time, I just cursed

him lightly, "Someday the bastard will be crushed under my car!" I had my feet on the clutch, and the car was in the gear. If I had hurried as well, he would have been flat out in front of my car. I was trying to maintain patience. My anger came out as a curse. After he left, I had moved my car three or four feet ahead. Intermittently, there was honking from the front and the back. With the increasing ratio of the un-controlled traffic, slow and undisciplined, the ratio of people's desperation to get ahead was increasing too.

I tend to keep some distance between my car and the one ahead, but this habit of mine has just cost me my space, and a car which was behind has inched ahead in this space. I was now, one car behind my destination. I was beginning to lose my patience and self-control, "where are you getting stuck, you ass, I'll crush you!" Suddenly I became aware of my window which was still open. My back was sticky because of the sweat. I rolled up the glass and adjusted the AC ducts, to finally get some relief. Anger too, went down a little.

Resting myself on the head-rest, I took some deep breaths and found my body and mind getting peaceful. But soon enough this peace was broken, when another driver, like a true Delhite, ignored my horn and swept past me to wedge himself between the next car and mine, all the time, honking loudly. While he was at it, the driver of the car behind me had given a long honking. Perhaps he felt that I was dozing off or maybe chatting on the mobile or there was something wrong with

my car, and if none of these, then I would have surely lost my mind according to him. He had honked for very long.

Traffic had started opening up all of a sudden. Slow movement lessened. Speed picked up. South Campus turn was past. As I moved forward, right in front of the boundary wall of Venketeshwara College, in the middle of the road, the front wheel of a bus had come out. A jack was being put in its place. The wheel had moved ahead a little on the road and perhaps that was the reason for the traffic jam. At this point, most of the vehicle drivers were slowing down, assessing the mishap and finding the road ahead a little emptier, were speeding up. Coming out from there, I too changed gears and pressed the accelerator a little more than usual.

Apprehension regarding Amarendra surfaced again and started to claw my mind—who knows how much he is hurt? Which vehicle hit his scooter? Hope it wasn't a Blue-line bus which hit him? He had to take a left turn from Barar Square. Maybe while turning left he hit somebody else turning or some vehicle going straight. Now they have closed the crossing at Barar Square. It is not an accident-prone area like it was earlier. It is comparatively safer now. Sometime last year, it was in the newspaper that an army man was crushed under a bus. The bus had dragged him for some distance and turning him into a mass of flesh had left him in the middle of the road and run away. Traffic cops had chased it on motor cycles and succeeded in making it stop.



Reminded of the newspaper report, and shaking away any fears of an impending disaster, I reached Barar Square at a speed of ninety KM per hour. On the left, outside the CNG station, a long queue of vehicles wanting to refill had been created and had spilled out on the road. Traffic had slowed down again. I turned on the left indicator and honked to turn slowly toward the left when I saw one scooter standing. The scooter was parked on the side but it was still on the road! I turned on the right indicator and inched pass the scooter to move the car forward and again indicating left, turned the car towards the Army Base Hospital and Kariappa Vihar. Meanwhile, I could still hear the angry honking of the cars behind me.

After I turned left on that road, something struck me—the colour of the scooter and its number! Oh, this is Amarendra's scooter! Going a little ahead, I stopped the car on roadside. I got down and walked back. At the corner of the CNG station, on the side of the road, I enquired from a street hawker selling bottled water, paan masala and chips etc., if he had seen an accident... in reality I had become a bit assured after seeing the scooter safe, that may be Amarendra has not been injured much. Perhaps a little scratch here and there. It is possible that the Army hospital staff have sent him home after giving first aid... but why is the scooter still standing here? The hawker told me, "No, there was no accident, sir! An hour back, there was a fight, surely. A car was here with four–five boys who stabbed

a guy on a scooter. Somebody called up the PCR. The police came and picked up the guy. This is his scooter.

I went near the scooter and saw blood stains in the sand on the pavement— semi-dried, crushed stains. After being stabbed, Amarendra might have sat or lay down here on the pavement...

"How did it happen?" I flustered a little and asked hurriedly. I was desperate to get to the Army Base Hospital.

"Scooter guy had to go left, but a car which was going straight, was standing in front of him. There was loud music blaring inside the car. When the driver did not hear the horn, then the scooter fellow parked his scooter on the stand and went to ask them to move a little ahead, and give him way to turn left. In the midst of this argument, four or five guys got down from the car and started a fight with him. When he hit them back, one of the guys stabbed him in the stomach with a knife and then they ran away in their car. All this happened within a minute and no one could note down the number of the car..." the hawker rambled on carelessly.

Listening about strangers meeting with accidents, we Delhites are used to discussing such incidents with complete apathy and indifference. We are affected only when someone close to us meets with such a mishap. We, the people of Delhi are extremely sensitive about ourselves and about others almost hundred percent indifferent.

I couldn't hear more than this. Quickly, I hurried back and got into my car. As

soon as I pulled down the hand brake and inserted the key in the ignition, the mobile rang. I could see Amarendra's mother-in-law's number flashing on it.

I pressed the button and said hurriedly, "Ji namaskar! I have reached Barar Square. Within a couple of minutes I'll be at the Army Base Hospital. I will call you when I reach..." but the trembling voice on the other side pounced on my reassuring tone.

"I am at the Army Hospital bhaiya.

You come fast."

The increasing tremor of the voice had agitated me, "Ji, I am about to reach. Hope all is well?"

That is when I heard her shriek and trying to control herself she said, "The doctors have just informed us, Amarendra is no more...! We are ruined bhaiya...!"

Forgetting to switch off my mobile and switch on the car engine, I was dumbstruck...

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**Harjendra Chaudhary** : was born on 02 December,1955 in Haryana. He is a faculty member at the College of Vocational Studies. He has taught at Osaka University of Foreign Studies (Japan, 1994–1996), Warsaw University (Poland, 2001–2005) and Osaka University (Japan, 2010-2012). He writes poems, short stories and articles on socio-cultural issues. Many of his works have been translated and published in various Indian and foreign languages. He lives in Delhi.

**Gauri Mishra** : was born in 1965 in New Delhi. She teaches English at the College of Vocational Studies, University of Delhi. She translates from Hindi into English. She lives in Delhi.

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## Bheed Se Alag

Ashok Patel

Translated by  
Nishi Tiwari

Nature's fury unleashed the night, dark and dreadful; crackling streaks of lightning, splitting the firmament for a moment; the thunder rolling fast and furious—amidst torrential downpour Why such fury, I wonder! Why the frightening aspect? Uncontrollable, which, none could tether. No leisurely breeze passing gently by, but, a gale-violent and furious, bursting with unspent energy. It was just 8 o'clock in the night, but it seemed like midnight. The clouds reigned supreme over the sky subduing its vastness, triumphant, proudly exulting. Crystal moon beams and the scintillating stars failed to pierce the dark canopy. Neither nature's cruel play, nor the fever raging within him was the cause of his anxiety. Buried under a layer of three blankets, he could not subdue the chill arising out of his furnaced body. Disturbed by chaotic thoughts he kept tossing and turning on his cot. Sleep had deserted him.

His wife had just given him a soothing concoction of turmeric and ginger, but it failed to alleviate his suffering. His grave illness distressed her and she was deeply moved by his pitiable condition. 'If my son had been here today, he would have been a great support, but he has gone to Vijayour, just this morning, to play a match, organized by the college. He will return only after ten days. Oh God! Help me! I don't know what to do? Where should I go for help on this dark and dreadful night? The doctor is at a distance of fifty km., in Durgapur and no one in the village owns a vehicle.

So, how is it possible to rush him to a doctor? There is only one bus service to Durgapur, but that too, is at 6 in the morning. So, it's impossible to go there earlier. There is no hope of getting any help from the village. What should I do? Let the night pass somehow. In the morning I'll take him to Durgapur for treatment'.

She waited thus, for the morning, her mind in turmoil. He was still tossing and turning in his bed. Although closed, sleep had not touched his eyes, rather scenes flitted past in them and he grew increasingly restless. The tinkling sound of the bell drew Bihari out of the house, and in a loud anxious voice asked, "Postman uncle, postman uncle! has my joining letter arrived?" Coming towards Bihari, postman *chacha* would say, "Why do you ask me the same question every day. *Arree...*, when your joining letter arrives, I'll deliver it to you." But Bihari's eagerness led him to ask the same question every day.

He was the only son of his parents. Their only lifeline. His father had worked very hard to provide him good education. He was a daily wage labourer. Bihari was sharp and proved to be a worthy son. After completing his higher secondary, he had been selected as a clerk in a big company. He was waiting for his joining letter. It was expected to arrive within a few days by post.

Greatly perturbed, hurriedly, with restless energy he sits upon his bed. Bihari's word echoed in his ear-'Postman Uncle has my joining letter arrived?'

He seemed to feel better with his body temperature having decreased. He told his wife to fetch his post-office bag. Taking out Bihari's joining letter from the bag and showing it to her he says, "This is Bihari's joining letter. He used to ask me everyday-'Postman *Chacha* has my joining letter arrived?'

Today at the post office I was handed only this single letter for distribution. As usual I came home thinking that, after resting for a while I would deliver the letter to him. But as I was about to leave I felt giddy, everything swam before my eyes, with a strange weakness overpowering me I collapsed on the ground. When I came back to my senses and opened my eyes I found myself lying on the cot under a thick layer of blankets, raging with burning fever. But all the time I have been worried about Bihari. His undelivered joining letter lying in my bag has been worrying me since the time I regained consciousness. Thence forward I haven't been able to rest one gentle moment. How can this joining letter be sent to him? God forbid! I hope the date of joining is not the day after tomorrow. If that is so, the letter will have to be delivered to him today itself, because it will take him one whole day to reach the place. In that case he will have to start his journey tomorrow itself. Till today this had never happened, I had never delayed in delivering any letter. Many times even in my illness I have not failed in my duties. On many occasions I have had just one letter to deliver, yet I never postponed it

for the next day, and worked honestly. But unfortunately due to my sudden illness this letter is still lying with me. Like every day, Bihari must be eagerly waiting for me today also. I must deliver this letter today at any cost. This is my duty and I must not fail to carry it out.”

Alarmed by her husband’s words she replied, “how can you go in this condition? You are running high fever. Your eyes are red with pain. It is still raining outside and there is darkness all around. Please rest for today. Tomorrow morning I’ll send this letter to Bihari through somebody. It is impossible to send it now. Who will go in this dark and foul weather? It’s raining heavily and it’s completely dark. No one will agree to go.”

He was not convinced. He said, “if he has been called to join the day after tomorrow, how will he reach in time.”

His wife said, “Come let us read the letter.”

“No this is wrong. I cannot do this without his permission.” He told his wife.

Abiding by his resolve to do his duty honestly, he left his bed and started getting ready. His will power suffused him with energy, sickness fled... for the moment. Now there was no stopping him, nothing could prevent him—neither the dark awful night, nor the lashing rains or the chilly bitter wind. In spite of his wife’s best efforts to stop him, he walks out into the darkness, riding his bicycle slowly, sheltered under an umbrella. After riding for two miles, he reached his destination and knocks the door.

Bihari opens the door. On seeing him he calls out to his father in a loud voice—“See *babuji*, postman uncle has come. I have been waiting for you desperately since morning. I was certain you would definitely come.” Before Bihari could speak further, he handed over the joining letter to him, carefully wrapped in polythene to protect it from the rain. The letter was completely dry, but he was drenched. Mad with joy, Bihari opened the letter and started reading it. After a short while, Bihari’s father comes out and welcomes the postman uncle into the house. He goes in and sits on the cot.

“Postman uncle, they have called me the day after tomorrow. I must immediately make preparations to go, because I shall have to leave tomorrow morning. It will take one whole day to reach there.”

Bihari tells the postman uncle to read the letter, who heaved a sigh of relief, feeling as if a great burden had been lifted off his shoulders.

Filled with gratitude Bihari’s father said, “I am very grateful to you for delivering this letter on time. Tomorrow after I see Bihari off at the bus stand I will come to your house with sweets.”

“There is no need for this. This was my duty.”

After sitting for a while he left for home—alone figure on a dark night with just an umbrella for protection against the lashing rain, slowly riding his bicycle. Suddenly a strong gust of wind wrenches away his umbrella. He reaches home completely soaked to the skin. His wife

who had been anxiously waiting for him opens the door before he could knock. She is horrified to see him in this condition.

Next morning, Bihari's father comes to the postman uncle's house with a packet of sweets. He is worried to see a gathering

of people there. Trying to find out the reason he peeks here and there. Suddenly he beholds postman uncle's dead body shrouded in white and his wife crying bitterly over it. He died a warrior doing his duty in the battlefield of life.

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**Ashok Patel** : born 1989 Shahdol, M.P., studied at DAV Bhopal, is a poet and short story writer. His collection of poems is 'Neend Ki Goliyan' and collection of short stories is Book Milan from Bodhi Prakashan. He lives in Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh.

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## Hindi Cycle

Satyendra Srivastava

Translated by  
Jutta Austin

### THE WAIT

Looking at her granddaughter and grandson  
Unblinkingly with sharp but somewhat  
Mocking eyes  
The old English woman asked  
Kids, this Hindi-Urdu, what sort of thing is that?  
The two children yawned in boredom  
Looked towards the old woman  
And said  
Grandma, Hindi and Urdu  
Are the two main languages  
Of the Indian subcontinent.  
Twiddling their uniform ties and taking them off, they continued  
crossly Oh. It's those—those languages, isn't it,  
Which we gave those countries  
So that they could learn and understand English.  
Suddenly realising the children said testily and  
Speaking loudly in an almost dejected tone  
'We didn't know that'  
'Perhaps nobody did.'

## HINDI IN THE WRONG HANDS

Whatever is put into this dish  
Will be absorbed  
Tingling jingling in this dish  
Continual openings  
Seized by the ochre cheats  
The naked holy men  
Covered in tri-coloured garments by helpful hands  
The sharp fingered  
Whose long hands  
Attaching themselves  
Scrutinising everything  
These are the masters of the dish  
Favoured by their world  
Members of every fellowship  
Experts in everything  
The curtain in front of our eyes is dense  
Still, a closer look reveals all  
But they walk proudly  
Just touching them shakes the mind and makes it tremble  
Even those from outside Delhi  
Their impressions  
All their paper thin delicate sheets  
Their pockets long, spacious, bulky, heavy  
This coloured sweat is not the blood of mother Hindi  
The intent of their deceit remains  
Their chatter remains  
Whatever is put into this dish  
Will be absorbed.



## THE WINGED WORDS OF HINDI

Language can never be constant  
Words are also birds  
The world is open  
As far as the eye can see  
Just like grammar  
Smiling, teasing,  
Asking  
For new connections to be formed  
But the buzzing talk  
Flies and flaps and is  
Finally caught in fabrications  
The threads of thoughts are traps  
Sanskrit is the whim of the alphabet  
That which we have been tied to from the beginning on  
Verses hold the identity of Hindi  
Light and kindling all ready  
Each flame of meaning is a sacrificial wing  
Explications are the sounds of the conch  
The living voice, tomorrow's summons  
Poems are beauty, are the chosen ones  
What they are saying, what they will be saying  
Will be the progress of generations  
They will be what adorns us  
Not only our destiny but our achievement, too  
Be it the echo of a hum or meaningful speech  
What can be said will be said  
Our history  
Will only be told to them  
They are the special servants of the writer.

## THE SHAPE-SHIFTING VOICES OF HINDI

Will now nothing else do  
for us  
Whatever we may be saying in the jungle of  
Languages, with all kinds of roaring, humming and echoing,  
We need to be saying it in two languages  
One just for ourselves  
The other would be for them  
Because whoever comes to our home  
Be it as a guest, for business  
Or to attack us he will bring with him two things  
A sword is the first  
The second is his language. Then, brandishing his sword  
Proclaiming himself the great victor  
The stranger would speak loudly  
As if entering our ears  
Describing the magic of words as a cure  
And saying you will have to change.  
Whoever said this—a hakim, a vaidya, a warrior—  
He would try everything to make us change.  
He explained to us the elements of his language  
Its essence and its basis and said  
That in order to keep ourselves safe  
We would one day have to accept the stranger's language  
As a necessity. At first each accomplishment will feel  
like copying  
For gain and achievement  
Like our shadow in the desire to live. Then he also said along this path  
You will all be consumed more and more and gradually  
Drain out and in the end your whole name, your colour, you will change  
everything.  
And when all your customs and manners disappear  
And become confusing  
And you begin to stumble over whatever you want to say  
Then you will no longer perceive us nor our language. Will not be cursing  
us  
But will begin to curse yourself

Asking yourselves why you followed his words  
 And in the end you will take to making vows  
 That we will not change anymore.  
 We will remain our reality  
 But then you will be pushed to change further to the point  
 Where you will change your name from Pandey to Painde  
 Sharma to Shaima and  
 Varma to Vama or something else. Your appearance will speak louder than  
 your beliefs  
 You will speak to your sons and daughters and say :  
 We have tried really hard to express ourselves in two languages  
 But could not express ourselves like they do  
 Could not be like them, a copy of them.  
 Our rulers speaking like parrots, saying in their languages what they could,  
 What had to be said...  
 Kept saying that you must become, live and be the servant of those  
 whose food you eat...  
 Go and write their praise. Using the names of others or even hiding your  
 own names write and publish their praise and, hiding the core of that  
 greatest of languages, keep publishing  
 And filling your pockets.  
 And there is some parallel world a small distance away  
 Where some people wander from door to door  
 With bundles hanging over their shoulders  
 And the robbed people call out and shout 'Drunkards,  
 Purchasers'. Come outside. Come on your own or as a collective or with  
 you top knots.  
 I have brought for you  
 In this bundle  
 The secret of those who live by half-truths  
 Yes, it is true.  
 that our swords have now become too blunt  
 and the knots of the bundles are too tight,  
 They cannot be undone  
 So how can they be opened. How can everything become known  
 Isn't it curious that in order to destroy the masks  
 Those bundles passed on to us  
 By our parents

are now being offered by some broker  
Standing in the middle of the market, shouting :  
Buy from me whatever you can. Note  
I am a salesman  
I sell  
For profit.  
I change my language with the times.

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**Satyendra Srivastava**, is a veteran, versatile poet and professor of language in Cambridge University. Equally famous as a broadcaster. He also writes in English. He has many published works. He lives in London, U.K.

**Jutta Austin**, teaches in Adult Community Learning Programme. She lives in U.K.

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## Five Poems

Lalitya Lalit

Translated by  
Nishi Tiwari

### THE DEFINITION OF TODAY

Man has carved out his own definition  
And backslided  
Reduced to a mere commodity being sold in the market  
Be it expo or a branded underwear  
Completely devoid of shame !  
Konark sculpture or the caves of Khajuraho,  
It matters not  
When relationships are sinking down  
Into cold indifference....bitterness  
Those who relish no more  
The sweetness of the *desi* tea  
Shun Chandni Chowk.  
Searching for our mooring, our lamp posts  
In the fast and furious mirth of the lesbian gigolo  
And  
In the conflicting world of this ostentatiously flamboyant existence  
We, the netizens, the net surfers, the google crazy people  
Waiting for the day when children's name will be  
Yahoo messenger, Twitter or Facebook.  
The newly-wed bride of the new generation

Will step into the threshold of  
Her new home,  
Cuddling a mewling infant in her arms  
And a marvelous array of gadgets of all tincture  
Will adorn her dowry box  
An electronic laptop, notebook, latest mobile, android phone.

While you and me  
Locked in adorned photographic frames  
Hung as mute spectators on the wall  
Will watch and gaze at our young generation...  
Tongue tied and aghast  
Their whims, their fancies,  
Crazy passions  
Overruling their beings  
Where our own identity will dare not intrude  
Possessing full authority over our pictures,  
Would make us public  
Tagging anyone they pleased.

Maybe someone would like us  
And even pass comments  
Oh damn! What do we care!

## THE GIRL OF TODAY

Excellent arguments can today's girl give  
She goes to the gym  
Sits glued to the computer  
Well versed in net-shet,  
Twitter, Facebook all on her fingertips.  
But gadgetcentric,  
Sinking into mechanical living  
Hardly knows how to fit the regulator  
On her cooking cylinder.  
Kitchen she shuns  
Yet fond of eating  
Orders readymade meals.  
Talks hours on phone weaving yarns galore.  
How well she dupes those who most love her  
Extracting money always  
And parents too, a party to this, her accomplices.  
Content are they in her happiness  
Basking in her vain happiness.

## RATIONAL PEOPLE

The inhabitants of a dark den  
The unscrupulous traders  
No more alive to tenderness  
Caring not for your intestine malfunction  
Or kidney collapse  
Brought to ruin by the adulterated food they sell  
Callous to the very core  
Profit oriented are they all  
Dishonest their dealings  
Rivers of greed rage in their beings  
And profit, more profit is their only craving  
In this, they excel.  
These inhabitants of a dark den  
The unscrupulous traders  
Appareled in hippopotamus hide, so thick that  
Insulated they remain, insensitive to all else  
Except themselves.  
But markets and bazaars they throng not  
Flowing like a subterranean evil stream  
Yet the bazaars of today replete  
With such practitioners of greed  
Thick skinned, thick hearted  
What are you looking for brother?



## THE NEW TREND

A paying guest house she considers her home  
The girl of today.  
Parents feel cheated  
And bewildered they stand  
Astounded by the new winds of change  
Amazed they stand in the strange wind that blows  
So queer...so alien  
Listen dear, didn't winds blow during our times too?  
Of course they blew  
Replied his wife, amidst coughs and sneezes  
But the birds  
Of Facebook, Yahoo Messenger and Twitter  
Sailed not in those.  
Times have changed  
And we belong to a creed outworn  
It matters not,  
Soon we'll quit the shore  
And cease to be.

## CONFINED IN HIS OWN WORLD

Locked and barred, confined in his own world  
A world of his own making  
Mobile, Internet and now the Blog Zone  
First an SMS, followed by Read and Comment,  
Express your views and reviews  
The invading trend so popular so extensive  
Flap matter writing  
Book discussions with refreshments  
Or *masala paan* in more enthused moments.  
So sure are they of others, habits...tastes...interests  
That, they keep striving, persevering to the very end  
What harm in trying?  
Married women too are trying, experimenting...  
Adopting new ways  
Live-in-relationships have mushroomed  
Times have greatly changed  
*Namakparas* and *matthi* were earlier made at home  
So were the *shakkarparas* but those are days bygone.  
Housewives now shun homework  
Sit glued to their T.V. sets  
Household worries plague no more,  
But come *karwa-chauth*, a new sari they must don  
Complete with jewellery and all  
And adorned they stand all glittering and dazzling  
In the mirror ahead.  
With honeyed words cajole their husbands endearingly.  
Softly whispering in friendly cadence  
Listen dear, come soon today,  
Water I'll sip only from your loving hands today.  
And the lone husband plods on  
Heavy of heart, murmuring, grumbling...  
Only to return at sunset.  
So many irons in the fire...so many skeins to disentangle  
Zen fund loan, Mobile bill, marriage gift,  
Marriage to attend, brother-in-law's house warming ceremony,

Sister-in-law's something...something...  
Accustomed to all types of traumas and shocks  
Your's and everyone's government servant  
Mister of Rewati  
Karuna's husband  
Shilpa's darling  
Sweety's pappu  
Poor hubby! Overburdened...overworked  
Always an attaché

This is how life grinds on  
This is our style  
Our unique style.

In the *Dhaba* gluttons throng stuffing their tummies  
With spicy food

Four *lachha paratha* topped with a butter lump  
Later two *daal makhani* and before that *paneer tikka... chicken malai tikka*  
Garnished with *chutney* all tangy and spicy.  
This, the list of items of *Dhaba* haunting gourmets.  
Taste buds are super-active sir  
Relishing spicy food all sweet and sour and real hot.  
And the doctors! Their earning galore  
Overloading the system and indigestion follows  
Digestion all ruined, a series of maladies entail  
High blood pressure, uric acid and God knows what else!

Mail, play blog-block  
Queer spectacle, watch the world  
All gadgecentric...hours on computer...  
And cervical pain...all free...free of cost!  
Would you like some?

Come Diwali...glaring posters on sale...  
Disorienting the mind  
With a spending spree soon to follow suit

Empty purses, credit card bills  
All forgotten under her smiling gaze...

Replete with contentment.  
They least care, when the euphoria ends,  
Disenchantment begins, dreams lie shattered  
All in a heap.  
When the bill arrives, we'll see!  
Under a spell of exhilaration they proudly declare.

Busy at the town square  
Sevak Ram the sepoy, charging entry fees  
Money drifts to the top  
Why not, he has numerous brethren to feed.  
Such Sevak Rams abound guarding and vigilant  
At every town, haunting the squares,  
Sycophants, boot-lickers fawning on seniors  
And the guru too, dearly loves his disciples.

Any channel you switch on,  
All you hear is  
This world is a delusion, times have changed  
It's a corrupt world we live in,  
Turn...turn to the Lord  
Your savior...your God.

Take a deep breath,  
Be generous, give charity  
This world of *maya*...a mirage...a dream  
Devoid of substance.  
Donate in cash, donate in kind, donate land and cattle.  
Serve in the *ashram*, stay at God's feet, under His protection  
You'll attain salvation  
Here the heaven, here...here the bliss  
Here is completion, here is perfection.  
Remember the Lord, meditate on the Lord  
Succumb to our will  
We are sevaks,

True representatives of the Lord.  
Welfare trusts and organizations dotting the landscape  
Whether tending the blind or victims of calamity  
All bent upon enriching themselves,  
Filling their coffers, stuffing their lockers.

And the common man  
Still is, where he was...hapless... alone  
Dejected he stands, tortured  
By his sons and daughters-in-law.  
And our saints and sages?  
Speed past in luxury cars  
Engaged in discussions with the V.V.I.Ps.  
Relishingly popping offerings of dry-fruits.  
Who will be the beneficiary  
It's all so clear  
To you and to me.

So don't be a lunatic,  
But who pays heed?  
When sanity returns...too late by then  
The little remaining capital  
Gone down the drain  
Swiped off...swindled

And salvation attained.  
Do you too want salvation? Here, I have the Guru Mantra.

---

**Lalitya Lalit** : born 1970 Delhi, has been a student of Delhi and Garhwal Universities. He has written widely for neoliterates. He writes poems and has 7 collections of poetry. He works in National Book Trust and lives in New Delhi.

**Nishi Tiwari** : a post graduate in English from Benaras Hindu University, has taught English literature in various colleges on *ad-hoc* basis. She has also worked as Extension Officer in the government of Bihar and has been teaching English literature for several years. She lives in Ranchi.

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## Four Poems

Pawan Karan

Translated by  
Rashmi Bajaj

### SURYA-SAVITRI

Before reaching  
The marriage-altar  
And even afterwards  
They were never ever  
Told about HER.

They were told  
Only about Savitri  
Who brought back  
Satyavan's life  
From Yamraj's clutches.

Why was  
Surya-Savitri's identity  
Thus kept away  
As a guarded secret  
From these women?  
Why were they  
NOT told  
That the hymns  
Chanted in  
Marriage ceremonies  
Surya-Savitri composed?  
She was the one

Who rejected  
Her father's selected spouse  
And went on  
To choose  
Her class-fellow Poosha  
As her life-companion.  
Were these women-  
Losing the game of life  
In the marriage-mandaps  
Not told about Surya-Savitri  
Lest any or many  
Amidst them  
Should reject  
The groom  
Chosen by their fathers  
And go on  
To proclaim :  
"Like Surya-Savitri  
My choice  
It shall be  
And the conditions too  
Shall be fixed  
Only by me!"

## EXPRESSION

Unversed in  
The Art of Expression  
You've still  
Come here  
To express yourself!  
First master  
This subtle Art  
And then only start  
Saying what you want.

Those who have  
Much to share  
Those who  
Wish to share  
But are unschooled  
In this fine  
Art of Expression-  
I continue to be  
One of them.

## NINE MILLION TIMES

Nine million times  
Different is the food  
Which I take  
From the one  
Taken by them.

I wonder  
If mine  
And their 'roti'  
Tastes essentially  
The same?

In all measures  
Nine million times  
Lesser than them-  
I am well-familiar  
With the odour of my labour  
And wonder  
Whether their sweat  
Also has any flavour.

I sleep in a bed  
Nine million times  
Clumsier than theirs  
I dwell in a house  
Nine million times



Poorer than theirs  
Their children stand  
Nine million rungs  
Above my kids  
On the stair.

The moon is closer  
Nine million times  
To them vis-a-vis me  
Whenever they wish so  
They can kiss the moon  
So very easily!

(There is a nine million tinegap between  
the rich and the poor in India)

## A POOR COUNTRY : TWO POEMS

1.  
'A poor country'—  
This nomenclature  
Assigned to me  
Has made me forget  
My real name and identity.  
  
When you send me  
The Financial Aid  
Close on heels  
Your Business Companies  
Arrive herein and run away  
Forcing arms-purchase on me.  
  
I am NOT able  
To convert your dollars  
Into my food  
My empty stomach  
Defines my Identity  
And my hunger  
Writes my Life-history.  
  
I have not eaten  
Stomach-full for ages  
I am too feeble  
To even stand erect  
Holding the heavy rifles  
Thrust by you  
In my hands.

2.  
More than  
My starvation  
You dwell on  
My affliction  
You are able  
Not only to diagnose  
My disease  
But also my treatment  
And my needs  
During my illness.  
  
Plane-loads of medicines  
Unload here  
And are thrust down  
My mouth and throat  
In the piles of medicines  
I search for 'rotis'  
And my children  
Look for milk and bikis.  
  
My land and my streets  
Lie all cluttered with  
The 'expired' contraceptives.  
You are blind  
To the battle  
That rages inside me-  
It needs  
Not weapons  
But food  
To settle  
This battle!

---

**Pawan Karan** : born 1964, he is emerging as an important poet with a pro-woman stance. He is postgraduate in Hindi and in Mass Communication and Human Resources. He has three poetry collections out of which 'Stree mere bheetar' and 'Aspatal ke bahar telephone' have been widely read and reviewed. He lives in Gwalior.

**Rashmi Bajaj** : is a noted bilingual poet, critic and translator. She has published one work of criticism (English) and four poetic collections (Hindi) till date. Presently she is the Head, Dept. of English in a P. G. College in Haryana.

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## Four Poems

Manoj Kumar Jha

Translated by  
Nishi Tiwari

### ANYONE...ANYWHERE

Any moment might I turn into a laughing stock  
Utter...utter a word more biting, more searing than this.... utterly  
degrading  
More scorching, more venomous,  
Carrying humanity beyond the melting point.

Any moment might I become a laughing stock  
At home...outside.

Any moment I might be caught red-handed  
By my wife  
Stealthily adding the child's share  
Of milk into my tea-cup.

Just like me was that man  
Stooping down to extract a coin  
Stuck into the coaltar  
I recognized him  
That day we had bought roasted corn  
From the same vendor.

If he has become a laughing stock

Then how do I escape mockery?

Any moment I might become a laughing stock  
Not unusual in this world of ours  
Where, in every locality,  
With a noose of poverty round his neck  
Someone or the other is always licking clean  
The Jootha Paat.

## AKARAN

This ambulance...will it not stop for a while?  
The poignant moment, I wish to explore.  
Worryingly I wonder, what sickness...what agony is  
Locked within?  
If sick, how sick the one laid out within?  
If dead, whose corpse? Old?...young?  
If old... How many teeth intact  
If child...how many had he grown?

Who...shrieking with grief drowned in lamentation?  
And who... tending the sick?  
And tenderly massaging the feet  
Trying to ease the ordeal of sickness?  
No...no,...no reason for my concern  
I find none.  
It's just that, I too, a resident of this  
Piece of earth is  
Treading on the same path...  
We both!

## BABUJI IS SAD, THE DYING TAKE MONEY

So what, if panditji said  
Don't...don't sell this piece of land  
Rituals and prayers cannot extract  
Every thorn pierced through the heart.  
Swept off in flood...but here...just here  
Was the Joda Mandir.  
Somehow, anyhow salvage the last memento  
Of my parent's love...the last pillar of a bridge aflame.

Let turmeric be grown there every year  
Nowhere, will you find the verdant glow of turmeric leaves.

Teak? That is no tree at all  
Measured in an embrace  
Its sturdy girth...its price.  
Pleadings, convincing lost in the wind  
Teak saplings from the blocks  
Encircled the land.  
Then he too never went near and we...  
Moved to the city.  
Keep ruminating now, when father grows older  
We'll bring him to the city.

Once panting he came asking for water  
Two gulps...and a breathless pleading  
Take *sattu*, take *gur* whenever to Disawar you go.  
Never mind if you take it not, but have the courage  
To come back home,  
Though every home-coming is not the same.

Rehmani Mian was right when he said  
No matter how much shimmer and glimmer  
They might accumulate  
Hollow it sounds, like the brass plates of Azadi, *dadi* brought in dowry.

A nice boy he was...played the flute to perfection...

Better than his father;  
Designed puppets of palm leaves,  
And at every feast set the milk to curd  
But all this came to naught in that land where he sojourned.  
One day at a festival, snapping apart his ties with the earth  
Blew himself up with a bomb in the waistband  
Unleashing a sinful fury...

Since then in my heart revolves  
A cycle wheel at a frantic pace  
Tearing my sinews to shreds.

Gripped with fear, seized by panic, all the while  
I invoke the Lord  
Reciting the *Hanuman Chalisa*.  
Those who left their land and on whom hopes were pinned  
Forfeiting happiness...drilled a hole in the boat they sat  
Worshipping a grim idol.

Then...what remains behind...  
Nothing...but money  
Is this all...the value of human life  
Sinking into monetary concerns  
While alive  
Keep counting, keep jingling the money bag.  
In death  
Leaving a fortune behind,

## TRAHI-MAAM

How enticing the walls, the glasses,  
All sounds, all voices  
The labels enticing, all prices inviting,  
Oh! even drinking water too attractive  
Assailed by a plethora of attractions.  
I flounder, I stumble aghast and bewildered  
Losing my mooring in a world of glitter  
My thermometer unequipped  
To measure  
The bewildering heat of attraction.

Suspended I lie, oscillating betwixt  
Planets and stars beauteous  
Mother earth...her attractions  
Intensest of all.  
Beautifully clothed she beckons all  
With unrelenting motion, life drags on.  
The march ahead impeded by hurdles galore  
Two steps forward...stumbling blocks ahead  
Frantically searching for honey and rock.

*Acharya!* Who is behind it all  
This motion picture ever creating...ever creating  
Monitoring the dance of life  
Holding the puppet strings.

All that I need is a place liveable  
And a market tolerable  
That  
Dizzies me not  
From where I can come back  
Whole ...in one piece.  
My wooden slippers unscathed.

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**Manoj Kumar Jha** : is recipient of Bharat Bhushan Agrawal Puraskar 2009. He writes in Hindi, English and Maithili, has published extensively in literary magazines and journals. He lives in Darbhanga, Bihar.

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## Four Poems

Kumar Anupam

Translated by  
Nishi Tiwari

### THE FINAL METAPHYSICAL DOCUMENTATION OF CONFUSED CO-MINGLE OF OPPOSITES

Every single brick of the house sustained itself,  
Nourishing on  
Fond memories, hopes  
And  
Sacred remains of our forefathers.  
There, the multi-directional stormy turbulences  
And  
Greed of various hues,  
Spinning fast and furious  
Sharpen the mutually inflamed frenzied desires  
of  
The loved ones.  
Hence,  
A Kabir's relentless toil to weave a motif  
With his very lifeblood,  
Sadly fails to give the finishing touch  
Unable to satiate the raging greed of his loved ones  
The greedy fiend devouring familial ties.  
Even the eyelashes hurt the eyes.  
All the same,



The ancestral mansion, our only legacy... remained—  
The final metaphysical documentation  
of  
A confused co-mingle of opposites.

Sunk into oblivion  
Are the  
Fond memories and dreams of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
Now merely, frozen figures in an album.  
When the entire world was engaged  
In  
A frantic effort to bridge gulfs...  
Then,  
For the first time was visible  
Unashamed flouting of civil norms.  
Cordial ties snapped apart  
Petty mongering,  
Domestic strife  
Shamelessly surfaced—corrupting  
Its very essence.  
And  
Layer by layer, ancient values, so protectively treasured  
Over the years, peeled off  
Corroding...fond memories,  
Cohesive bonds crumbled  
Diligently papered faultiness reappeared  
And thus, this way uprose  
The 21<sup>st</sup> century  
Germinating in a fallow land  
After the so called dissolution of the middle class  
A deafening clamor of applause,  
And  
Echoing roars of laughter, out of gear.  
The sounds of the tyrant puppeteer  
In jubilation—back stage.  
Jubilant celebrations beyond the seven seas.  
And the Maniac?  
Drunk with power, loudly sighed

In relief, in triumphal vulgarity  
The autocratic tyrant brewing faction  
Proclaimed his victory,  
Crushing atomies.

Gradually,  
Misgivings gathered momentum  
Confirming that,  
Nothing happens suddenly  
The paralyzing poison, injected in tiny doses  
Trickles to each cell, tissue  
Sapping,  
Withering,  
Contaminating,  
Desertifying a green patch...  
Till lo!  
The majestic oak comes crashing down—blossoms, branches all  
Slowly, does this way, disappear an entire race,  
A culture—  
Losing its essence, shifting to a lower gear  
Lost...lost in the womb of conspiring forces  
And global treacheries.  
The poet sojourning in his poetic world  
Dare not utter...  
Let be...let be...  
Complacency he shuns  
The naked reality confronting him, he cannot blink  
Away with eyes shut  
Alas! The glowing warmth of a loving home  
Is no more.  
This reality of a bygone era  
Now  
Reduced to fictitious tale  
Blasphemed by...  
A desecrating touch.

## THE SONG OF THE MEADOW

Wedded to the earth,  
We aspire not, to touch the skies  
What use to us, the vast expanse  
...So distinct...So remote?

The galaxied sky, beckons us high  
Although,  
It is we, who have bestowed beauty to them.  
It is we, they reflect, in twinkling abundance.  
Our Sufi insight,  
Imparting the twinkle.  
With wings outspread,  
The nectar-drunk butterflies  
Offer prayers...overwhelmed.  
But  
The flowers of our womb  
Huddled in awe,  
Shy away whispering  
Nay, nay, not we, not we,  
Symbolize the omnipotent,  
His beauty, we cannot equal.

Oh!  
Insignificant, the wave,  
The wavelet,  
The tide,  
The rainbow glorifying the sky  
The award,  
The reward.  
It is our chlorophylled limbs,  
That nurture the world.  
No romantic outburst, this,  
Nor a song of self-praise.

No more do we desire to live

Should we,  
Drunk with greenery  
Blind our eyes?  
Will someone tell us?  
Of what use to us?  
This tainted earth, drowned in blood  
And  
The sun no more  
A bestower of life,  
No more, the rosy glow peeping  
Out of a hare's eyes.

Fruitless our existence  
Longing to shun the sacrificial flames  
Where,  
Intermixed with rice we appeased the Gods  
And now?  
Threaded in garlands  
To honor the most undeserving  
Those, seething in corruption,  
Exploding with sin  
...inhabitants of a subterranean world.

But  
Stormy furies, and times' cyclonic fluxes  
Leave us unscathed.  
Unfazed, riveted to earth we remain  
Liberty unshaken.  
Our pride, remaining thus, gravitationally bound  
Beware of!  
Our verdant glow,  
Our blistering flame  
May set you aflame.

## THE TWO OF US

The same shortcomings  
Never opened quarrels between us.  
Silent as flowers  
Communing through multiple fragrances.  
Walking long distances  
Silent we remained, yet enthralled.  
But,  
Never asunder...  
Never afar.  
Overshadowing the dust and din  
The grime, the conflict  
Of  
A city chaotic  
We lay drenched in prismatic hues  
Picking rubies out of each other's garbage heaps.  
Oblivious of the world around  
Lost in a lover's paradise...  
A carnival of kissing embraces  
With the veil of intoxicating passions  
Interposed  
Between us, and the world,  
Separating us  
From the rest of the world.  
The veil very much there  
As much as  
'is' resides in 'is not'.  
Like Nature we remained  
So close... so very close  
In blissful repose,  
Interlocked.

## TRANSFORMATION

While touching you,  
My raging passions get suffused,  
With  
A solemn fear,  
Becoming maimed  
Because,  
You are an infant's toy.  
Like spiralling coils of a pumpkin shoot,  
Your touch entwines my soul  
In  
An unrelenting embrace, like clinging creepers,  
Sealing my spirit  
Where,  
I dwell secure.  
The vastness that I behold in your eyes  
In breathless adoration,  
Is... so... so... serene,  
Absorbed in boundless depths  
That,  
The mere echo of my foot fall  
Disrupts the tranquility,  
Breaking your trance.  
The aroma of milk suffuses your being.  
When you make me your own  
With your mother's adoring pride  
Then,  
Refashioned, my love dons  
Your lovely form  
Becoming just like you— a mother.

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**Kumar Anupam** : is a young poet and painter who also works for a social cause. He has been awarded Bharat Bhushan Agarwal Puraskar for his poetry in 2012 and his collection of poems 'Baarish Mera Ghar Hai' has been published by Sahitya Akademi, has edited several books. After a four year stint in Bhartiya Gyanpith he is now OSD in Dr. Ambedkar Pratishthan. He lives in New Delhi.

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## T.S. Eliot and Prayogvadi Hindi Poetry

Ramvilas Sharma

Translated by  
M.S. Kushwaha

Prima facie it appears that *prayogvadi* (experimental) poetry is completely cut-off from the old poetic tradition. The *prayogvadi* critics support this view by arguing that all traditions in modern times have broken down, and that this new poetry is the product of this modern life. As a matter of fact both *prayogvadi* poetry and *prayogvadi* criticism have got a definite tradition which was established by some western poets during the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Prayogvadi friends have borrowed all the arguments about new poetry from abroad. The refutation of these arguments is also available in the writings of a number of western writers.

The new poetry of England was linked with the First World War. The new poetry in Hindi flourished after the Second World War. Hence it has been linked with both the world wars. An English critic states. "After the exacting claims and the vaulting hopes of the First World War, disillusionment and scepticism set in" (C.M. Bowra, *The Creative Experiment*, p.161). A Hindi critic, after linking the First World War with the Second, writes : "The two World wars had their impact not only on some particular community or class, but influenced, directly or indirectly, entire humanity and its ideals, and a new kind of poetry was born during a theoretical

upheaval" (Lakshmikant Verma, *Kavita Ke Naye Pratiman*).

The new poetry has only this much connection with World Wars that after them the dangers of capitalist culture became more pronounced. The decadent tendencies, which were present even before the First World War, assumed a formidable shape. This is also a kind of qualified change, but this quality of decadence had entered into poetry like a wood-worm, first in France and then in England. The English critic Bowra, quoted above, has written about T.S. Eliot, the grandfather of new poetry : "Eliot seems to be a lonely, distrustful, and at times supercilious soul. It is hardly surprising that revolutionary critics have seen in him the last voice of a civilization which knows that it is doomed and struggles without hope to regain a splendour which is lost for ever". (p. 187)

What the critics, referred to by Bowra, say is perfectly true. The civilization, which feels its end is inevitable, is capitalist civilization. Its last strain may be heard in the poetry of T.S. Eliot and his circle. Its faint echo may be traced in the poetry and prose of Jagdish Gupta, Lakshmikant Verma and other *prayogvadi* writers of Allahabad.

Eliot has written that Romantic poetry is meant for those who look for daydreams or a transformation of their pure desires and sexuality or those who want to see in poetry an elevation of emotions. For Eliot, Byron has no thematic significance and Shelley's works lack in harmony. As

such, Romanticism should be forbidden to enter literature.

Eliot rebelled against the Romantic poetry, hence, for Lakshmikant Verma, too, *chhayavad* (Hindi Romantic poetry) is just an expression of child-like curiosity; it has no commitment to existence nor does it have the capacity to absorb beauty. Whatever these allegations may mean, Lakshmikant Verma had to accept that Nirala's *Kukurmutta* was the best achievement of the *chhayavadi* poetry. New poetry demands new sensibility. "Nirala was the first among them [*chhayavadi* poets] to compose *Kukurmutta* with this new sensibility". Here the promising *prayogvadi* (experimentalist) Lakshmikant Verma surpasses his guru Eliot.

New poetry is known for its intellectuality. Eliot has written that it is not enough to look into the heart; "One must look into the central cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts." Now every Hindi *prayogvadi* poet is ready to appeal in the name of intellectuality. Whosoever does not accept his brilliance is considered as lacking in intellectuality. *Kavita Ke Naye Pratiman* speaks highly of this intellectuality.

Eliot has written that it will be wrong to think that all poetry ought to be rhythmical; dissonance too has got a value of its own.

Among the paradigms of new poetry it was duly registered that metrical beauty, rhythm, etc. are unnecessary for poetry. The champions of new poetry caused a hullabaloo with their cacophony, and



claimed that they were reflecting the modernity of the age.

Eliot has written that it is natural for the poets of the present civilization to be obscure. The reason is that this civilization is multifarious and complicated. It leaves a complex impression on the mind of the poet. The poet has "to dislocate, if necessary, language into his meaning."

This dislocation is not confined to language alone; it extends to all areas including feeling, meaning and aesthetic appreciation. To these unprincipled poets, the whole world seems to have no centre. Both images and standards of new poetry are centreless. These new poets, in order to express the modernity of the age, take recourse to disconnected symbols. About this disintegrated symbolism the English poet-critic C. Day Lewis has written that the poet "builds up a series of broken images and calls it a house,...[he] claims that the process is modern architecture or its result is the only thing worth calling a house nowadays. But the building of a beautiful ruin—and this is what this process often amounts to—is a folly. An increasingly complex civilization will justify more complex image patterns within the poem; an era which throws up masses of new ideas and sense-data will call for a response in bold, novel imagery : but it does not at all follow from this that the right answer to disintegrated civilization is a disintegrated poem" (*The Poetic Image*, p. 117).

Lewis has talked of beautiful ruins. New Hindi poetry does not have even

these. The piles of images produced by prayogvadi writers can serve only the purpose of manure.

Eliot broke away from the healthy and progressive tradition of England and America. *Prayogvadi* poets, who modelled new poetry on his pattern, took arrows from his quiver and attacked *chhayavadi* and progressive poetry. Eliot declared himself a follower of Christian poets by suggesting Dante and Metaphysical poets as his ideal. Lakshmikant Verma mentions only *Kukurmutta* in the name of tradition.

Notwithstanding his mention of Dante and Metaphysical poets, Eliot's level of sensibility is the same as that of the decadent poets of France and England. Despair, loneliness, frustration, suffocation—all these are also found in Romantic poets. But this is only one aspect of their poetry. There is also, in their poetry, a feeling of sympathy for common people, love of nature, a longing for revolution, zest for life, etc. In decadent poets only the first aspect is developed. Despair and frustration are intensified and turned into a disease. They do not find any happiness in nature or social life. Eliot has a close relationship with these advocates of frustration. Thus the weak aspect of Romantic poetry becomes the only aspect of the new poetry of Eliot. Eliot's opposition to Romanticism is superficial; Eliot has broken away from its healthy aspect. Eliot's sole emotional wealth consists in the feelings of despair and loneliness of the Romantic poets and the feelings of frustration and suffocation of their successors, the decadents.

In order to understand the strategy of new Hindi poetry, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the tradition of poet-teachers of its grandfather, Eliot. In his essay on Metaphysical poets, Eliot mentions two French poets : Jules Laforgue and Tristan Corbière. According to him, these poets were closer to Metaphysical poets than any modern English poet. There is a considerable influence of these poets on Eliot. Corbière belonged to the second half of the 19th century. According to Edmund Wilson, he was an eccentric (*Axel's Castle*, p. 93). He slept all day and spent the nights in gathering experiences and writing poetry. He had an intimate relationship with the prostitutes of Paris, for he considered them exiles from the conventional society just like himself. "Melancholy, with a feverishly active mind, full of groaning and vulgar jokes, he used to amuse himself by going about in convict's clothes and by firing guns and revolvers out of the window in protest against the singing of the village choir; and on one occasion, on a visit to Rome, he appeared in the streets in evening dress, with a mitre on his head and two eyes painted on his forehead, leading a pig decorated with ribbons" (op. cit.). Wilson has called him a 'Romantic personality'. In the second half of the 19th century, in place of Byron and Shelley, only such Romantic personalities were left.

Corbière died at the age of 30, and Laforgue at the age of 27. Both were patients of tuberculosis. Wilson has likened Laforgue's agony to that of a sick well-cared for child; his clever sayings, cynicism

and impudence were like those of a clever school-boy. Before mentioning childlike curiosity of *chhayavadi* poets, Lakshmikant Verma should have paid attention to childish pranks of Eliot's poet-teacher, Laforgue. Both these poets were associated with the Symbolist Movement of France. This Symbolist Movement has developed along the unhealthy aspect of the Old Romantic Movement. Eliot learnt the use of colloquial language as well as irony from these poets. This 'modernity' was not connected with any World war. The 'historical background' of new poetry was not ready at that time, but the controllers of the destiny of new poetry were born.

Wilson refers to French critic, M. René Taupin, who has discussed Gautier's influence on Eliot. Gautier was one of the prominent Romantic poets of France. Wilson has praised Eliot for expressing pathetic-comic, worldly-aesthetic mood of the last decades of the 19th century. The students of literature know that the aesthetic sensibility of these decades was unbridled and decadent. This sensibility provided an impetus to Eliot's poetry. It was also the source of his modernity.

Ezra Pound was another writer who influenced Eliot. He was responsible for popularizing Laforgue, Rimbaud and other French poets in England. A writer has rightfully called Pound an international vagabond. Later he became famous for writing books in praise of Mussolini and fascist Italy. Pound was an expert in composing poems on the basis of poems written by other poets; even his fans do

not pay any attention to his original poems. Speaking of Pound's influence on Eliot, C.M. Bowra writes : "There is undeniably something repellent in Pound. His claims of vast learning are not justified by his own displays of it; the personality revealed in his poetry is uncongenial; the movement of his verses is often cacophonous; his work has a distasteful air of pretentious smartness, of being altogether too 'knowing'; his political opinions are brutal and angry, and have earned him the unenviable name of traitor." (op. cit., p. 162)

Writers like Ezra Pound are rotten remnants of capitalist society whom even ordinary capitalist writers of America and England are unable to tolerate. These are the writers who influenced Eliot and gave birth to 'modernism'.

Eliot's book, *Prufrock and Other Observations* was published in 1917. It is not a post-war composition. It was published during the War, and it undoubtedly belonged to the pre-war period. Its first poem is the love-song of Prufrock. The hero of the poem asks his beloved to walk with him. The evening is spread in the sky like a patient on the table. The chief characteristic of his love is that it lacks courage. He says :

And indeed there will be time  
To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and 'Do I  
dare?'

.....  
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,

Have the strength to force the moment  
to its crisis?

But the moment of Prufrock's test of  
courage passes away, for he was frightened :

And in short, I was afraid

Like Prufrock, a *prayogvadi* Hindi poet  
sings :

Collecting tired feathers-  
Covering the demand for shelter with  
faith-  
With the help of beak-inclined  
restlessness

The wet neck raised,  
Shivering, trembling

Besides the image of bird, we have

My arms stopped after encircling you

Why it happened? Simply because

We were beyond lust and solicitation-  
Innate lovers.

This new cult of innate love has got  
an international organization. At the one  
end of it we have Eliot's Prufrock, and  
on the other there are *prayogvadi* Hindi  
poets who are beyond lust and craving.

Some of the utterances of Prufrock are  
very poignant. For example, he says :

It is impossible to say just what I mean!

Prufrock's younger cousins, Indian  
*prayogvadi* poets followed suit :

Language impotent, could not express  
feelings

Speech timid, returned after touching the lips.

Bashfulness, which was considered an ornament of ladies, has become an adornment of the heroes of new poetry. Not only bashfulness, timidity, too, has become the chief element of the subject-matter of new poetry.

Prufrock has rightly said about himself :

At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—  
Almost, at times, the fool.

*A prayogvadi* has portrayed the symbol of foolishness as follows :

Closer to a crumbling roof, passionless  
in seclusion,  
Amid the circle of the urine drenched  
mud  
Stands on three legs with bent neck  
Storehouse of perseverance, the ass.

Eliot's fame rests on *The Waste Land*. In this poem Prufrock is born again. According to old legends, there was a fisher-king who had lost his sexual power due to injury or some disease. The country of this impotent king is the 'Waste Land' which is struck with famine and where people lack not only in physical but also mental strength. Has Eliot portrayed here the despair or hopelessness of the post-War Europe? Bowra says : "This land is much more than post-war Europe". In fact, this landscape may be connected with post-War Europe only by force. In this poem there is the same kind of lamentation on the lack of manliness as in Prufrock. There

is no clear reference to any problem of the post-War Europe. There is a saying in Hindi that one who becomes blind in the month of *Savan* sees everything green. Likewise, to the hero of *The Waste Land*, the whole land appears dry and barren. Instead of curing his own barrenness, he comes to regard the land barren.

Here is also a lover who, like Prufrock, has no courage to communicate his love :

I could not  
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither  
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing  
Looking into the heart of light, the  
silence.

The lover could not say anything. His eyes failed him. He was neither dead nor living. He kept on exploring the secret of light and silence, but could not know anything.

Eliot's dreams are that of an impotent person who can neither be counted among the living nor among the dead. Eliot has strongly supported intellectuality. Indirectly he has proclaimed his great scholarship. But he has got nothing to get out of this barren land except travelling and some magical charms. Eliot's sharp intelligence avoids facing a socialistic solution of the problem. Neither has he the capacity to portray the imbalances of the capitalist society nor his intellectuality is ready to move in the direction of socialism. Magical charms cannot remove the barrenness of the capitalist society nor can the uttering of Shantih, shantih make Prufrock a he-man.

Eliot is a poet of morbid imagination. To him, people working on the London bridge appear dead. His imagination contains the poisonous germs of anti-humanism. This kind of imagination cannot find anywhere the signs of healthy life. According to Edmund Wilson, fashionable intellectuals of London and New York, for a period of time, began to draw inspiration from barren-beaches, cactus-grown deserts, dusty antics overrun with rats, shattered glasses, and broken bones. These were the special equipments of Eliot's new imagery, with which he enriched poetry.

Eliot's another great poem, 'The Hollow Men', is an abridged edition of *The Waste Land*. Here also the manliness is paralysed :

Paralysed force, gesture without motion

Just like the barren land of *The Waste Land* :

This is the dead land

This is cactus land.

Now there is a demand for cactus in Hindi literature, too. After the spell of *The Waste Land*, Eliot openly took recourse to religion. A cat, after eating hundreds of rats, goes on a pilgrimage to Mecca—says a Hindi proverb. This applies to T.S. Eliot, whose intellectuality, after projecting his disease on the whole world, took shelter in religion. This religion is not limited only to soul and God, it is also the foundation of social organization. According to Eliot, "You will accept Christian society only after

you have tested and rejected other social organizations". What is the nature of this Christian society? "It is a vision of or ideal of a small society that is characterized by personal relationships". But no social organization, having a tradition of such relationships, exists now. There is no suggestion how the present society will reorganize itself according to Christian ideal.

It will be clear from the above discussion how deeply *prayogvadi* poets are related to Eliot. Like Eliot, these supporters of intellectuality have begun to see the world with their morbid imagination. It has become fashionable to make imagination morbid, even if actually it is not morbid. Like Eliot, they reject *chhayavad* and all healthy elements of Hindi poetry. Like Eliot, they too, represent unhealthy aspect of Romantic poetry—its despair and frustration. Their ancestors were vagabond poets—physically and mentally diseased—who knew only one meaning of social rebellion, that is, lack of restraint. Poets like Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot suggest the most poisonous aspect of Capitalist civilization. In order to oppose socialism and weaken the faith in national reconstruction, these *prayogvadi* poets, cut off from public life and cultural tradition are flying in the sky of absolute personal freedom just like torn kites. They brag of intellectuality in order to intimidate simple people. In fact, they are the enemy not only of poetic beauty but also of intellect. This is why this *prayogvadi* movement, which was carried with the help of

criticism, appears to be dying during its birth. There is no wonder if the *prayogvadi* poets find their future dark.

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**Dr Ramvilas Sharma (1912-2000)**, was an outstanding Hindi scholar and critic. He has authored numerous books, including *Nirala Ki Sahitya Sadhana*, *Mahavir Prasad aur Hindi Navjagran*, *Bharat ke Prachin Bhasha Parivar aur Hindi*, and *Paschim Asia aur Rigved*. He lived in Agra.

**M.S. Kushwaha**, retired as Professor and Head, Department of English and Modern European Languages, Lucknow University, Lucknow. He has published a voluminous Hindi commentary on the well-known text of Sanskrit grammar, *Laghusiddhānta-Kaumudi*. He has also edited two volumes of essays on Sanskrit poetics. He lives in Lucknow.

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## Chemmeen : Its Passage Through Three Languages

Raji Narasimhan

The chance to consider a book in three different languages does not often present itself to a reader. When it does it is exciting. The play and pressure of each language upon the theme and body of the original, and the product that results from this interaction, underscores a lot about the nature and art of translation. Before coming to that larger formulation it may not be out of place to consider the special quality of *Chemmeen*, the book which has presented one with this opportunity of seeing it through the sound and sense of three languages. The special quality of *Chemmeen* is its femininity, the kind of femininity, that results from a man's depiction of it. The ability to don the feminine personality seems the hallmark of many notable men of letters. Writers like Sarat Chandra, Tagore, Renu and Pudumaipittan, gain their special poignance from their ability to pattern their voice to feminine scale and inflections.

*Chemmeen* is the story of Karuttamma, the daughter of the sea. The sea is maternal and matriarchal in the perceptions of the fishermen living on its shore. Life-giving, nurturing, it is also reusable to unpredictable fury like a flesh and blood maternal, matriarchal force. Living by the side of this primal force, a particular system of mores and a particular feminine culture is bred among the fisherfolk. It stresses almost fanatically the primal male urge to make the female pray for his welfare and longevity, make her his link with God. Perhaps this is a natural distribution of roles between partners, one of whom is impelled to venture out to test his strength

against the unknown, while the other, not so impelled, is required to be understanding and empathetic. Empathy at the best of times is a bit of a shadow play between the empathiser and the empathised, between the actor and the acted upon. But it becomes a classic existential situation when the person empathised with is mostly physically absent, away on dangerous missions, and death is a numbing presence in the homestead. It then inevitably falls to the lot of the partner physically present upon the homestead, to placate death, beg for its mercy, keep its attention turned from the one away.

This primary, pre-historical division of roles has been imbued with gender properties by the fisherfolk depicted in *Chemmeen*. They impregnate it with mythic values for an inner ballasting to their community life. The fisher-wife is called upon to pray for her fisher husband's safe return from sea. This is the core slogan and underlying platform of the story. It is not only a slogan spelt out in words, but given a pictorial re-inforcement that becomes a major motif in the work. The fisher-wife, we learn, does *tapasya* on the sea shore, when it rages, and her husband is out at sea. She stands on one leg in a yogic posture, and does not move till he is back. The powers of her purity and chastity act as a lighthouse for the man battling the waves, and steer him to shore. Around and from the ideology condensed in this figuration, the feminine character and overall femininity of *Chemmeen* are built.

The translator has to grasp the roots of this feminine orientation. His prose has to rock with the pain and pleasure, the ethics and passions, battling each other in Karuttamma's sexual awakening. He has to be alive to the collision and rebound-like the sea colliding and rebounding off the shore—that these feelings make in her mother, Chakki.

The femininity of *Chemmeen* is not constituted so much from the love affair of Karuttamma and the Muslim boy, Pareekutty, as from the struggle of mother and daughter to domesticate the rearing sexuality of the latter. Female sexuality is an object of dread in the Indian context (its mythicising notwithstanding) and in conditions of poverty like those in which Karuttamma and Chakki live, is even more so, lacking as it does then, the bare privacies demanded by the processes of growing and becoming. Chakki and Karuttamma, as mother and daughter, represent in their personalities the drives and counter drives that come into play with the sexual awakening of the girl, and it is on this tussle of the women—a tussle that is joint as well as mutually opposed—that another aspect of the femininity of *Chemmeen* is built.

A strong body consciousness is a major attribute of this feminine atmosphere. Both Chakki and Karuttamma are beside themselves with fear and anxiety about the physical manifestation of female sexuality, and its animal potencies. Both are seized by a haunting sense of responsibility to harness these potencies to sanctioned and



legitimate ends before it is too late. The novel reveals its innermost self—opens its maws, so to say—in these flashes of intense self-seenings by Karuttamma and Chakki, when they curse the external manifestations of female sexuality. The deep transference to the female psyche that Thakazhi makes in the novel, shows itself at its clearest in these self-reproachfully roused states of the two characters.

The translating language has to rock with the inwardness of these self-seenings. The language must bend to the emotional inflections of the two major female characters, as the Malayalam.

Of the three translations we have chosen to consider—Tamil, Hindi and English—the Tamil definitely has stretched the language tunefully, making it register the bated breaths and gasped thoughts of Karuttamma and Chakki. Now, Sundara Ramaswamy himself is among the finest writers of Tamil today, with a highly developed sensitivity to the nerves of speech. Secondly, Tamil is much closer to Malayalam than Hindi and English, so a certain level of fidelity to the original is assured. The dialect Tamil that the characters speak in the rendering is more akin to the language of the rustic characters of Thakazhi than Hindi can possibly be.

But such translatability is no guarantee of a translation as we define it. In fact, it can be a pitfall, as Sundara Ramaswamy's work proves. A translation has to be bi-tonal and bi-cultural in its effect. It ought not to read like the original, or read original, but should suggest the original

as a vastness lying beyond—like the horizon suggesting lands beyond.

This distinction has been so completely erased in the lyrical prose of Sundara Ramaswamy that the special pleasure of reading a translation is taken away. We never experience the pleasure of being carried on two streams of narration simultaneously, never experience the special pleasure of disjunction. One small passage taken at random, with particular reference to one phrase in it, would be enough to explain this.

Karuttamma and Pareekutty meet, as forbidden lovers do, amidst danger. Pareekutty calls her softly by name and asks her to say what he means to her. She holds and raises his face in both her hands, eyes in a semi-swoon, drinking in his adored face, and says, "My king beloved" (En Asai Raja). Once again, the narrative goes on, they become two of body and one of soul. Swaying on the pinnacle of ecstasy she babbles into his ear all that comes to tongue.

Here is the Tamil of Sundara Ramaswamy :

*Naan unakku yaru? Sollu?  
Avanadu mugathai tanadu iru  
karangalilumyendi yedittukondu  
araikuray  
aai tirandirunda vizhigalaal avanadu  
azhagu mugathai assayodu nokkiyapadi  
badil sonnal: "Yaaru? En Asai Raja"  
Meendum avargal eerudal  
oruyiaariyanar. Unarchiyin unnata  
sigarathil*

*aval vaaykuvanda padiyellam  
avanudaya seviyil yedai yedayo aratriko  
ndirundirundal*

The Malayalam original of Thakazhi is not very different from that Tamil. The image is the same, of Karuttamma with half-closed eyes, unsteady of leg, babbling into his ear, and holding his face in her hands. That gesture of holding Pareekutty's face in the hands is a breakthrough gesture, a shaky enactment of the tremendous unshackling she has achieved, as one can see in the para quoted above. It is the first act of freedom she is performing. The extended arms symbolise a coming away from herself, a decisive leaving of herself, while the gently appropriative act of holding her lover's face between the hands expresses the acceptance by her without fear, of the vastness outside herself. The mime element in that scene is very important, and none of the other translators except Sundara Ramaswamy has transferred and incorporated the full emotional intensity of the mime content so wholly in their renderings. The only common point in all the renderings is the mention of the half-closed eyes, *ardhanimeelitha* ... as it occurs in the Malayalam.

But in Sundara Ramaswamy's prose, the scene, and the particular Tamil equivalent he has used for "My king beloved" (En Asai Raja) take on a near autonomous quality. The phrase is his own. The Malayalam says, "My pitcher of gold". The recreation is only the acme of his own

full and seamless involvement in the stream of emotion present not only in that scene, but throughout.

On closer reading this feeling of seamless involvement that the rendering gives subsides, and a sense of "they", of a distinct third person presence is felt. 'They' become one of soul, he says. They" could not disengage from "their" embrace. But this suggestion of third person presence has not, by any means, amounted to the purposeful retention and cultivation of otherness, of difference, making for the bisected quality which we have postulated as the true form and physique of translation. The otherness that surfaces in Sundara Ramaswamy's rendering is probably more a pronouncement of critical hair splitting, become permissible in comparative studies, than anything real! In Tamil syntax and construction subject and action merge. The sentence, "They become one of soul", gets compressed to a single phrase *oruyi-raavinar*. It is only by separating the components of this phrase, an exercise which is purely academic, as we said, that the sense of 'they' is felt. It makes it, of course, a linguistic characteristic rather than a conscious strategy of translation.

The story of the women, and the femininity of the original, have obviously caught the imagination of Sundara Ramaswamy. He himself has these biases in his own writing. Probably he is among the very few writers today who can recapture in the turns and timbre of his prose the unspoken feelings of a woman,

feelings that become onomatopoeic through overt inflections and a certain monosyllabic flutteriness. The corroboration that Chemmeen provides to this natural bent of mind has sufficed for him, and he has not bothered about cultivating and conveying a matching intimacy with the other characters or aspects of the book. He has left this to the care of his own eloquence and suppleness of language. In addition to the advantage that his like-mindedness with Thakazhi gives him, he has the advantage too, as we said of dialect Tamil, creating its illusion of speech similarity with the rustic Malayalam of the characters in the original. It is in addition to these enormous natural advantages that his linguistic artistry presents itself. And it seems just too much of a pile-up, making for an imbalance in the translation. There is an explicitness, a lack of suggestion, come about, in much of the narrative sections, born of the very linguistic virtuosity, that we otherwise admire. No, linguistic virtuosity is no guarantee of a translation that is right in its tether with the original.

The Hindi rendering of *Chemmeen* by Bharati Vidyarthi takes several paces deeper a field, the problem of the dark areas in a translation, as in Sundara Ramaswamy's, becoming a fault in the rendering from beginning to end. Neither linguistically nor from the point of insight and deeper understanding has Vidyarthi's translation risen above the pedestrian level. Some redeeming features, of course, can be mentioned, such as the leave-taking scene between Karuttamma and Pareekutty after

Karuttamma's marriage with Pazhani has been fixed. The conversation that takes place between them is spare, muffled, almost strangled by emotional intensity. Stretches of silence intersperse the conversation. There are swift and tremulous oscillations of mood ranging from the urge to pour the heart out, and the simultaneous perception of the futility of it. Karuttamma goes away without saying anything of the many things she had planned to say to clear the air between them. The text says :

*This was the only way of taking leave she knew.*

*Paree kept gazing at her.*

*This was the only way of proffering leave he knew too.*

The Hindi is :

*Yehi uska vida leney ka tareekha tha.*

*Paree usko dekhta raha*

*Vida deney ka uska bhee yehi dhang tha.*

Mimesis is a strong characteristic of Thakazhi's writing generally. In that scene, in the Malayalam, which the Hindi recaptures best among the translations being considered here, occurs one particularly mimetic, visual phrase—"kizhakottu nadannu", or, Karuttamma walking away eastwards. The idea of return contained in the act of taking leave is tellingly recaptured in the term "eastward" "kizhakottu". None of the translations, not even the Hindi, makes use of this term. The Tamil, in translation, reads :

*Yes : she had taken leave of him.  
Unblinking he kept his gaze on her. Yes,  
he had given her leave.*

Mime is not as strong a presence here : the translator's voice does quite a bit of speaking. The English, simply—and stolidly—says, "And so they parted". Whenever and wherever the element of mime gets reflected strongly in the translations they gain power, it can be said by and large. In the Hindi, in spite of the absence of the term "kizhakottu" the realm of wordlessness, of feelings and actions beyond the ken of word or voice, into which Karuttama and Pareekutty are shown thrown in the original is best reflected. Like figures seen through binoculars we see the departing figure of Karuttamma and the fixed yet animated face of Pareekutty gazing at her. They bring home through the hush permeating and alternating with the sentences, the universality of the situation, underlying its particularity, in which the two people are caught.

A few more such instances of completion can be cited. But these would not alter the overall conclusion one has to make about the Hindi translation, that it is a passive rendering, never getting anywhere near the springs of warmth in the original.

Apart from declined readability the real loss suffered by such boneless renderings is their incapacity to do anything about thinnings or cracks in the original. In Chemmeen there is such a crack, arising

from Thakazhi's failure to make a forthright statement on the moral issue involved in the business deal struck between Karuttamma's father, Chemban, and Pareekutty. The point Thakazhi is driving at implicitly, is that sexual morality and general morality are not different from each other. Pareekutty lends money to Chemban for buying his own fishing boat and tackle. The implication is that Chemban takes full monetary advantage of Pareekutty's feelings for his daughter, the very feelings which he opposes as outrageous, not to be countenanced. Karuttamma is wrackingly alive to this duplicity, and her distress is a direct outcome of the corruption she smells in her father's conduct. How can one form of immorality be taboo and another not? Thakazhi never formulates the question as plainly as one expects. As against, the examinings into the nature of femininity that he does with genuine fervour, on this question he veers away into a kind of loftiness, from which position he detaches the human factor from all happenings, tragic or otherwise. Nature, as manifested by the open sea, and the cumulus of impressions it creates in the depths of the human mind, comes in for portrayal as the supreme arbiter, drowning out individual human efforts and motives.

But this flight to grandeur lacks a firm dialectic base, and becomes grandiloquent, gesticulatory. One of the reasons for this, as we said, is the failure of Thakazhi to make more plain the moral conflict and the odour of corruption from which the novel takes form. Again and again, at

various points of climax, the underlying reasons for Karuttamma's burden of sadness comes up, begging for unambiguous statement. Her sadness is not caused by separation from Pree, but by her father's exploitation of him, and the sully of love, of herself, this implies. An unequivocal assertion of this from the author, supporting the subconscious perceptions of Karuttamma, is never forthcoming.

The question is, how is the translator to get round this inner gap in the text? Simply disowning responsibility for it is not the way. The fault only gets reproduced, further entrenched, in language after language. In this age of translations a creative responsibility has come to be placed on the translator, compelling him to raise to the level of redressal when necessary, the qualities of sympathy and co-operativeness he is expected to have.

The Tamil rendering of the novel muffles the fault in the work by sheer lyricism of language, by the translator's own close identification with the characters and the theme of femininity. The Hindi translation does not address itself to the problem at all. It could not have, because the required alertness and in-depth understanding by the translator is not there from the beginning. From the point of view of clearing away obscurities and haziness, Narayana Menon's English translation of the novel scores over both the Hindi and the Tamil. Menon's way seems to be to get to the heart of things

without ado, cutting down on the sentiment, and the chronically near-hysterical, agitated states of the characters. Instead, he favours soberly stating the truths embedded in the agitations.

But, as we shall see, the tidying up is not always done with discretion. The abstracting of essence does not always read assonant with the sense of the original. And sometimes the abstraction has not been done at all, when the translation could well have done with it. This results in its own dissonance. The beautiful sentence *En Asai Raja* (My king beloved) in Sundara Ramaswamy's translation, has come in literally from the Malayalam as "My pot of gold", in Menon's rendering.

*Karuttamma ... what am I to you?  
She took his face in both her hands and  
looking at him with half closed eyes, she  
said, 'Everything. My pot of gold.'*

"Pot of Gold" cannot be called pleasing by any process of reasoning. The term "gold" has overtones of intimacy in most Indian languages not really there in English. In Tamil, the common saying *Tangamana Penn* (A girl as good as gold) or *En Tangam* (My golden child/beloved) have an intensity—a catch-in-the-voice intensity—which cannot be conveyed in English. Even with the linguistic backing available to him Sundara Ramaswamy has not used the term *tangam* in his rendering. Perhaps he could have used it in a gasping, all but inaudible way in keeping with the swoon in which Karuttamma is shown, in that scene. But he does not, whatever his reason, and the

rejection makes its retention in the other two translations even more glaring. The Hindi version says *Mere ratnabhandaar*. It preserves the association of wealth present in the original, but as in the English, the word *ratnabhandaar* is not in keeping with the swooning state of Karuttamma. It is too long, too double-consonanted and Sanskritised.

To the word "gold", the word "pot" adds its own absurdity. Its sharp, one syllabic sound stamps down upon the whispery, tapering notes of the scene, shutting out its soft wash of echoes.

However, this is but one sentence. Let us consider the translation of Menon in detail, starting with the quality of otherness, which we have adopted as a ground level of evaluation. Otherness comes in for what can only be called an uneven expression in Menon's translation. The narrative prose gets a quickening, an action-packed quality, which is arresting, is pleasantly startling—like a road suddenly swept clear of cosy clutter. Karuttamma's source of unhappiness is not obfuscated, or mystified, and there is a clear attempt at considering the springs and network of her behaviour with the openness and naturalness of a psycho-socio-logical temper, a characteristically English-educated Indian's temper.

Take this passage, quoted alongside the Tamil :

*When their love-making was over, Karuttamma became shy as well as a little afraid of herself. She spoke of all kinds of things, yet the unknown fear remained*

*with her. It was a kind of madness. Something slightly unclean, without morals or decency. Was it becoming of a woman's duty? What would her husband be thinking of her?*

*Paguttarivum chintani unarvum seyalpadugira inda ulagukku karuttamma ti tirumbi vandu serndapodu vetkam avalai pidungi tindradu. Vekta unarchiyodu inam teriyada bayam manattinul uruveduttudu. Taan yedai yadayao pesivitta dai aval unanrndaal. Manattil avasiamillada ennangalai kilarivittukondu kuzhaindaal. Appoduaval ullattil edivum telivana uruvan petrirkka villai. Yedo Pittupidittadu polirundadu. Maanam avamaanam inri, vetkattai turandu ... evva-lavu abasamana vizhayam ... Oru penn seyyakkudiya kaariyama idu? avaludaya kanavan avalaippatri enna ennikkolvaan?*

There is a world of difference in those two translations. The Tamil's pitch of voice is higher, much higher, than the English. Passionate and resonant with the feelings of Karuttamma, it is more descriptive, more associative. The opening sentence, the English of which would read : "To this world based on common sense and mind-awareness, when Karuttamma returned ..." has been severely curtailed in Menon's rendering, to "When their love-making was over." In the Hindi it has been translated prosaically as *jab Karuttamma hosh ki duniya me aye...*

In the Tamil, Karuttamma's feelings

have been set down with minutiae, with a sense of discovery by the writer, impelled by the original. We understand these feelings, are carried along by the sheer silvery quality of the prose. But a sense of having outlived and outgrown fears such as Karuttamma's persists in our mind, interfering with our highest level of reading pleasure. For us, wizened and made crass by our prolonged, conditioning exposure to literature which makes erotic passion moral, and frankly wanted as liberative by heroines, Karuttamma's self-questioning, her "being eaten up with shame" (*vetkam avalaipidungi tindradu*), serve the purpose of recall. But we would rather have the recall made for us by the author in language that has a recollective base, making for a montage for Karuttamma's feelings. Sundara Ramaswamy is too involved in the feelings himself, his feelings and intensities vying with those of Karuttamma.

A subtle and delicate loosening of the narrator-narrative bond is what the English performs. It supplies the maturity and a matter-of-fact diction, based on contemporary realities, which our present day sensibility state demands for a comprehensive reading experience.

However, as we said, this clean-shaven prose does not always have happy results. We see the best results of it, better even than the passage considered above, in the rendering of the scene showing Palani caught in the storm at mid sea.

This scene is the grand climax of the story. Artistically it is a bit of kitsch. The sea's fury seems overdone, and Palani's

battling it is coloured by the fabulous, the impossible. Chemmeen, after all, is not a fable. In the other renderings, the fable element, or the impossible, has not been sought to be tamed or brought to more life-like proportions, in the kind of modificatory gestures that the pressures of translation cannot help. We saw this in the Hindi and Tamil rendering of the phrase : "a pot of gold". In the English, the steering movements of Palani have been set down with a certain nautical aliveness, relieving the super brawn power of the scene with a measure of simple brain power.

*Palani let loose the line. If he held fast the line and the boat stopped the boat would be smashed. He let the fish pull the boat as it liked :*

*When the head of the boat mounted the crest of the high waves, he balanced himself with the aid of his oar and jumped upward so as to lighten the weight of the boat. When he reached the top the boat again suddenly came down. The boat became almost vertical.*

The operative phrases in that passage are about the letting loose or holding fast of the line, and about the agile, squirrel-like, split-second motions of the boatman in balancing and jumping up the oar to lighten the weight of the boat. Above all, is the short sentence about the boat becoming almost vertical. It is a sentence that stands away from the crowded actions of the preceding lines, and flashes a sudden, clarifying distant view of the view, freezing it.

None of these actions comes with a like dour recounting or clean-edged outline in the other translations. In the Hindi translations the sentence about the boat becoming almost vertical does not figure at all—very much there in the original. In the Tamil it occurs, but with its own drawbacks, as we shall see. That apart, the terms *daand* for oar, *rassi* for line, in the Hindi, the whole feel of that passage in that rendering is a little off the mark, not seeming associated with fisherfolk culture so much as boatpeople's culture, *mallah* culture. On the other hand, "Letting loose the line" "holding it fast", the very word 'line', carry in their inner systems of sound, standing images of a sea faring tradition. They contain in their terseness and solidity the sharp, salty words of command uttered on deck, with the whistle of wind and the push of water muffling the voice, heightening urgency. This seasoned, occupational authority is not there—perhaps not available—in the Hindi rendering. Palani's precision act of leaving the floor of the boat for the top of the oar and waves, does not register in the reader's mind with the enlargement and enhancement that would have followed, if it had been seen by the translator as a clear-headed, integrated piece of action. It comes as a far-off miniature act, as if seen through a peep hole.

*Oonchi tarangon par jab naav chadti thi tab naav ka bhaar kam karne ke liye voh daand pakade oopar uchchal jaata tha, aur tarangon kee choti par*

*ate ate voh nav meh gir jaata tha :*

is the Hindi. The phrase *oopar uchhal jata tha* for that central, all important act of jumping clear of the boat's tether underfoot in the composition of his dance, is not weighty enough, not solid enough, to invest that scene with meaning, and rescue it from the kitsch in which it is embedded.

Let us look at the Tamil version of that passage now :

*Pazhani meylum toondil kayitrai negizha vittaana. appodu irunda nilamayil avan toondil kaitrai izhuttup pidittukondan enraal tanneerin asura vegame toniyai tagarttu erindividum. surameen adan pokkuppul toniyai izhuttuch chenrudaan paarkattume!*

*Mayle ezhumbi uyaruginra alaigal meedu eruginrapodu toniyin sumayai kuraippadarkagap pazhani toniikul kudittuantarangattil ezhumbuvaan. toni alaikkooattatin sirasil eriyadum meendum pot-tenru tonikkul vizhuvaan. appodeliam talai kuppura ninrukondiruk-kum toni ...*

Compared to the Hindi there is a greater familiarity with navigational reflexes, and the terms rise from deeper within the language. Not only here but throughout the Tamil rendering, terms like *sukkan*, or *tuduppu* (oar), *toni* (boat) occur, which are authentic and impart the firmness and realism of professional phraseology to the narrative.

But yet, as with the passage about



Karuttamma's guilt feelings and fears, it is an anthropological interest that we derive from the scene and the overall phraseology. We perceive the boat as a fragile bark, which of course, it is. The fragility of man and his small dexterities against the might of the elements is of course a major part of *Chemmeen*. But a sense of remoteness, of times over, persists in our mind, making the battlings of Palani archaic, somewhere needless. Look at the phrase *pothendru vizhuvaan*, meaning "coming down with a plop". The point is not that the phrase does not occur in the English, though that too is something to be noted. (In the Hindi it is *voh naav meyn gir jata tha ...* prosaic, to say the least.) The point is that the phrase suggests a precipitateness. It is an uncontrolled onomatopoeic utterance caused by a sudden, admiring over-incursion of the authorial voice, than from a disciplined and creative reading of the scene. Even the base word *kudittu* for jumping, has a home brewn, acrobatic sound to it, as indeed, has that whole passage in its compulsive adherence to the acrobatic quality of the scene, in contrast to the tempering of it that takes place in the English.

The English banishes the sense of the archaic. It contemporarises the action without affecting the otherness of culture, geography and time. Palani seems an ordinary man performing extraordinary deeds as ordinary men sometimes do. This ordinariness is not there in the vernacuars. It is not there in the original too. But we miss it, and this need felt by us is met

by the English.

Menon's strategy, then, of going in for bare statements and a weeded prose, has paid off in this and in some other scenes.

On the other hand now, let us look at this passage.

*In those few seconds Karuttamma forgot the sorrows of her life. She felt she had not been vanquished. She had the strength few had. She was under the protection of a strong man, life was secure. Palani would see to it that the world outside wouldn't dare touch her or hurt her. And she also had something else which gave her spirit sustenance. A man loved her as no man had loved a woman. Between these two, her life was full. Now the man who loved her stood in front of her.*

The understanding of herself and her situation that comes to Karuttamma 'in those few seconds' is of a primal, atavistic sort, the sort that brings to mind an unconscious, guiltless feminine freedom associated with matriarchal orders, untouched or unsubverted by the model and ideology of chastity. She is expanding in her perceptions of herself. She is breaking from the bounds of her given identities of name and parentage, towards a consciousness of unconditional feminine worth, emerged clear of social impositions of shame and morality. She is entering that state of amorality which is the immediate result of such a liberation, and is the precursor to a more self-authored, more openly and genuinely need-based morality. A woman can well take from each man

whatever he is peculiarly fitted to give her, according to this morality. She can segregate her sensual and spiritual spheres of being, of her body and mind, as ingenuously as the male, and need not reproach herself for disloyalty or fickleness. Nor is she sullied by this impartial, selective utilisation of her body for distinct and disparate purposes. Like nature, like the sprawling and immense earth with which she is so often compared, the female body has its hidden springs of purification, recuperation, self-generation and regeneration, which make themselves felt to the woman the moment she is ready to register their vibrations.

The important point about this inner awakening of Karuttamma is that it is taking place at a semi-conscious level. And it is this semi-consciousness that is impaired in Menon's rendering. The English strips the protective layers furnished by the semi-conscious condition of Karuttamma against the full brunt of the unearthings taking place within her, against the awful dare of her coming alive to the multiple nature of femininity, a multiplicity kept hidden from her by society. The English straightens and defoliates the semi-consciousness of Karuttamma's growing, into a self-conscious process. It profiles an order and a sense of ready, extant social accommodation to the unorthodoxies blooming within her. It seems to be saying, there was Palani, her husband, to look after her on the everyday level. And there, on the subtler, poetic level of the spirit, was Pareekutty, providing completion, contentment. And

at this moment, the man from whom she derived spiritual sustenance, stood before her, calling to her. She would, therefore, go to him.

There is a clarity and a straight, uncluttered passage between thought and action, taken place in the English. There is an attenuation of the time and distance between the two that is characteristic of the original. Karuttamma, in the English rendering, is not thinking. She has already thought, fully and clear-headedly. There is no completed thought in the original, not at any point. There is only thinking, a slow, quaking course of thinking, below the fast-paced writing, that rends selves, emerges with fury and devastativeness.

Reading those sentences in Menon's English rendering we are put in mind of Western real life adjustments in which such self-accommodations are practised with a certain cold bloodedness. It is almost as though, to make it read plausible in English and to the Western sensibilities—an exercise in which the Indian writer in English comes to be engaged inevitably in some form or the other—Menon has, with the best of intentions, yielded to a phraseology already seasoned in the expression of thinkings like Karuttamma's.

There are few works in Indian writing so completely free of the Western correlative in their dialectic, as Thakazhi's. He works out the liberation of Karuttamma from the confines of superstition and fear to non-masochistic ideas of self-justice, purely by intuitive readings of her character, by divinings of her mind without the

comparative method of having a western model as reference. His reference is always the sea, utilised as a symbol for the rise and fall of Karuttamma's mental processes, and as metaphor for the explosive fury with which they finally break forth, annihilating her, the annihilation spelling the end of her story and pervading it. The factor of historicity—the Then and Now axis—of course, has been incorporated in the work, as is seen in the conversations between the fishermen on such issues as the powers of the headmen, the age of marriage for girls, the castes allowed to be boat owners. But here too the present is sought to be changed by the fishermen because of the fading relevance of the past in their own minds, because of its erosion by sheer time, not because of inducements from western examples.

It is precious, this intact preservation of a sense of cyclicity of values, unprompted by western norms. And it is this pre-western historicity which has to be maintained by the English rendering, and to which the translator has to be alive.

It cannot be said that Menon is not alive to this pre-western historicity. There is a modesty of gesture and inflection in his voice, in the approaches and addresses to the people and their life that he makes through the agency of English. But beyond establishing such a seamliness of manner and deportment, he does not guide the language into the thought springs of the people. He lets it float on the outside, depending on its conventional expressiveness to have the story told. This is chancy,

to say the least. English is a dangerous language, its powers of mental arrest and manipulation almost unlimited because of its imperial, colonising past, and its world wide currency. The pressures made by these blocks to free flow of thought and imagination are most felt in a sentence such as this, spoken by one of the fishermen during their discussion on the customs of fisherfolk.

*Are there any instances of any fishermen of the wrong caste getting a boat and net?*

The phrase "wrong caste" is an alien interpolation in this semi-drowsy conclave of insiders swapping data about themselves. It tears away the ring of privacy around the conclave, the unseen fencing that comes around all in-groups, and rudely scatters the atmosphere of unself-conscious privilege getting built in their midst. It is an educated, sociology-conditioned voice that we hear in the phrase, imposing itself on the uneducated but unscattered and well contained voices of the fisherfolk.

This overpowering and counter-creative usage of English has perforated the translation all through. One cannot help recoiling from it. Take, for instance, the English translation of the names of the various kinds of fish : "shrimp", "herring", "haddock" and so on. Even the Hindi terms (jhingra, for instance) do not sound right in the context of Thakazhi's work. The English positively foreignises the context, bringing in a dry correctitude in place of the charged evocativeness of the original.

The fish names in the Malayalam pulsate with the dms and rhythms of the fisher folk of Nirkunna sea-front. Not just any sea front, but this particular one, saturate with Karuttamma's tears, Chakki's scurryings about, Pareekutty's gentle, helpless mooning on its sands, Palani's desperation and feats of boatsmanship. Every novel worth its name has certain commonly used words in it, become special and sacred with the emotional saps fed into the work by the author. This sacredness of the local and particular, is what gets impaired in the Englishing.

The worst instances of these skids on the slopes of English are sentences concerning Karuttamma's femininity. Karuttamma, we are told, was given to "gadding about" on the sea shore, or "gallivanting about." She 'puts on a new kind of smile' to tell her husband something she is not sure how he would receive. When Pareekutty comes to her, dumb and suppliant, it is described by his sentence : "The man she had ruined stood before her." And there are a couple of instances of 'aunty' and 'mummy' as forms of address.

It is tawdry, this usage of phrases lodged on the tips of our tongue by deposits from pulp fiction produced in "the West. To some extent, the well reflected inner context mitigates the tawdriness. The inner context, for instance, in which the line about the new kind of smile occurs, to some extent rubs off on the line in the heat of reading. The context, one admits, does get built in the spare prose which

has been kept as model by the translator. Writing spare prose is not easy. A lot of judgment goes into the thinning. Just two lines earlier occurs the colloquialism, "She had no desire to play a game." This is all right. But not the putting on of a new kind of smile. English colloquialisms are tricky. The Indian context does not accept them all with equal ease. The sentence irks. It stays undigested in the back of the mind. In the same way, disturbs the sentence, "The man she had ruined stood before her." The context is sustained and kept breathing in the para, the cored, essentialised prose making itself felt all along, till the whole thing collapses, tripped by this sentence. Again, we overlook it, peering ahead for what happens next. But again, the irking persists. As for "gadding about" and "gallivanting about", these are sloppy, inexcusable.

The English language, as we said, breaks in upon one with a certain glut, an animal abundance, as if in keeping with the climate of mass production and mass consumption powering it. The translator has to exercise frugality in his application of the language to the Indian original. Frugal, Menon is, as we have seen. But a translator also has to play it by the ear, and ultimately a translation is a question of tone, of a timbre and pitch of voice subtly affecting and interacting with the volume of the original. It is, as we have been saying, another voice. But this otherness also induces you to re-read the original. The translation then slides back into our attention on the gravity of the

original, re-playing its compositions of sound, alongside those of the original, gaining for itself a re-confirmation.

Such a re-confirmation is the highest acclaim a translation can win for itself. It should be so whatever the languages concerned, and more so in English where the pitfalls are many, the chances of going wrong many, and therefore the challenge greater. Menon's translation does not really gain this highest acclaim for itself. The English has claimed him. He has claimed it too—and very well indeed—in certain passages, in the quick spill of the apt sentence in the momentum of rendering, in the fleeter, practical prose narrative that leaves no room for the kind of indulgent writing for which we have little sympathy today. But the totality escapes him. The language never gains that separate presence,

the well formed and separate body, bearing on its frame the cast and bias of the original, that make a translation memorable, perceptible.

Translation, let us repeat, is a major and extremely meaningful literary activity today. Like some other branches of the communications industry it is a means to gratify the increasing feelings of fellowship and mutual curiosity among cultures. It need not, indeed should not, be so like the original as to supplant it. To read original is not an achievement calling for praise. But it has to be itself. And this self is a second voice, a complementing voice, and a harmonious, assonant voice, above all. It is distinct, even while being all this. None of the three translations, one is forced to state, reaches this ideal.

*Courtesy : Indian Literature*

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**Raji Narsimhan**, Migrating from journalism to creative writing in the seventies, Raji Narasimhan, writing in English, has produced to date five novels, two short story collections, two books in literary criticism, and three translations from Hindi to English. Her novel, 'Forever Free' published by Hind Pocket Books in 1979, was short listed for the Sahitya Akadami Award, and was on the English literature syllabus of the IIT, Delhi. 'Sensibility Under Stress : Aspects of Indo-English Writing' was short listed for the Sahitya Akadami Award, and was recommended reading for students in a number of universities. A second book of criticism, dealing with translation processes, is recently published. She lives in New Delhi.

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## Promotion of Korean Studies : With Reference to Cultural Globalization

Divik Ramesh

My question is why we want to study and promote something other than us and why we want others to study us. The simple answer which I have got after long thought is because we want to share experiences in the interest of development of both and all of us and to overcome crisis of identification as fellows of the same planet. But there can be many reasons such as ancient roots of the civilization, similarity of philosophical happenings, significant cultural heritage, rapid growth in any field, discovery of some special inter links, sudden accessibility etc, for giving priority to someone among others. Further it is also natural for us to expand our wings from ourselves to home to village to town to province to nation and then outside. This applies to an individual, a society or country. Although in comparison to others Korean Study has come on our priority a little later but being a fellow Asian country it was necessary. Dr. Lee Eun Gu of HUFs has written in one of his articles that “In ancient times, Korean knowledge of, and linkages with, India was based on Buddhism that travelled to Korea both via China and directly. Legends are there about exchange of monks and marriage of a princess from Ayodhya to a Korean.” Bilateral relations between India and South Korea have been growing. Today, we may claim that study of almost all aspects of Korea is available to us. And now we have to find out relevance of the study in context of India. Here I should make it clear that when I talk of Korea, I, on one hand, talk of unified Korea before 1945 when it was liberated from the imperialism of Japan and on the other hand talk of South Korea.

I also want to point out that whatever I am going to say further is based on my study of Korean side of my interest as well as my experience which I had during my long stay in Korea from 1994 to 1997 followed by my two short visits. I want to touch those areas more which are not much discussed here. And before stepping ahead I must congratulate Jawahar Lal Nehru University for being the first and pioneer Indian University to begin Korean Studies. We should also welcome the department to expand the area and level of Korean studies in the previous years till now. I am also grateful to the department and JNU for the opportunity given to me to be here among the scholars of your order. I am humbled.

At the very beginning I want to share memory of my first day in the University of HUFs, Seoul where I joined as visiting Professor of Hindi. After finishing my classes, as per guidance of my student secretary (Chogyo) Mr. Chhal Bea, I went to Bus Stand to catch the bus to my residence. Mr. Chhal Bea had handed over a slip on which place of my residence was written in Korean Language with which I was not familiar at all by that time. And I also found that Koreans hardly speak English. Because of right hand drive system in Seoul about which also I did not know at that time I was confused. Nobody was there who could help me, I thought. I kept on waiting at the Bus Stop which was on the wrong side of the road for me about which I came to know later. After sometime I saw an elderly lady who came to me and

spoke something in Korean. I could not follow her but using my sixth sense I showed her the slip on which my destination was mentioned. By indication she made me realize that I was on the wrong side. At the same time she uttered a word which again I could not follow and later on I came to know that the word was Token, the accent of which was different to me. She took me to her nearby shop of photography and showed me bus tokens and tried to know whether I had the same with me or not. After knowing that I did not have tokens and perhaps I was not aware of token system she gave me tokens and inspite of request she did not accept money in lieu of them. Not only this she also accompanied me up to the right bus stand and when my bus came she guided me to board the same and she also instructed the driver to drop me at the right place. The next day when I visited her with my student-secretary she informed that she could know by my face that I was an Asian and Professor and she was very happy that she helped an Asian. When she came to know that I was an Indian or “Indo” in her words she further became very happy. From her gesture it was obvious that she had special feeling for Indians. This first day experience was very encouraging for me and feeling of alienation disappeared to a great extent. Since I come from a village basically therefore I could identify the warmth and values of human relationship of that lady whom I always addressed in future as Ajuma or Ajumani which means Hon.

Mother or lady. It was really a glimpse of Asian countryside culture which was still visible in one of the most modern cities of world, Seoul. I can share many more such experiences. During my stay I had opportunities to visit villages and towns of Korea and I can say with confidence that the people of small places were as innocent, simple warm and co-operative as people of small places in India. It does not mean that they are not intelligent. I am talking only about their behaviour. Once I visited a beautiful place known as Chunchan situated towards north of Korea with one of my Korean friends. Before the visit my friend informed me that most of the people of Chunchan are very shy because it is a small place and not like ultra modern City Seoul. Tak Kalbi (chicken) and cold noodles of Myongdong of Chunchan are very famous. The biggest dam of Korea is also there. But what fascinated me more was an experience of a traditional ritual which I saw in a park of that place. Here I saw many newly married couples with their friends. I was surprised when I saw the friends beating the bridegrooms by sticks and looking at that the helpless brides. My Korean friends explained laughingly that this was an old ritual of countryside which was being performed in a little new way. This is performed before moving for honeymoon. I saw legs of the bridegrooms were tied with a long cloth like ropes and were held by friends at the other end. They asked some questions to the brides related generally to last night experiences etc. In

cases where brides hesitated to reply out of shyness the friends would beat the bridegrooms until the brides reply. The brides were asked to perform some embarrassing actions also and the similar treatment was expected if the brides could not. It was really a great fun. At the same time it reminded me of similar tradition which I had experienced in my childhood in my village of North India. It is a popular saying that if we want to understand the real India we must study the villages of India also apart from the socio-economic scenario of the big cities. I think it is true in the case of Korea also. True, South Korea has witnessed a rapid growth of its urban centers and the Korean villages are much better in respect of infrastructure and facilities than Indian villages. Many a time I felt as if I was in a mountain village of India during my visits to Korean villages and small towns. If you listen to Korean traditional songs you may feel fragrance of our mountain songs. Sometimes fragrance of South of India can also be felt. As per a study, today's Koreans were late-comers of the Neolithic Period and as per anthropological, linguistic and legendary sources they trace their ethnic origins to people who lived in and around Atlantic Mountains in central Asia. Several thousand years ago people began to migrate eastward. Finally they settled in Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula. The Korean Peninsula is again a mountain dominated area. Study of origin of Korean language may also attract the Indians due to proposed various theories given by scholars



which link the Korean language with Dravidian Ainu along with Ural- Altaic, Japanese, Chinese, Tibetan, Indo-European and other languages. It is different that is accepted now generally that Korean is probably related to both altaic and Japanese. Korean script known as Han-gul (guel) which means great letters and which enable the Korean people to write their own language without the use of Chinese characters (Chinese characters were used by the upper classes, and Idu letters, a kind of Chinese based Korean character system was used by the common people.) was invented in 1443 under the reign of King Sejong (1418-1450) who was the fourth king of the Choson Dynasty. It is documented that King Sejong took help of many scholars to invent the Korean writing system. Although I cannot support with proofs but from the structure of the language it seems that the king might have taken assistance of Indian scholars also.

There are other factors also which make the Korean study necessary. As per Prof. Lee Jeong Ho of HUFSS, Seoul, who has translated famous Hindi novel "Tamas" written by Bhishm Sahani and done Ph.D. on Post Independence Hindi and Korean stories, both the nations India and Korea have suffered under colonial rule of rulers or foreigners and both the nations have experienced tragedy of division in the eve of their respective independences followed by wars between two parts. In both the countries the rulers kept on suppressing the independence movements but the strong protests through literature and arts

also kept on doing their role. Prof. Lee has shown lot of similarities related to contents, concerns and problems expressed in Hindi and Korean short stories. In justification of translating "Tamas" in Korean language Prof. Lee revealed that to understand Indian History, folk life (Lok Jeevan) and relations based on religions, study of 'Tamas' is necessary. Coming to the point again I may say that a study of Korea on the basis of its rural life can bring encouraging and interesting results. Specially if we want to understand their history and historical remains, beliefs, customs, traditions, gestures and even early religion, traditional life-style and society order etc., then we will have to study Korean villages and small towns. For example, during conversations, the Korean women touch each other by hand similar to Indian women in villages. At the time of photography they do not hesitate in holding even male foreigners. Even today one can listen echo of shamanism as a folk religion centered on a belief in good and evil spirits. The shaman is known as a professional spiritual mediator. One can see female shamans (Mudang) also along with male shamans (Paksu). The shamans communicate directly with the spirits and display supernatural strength. Among spirits, the mountain spirit is very important in Korea which protects the Koreans as per their belief. The mountain spirit, it is believed, watches over the village and influences the harvest. According to legend upon Tan-gun's death, the founder of Korea (about whom one can read

Samguk Yusa (memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) Shilla (57B.C-A.D.935), Koguryo (37B.C-A.D.668, Paekche (18B.C.-A.D.660) became the mountain spirit of Asadal, the ancient capital of Korea. Like the ancient capital, each village also has its own special mountain where the shrine of the mountain spirit is located. Offerings are made to this spirit often, but especially during the 15 days after the lunar New Year's Day. There is another spirit also known as Sonang which protects the village and looks after the welfare of all the villagers, brings happiness and harmony to their lives. Shrine of this spirit is usually located near the entrance to the village or on a hill overlooking it. The area is regarded as holy ground. Likewise ruling the waters is the dragon spirit who lives under the sea and referred as dragon king who controls the flow of water, its quality and the waves of the sea. In fact, mountains have special role in the life of Koreans for various reasons like religion, health etc. Mountains give even employment to the villagers. When I visited small towns and villages I found so many women selling herbs like vegetables etc., which were brought from the mountains. Source of one kind of natural mushroom which is very dear and for which even the rich Japanese do not mind spending lot of money is mountain itself. Likewise study of famous Mask dance can also reveal that masks were being used by the common people to express their grief before the Heads (Yangban) of the villages. Desire of having son has also prevailed among

Koreans. From ancient times, Korean women have been encouraged to produce male children. No matter how many daughters were born, the absence of a male child was ground for divorce. The idea of son preference is rooted deeply in the Confucian patriarchal system. It was the women's duty to produce a male heir to ensure the continuance of her husband's bloodline so that he can perform important ancestral rites. Although the modern Korea has overcome gender biases to a great extent and to study ways and means in this regard may be fruitful but even today one can see some Koreans attaching more importance to male child. I may recommend strongly a novel (in fact autobiographical novel in three parts) "Mom's Pillar" or "Mother's Stake" (Omai Maal Tuk) written by Park Wan-So to read. She died in early 2012. Through this Novel (and her other writings also) one can easily understand the lower status of women in Korean Society. In Part-III, seeing death of her son in the War (War between North and South Korea) she comments, "Oh God! instead of a useless girl (daughter who was saved) why you have snatched a good and noble boy (son)." Fortunately Hindi translation of Part-III has been done by a research scholar of JNU MS Lee Ji Hyun. A study of interpretations of Korean dreams can also be of great interest and useful to understand the Korean mind as mind of human beings. Some scholars have shown their interest in this direction also. The dreams for the Koreans who believe in them are like fortune tellers. For example

if the mother dreams about horses, oxen, dragons, tigers, bears, or other large animals, she will deliver a male child. If she dreams of flowers or toys that girls play with, she will deliver a female child. You should not be surprised if I mention that I have seen a cluster of houses at outskirts of Seoul, where almost all blind people reside. I was informed that they all were fortune tellers and many Koreans visit them to know their future. In this context I should also share that I was told that the Korean society was also divided on the basis of Uncha and Neecha means High and Low but not on the basis of caste but professions like Teacher or Guru, Doctors, farmers etc. Now no trace of such division is easily traceable in present Korean Society. Again a study in this regard can reveal the ways and means used by the Koreans to get rid of this evil. Incidentally, mention of Samguk Yusa reminds me of a very familiar story of Kim Suro, a king of Kaya Kingdom which is known as 4<sup>th</sup> kingdom of Korea and his Indian wife Ho Hwang Ok who was princess of Ayodhya, India and it is written there that she was married to the King in 42 of first century A.D. Generally, the historians do not approve the authenticity of this story. The story of Tan-Gun is also considered as myth. But without going into details at this moment I may say that as an Indian both these stories for me are very important to understand the feelings and intentions of the Koreans. Through these and similar stories, at least the urge, to inspire and endeavour for having or bringing the

relationship closer and stronger between the people of both the countries is very much obvious. So I welcome it. In Tan-gun story one can see concept of incarnation as well as his association with sandalwood which is not available in Korea otherwise. The name Tan Gun means king of sandal (Chandan) wood. Even today one can find a tree at the memorial of Tan Gun in Korea which is known as Sandal tree but that is different from sandal tree available in India. For details, I think one should read Samguk Yusa and other sources.

Now I want to share another interesting experience which I had after sometime of my said stay in Korea. By now I had learnt some Korean words also. An old student of the University where I was Professor and who claimed to be a believer of Buddhism became my friend. He could speak English. So he became my unannounced interpreter. One day we were going somewhere when all of a sudden a boy of hardly 12 years came near us and uttered in question style "Indo". I knew he wanted to confirm whether I was an Indian. When I said 'Ne' means yes he almost jumped with happiness and uttered some words out of which I could follow Gandi (Gandhi) and Thagore (Tagore). My friend told me that the boy wanted to know whether I was familiar with Buddha, Tagore and Gandhi. On listening yes from me he again expressed his joy and uttered few lines in Korean which I could not follow at all. By now I had come to know that the above three names were like identity

of an Indian in the eyes of an average Korean. India here is generally recognized and identified as the land of Buddha, Gandhi and Tagore. I was amazed to know from my Korean friend that the boy uttered Korean translation of four lines poem of the poet Tagore. The poem reads as :

In the Golden age of Asia  
Korea was one of its lamp-bearers  
And the lamp is waiting to be lighted  
once again  
For the illumination of the East.

In brief, This poem was written by Tagore during his 3<sup>rd</sup> visit to Japan in 1929 to leave the same for the Korean patriotic youths in Tokyo who requested him to visit Korea and the poet could not visit this time also. This poem was translated by poet Chu Yo-Han and was published in April, 1929 in 'East Asia Daily' under the title "Tongband Ui Tungbul (Light of Asia) and soon after independence it found place in text book for high school. This poem proved an unprecedented rise in the esteem and popularity of Korea. In the words of Madam Kim Yang Shik , "The year 1929 marked the tenth anniversary of one of the most memorable patriotic movements in Korean history, the March First Movement against Japan. Tagore's poem is only of four lines but the strong suggestion in his poem is enough to leave a deep emotion and a remarkable encouragement to Korean people at that time. Thus Tagore's poem sums up his strong optimism about the revival of Korean glory which the pervading gloom of Japanese colonialism had unfortunately enveloped.

The poem infuses confidence and hope even today in the minds of Korean people to march ahead towards a better future and one can easily imagine how much inspiration it would have given to them more than half a century ago when our country was chained by foreign rule as India was." (December, 1988).

This poem was originally written in English and not in Bengali. After nearly 68 years of its creation it could see its Hindi translation for the first time which was done by the writer of this article (Divik Ramesh) and when it was presented before a large gathering of Indians and Koreans in a function organized by the Tagore Society of Korea in Seoul during my stay (1994-1997) in Korea, it moved all and got much applause. As an editor Kim Yang Shik publishes the poem original in English along with its translations in Korean and Hindi on the back cover of the prestigious Korean journal 'Korean Indian Culture'.

I was eager to know more and more about relationship between Korea and Tagore. Tagore commands a special respect, honour and place among the Koreans even today. Because of constraint of time and space I may say very briefly in this regard as follows: Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore (Thakur) (1861-1941) remained no more unknown to KOREA. Just after he won the Nobel Prize in 1913, Asians themselves, the Koreans welcomed and celebrated the Prize as the first Asian Poet's prize. The works of Tagore reached Korea in English translation. It was found reflecting Tagore's deep concern for suffering humanity and

a strong will and message for a future world 'where mind is without fear and the head is held high'. Between 1916 and 1919 Tagore's name had entered in the homes of the Koreans. Translation of his works was started in 1916 and it has not stopped till now. This is also worth mentioning that his work has a great influence on Korean authors and poets. It is known as a fact that 'Tagore's influence on the Oriental world is restricted mainly to China, Japan and Korea, and the common factor in these countries is that all three countries were nationalistic. Of the three countries, the most influenced and the most accomplished work was produced by the sage Manhae.' (Kim Yang Shik). But according to studies, Tagore's influence was not limited to Han Yong Un (The Silence of Love) but extended to many other writers of the time, including Yi Gwang-Su (Pl. refer to article 'Translating Indian Poetry in the colonial period in Korea' by Theresa Hyun, York University published in "Benjamins—Decentering Translation Studies India and beyond ed. By Judy Wakabayashi and Rita Kothari.) This influence covered style and structure also. Kim Jae Hong who published one of the deepest studies on Tagore's influence in early 1980s established that Korean poets owe much in terms of style and structure. An article "A comparison between the Poetry of Rabindranath Tagore and Han Yong Woon (Man Hae) under the major title "Literary' Contacts and Influences between India and Korea" written by Prof.

Lee Jeong Ho of HUFs, Korea can also be read in this regard. Dr. N.K. Pankaj has also published articles on this topic. Very humbly I may suggest my own article 'Tagore : A Song of Hope in Despair' which was presented in one of the seminars organized by J.N.U. It is encouraging that mutual cultural and literary exchange programs have become the priority agenda between India and South Korea. Recently in 2009 one of the biggest business House of Korea Samsung Electronics and the South Korean Embassy has extended its full financial support towards "The Tagore Literature Award" for the Indian authors of various languages launched by prestigious central academy of India the "Sahitya Academy". At its first award function Samsung Vice-Chairman Y.W. Lee said about Tagore that through his writings and poems he touched the hearts of Koreans at a time they were passing through great difficulties. He is as revered in Korea as he is in India. South Korean President Lee Myung Bak has promised to have a bust of the poet installed in Seoul. This shows the love of Korea towards India and Tagore. Much more can be said in this regard. Before closing this point I may like to mention the earliest known poem "Song for Golden Orioles" composed in Chinese Characters by King Yuri (19 B.C-17 A.D.) of the Koguryo Kingdom which reads as follows :

Golden Orioles are flitting about,  
Male and female enjoying each other.  
Let alone to myself in solitude  
who shall I return home with?

Because of the enjoying birds, does not it remind of the first composition of Sanskrit poem by Valmiki? In the case of Valmiki the mating birds were killed by a hunter and seeing that the poet was inspired to write the so called first ever poem and in the case of above Korean poem King Yuri on his return orioles home from hunting found that the more favoured of his two wives had left him after a quarrel with the other.

He hastened after her and pleaded with her in vain to come back. On his way back he chanced to see a couple of orioles enjoying which inspired him to compose the above poem. Among the modern poets a comparative study of Hindi poet Trilochan and Korean Poet Shin Kyoung Rim (Nim) may be of interest. In the poems of both the poets one can see the depth of life, social reality with voice against oppression of farmers and countryside people also. Fortunately I could meet and talk to Poet Shin Kyoung Rim at Insa dong in Seoul, a place where ethnic glimpse of Korea can be seen. Korean poets, artists etc., meet there in restaurants . I think both sides should try to translate the literature of both sides and present research oriented comparative studies on the same more and more. Korea is one of those few countries where one can find well maintained memorials of not only great personalities but also of their authors. Memorial of one of the most lovable poets Kim so Wol is in Seoul. And there one can find his poem engraved on stone. For the first time I saw such a different

memorial through which more importance was given to the creation. That inspired me to read Korean poetry both ancient and modern. However, I leave this context here since I have already published an article on Korean Poetry in “East Asian Literature” edited by Prof. P. A. George. But I may recommend an article on Poetry of Korea (Trends in Modern Korean Poetry) entitled “Rediscovering the Self Through Lyricism” by Yoo Sungho published in 2010. The author has pointed out that i. Korean Poetry has ‘pursued the creative integration of social consciousness and lyricism rather than traditional sentiments,’ ii. ‘A dramatic increase in ecological poems can be regarded as a notable trend in poetry in the 1990s. Environment-friendly poems, contemplative poems immersed in nature, post-humanist poems that affirm all living things and poems critical of civilization can be included in this trend,’ iii. ‘A number of female poets formed the main body of poetry in the 1990s. This signified a shift that had previously centered on reason, power, and men, to a focus on emotion, diversity, sexuality, and life. Examples of this change can be found in poets such as Chun Yanghee, Kim Hye-soon, Bak Ra-yeon, Hwang In suk, Choi Jeong-rye, and Jeong Keut-byeol.’, iv. ‘Poets such as Jeong, Ho-seung, Lee Seong-bok, Choi Seungho, Choi Seung-ja, Lee Ha-suk and Ki Hyung-do presented poems that explored an authentic existence by embodying the inner self of a person living in a capitalist society and the social violence that induced it.’,

etc.

Now I will like to draw your attention towards a lacuna of Korean Studies so far. Almost negligible interest has been shown towards Children's Literature of Korea. Here I would like to touch a great poet, Pang Chong Hwa (1899-1931), the great fatherly figurer of Korean Children whose nick and popular name is So pa (small or little wave) and who founded the Korean Children Day *i.e.* 5<sup>th</sup> May in 1923 to install in the children a sense of independence and national pride and whose statue and teaching can be seen in the largest Children's Park "Orini dai Gongwan" in Seoul. He addressed the children as Tongmu means comrade or 'Saathi' in Hindi. He also talked about the rights of children. In the summer of 1921 he returned to Korea from Tokyo University where he was an exchange programme student studying literature and started a movement to use honorific language when speaking to children. In 1922 he published a book of original stories for children, Sarang Ui Sonmul (The gift of love) and in 1923 he began publishing the magazine Orini (Children). Pang Chong Hwa was among two of the early prominent figures of Children's literature. The other one was Yun Sok Chung. Both these writers translated and introduced works from "The Crescent Moon" (prose poems written on children and childhood by Tagore). This was the time when Korean Children literature had no special attention or mention. So 'The Crescent Moon' provided new genre during the colonial period. In

particular the translations by poet Yun Sok Chung are considered of high quality. In my view, otherwise also, Yun Sok Chung has written the best Children's poems in Korean. This I felt when I was translating Korean Children's poems for my book 'Korean Bal Kavitaeyin' (Korean Children Poetry) published by National Book Trust, India. One can feel obvious influence of Tagore's works on some of his poems for Children. For example, in one of the songs Tagore wrote :

Where the world has not been broken  
up

Into fragments by narrow domestic  
walls...

And

Yun Sok Chung has written in one of his most famous and beautiful poems, "World Map":

I have got a home work/ To show the  
world in a map./ I could not finish the  
same/ I worked hard the whole night.

If there were no boundaries

If there were no countries and nations  
It would have been easier

To draw the world in a map.

Towards the end, I may mention that apart from economic development, history, literature, language, philosophy and religion the Korean music, musical instruments like khayagum, drums, pansuri etc., paintings, festivals like Daeboreum (The first full Moon Folk Festival), fairs dances etc., can also be interesting areas of study. One can trace number of similarities to Indian side. The festival Daeboreum about which I have published

an article in Hindi was equated by me with Holi of India. The full name is Jeongwol daeboreum Daljiptaengi means first full moon 'straw heap' burning. This is known as fire festival also. The festival is celebrated to pray for health and a good harvest in the coming year. Fortunately I participated in the festival on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1995 in Changchung Park, Seoul. Like stories or legends behind Indian festivals this festival has also a legend to support its celebration. Legend is that King Yuri (24-57) from the Silla Kingdom was eating in his garden on the day of the first full moon, when a passing crow dropped a 'letter' at his feet. On the outside was written, "If opened, two shall die. If not opened, one will die." The puzzled king asked some of his advisors for an explanation and was given the following interpretation, "The 'one' refers to your majesty, while the 'two' are other people." So the King opened the letter and read the message it contained, "Shoot an arrow into the harp case." He hurried back to the palace and did so. As he looked into the case, he found his Queen and a monk, dead in each other's embrace. It appears, that the Queen had fallen in love with the monk and the two had been planning to murder her husband, the King, that very night. To repay the crow, the King proclaimed the 15<sup>th</sup>, the day of the first full moon, the day on which his life was saved, as Crow Thanks-giving Day. In gratitude, a rite to the crow was held with an offering of black rice, the colour of the crow. Killing of evil is common in Holi and Daeboreum and at the same time both

are related to agriculture too. Korea is known as country of festivals. Further, study of Buddhist monasteries or temples (although now one can see Gurudwara also) should also be taken. In particular, in my opinion to begin with studies of Gaaya San Hea In Sa known as 'reflection on a calm ocean' which means a state in which the enlightened soul can see the true meaning of everything, 'Tongdo Sa' where the Pagoda contains the remains of Buddha and 'Songwang Sa' where many scholars have lived may be of great interest. And some words about Gaaya San Hea In Sa the place which I visited with poet Madam Kirn Yang Shik the first Korean who has been honoured by Padamashri Award. Going through the temple was a marvelous experience. The temple had about 220 resident monks. Special three-monthly meditation camps are held in the summers and in the winters. The number of monks in the temple goes up during such periods. The place also had a university with about 100 students. Around the temples were beautiful mountains that had about 15 residential blocks accommodating 200 women Buddhist disciples. But the section of the temple we finally visited was truly astounding and was not only the pride of the temple but that of Korea. The section houses a treasure which makes us feel proud and humble at the same time. The section, in a certain sense, is a distinguished library and is truly reflective of the structure and aim of the temple. The section has an extraordinary treasure of 81340 similarly crafted wooden pieces. The entire Buddhist



scripture has been engraved in these pieces. These engravings have been preserved in a unique manner. The section was built upon a special soil and the rooms were designed to let air circulate in a manner that would save the engravings from moisture. The section housing these treasures looked very ordinary. However, some years back these engravings were shifted, for better preservation, to a new, expensive building. But within weeks the wooden pieces started degrading. They had to be quickly taken back to the older building.

I was keen to know more about these engravings. It was very interesting to learn how they were made. First, special white trees in the islands were chosen. Then the logs were kept submerged for three years in the sea. Then they were made into planks and then boiled in sea-water and dried in shade. After they dried they were made smooth. And then, before engraving, the words were painted on to them. The 52382960 characters were engraved by about 30 people but their similarity is really amazing. It is even more amazing to know that the engraving is not only beautiful but also error-free. These Korean scripture engraving have many sections—some of which are not even in the Chinese. The Japanese also have derived much from these scriptures. They are very important from the cultural and national identity point-of-view of the Koreans. The Korean Buddhist Scriptures were engraved twice in the Korea Kingdom (918-1392). The King and the people believed that the

presence of the engraving would help them defeat all foes. The first engraving was completed in 1087. Unfortunately, it was burnt in 1232 in the Mongol attack. The work was resumed in 1236—under the King Go Long. The present engraving was completed in about 16 years—in 1251. It was first kept in an island called Kang Hwa and was moved to In Sa in 1398. The In Sa Island was not much inhabited then and it was found appropriate to hide the scriptures from Japanese attacks.

The engravings have bestowed upon He In Sa a high religious status. The place is known as a place of knowledge. We also got to hear many miraculous stories about He In Sa. The temple was ordered to be bombed in the Korean war. The pilot kept hovering over the temple but could not bomb the grand edifice. He was later punished for disobedience. However, after the war, he became a national hero. The mountain on which He In Sa is situated is spread over an area of 8156 acres and is at a height of 1430 meters. The entire area is densely forested and gives the feeling of a big green sea. I felt as if I was blissfully immersed in the sea.

I know that practical demand of “Korean Studies” would be to explore those areas through which purpose of relevance of employment and economic growth outside is served. But I think in this era of globalization which is mostly based on economic and technological relations, if we really want the world to move through peace and mutual growth then we will have to think of cultural globalization also. It

will be interesting to quote a view which deals with a purpose of “Indian Studies” in the eyes of Koreans presented by Dr. Lee Eun Gu who has translated Premchand’s “Nirmala” and has written a book on “Indian Culture” . I quote, “What is the purpose of “Indian studies” in South Korea?.. . Unquestionably, many scholars study India purely because it is intellectually interesting and they have no other purpose than to share their love of India with others, with no motive of anything applied or “practical” coming out of their labours. This perhaps is most true of scholars in

the arts and letters, whose scholarly outputs may appear to have little practical relevance to the real world of today’s India.” One may consider this view also while thinking of Korean Studies in India. We should also try to have more and more organizations to promote India-Korea cultural relations. There is one India-Republic of Korea Friendship Society but it is not very active. In Korea there are at least seven organizations including Tagore Society of Korea, to promote Korea-India cultural relations. The upcoming cultural centre of R.O.K in New Delhi may be helpful in this regard.

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**Divik Ramesh** : born 1946 is a prolific, prominent poet and academician; has been professor and principal of a college in Delhi University and on visiting faculty at Hankuk Univ. Seoul, Korea, has several collections of poems and is honoured with Hindi Academy’s and N.C.E.R.T. awards. He lives in Noida.

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## The Gradual Decline of The Bhakti Movement and Its Relevance in The Present Times

Rajeev Ranjan Giri

Translated by  
Mohini Mehta

The *bhakti* period has been marked as an extremely significant epoch in the Indian cultural history. Its prevalence is not limited to any particular language, nor is its popularity constrained in the country by the geographical divisions. This era, stretching up to over a thousand years in a large part of the subcontinent, can aptly acquire the status of a 'movement'. The impact of this millennium-long *bhakti* period can be felt not only on the literature, but on every discipline associated with art and culture—a fact proven by eminent social scientists, historians and researchers who have compiled their seminal work on these cultural disciplines. When discussed in the context of literature, it becomes evident that *bhakti* literature—the umbrella term used for the literature written and compiled in distinct languages/dialects over this long period of time—has many similarities within its own sub-divisions and sub-genres, which connects all of them (superficially) and brings them under the general rubric of *bhaktisahitya* (literature). However, as one ascends through the levels, the quintessential uniqueness of each of these styles become more distinct. This distinctness can be observed in the language, region, writer (poet/composer), concerned class and community among other factors, and it makes these literary sub-genres all markedly different from each other. This essay will deal with the

critical assessment of the decline (and gradual expiration) of the *bhakti* movement in the Hindi speaking northern belt of the country. The relevance of the movement in the present time shall also be discussed briefly. The discussion of the latter is not done in the context of cultural disciplines like music, artwork and dance forms; instead, it revolves around analyzing its impact particularly on literature.

The nature, characteristics and geographical impact of the literature composed during the *bhakti* period has been studied and researched upon by a number of scholars, historian and literary critics. Different interpretations and the hypotheses/postulates to comprehend the same have also been given. However, before delving deeper into these thought-churning analyses, it's important to have a proper understanding of a couple of questions—what is the exact meaning and connotation of the term '*avasana*', (the term which forms the crux of my argument and will therefore be used frequently in the essay)? Did the post-*bhakti* period witness a complete absence of composition of *bhakti* literature? It is incredulous that composition of a particular genre of literature (or for that matter, of any art form) can come to a complete halt all of a sudden. In accordance with the different eras involved in the evolution of an art form, it is more plausible to say that the importance of a particular genre of literature/art in the cultural history reaches its zenith only under certain circumstances, and wanes thereafter. Juxtaposing the same in the

context of *bhakti* period, it can be concluded that though the composition of *bhakti* literature might have continued even after the *bhakti* period, the later day compositions can't arouse the same emotions, or be as impactful as they would have been in that particular period. The concepts of 'mainstream' and 'marginalized tendency' also have their limitations in facilitating a complete understanding of this process. Another noticeable factor is the role played by the creative skills—the creativity which for once plays a crucial role in a particular era of history, later goes on to acquire characteristics opposite to the ones it endorsed before. For instance, the ideas propagated by the contemporary literature during the *bhakti* movement (the contrasting and contradictory tendencies within this genre have been clubbed together under this term for ease of explanation) are markedly different from the nature of *bhakti* literature composed in the present times. Except for the similarity of genre, the compositions from these two different time periods stand poles apart from each other. The heights achieved by human conscience in the cultural and literary context in the history presents a stark contrast to the *bhakti* poems of today. Ironically, the unique characteristics which metamorphosed the literature of the *bhakti* period into a movement, later (under the changed socio-political and economic framework) went on to lose its revolutionary traits and gradually started stemming up in its opposition.

The *bhakti* movement itself stemmed from the deep tensions and struggles of its times. It had a well defined social basis and a material reason as well. These major and far-stretched cultural processes in history have one thing in common—they exhibit a broadly similar nature and characteristics among other things. However, as one delves deeper in analyzing it, the mutual contradictory tendencies and struggles within the process begin to unfold. So, the stress on accepting the superficial unity of a cultural process as an established fact actually diverts the attention from internal contradictions and dominating tendencies of the era. This acts as a hindrance in properly analyzing the concerned period.

Regarding interpretation of the *bhakti* era, one drawback in the critique must be mentioned—the critics' tendency to research upon the plethora of literary compositions of the period through the perspective of a single contemporary poet. Now, a critique using the compositions of Tulsidas as the yardstick obviously can't do justice to the works of Kabir or Surdas. Similarly, a literary critique influenced by Kabirdas' work won't be appropriate to judge Tulsidas, Surdas or Meerabai. On one hand, the tendencies stressing on superficial unity make a desperate attempt to hide the internal contradictions and veil the contemporary dominating factions within the power hierarchy, while on the other hand, a literary critique based on a particular poet tend to overlook the unique traits of other contemporary poets. This

is not only true with respect to the diverse works of Meera, Tulsī, Kabir and Surdas, but also stands true for two entirely different compositions of the same poet. For instance, it is just not possible to justly analyze Tulsidas' *Vinayapatrika* and *Kavitavali* on the basis of his *Ramcharitmanasa*. In the same way, trying to properly understand Jaysi's (Malik Mohammed) *Akhiri Qalaam* on the basis of *Padmavat* would be inappropriate. It is because of the fact that despite being the creations of the same author, these compositions also have certain individual traits which define their uniqueness. It thus makes it indispensable to have a prior understanding of the dialectical nature of the concerned period for the complete comprehension of a particular period. It also shows that the scholars who have analyzed and researched upon the internal contradictions of the *bhakti* period have also made a note of its gradual deterioration and decline.

According to Dr. Ramvilas Sharma, medieval poets should be classified on the basis of serving the court (courtly and non-courtly). Based on this, he stressed upon identifying the similarity between Kabirdas and Tulsidas. He states, "who is actually the affluent poet—the one who resides inside the court, or the one outside its influence? Numerous court poets, from Keshavdas to Bihari have been discussed in history. But why aren't these noted court poets discussed in the same breath as Kabir? Why is the literary affluence associated with Tulsidas instead of them, who was nowhere near

the courtly periphery! Those who assign this status to Tulsidas are the ardent supporters of *Reetivaad*—the literary tradition of the court; therefore they will never endorse Matiram or Bihari as being superior to Kabir. But their vehement protest will be aimed at the other party—the non-courtly poets. According to them, the difference between the impacts of compositions of the former two can be analogized as differences between rural cultivator and a casual urban labourer. It's just like assigning the idea of revolution only to the proletarian class—the urban artisans—while denying any such revolutionary traits among the rural cultivators. Therefore, they thought that a humble poet emerging from the rustic grassroots can never usher in a revolution with his words. Using this analogy, it becomes easier to identify the perception of those scholars towards courtly and non-courtly poets. However, despite this quintessential difference, the dissimilarities between the non-courtly poets, and the likes of Kabir and Tulsidas are not that entrenched as those between them and the court poets like Bihari and Matiram—they were, after all, the court poets following the tradition of the court.”\*

“Whether Dadu and Raidas (Ravidas) shun the caste system just like Kabir is another question for which one should seek answer. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi mentioned that these artisans taught their message in simple and sweet words. Even they belong to the category of artisans. However, not all artisans (or members of the same

profession) are the same. Taking one out of the rural lifestyle and disassociating him with his familiar environment and then emphasizing upon him being different from the rest of his group—wouldn't that be called an act of tampering with the cultural history according to one's own whim? Broadly speaking, both Tulsidas and Surdas are *Vaishnavas*, like Kabir. The latter frequently mentioned Vaishnavas as the virtuous ones while abhorring Shaktas/*Sakhats* (worshippers of goddess Shakti—in literal sense, the wielders of power) as evils who spoke ill of *Vaishnavas* while praising lord Shiva. On the other hand, Tulsidas was trying to unite *Shaivas* and *Vaishnavas*. Now, some critics are trying to bring forth this conflict between the two factions in an altogether different manner. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi is in favour of lord Shiva being declared as the national deity. In response to that, I have written that he should instead be declared an international deity revered across the world, for He was the *proletarri*—the man without property or wealth resource. But ironically, the worshippers of Shiva themselves believe in the (vices of) caste system, and if they would continue with that mentality, they would soon forget the sincere efforts of Tulsidas towards uniting the two. They will also forget that Kabir was a *Vaishanava*. Those propagating Kabir as a revolutionary ignore the fact that he was a Vaishanava; like Tulsidas, he too emphasized on non-violence and was against sacrificial ceremonies. But, we conveniently overlook his *Vaishanava* side- his protest against the

Shakta faction, the *mullahs* (Muslim religious clerics/fanatics), and his views on mysticism—taking to notice only his protest against the caste system. Even in mysticism, we don't take into account the phase when his mysticism had elements of *hathiyoga* (the tantricism apparently practised by him) and when it was devoid of it. We therefore present an image of Kabir as a jigsaw puzzle in front of the readers—a puzzle which has many pieces missing. It is of no help in understanding either Kabir or his ideological tradition.”<sup>1\*</sup>

Along with presenting the broad classification based on courtly and non-courtly poets, Dr. Sharma also declares the supporters of literary affluence of Tulsidas as 'blatant supporters of court' and 'followers of *Reetivad*'. He also considers the difference between Kabir and Tulsidas as the one between artisan (*proletarri*) and cultivator (producer), though he himself considers this differentiation negligible. He also expresses his surprise over not emphasizing upon Kabir's protest against the Shaktas and the *mullahs*, for Kabirdas' identity is defined by his vehement protest against the politics of religion and powers which follow consequently. Overlooking the contradictions between Kabir and Tulsidas, Dr. Sharma tries to pit them (and the likes) against a completely different group comprising of Keshav, Dev, Bihari and Matiram to stress upon the significant difference between them. There indeed is a marked difference between the court poets and the *bhakti* poets. Despite this, it was only Surdas and Tulsidas who

championed the cause of protesting against Kabirdas and the followers of *nirguna* philosophy. This was because Matiram, Keshav and Bihari were not confronted with those (intellectual and spiritual) worries which had rendered Surdas and Tulsid worried.

According to Dr. Sharma, absence of courtly influence and *Vaishnavism* aren't the only factors drawing similarity between Kabir and Tulsidas. In fact, he goes a step further by showing a similarity between the social aspects with respect to the content in their literary works. "There is no mutual contradiction between *Nirguna* and *Saguna* ideologies. They share the same traditions—expressed and unexpressed...Kabir, Jaysi and Tulsidas share the same philosophical background. This is reflected in the common aspects their compositions have."<sup>2</sup> After analyzing these similarities, Dr. Sharma has accorded the title 'Sant-Kavya' to the literature composed during this era. For a moment, even if we accept his argument regarding the poets of *bhakti* period sharing the same philosophical background and socio-literary aspects, then how can one come to terms with his statement that "Kabir comes across the readers as a fearless and somewhat revolting (norm-defying) critic?"<sup>3</sup> Is the similarity between the social content of their work also judged on the basis of 'broad classification' discussed earlier in the essay? If this social content reflects such deep similarities, then why has Dr. Sharma referred to Kabir as the 'revolting critic'? Despite Dr. Sharma's effort to consider

social content as the biggest similarity between Kabir and Jayasi, Tulsidas, the usage of such adjectives by him for Kabir itself depicts the deep tensions prevalent in that period. What else does the bitter abhorrence of Kabir and *Nirguna* sect by *Vaishanava* poets like Tulsidas and Surdas reveal?<sup>4</sup> The presence of a strong protest (along with the social content) against the *Saguna* poets in the works of Kabir and *Nirguna* poets propelled Tulsidas and Surdas to take this as a challenge and respond with a sharp critique of the former. Had it not been the case, would *acharya* Ramchandra Shukla have called the *Nirguna* poets as the 'anti-social' elements then, just like Dr. Sharma called Kabir as the 'impertinent critic'? "If seen from a broader perspective, it can be easily discerned that according to Dwivediji, the (social) ideas of *Nirguna* poets were much more progressive. Now this opinion is clearly in contradiction to his other theories which state that *nirguna* poets criticized the masses while the *saguna* poets, especially Surdas advocated the cause of these groups in the society. Needless to say, it takes a while even for the greatest supporters and the most progressive critics to be in full agreement to these theories of Ramchandra Shukla."<sup>5</sup> Dr. Namwar Singh is perhaps aware of this situation.

Though in a considerably faint manner, Dr. Ram Vilas Sharma also seems to agree with the theories of *acharya* Shukla. If Shukla portrays Kabir as an 'anti-social' (*lok-virodhi*) element-blatantly defying the norms dictated by the elites of the society-

Sharma calls him a norm-defying critic. After all, Kabir stood in bitter opposition to the '*lokdharmā*' (the regulations and customs followed by the contemporary society), defined by *acharya* Ramchandra Shukla. There is one more noticeable difference between *acharya* Ramchandra Shukla and Dr. Ram Vilas Sharma in their beliefs regarding Kabir. While *acharya* Shukla acknowledge the difference between *nirguna* and *saguna* factions and strongly criticize the former, even calling it against as an institution 'against the masses', Dr. Sharma on the other hand considers the difference between the two factions negligible and sees a great similarity between the social content in the literary compositions of the two. By emphasizing the difference between *bhakti* and *tantra* yoga as the most important one, he echoes the ideas similar to those propagated by *acharya* Shukla. Though there may be a slight difference in the terminology used by the two in context of Kabir, their inference, however, remains the same.<sup>6</sup>

It is but obvious that unless the nature, characteristics and contradictions of *bhakti* movement are not properly studied and analyzed, it is not possible to critically explain its gradual decline. Despite emphasizing upon the need to look at unique traits of each composition of the era and elucidating on the literary qualities of Surdas, even Manager Pandey has ignored the internal contradictions of the movement in a bid to accord an epic-like status to the *bhakti* literature. "Protection and progression of human and the ultimate



truth are the motives of *bhakti* movement. The very creativity of *bhakti* literature serves towards this goal. For *bhakti* poets, nothing comes before the ultimate truth of human life—be it clan, creed, religion, community, gender difference, social speculations, or even fear of the words of canonical texts. *Bhakti* literature wants to replace the bias-ridden social arrangement with a more egalitarian and humane social structure based on the principles of humanity.”<sup>7</sup> Though it’s true that the ultimate truth and protection of humanity is discussed by almost all writer-poets of *bhakti* movement, but are these concepts same for every contemporary poet? Or, were there different connotations used by different poet-philosophers for this umbrella concept? So the *bhakti* poets really didn’t care about any socio-economic difference prevailing in that era? And, by saying the above, is it *really* sensible to use the same yardstick for accessing and analyzing emotions, ideology and cultural awareness expressed in the literature composed by these poets? Such unity (in the literary compositions and ideas) was stressed upon by Vasudev Sharan Agrawal—“the cultural history of our country is gleaming with the gems of a united originality. Only that historian is worth his profession, who can find single unified tradition buried deep under the multiple layers of differences, and work towards highlighting that genre of unity.”<sup>8</sup> Now, is it not plausible to stop here and ask why the historians have to prove their mettle only by unveiling the unity behind

the diverse differences—why not the same title be accorded to the one who studies beyond the superficial unity to properly understand and bring out the tensions and contradictions which have continuously rippled over the concerned era? Therefore, Dr. Ram Vilas Sharma’s idea regarding treating all those who study about the internal contradictions—either between Kabir-Tulsidas or *Saguna-Nirguna*—as the supporter of *Reetivaad* and courtly tradition, definitely needs to be re-examined. Dr. Vasudev Sharan Agrawal’s above mentioned idea regarding cultural unity also deserves the same. As a result of dearth of attention and thought given to such beliefs, they continue to thrive and take over the general historical sense. Therefore, those bringing forth the internal contradictions of the Indian society are often looked down upon as the victims of colonial mentality. On one hand, there is a deliberate effort to overlook the contradictions to stress upon the general unity; while on the other hand, those trying to unveil the difference are labelled as suffering from colonial mentality just to divert people’s attention from those issues. This two-fold process is carried out—overlooking the dominating factions in the structure. Therefore, “in today’s scenario, the general attitude is not to delve deep into the contradictions within *bhakti* movement and instead focus on its similarities only.”<sup>9</sup>

After researching upon the contradictions of the *bhakti* movement, historians Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Joshi have

reached the conclusion that “there was a clear distinction between the different sects of the medieval time—Ramanandi, Nanakpanth, Vaishanava etc. and, this distinction obviously wasn’t the ‘colonial construction’, and was decided by the cultural heads of these sects prior to coming of the British. The colonizers however did use it for their own selfish interest.”<sup>10</sup> Bajrang Bihari Tiwari has brought to notice some aspects of *bhakti* movement which weren’t noticed earlier. Tiwari’s research further elaborates the internal differences and thus works in favour of theories established by Joshi and Joshi.<sup>11</sup> with numerous evidences, Tiwari has proved that the difference which is considered the ‘main struggle’ (difference between *saguna* and *nirguna* sect) in *bhakti* movement is actually negligible, while those internal contradictions—which are often overlooked—are the most crucial. Along with that, there were tensions within the different factions of the *saguna* sect as well. And, it was not only limited to just mutual bitterness and eloquent arguments. In fact, there have been instances of physical violence between them all. Amidst all this, the *saguna* poets managed to establish sound relations with the ruling elites of their times, and got decisions made in their favour. If this was the nature of relation shared by *saguna* sects, then one can well imagine the conditions prevalent among the *nirguna* factions. it perhaps needs no explanation, because the biggest worry of Vallabhacharya was this sect which stood in bitter opposition to *Vedas* (canonical texts).

*Saguna* sect was organized to oppose the former only.

It can be questioned as to why the tendency to recognize the internal contradictions is not as common in Hindi literature as it is in other disciplines. Why the great poet-writers are always accorded with the demi-God status in our country? Other consequent development is that the Hindi literary society is not able to critically look at and accept the internal contradictions, despite the presence of numerous reasons and evidences.<sup>12</sup> For now, it is important to know who all have researched on the internal contradictions in this context, and to what extent.

Gajanan Madhav ‘Muktibodh’ has been the first critic of Hindi language, who raised the issue of the gradual decline/ deterioration of *nirguna bhakti*—an extremely important part of the *bhakti* movement. Muktibodh felt the need to analyze as to “what were the reasons that *nirguna bhakti* movement against the caste hierarchy failed to achieve the desired success?”<sup>13</sup> He has devised two methods to understand and analyze literature. “Firstly, it’s not possible to properly analyze any genre of literature unless we get a complete understanding of those social factors in force which shaped the cultural history of the given period.”<sup>14</sup> Secondly, “Any type of literature should be studied using three perspectives—the socio-cultural and psychological factors behind its origin; the factors and emotions which have inspired and consequently shaped its internal composition and final structure;

and lastly, its impact, and how it has been used (or exploited) by the contemporary social powers and the reasons for the same. The reasons behind its evolution or destruction by the common masses are also taken into account.<sup>15</sup> based on these methods, Muktibodh has studied and analyzed the *bhakti* movement. Answering his own questions, he states, “The struggle of the *sagunas* against the *nirgunas* actually represented the struggle between the lower sections and the high-born, virtuous and affluent members of the society. The *saguna* sect, which initially started off with worship of Lord Krishna, eventually emerged victorious. The Krishna *bhakti*, in many senses, was deeply influenced by revolutions undertaken by lower sections. An emotionally charged section of high-born continued to be influenced by the *bhakti* movement, in southern as well as northern part of the country. The Krishna possessed many traits of criticism against the vices of caste structure. In other words, this movement was a type of emotionally-driven individualism. This was the reason why the *saguna* sect was spread on a larger scale among the lower castes in places like Maharashtra instead of its *nirguna* counterpart. ...however, the kind of intense struggle between *nirguna* sect and Krishna worshippers witnessed in North India was thankfully not present in Maharashtra. The elements of *shringara bhakti* and *bhramara-geet* (literary genres ridiculing *nirguna* ideology) were absent in Maharashtra. There Krishna was seen as a redeemer, who helped His worshippers in their plight,

regardless of their caste or creed. There has been no evidence of struggle between the *shringara* element of Krishna worship, and *nirguna* ideology. On the other hand, North Indian bhakta-poets like Nandadas (most of whom were high-born affluent members of society) have shown their clear disdain against *nirguna* sect. Though the Krishna worshippers were the high caste members posed in direct conflict against the members of *nirguna* sect, they did not directly criticize the innate composition of society—the *varna* structure. But its impact upon the north Indian society had been phenomenal... Once the Brahmins took over the *bhakti* movement, the re-emergence of *varnashram* (*varna* structure) was promptly declared.”<sup>16</sup> To stress upon his notion, Muktibodh has shown the similarities between the forces opposing *nirguna* sect in North and South India. He states, “In the initial stages of *bhakti* movement, the low-born elements of the society were the most active. The orthodox elements of the South Indian society were the ardent supporters of the Hindu feudal elites and thus vehemently opposed the cultural awareness among the lower class masses. The latter also faced numerous atrocities in the hands of high-born elites. Despite sharing a bitter relation with Muslims, the Hindu feudal lords were forced to be party with them against the *bhakta* poets. But in North India, a large section of Hindu community was servile to the Muslims. In fact, Akbar was the first ruler who welcomed the Hindu feudal elites with open arms.”<sup>17</sup>

Muktibodh has highlighted the alliance (rather a compromise) between the supporters of Hindu feudal elites and the Muslim against the rising socio-cultural awareness among the lower classes. This statement of Muktibodh is worth giving a thought—“Akbar was the first ruler, who openly welcomed the Hindu feudal lords based on the contemporary facts and situations.” Now what does ‘contemporary facts and situations’ connote? What were those factors which prompted Akbar to extend a friendly hand towards the Hindu feudal groups? This is a crucial question, for it means that by forging amicable relations with the feudal group, Akbar also played a role in weakening the social cause carried out by the *nirgunas*. Rangeya Raghav also agrees to Muktibodh’s views regarding Akbar.<sup>18</sup> The evidence to this belief advocated by Raghav and Muktibodh can be seen in some decisions taken by Akbar. Intimidated by the phenomenal impact achieved by *nirguna* sect in transforming the society, the leaders of *saguna* sect resorted to political-administrative power. Consequently, it led Akbar to even order that “no member of lower caste should have the access to education, because their minds become conducive to destruction after receiving education.”<sup>19</sup> along with this, Akbar also ensured that “Brahmins should be appointed to take decisions for Hindus in place of Qazis or Muftis.”<sup>20</sup>

In his above-mentioned analysis, Muktibodh has stated that “it can be concluded that *bhakti* movement started

with the common masses and represented the cultural aspiration of these groups against the social orthodoxy along with a quest to discover the ‘ultimate truth’. Later, the higher castes tweaked the idea of the movement to their own benefit, making it devoid of the socially integral elements and establishing their complete dominance over it.”<sup>21</sup> By using the term ‘higher castes’, Muktibodh is referring to the *saguna* bhakti sect, which first compromised (with the Muslims) and then created their influence in the “socio-cultural field to completely uproot the egalitarian message propagated by the lower-class driven *bhakti* movement. Though the poet-saints propagating the same received acknowledgement from all sections of society, their ideas were severely despised, and the caste system guided by the *pauranic* tradition was eminently re-established.”<sup>22</sup> It should be noticed that Muktibodh blames the alliance between contemporary power setup and *saguna* sect for the decline of *nirguna bhakti*. However, those who have analyzed his beliefs have overlooked his ideas regarding Akbar. In the process of analyzing the gradual deterioration of *bhakti* movement, Muktibodh has also focused upon the conflicting nature of the basis and composition of the same, which makes his inference all the more reliable. Therefore, it’s necessary to include his analysis on Akbar, or else it would remain confined to only the literary aspects.<sup>23</sup> The historical context in his arguments makes them even more plausible. The same has happened with the ushering in of revolutionary ideas

in history, even prior to the beginning of *bhakti* movement. “The ideas which are opposed by Tulsidas and *saguna* sect for protection of *Vedic* and *Pauranic* traditions, those ideas have been opposed in the same manner earlier as well. According to that methodology, a revolutionary idea is first met by a vehement opposition. If such action fails to uproot the idea, then it is contaminated. If it survives all these atrocities, then it is assimilated into the mainstream by quelling its protesting streak. Before the *nirguna* sect, both Buddhism and the *Lingayat* sect had faced the same fate of opposition and assimilation.”<sup>24</sup>

This methodology also has a two-faceted process operating in continuous force—on one hand, the forces in opposition continue with their protest, contamination and consequent assimilation, while on the other, the opposite group too possess some loopholes which gradually dilute its nature. This phenomenon can be seen in the historical evolution of all social revolutionary groups.<sup>25</sup> To further study upon this aspect of *bhakti* movement, it's important to understand the famous theory of 'Sanskritization' proposed by sociologist M.M. Srinivas. In his book '*Social Change in Modern India*', Srinivas has stated that “the caste system under Indian society never actually underwent a structural change. A caste, after strengthening its economic and social position, got assimilated into the higher castes. The lower castes never really struggled for a separate identity but preferred to be members of already

established castes. The higher castes upheld their power-balance by being flexible and including these groups within themselves.”<sup>26</sup> This means that the desperate opposition presented by the dominant forces and the process of apparent 'Sanskritization' among the lower sections prepared ground for decay of the revolutionary ideas. Historian Harbans Mukhia has drawn our attention towards some limitations of *nirguna bhakti*. According to him, “this movement has streaks of anger against the prevalent social injustice, but it doesn't show a full-fledged protest...this is perhaps the reason why the *bhakti* movement, despite being immensely popular among the lower sections of North Indian society, failed to pose a threat to the ruling elites.”<sup>27</sup> along with this, Mukhia, while analyzing the main reasons for its decline, explains that “bhakti movement had no alternative for the already established social system—just an (obscure) idea to make the society function in an ideal manner.”<sup>28</sup> Along with studying the theory of Sanskritization, Mukhia establishments should also be read to understand why the impactful *nirguna* ideology failed to wipe out the existing caste structure. “Like (its) other aspects, the criticism of caste system remained confined to moral grounds only. As discussed before, the institution of caste system was based not only on morality, but had a deep socio-economic base on which the entire superstructure of society was built.” It was unimaginable to break away from this entrenched institution

unless a better alternative was proposed and established. And, it was not possible to think of any such new institution in the medieval era.”<sup>29</sup> This limitation defined by Dr. Mukhia is actually the imitation of the medieval times itself. D.P. Mukerjee’s view on the decline of this movement is also on the lines of the theory proposed by Mukhia. “Though bhakti movement reflects the contemporary society, there’s no notion of mass benefit for the society. Consequently, there is a wide difference between the spiritual quest and needs of the society—a contradiction between material aspect of spirituality and facets of social norm, the *lokdharmā*. This structural loophole of the movement is the reason behind its failure.”<sup>30</sup>

Historian Irfan Habib has researched upon the technological reforms in the society during the 13-14<sup>th</sup> century, and this study reflect the continuous process of change in those times. It was this process which prepared ground for *bhakti* movement, and there’s a direct relation between the *nirguna bhakti* and the former. The process of Sanskritization and improvement in the conditions of lower sections must also have started after the technological reforms gained ground. As a result, the *bhakti* history of south India also faced similar consequences as its north Indian counterpart. Satish Chandra has noted that “*bhakti* movement reached its zenith in South India during the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Afterwards, it was gradually molded into the Hindu mainstream and accepted the *varna*-structure, religious

rituals and the superiority of brahmanas.”<sup>31</sup> Explaining the decline of *bhakti* movement, he states, “in the Ganges valley region, the victory of *saguna bhakti* over the more reforming monotheistic tradition can be analogized as the victory of urban reformism over the rustic stagnancy of the rural areas. The relatively sluggish development and eventual stagnation of the Indian society and economy from the 17<sup>th</sup> century should be seen in this context.”<sup>32</sup> The apparent tendency of Sanskritization among the lower sections, and the unexpectedly slow socio-economic development weakened this movement. After the process of Sanskritization was accomplished, *nirguna* sect also started developing its own religious institutions—creating new factions (*panthas*) and constructing *mathas*. If that wasn’t enough, the *Kabirpanthis* themselves made arrangement for the deterioration of his cause by fabricating the notions of his incarnation and the six-fold philosophy. As a conclusion, one can say that the joining of hands between *saguna* sect and political administration, the socio-economic stagnation post 17<sup>th</sup> century, the continuous process of Sanskritization and the want of an alternate social system in the compositions of the *nirguna* poet were the reasons behind the decline of *nirguna* cause.

After accessing the reasons behind the decline of *nirguna* sect, one should veer the attention towards the factors responsible for the same fate experienced by the *saguna* sect. Possibly, it was weakened by the increasing contradictions

within the sect. Moreover, the motive which triggered off the establishment of *saguna* sect lost its significance once its task was accomplished.<sup>33</sup> Max Weber presents a sharp critique of the *saguna* tradition of the bhakti movement. According to him, the lower Hindu classes clung on to their class duties with even greater tenacity than before, in hope of a better life after death. Thus, the bhakti movement made the position of brahmin even stronger than what it was before. He also feels that the rise of a spiritual teacher (guru), instead of refuting the occupation hierarchy, further entrenched the hierarchical traditions and dominance of brahmins in the society.<sup>34</sup> The gradual acceptance of orthodox ideas would have wiped out the last remains of reforming zeal entailed by the *saguna* sect.

One should think over how the *bhakti* movement can prove helpful in context of the problems faced by society in the present times. The quest for its answer will then bring to light the relative importance of the compositions of the different *bhakta* poets, just like Muktibodh once rose the question—“why do Kabir, *nirguna* poets and their southern counterparts, seem more progressive than Tulsidas?”<sup>35</sup> However, he has further stated that “the author of Ramcharitmanas (Tulsidas) was a saint in the truest sense. The text has been equally revered by the masses as it has been by the higher sections of the society. It was the religious fanatics who used Tulsidas according to their own whims.”<sup>36</sup> There have been numerous reasons behind the

immense popularity of Tulsidas. It is worth noticing that Ramcharitmanas has been more popular in comparison to his other compositions.<sup>37</sup> Tulsī’s compositions have been interpreted by various scholars in a completely distinct manner. To know more about some of these interpretations, one can look up to the analysis by Sudhish Pachauri<sup>38</sup> and Francesca Orcini.<sup>39</sup> Both of them have conducted an extensive research on the political and psychological ideas of *acharya* Ramchandra Shukla, who has been a pioneer in studying Tulsidas. When it comes to discussing the relevance of Tulsidas and Ramcharitmanas, theories of *acharya* Shukla and the peasant movement of Awadh are often recalled. Therefore, it is important to know how Ramcharitmanas was used by *Baba* Ramchandra. Veer Bharat Talwar, based on his in-depth analysis states that, “it would be wrong to say that *baba* Ramchandra did not present any revolutionary interpretation of Ramcharitmanas. But he used it in only two senses. He read this text aloud in the Awadh region to strengthen ties with the local population, as Ramcharitmanas was immensely popular there. Along with that, he often recited many of the *doha-chaupayis* in accordance with the prevailing situation.”<sup>40</sup>

It should be understood that in present time, using the medieval compositions in one’s own favour seems more of an act of political manipulation rather than an attempt to research and analyze the same. Along with that, one should remember that “it is not possible to interpret any literary

composition as revolutionary—or sustain such claims—unless that revolutionary idea forms the backbone of the composition.”<sup>41</sup>

Thus, there is an urgent need to understand the uniqueness (individuality) of authors and the compositions, along with noticing the mutual contradictions to comprehend the context of their relevance in the present time. It would rather be an over simplification to talk about using the ideas propagated by these texts without looking into their relative importance. The religious orthodoxy and supporters of *varna* hierarchy might tweak and use the ideas propagated by Tulsidas for their own benefit, but they certainly can't do the same with compositions of Kabir. However, desperate attempts to interpret Kabir in fanatical perspective can be seen nowadays. Therefore, it is important to highlight some fundamental ideas of *bhakti* movement—the movement which left an indelible impact on the cultural history of the medieval era. The legacy of the cultural-ideological struggle is of immense importance for the society, and it will surely help us to understand the potential dangers of the present time.

## FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Poet Vijendra and Roshna Vishvakirti have penned their conversation with Dr. Ram Vilas Sharma on several aspects of traditions in the book- *Parampara Ki Pehchaan*. Ed. By Vijendra, Oar Prakashan, Janavadi Sahitya Sadan, Rajamandi, Agra, First Edition 1988. Pages: 9-10.

2. *Parampara Ka Moolyankan* (Hindi)- Ram Vilas Sharma, Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, Second Edition 1987. Page: 93.

3. *Bhakti Andolan Ke Samajik Adhaar* (Hindi)- Ed. by Gopeshwar Singh, Bhartiya Prakashan Sansthan, 24/4855, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, New Delhi. First Edition 2002. Page: 107.

4. This ideological conflict can be clearly felt in the 'Udhava-Gopi Samvad' (*Balkanda, Ramcharitamana*s). Hazari Prasad Dwivedi has brought forth some of Tulsidas' work composed in protest of the ideas proposed by *Nirguna* poets. See- *Kabir*-Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi. Tenth Edition 2006, page: 99.

5. *Doosri Parampara Ki Khoj* (Hindi) - Namwar Singh, Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, 1984 Page: 84. This book is an intensive research on the *bhakti* movement and discusses the connotation of the 'initial order' (*pehli parampara*). For Dr. Namwar Singh, Ramchandra Shukla is the pioneer of this initial order. Apart from him, Dr. Singh has also criticized Dr. Ram Vilas Sharma on several points. This should be kept in mind that Dr. Sharma in his work '*Acharya Ramchandra Shukla Aur Hindi Alochan*a', has defended some of the very controversial beliefs of Acharya Shukla, and has also deliberately overlooked the internal contradictions presented by the former. Therefore, it can be speculated that Dr. Namwar Singh's ridicule of 'the noted progressive critics' is aimed at Dr. Ram Vilas Sharma.

6. In this context, the seminal work of Dr. Ram Vilas Sharma, *Parampara Ka Moolyankan* (Hindi) can be read. In this book, the chapters on Tulsidas discuss *Nirguna-Saguna* and unity between Kabir and Tuls. However, when it comes to passing fixed judgment on Kabir, Dr. Sharma considers him relatively inferior.

7. *Bhakti Andolan Aur Surdas Ka Kavya* (Hindi)- Manager Pandey, Vani Prakashan, New Delhi, Third Edition-2001. See- Preface of Second Edition.

8. *Itihas Darshan* (Hindi)-Vasudev Sharan Agrawal, Prithvi Prakashan, Varanasi-1978, Pages: 1 to 9. Editor- Akhilesh; mentioned by Bajrang Bihari Tiwari in April 2003. Page: 100.

9. *Doosri Parampara Ki Khoj*, Page: 84.



10. *Struggle And Hegemony in India*, part-3-Shashi Joshi, Bhagwan Joshi, Sage Publication, New Delhi-1914. Page Number 18 till Article 9. Editor: Akhilesh (till page number 100).

11. See Essay 6, October 2001- research article '*Bhakti Ke Vrihad Aakhyan Mein Satpurushon Ki Peeda*' (Hindi, Page 42 -59) and; Essay 9, research article '*Madhyakaleen Satta Vimarsha Ka Ek Peblu*' edited by Akhilesh (Hindi, page 77-104).

12. In context of the issues and contradictions concerning farmers raised by Premchand, Veer Bharat Talwar has mentioned an incidence. See- *Kisan, Rashtriya Andolan Aur Premchand 1918-22* (Hindi), preface to Second Edition. Vani Prakashan, New Delhi, Second Edition-2008.

13. See- *Madhyayugeen Bhakti Andolan Ka Ek Peblu* (Hindi, research article). This essay gives a critical analysis by addressing numerous important questions regarding the *bhakti* movement. Muktibodh probably is the first critic to analyze *bhakti* movement by focusing on the caste structure, and has also presented a few postulates regarding the same. Though in present context, its limitations are pointed out, but this essay created a stir when it was first published in 1955. *Muktibodh Rachnavali*, Editor-Nemichandra Jain, Part-5, Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, First Edition-1998. Pages: 288-297.

14. *Ibid*, page: 289.

15. *Ibid*, page: 293.

16. *Ibid*, page: 291.

17. *Ibid*, page: 295.

18. *Rangeya Raghava Granthavali*, Part-10. See- *Madhyakaleen Hindi Sahitya Aur Bhartiya Bhakti Andolan*, page 203-215. Editor- Sulochana Rangeya Raghava, Rajpal and Sons, New Delhi, First Edition: 1983.

19. *Akbari Darbar*- Shams-ul-Ulma Maulana Muhammad Hussein '*Azad*'. Translator: Ramchandra Verma, Nagri Pracharini Sabha, Varanasi, latest Edition: 1978, page 130. Reproduced by Bajrang Bihari Tiwari, *ibid*, page: 56.

20. *Ibid*, page: 56.

21. *Muktibodh Rachnavali*, part-5, page: 292.

22. *Ibid*, page: 290.

23. To know more about the economic, political and the social structure, and the changing relations between the technology, art and literature in Medieval India, see- *Medieval India : The Study of a Civilization*, Irfan Habib, National Book Trust, Delhi, First Edition-2008, chapter 2 and 3, page: 57-260.

24. *Bhakti Andolan Aur Surdas Ka Kavya* (Hindi) - page: 26.

25. Veer Bharat Talwar has done extensive research on Arya Samaj and has pointed towards some of the compromises made by Swami Dayanand Saraswati. These compromises, according to Talwar, have decided the waxing and waning of Arya Samaji ideology. See- *Hindu NavJagran Ki Vichardhara : Satyarth Prakash Samaalochana Ka Ek Prayas* (Hindi)- Veer Bharat Talwar, Indian Institute for Higher Education, Shimla, First Edition-2001.

26. *Anbhae Sancha*, editor- Dwarika Prasad Charumitra; reproduced by Manoj Singh in January-June 2008. Two decades prior to the establishment of this by M.N. Srinivas, Manoj Singh has highlighted the same fact explained by Acharya Hazari Prasad Dwivedi in '*Hindi Sahitya Ki Bhoomika*' – "Every caste under the Hindu pantheon enjoyed the liberty of following their own specific rules and customs. If a caste group accepted Brahmin superiority, it was then included in the four-fold *varna* structure. Thus, many of these castes tried to imitate the customs and regulations of Brahmins and other higher castes/*varnas*." Using this, Kumar has brought to attention the ironical difference between the English speaking and Hindi speaking group. For historiography and critical analysis/debates in context of *bhakti* movement, read *Bhakti Andolan Aur Hindi Alochana* (Hindi) by Manoj Kumar, Confluence International, First Edition, New Delhi.

27. *Bhakti Andolan Ke Samajik Aadhar* (Hindi)- Page: 89. According to Harbans Mukhia,

as a result of this, the historical accounts written by historians of the ruling elites didn't have a single mention of this (*bhakti*) movement. Mukhia has mentioned Abul Fazal as an "administrator and a guide with a defined motive and idea". Fazal believed that "if monarchy doesn't rule with an iron hand, then what would keep the feuds and disorders in check?" Mukhia has augmented his agreement to this belief of Fazal with couplets of Dadu Dayal, which express the same idea.

28. *Ibid*, page: 87. Harbans Mukhia has explained its reasons as well. "Medieval age has been that period of Indian history which underwent a lot of changes amidst tensions, but the overall condition was still not conducive to the uprootment of the existing socio-economic order and its replacement with a completely new society...for want of an alternative, the moral protest against the established social norms can be expressed only through its acceptance and a hope that they will either reform or begin to function in the ideal manner. However, this attitude is also an indicator of its (protest's) biggest limitation, because it limits the reactionary protest to those units which ironically, are the targets of that outburst." (*ibid*, page: 88)

29. *Ibid*, page: 90.

30. *Bhakti Andolan Aur Surdas Ka Kavya* (Hindi), mentioned on page 50.

31. *Madhyakaleen Sahitya Vimarsha*, editor-Sudha Singh, Anand Prakashan, page 176-78, Rabindra Sarni, Kolkata-7, First Edition 2004, page 23.

32. *Ibid*, page: 24.

33. In both of his above-mentioned articles, Bajrang Bihari Tiwari has shown the horrific struggle and rivalries that existed within the *Saguna* faction of *bhakti*. He has also explained how the

*saguna* sect stemmed as an opposition to the social attitude of the *Nirguna* saints.

34. Max Weber, *The Religion of India-Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*, Munshiram Mahoharlal Pub. Pvt. Ltd., (2000).

35. *Muktibodh Rachanavali*, part-5, page: 288.

36. *Ibid*, page: 293-294.

37. To know more about the immense popularity of Ramacharitamanas, see-*The life of A Text : Performing the Ram Charitamanas*—research article by Philip Lutzendurf and Raman Sinha-*Ramcharitamanas : Ek Rachana Ki Yatra*. Bahuvachan-10, editor- Prabhat Ranjan, Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University, New Delhi, January-March 2002, page-72-99.

38. Sudhish Pachauri has presented a refutation of Acharya Ramchandra Shukla's research on Tulsidas. See- **Ramchandra Shukla Ki Dharma Bhoomika**, title essay: *Vibhakti Aur Vikhandan*-Sudhish Pachauri, Anang Prakashan, B-202, Northern Ghonda, New Delhi-53, First Edition-2002, pages: 27-48.

39. Francesca Orcini has analyzed the thoughts and ideas of the intellectuals during the formation of the initial curriculum in Benares Hindu University. See- *Vaak*, issue-1, January-March 2007, title essay- *Tulsi Kyun?*, page 8-13.

40. Samna, page: 22. Veer Bharat Talwar has reproduced the couplets used by Baba Ramchandra. To know more about this issue, see- *Kisan Vidroha, Congress Aur Angrezi Raaj*, Kapil Kumar, Translation—Asad Zaidi, Manohar Publications, 2/6, Ansari Road, Delhi, First Edition-1991, Fourth chapter- *Kisan Vidroha Ka Doosra Charan*, page:193-235.

41. *Ibid*, page: 22.

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**Rajeev Ranjan Giri** : has taught in St. Stephens College. Published articles in Tadbhav, Vagarth, Hans etc. has written columns and is honorary editor of a monthly magazine 'antim jan' by Gandhi Smriti aur Darshan Samiti. He lives in Delhi.

**Mohini Mehta** : studied at St. Stephens College and now works as radio jockey with Delhi University Community Radio 90.4 MHz. She lives in New Delhi.

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## A Sheaf of Old Letters

Mangal Murty

Technology seems to be overtaking itself by leaps and bounds. It's now an age of SMS texting and video calls. Letter-writing has been a thing of antiquity. The telegram is already dead and the postman has now become a ghostly figure. Letter-boxes are no longer familiar landmarks on city streets. But this IT-revolution has also added a special aura and sanctity to old letters of the 'paper and ink'-era as collectibles for—if we may call them- epistolists, or 'letter-lovers'.

Literary letters, of course, are a class apart. And the older they be, the more precious they become. There is a whole genre of literary letter-writing, like writing diaries, in world literature. In Hindi literature, too, there have been two inveterate letter writers—Shivapujan Sahay and Banarasi Das Chaturvedi—who were also great collectors and preservers of literary letters. Their own literary and journalistic careers spanned practically more than half of the last century which was also the golden era of modern Hindi literature, and their collections of letters run into several thousands, and are also, luckily, quite well-preserved in national institutions. Recently, a voluminous selection of literary letters (nearly 1,700 letters) from the valuable collection of Acharya Shivapujan Sahay has been published in the last three volumes of the ten-volume *Shivapujan Sahay Sahitya Samagra* (SS). These three volumes contain a representative selection of letters from all sections and levels of the modern Hindi literary world (c. 1910-1970) which reflect not only the literary but also the entire spectrum of the larger concerns of this most important era of Hindi literary and socio-political renaissance ('Navjagaran').

Not only in Indian history but also in world history the 20<sup>th</sup>

century was a century of horrendous wars, national revolutions and emancipations. The period of the literary renaissance in Hindi literature especially, and in literatures in the other Indian languages as well, was coeval with the Indian freedom movement. And one of the seminal issues in that national movement was the issue of a national language—a language that could break the stranglehold of the reigning English language that had the stigma of a ‘language of slavery’. The only language among all other regional languages in India, with the most far-reaching spread in the subcontinent, was Hindi that had the full potentiality to serve as the national language.

The story begins in the 30s when Gandhi had launched his Civil Disobedience movement with his Salt Satyagraha. The whole country from one corner to the other was convulsed with the spirit of freedom and patriotic fervour. In Bihar, Rajendra Prasad was in the vanguard of the movement. As early as 1921, he had started a nationalist Hindi weekly ‘Desh’ to propagate the ideals of the freedom movement among the masses. In 1923, a politico-literary Hindi weekly ‘Matwala’ had also started publication in Calcutta. Shivapujan Sahay, one of its editors and leader-writer, had earned fame for his scathing editorials and satirical articles, and short witty and sarcastic comments on topical issues of the socio-political sphere. Working generally as a freelance writer and journalist in the early part of his career, he had moved to Banaras

by the late 20s, and then for a year to Sultanganj in Bihar in 1931, where he was editing ‘Ganga’, a literary monthly published by the Banaili Raja Krishnanand Singh. Rajendra Babu must have known Shivji from the ‘Matwala’ days and in the following letter he requests him for his similar satirical notes and articles for ‘Desh’.

**1. Rajendra Prasad to Shivapujan Sahay [Patna to Sultanganj : 2.7.31]**

*Dear Shivapujan Bhai : Your kind letter reflects your generosity just as I had expected. I shall now await a personal meeting also. I know, in ‘Ganga’ you have to do everything. But only hard workers can do more; not the idle lot. Though I hesitate to add to your already heavy burden, yet I can hardly restrain my eagerness to ask for your articles for ‘Desh’. Please write whenever you can for it. ‘Desh’ is in dire need of literary articles. In our country, we are not yet in a position to devote a journal to a single domain. Our poor people can hardly afford to subscribe to one journal for reading. They must get all kinds of mental food from that single journal. ‘Desh’ will be too happy to publish literary articles. If such articles have not been published so far, it’s only because literary writers have never sent such contributions to us till now. And I dislike publishing matter just to fill columns, or add to items; I detest cheating our subscribers by such tricks. If you could send some satirical notes or witticisms of 80-90 lines on a weekly basis—nothing could be better than that. What could be more entertaining than the articles you write in lighter vein!*

*Published under the patronage of Banaili Maharaja, how does ‘Ganga’ connect with*

*a poor country like ours? Yet 'Desh' is ready to help 'Ganga' in whatever way you suggest, even in the interest of provincial affinity. But how do you propose to carry on publishing special numbers like 'Gangank' and 'Vedank'? Instead if you could publish 'Marxank', that would, of course, be wonderful. The only fear, however, is that you publish 'Marxank' today and the Maharaja goes tomorrow!...*  
[Incomplete letter]

Files of 'Desh' are not available to confirm whether Shivapujan Sahay complied with the request or to what extent, if he did. But he soon left 'Ganga' and went back to Banaras to edit the literary fortnightly 'Jagaran' which after six months was taken over as a political weekly by Premchand. From Banaras, Shivapujan Sahay moved finally to Laheriasarai in 1933 for editing 'Balak', and thence, in 1939, to Rajendra College, Chhapra where he taught as Professor of Hindi till 1949.

The early 40s were a period of great turbulence with the 'August Revolution' (1942), the Bengal Famine (1943), and the great cataclysmic Second World War (1939-45), leading ultimately to India's independence in 1947. Most of the Congress leaders, including Rajendra Prasad, along with thousands of the rank and file were lodged in jails during 1942-45. The political situation in 1941 was extremely volatile with the horrors of the War in Europe and Asia casting its dark shadow on the national movement. During these turbulent years a very large number of young men were deeply involved in political activities, and most of the

nationalist journals, even literary ones, were dedicated to the cause of the mass movement.

In Patna, Prafull Chandra Ojha 'Mukt', a young Hindi journalist and writer, was editing 'Arati' a monthly literary journal. The journal was aggressively nationalist in temper and had Rajendra Babu's patronage. 'Mukt' was also serving as a literary assistant to Rajen Babu. The 'Hindi-Hindustani' controversy was at its peak during this period. The Hindi nationalist press was awash with articles opposing the propagation of the artificially contrived 'Hindustani' in place of Hindi as the national language. Shivapujan Sahay also had written a long editorial note on the subject in one of these journals (SS : 3.27) around the same time. All Hindi litterateurs of Bihar like Raja Radhika Raman Singh, Dinkar, Benipuri, Lakshmin Narayan 'Sudhanshu', et. al. were all opposing the imposition of 'Hindustani' as an artificial substitute for Hindi as the national language. Rajendra Babu, though a strong supporter of Gandhiji's patronage of Hindustani, also had his latent sympathies with the views of the pro-Hindi camp. The two letters sent to Rajen Babu are now difficult to trace, but Mukt's letter to Shivji gives an idea of their content. In 1941, Shivji was Professor of Hindi at Rajendra College, Chhapra.

2. 'Mukt' to Shivpujan Sahay [Patna to Chhapra : 31.8.41]

*Bhai Shivapujan ji. I am writing these lines to you as desired by Respected Rajendra Babu. He is not in good health to reply to*

*you personally. Yesterday when I went to [Sadaqat] Ashram, he showed and talked to me about the letters of yours and Raja Saheb's regarding Hindustani. He thinks that any statement issued by him now would only lead to a new controversy. It will serve no good purpose, but may only lend undue importance to the opposite party. Babu says that presently we are only neutral. And it would be better to solve the issue remaining neutral. He agrees with Raja Saheb's suggestion that we should have a dialogue with the leaders of the opposite party, individually or collectively. Babu proposes to go to Wardha on the 2nd, provided his health and the weather permits it. If he doesn't go, he would like to meet the opposite party people. By then, may be Raja Saheb also comes and you will also have to be there. And if he goes to Wardha, it can be only when he returns. Your letter has already reached Babu, and Raja Saheb also has sent your letter to him, and now he is conversant with all the aspects after reading them...Affectionately : Prafull.*

Shivapujan Sahay had studied Persian and Arabic upto his Tenth class and switched over to Hindi only in his Eleventh class. He was well-versed in Urdu and Persian literature. While teaching in Rajendra College, Chhapra, he had read a paper on the famous Urdu poet 'Akbar' Ilahabadi in the annual function of the College Urdu Literary Society that was later published in the College Magazine (1945) which Shivji himself edited. In that paper he had written :

*Hindi and Urdu are like own sisters. Their relationship is very old and strong. But*

*Urdu has not yet embraced Hindi in its loving arms as much as Hindi has done to Urdu...In Hindi today we have (translations of) a large number of Urdu writings easily available. So much so that we can talk and have, interesting discussions about Urdu literature for hours together only through the medium of Hindi...The history of Urdu literature has been written in Hindi in a commendable manner. Very good editions in Hindi have already been published of famous Urdu poets like Meer, Daag, Ghalib, Zauk, Nazeer, Hali, Akbar, Chakbast, et. al.*

And one of the she'irs of Akbar quoted in that paper is particularly relevant in the Hindi-Urdu context of communal amity.

*Hindu-Muslim ekhctin dono, yaniye dono Asia-ee hain.*

*Hum-watan, hum-zubano, hum-kismat, kyon na kah dun bhai-bhai hain.*

(Hindu-Muslim are one as both are Asians. Living in the same country, speaking the same language, having the same destiny, why should they not be called brothers indeed !)

The following letter refers to that published paper.

**3. Rajendra Prasad to Shivapujan Sahay [Delhi to Chhapra : 4.4.42]**

*Dear Shivapujan Babu. I had read your article on poet 'Akbar' (Ilahabadi) in the Chhapra College magazine. There you have written that many of the writings of Urdu poets and writers have been published in Hindi in Nagari Script. In course of a conversation with Mahatma Gandhiji when I told him that many of the Urdu works have been published in Nagari Script, he*

*asked me to give him a list of such publications and the places where they are available. Please send such a list directly to him at the earliest at Sevagram in Wardha or to me at Patna as soon as possible. Mahatmaji wants such a list only because he wants to know how far Hindi-knowing readers, who don't know the Urdu Script, can familiarize themselves with Urdu literature easily. He may even want to get all such books. Hope all is well there. I shall be in Patna in a couple of days. Yours : Rajendra Prasad.*

Gandhiji, Rajendra Prasad, Nehru, Patel and all the top Congress leaders were put behind bars for three years (1942-45) during the War, and it was in Bankipur (Patna) jail that Rajen Babu continued writing his 'Atmakatha' where he devotes a long chapter on the 'Rashtrabhasha' question. The issue of a national language had remained of prime importance throughout the past decades of the freedom movement. English never was nor could ever be the language of the common masses in India, especially when more than eighty percent of the population lived in remote, backward rural areas. The question of Hindi as the only viable national link language to replace English had always been uppermost in the Congress agenda.

Rajendra Prasad himself had been one of the most ardent votaries of Hindi as the only feasible national language right from the beginning. As early as in 1926, he had presided over the annual convention of the Bihar Provincial Hindi Sahitya Sammelan held in Darbhanga, where he

had particularly focused on the essential unity between Hindi and Urdu as two varieties of the same language, not only as used by common people in their day to day life, but also in their written or literary manifestations. And again, in 1936, presiding over the 25<sup>th</sup> annual convention of the A.I. Hindi Sahitya Sammelan at Nagpur, he emphasized the fact that in most of the northern provinces, in urban or semi-urban areas, both these varieties of the spoken Hindi-Urdu were hardly distinguishable, one from the other, in their use. Naturally, this spoken form of Hindi-Urdu as used in common parlance, with proper popular support, could well be developed within a reasonable time into a link language which even the people in the south could be willing to accept as the national lingua franca.

Rajendra Prasad's 21-page long speech in Hindi at the Nagpur Sammelan was a brilliant exposition of the argument in favour of this widely used Hindi-Urdu variety, of late designated as 'Hindustani', as the most suitable—even in terms of numbers or dispersal of speakers—to be adopted as the national link language or 'Rashtrabhasha'. As he writes in his *Autobiography* (English version, Penguin, 2010 : p.408) :

*We want one language for the whole country as a practical necessity. English can never be that language. Hindi is the only language, I think, on which the mantle of national language can fall, call it by whatever name you like—Hindi, Urdu or Hindustani. It will not, of course, displace the regional*

*languages which will continue to be developed and hold the field in their respective regions. The national language will be used only in all-India and inter-state affairs... [And] I reiterate that our national requirements will be best answered by a simple Hindi which will freely adopt words from all the Indian languages and dialects.*

For Rajendra Babu the new nomenclature of 'Hindustani' was less important than the affinity between Hindi and Urdu in their popular form of everyday use. He had, perhaps, deliberately chosen to write his 'Atmakatha' in a form of Hindi which could easily be seen as a model of such fusion of Hindi and Urdu.

In 1946, soon after his release in Patna, Rajen Babu gave the early chapters of his 'Atmakatha' for serial publication in the newly launched Hindi literary monthly 'Himalaya' edited by Shivapujan Sahay and Ramvriksha Benipuri. In the next five issues of the journal, these early chapters from the 'Atmakatha' were published in their un-edited form. Later, he requested Shivapujan Sahay to edit the whole book which was to be released during the Meerut Congress (1946). The following letter refers to the first part of the 'Atmakatha' published in 'Himalaya' in its un-edited form.

**4. Banarasi Das Chaturvedi to Shivapujan Sahay. [Tikamgarh to Patna : 28.2.46]**

Dear Shivapujan Sahayji. My regards. Got the inaugural issue of 'Himalaya'. I am reading it slowly. I don't believe in a formal response. I shall, of course, review it in 'Madhukar' but only after going

through it wholly...! liked respected Rajendra Babu's 'Atmakatha' immensely. It fully reflects his simple personality. I like such style of writing. There is no touch of affectation anywhere. No elaborate pretentiousness. All narration is simple and straightforward. I shall write in detail about it later. But one thing struck me as a little odd. The incidents that happened to the Maulawi Sahab with the gun and the bull were merely practical jokes and it would have been only proper if (respected) Babuji had only added a sentence at the end there that these pranks with the Maulawi Sahab were done only for childish fun at that time and were, perhaps, not in good taste. People in our country have a penchant for attributing motives and bad intention to such incidents, and as the Maulawi Sahab was a Muslim, it might easily be misconstrued... I wouldn't be surprised if some Muslim critic observes that Rajendra Babu took pleasure in getting Muslims trampled by bulls or terrorized by sudden gunfire... Benipuriji's editorial note on 'Hindi and Hindustani' in the issue is fully justified...

In the rest of the letter Chaturvediji comments on the various other articles and poems published in this issue. But he also refers to Benipuri's editorial note on 'Hindi-Hindustani' published in this same inaugural issue where Benipuri wrote : "We should not get flustered by Mahatmajji's propagation of 'Hindustani'; on the contrary we must welcome the endeavour because it will only broaden the path of Hindi's advancement."



In fact, the national language controversy had two facets. Besides the Hindi-Hindustani controversy which was rife among the supporters of Hindi as the national language or *rashtrabhasha*, there was also a wider and more acrimonious debate that had been going on in the Constituent Assembly from day one between members from the north and the south on the issue of Hindi versus English. A compromise formula had been settled upon to allow English to be used along with Hindi in the inter-state affairs till 1965. But the dominance of English, in spite of the compromise settlement, continued to irk the proponents of Hindi. A number of votaries of Hindi, including Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar', had been elected to the Rajya Sabha. 'Dinkar' was a powerful orator in Hindi, but his experiences as an M.P. in this regard were quite frustrating as he writes in the following letter :

**5. Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar' to Shivapujan Sahay [Delhi to Patna : 30.5.52]**

Respected Shivji. Your encouraging letter. No importance is given here to a speech in Hindi. Attention is paid only to Hindi speeches of people like, Rajendra Babu, Jawaharlal, Tandanji, et. al. Owing to the convenience of reporting, people prefer to give their speeches in English. Till now I have been able to speak only once, and scores of people congratulated me on that day. But PTI took only five lines from it and Searchlight not even as much. Hence, our coming here was very necessary. We may have to struggle hard,

but there's no cause for despair. We only need blessings of *people like you*. Yours : *Dinkar*.

In 1950 Shivapujan Sahay left Chhapra to join as Secretary, Bihar Rashtrabhasha Parishad in Patna where he served till September, 1959. Rajendra Babu also was serving his last term as President, and had been honoured with an Award for his 'Atmakatha' by the Parishad in 1954, and again with the 'Vayovridha Sahityakar' (Senior Litterateur) Award in 1959. He had earlier donated his former Award money back to Parishad for charitable purposes, and wanted to do so again with the second Award. His donations of the two Award amounts with some additional amount from his own side were meant to serve the larger cause of Hindi. The following letter and its reply by Shivapujan Sahay throw light on Rajendra Babu's abiding love for the cause of Hindi.

**6. Rajendra Prasad to Shivapujan Sahay [Camp Bhuwaneshwar to Patna : 28.3.59]**

Dear Shivapujan Babu. Got your letter and the receipts for the award which I am returning after signing them. I would like to have your advice on one issue. I wish to utilize this award amount in some project that could contribute to the service and propagation of Hindi. It would be better if it could be for the non-Hindi speaking areas. Kindly think over it and suggest some good scheme where this amount could best be utilized. I want your personal advice for this and not any official suggestion from the Parishad. If you could

give more than one suggestion, it would be still better, so that I could choose the best idea to utilize this amount. If necessary, I could also add some more amount to it. I will decide only after I get your reply, so please reply soon. Yours : Rajendra Prasad.

**7. Shivapujan Sahay to Rajendra Prasad [Patna to Delhi : 6.4.59]**

Most Respected [Rajendra Babuji. Received your letter of 28 March, 1958, in which you have so kindly asked for my personal suggestion regarding the proper utilization of the award amount. I consider this a great honour and privilege bestowed so graciously on me.

Meanwhile, I would also like to point out that from the 'Atmakatha' award amount you had gifted back to Parishad, adding Rs. one thousand to it from your own side, the Parishad has established a special fund as 'Rajendra Nidhi'. The Bihar Government was requested to give a matching grant of Rs. 10,000 per annum as a supplement and it has, for the present, agreed to give Rs. 8,000 per annum. From this special fund the Parishad has started giving one time financial assistance to indigent literary persons ranging from Rs. 250 to 1,500. Rules have been framed for the same in accordance with your expressed wishes when you had gifted the award amount and these rules have also been approved by the Bihar Government. Accordingly, after due and proper enquiry, needy literary persons are being given financial assistance for medical treatment, daughter's marriage, book publication, etc.

This year the Parishad's Control Board has decided also to give an annual award of Rs. 1,000 to a non-Hindi writer for his deserving book in Hindi, either original or translated in Hindi, published during the year.

One of the following suggestions may be considered for this year's award :

1. A Hindi writer from a non-Hindi area can be honoured with a 'Rajendra Award' of Rs. 1,000, to be given out of this fund, if he publishes a translation of a well-known and valuable Hindi work in his language of that region.

2. A 'Rajendra Award' of Rs. 100 to 250 can be given out of this fund to a non-Hindi student passing and securing the maximum marks in the highest Hindi examination conducted by the Rashtrabhasha Prachar Samitis of the non-Hindi areas, Akhil Bharatiya Hindi Sahitya Sammelan (Prayag), Rashtrabhasha Prachar Samiti (Wardha), Hindi Vidyapeeth (Deoghar), Kashi Hindi Vidyapeeth, etc.

3. A 'Badrinath Sarvabhasha Mahavidyalaya has been established in the name of Acharya Badrinath Verma by the Bihar Hindi Sahitya Sammelan and has been running for the last two years, in which regular courses are taught in Russian, German, French and Telugu. For this project the Bihar Government has given a grant of Rs. 17,000. There is also arrangement for teaching Hindi to non-Hindi students under this programme, though no such non-Hindi student is yet enrolled there. However, many students from the non-Hindi areas learn Hindi in

the Vidyapeeths at Deoghar and Mandar. A 'Rajendra Scholarship' of Rs. 100 per month for only two years can be given to non-Hindi students exclusively taking Hindi courses in those Vidyapeeths.

As you had asked for immediate suggestions, I am submitting some ideas that came readily to mind. I hope one of these suggestions would surely suit your intent. Humbly yours : Shiva.

Only five months later, before his tenure expired, Shivapujan Sahay was made to retire by the Bihar Government. But his dedication to the cause of Hindi—its viability as the national language, its continuing struggle against the sway and clout of English in the national sphere, its rapid strides of advancement against the challenges posed by English as a global language, the constant enrichment of its literary stock deepened further. The fight to secure for Hindi its rightful place as the national language, to popularize it in the non-Hindi areas of the country and to enable it to supplant English as soon as possible as national link language went on with increased fervour. But just when the 15-years period of continuance of English as a subsidiary language to Hindi was coming to an end, the government buckled under political pressure to give English a fresh lease of limitless extension,

and there was again a clamour in the Hindi world against the move.

Once more, like the last flicker of the lamp, during the last few months of his life, Shivapujan Sahay wrote an article, published in 1962 in the famous Hindi weekly 'Dharmayug', in which he expressed his anguish about the government's imprudent move to lend a kind of perpetuity to English. Only a small quotation from that article should suffice here. (The full translated article may be read in HINDI, July-Sep., 2011.)

'Our heads bow down in shame to find our populist government pleading for the inexorability of English. But those who now rule us, who hold the reins of government in their hands, it's their logic that must be seen as impeccable. It's an eternal principle that the power of governance can be held only in an iron fist. Even so, there can be no authoritarianism in a democratic set up. But had this been a reality, the vox populi of the Hindi-speakers would not have gone absolutely unheard. One has a distinct feeling of contrition in calling oneself the citizen of a country which holds its language and script to be incapable of national use and shows its helplessness by accepting the efficacy of a foreign language for its domestic purposes.'

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**Dr. Mangal Murty**, born 1937, is a retired professor of English and Linguistics, who served in universities in Bihar and Yemen for more than four decades, and has written and edited several books in Hindi and some in English. He has recently edited and published the collected works of Shivapujan Sahay (his late father) and is presently doing translations of Selected Writings of Shivapujan Sahay. He now lives in Lucknow and is working on an English biography of Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Email: bsmmurty@gmail.com

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## Balraj Sahni and Hindi

Kuldeep Kumar

Apart from being a great actor, Balraj Sahni was an eloquent speaker, who in his convocation address at JNU in 1972, emphasized the oneness of Hindi and Urdu.

This happens to be the centenary year of the great actor Balraj Sahni (May 1, 1913–April 13, 1973) who expressed the tragedy of the Partition with his unforgettable performance in M.S. Sathyu's "Garm Hawa" (Hot Wind). While the South was not much affected by this great human tragedy, the North bore the brunt of this cataclysmic event that caused the biggest transfer of population ever witnessed in human history. Yashpal, who hailed from Lahore, portrayed the physical trauma experienced by the people of the undivided Punjab in his two-volume monumental novel "Jhootha Sach" (False Truth) that contained vivid description of all the horrors associated with the vivisection of the country while Rahi Masoom Raza expressed the emotional anguish and deep distress felt by the Hindus and the Muslims of Uttar Pradesh in his great novel "Aadha Gaon" (Half-a-Village). Although "Garm Hawa" showed the sufferings of a nationalist Muslim family in Independent India with Agra as its locale, it too was in a way an extension of the great Partition narrative.

Balraj Sahni as Salim Mirza offered one of his best performances, comparable to any in world cinema. His restrained, understated acting was in the true tradition of neo-realism. Sadly, he could not see the film as he breathed his last soon after he had finished dubbing for it. When he died, he was not even 60.

Sahni had worked with the BBC as its Hindi announcer. A

life-long communist and a dedicated activist of IPTA, he remained committed to the common man and the need to establish communication with him. A radio announcer has to be very sensitive towards language as he should be able to reach even the illiterate listener. Sahni never lost this sensitivity for spoken word. His convocation address at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in 1972 bears testimony to his deeply felt concern for the two major languages of the North–Hindi and Urdu.

When JNU invited Balraj Sahni as chief guest to deliver the convocation address, the Right rose to vociferously protest. However, the protest failed to cut much ice. His address requires close reading and looks as relevant today as it was in 1972. An ardent advocate of Hindustani, he spoke at length in favour of the language developed by the common man. He said : “A rough and ready type of Hindustani is used by the working masses all over India...Today in this bazaar Hindustani the word university becomes univarsti—a much better word than vishwavidyalaya, lantern becomes laltain, the chassis of a car becomes chesi, spanner becomes pana, *i.e.* anything and everything is possible. The string with which the soldier cleans his rifle is called “pullthrough” in English. In Roman Hindustani it becomes fultroo—a beautiful word. “Barn-door” is the term

the Hollywood lightsman uses for a particular type of two blade cover. The Bombay film worker has changed it to bandar, an excellent transformation. This Hindustani has untold and unlimited possibilities. It can absorb the international scientific and technological vocabulary with the greatest of ease. It can take words from every source and enrich itself. One has no need to run only to the Sanskrit dictionary.”

In this address, Balraj Sahni made a controversial point regarding the oneness of Hindi and Urdu that are perhaps the only two languages in the world that share the same nouns, pronouns, verbs and syntax. “It is an open secret,” he said, “that the songs and dialogues of these Hindi films are mostly written in Urdu. Eminent Urdu writers and poets—Krishan Chander, Rajinder Singh Bedi, K. A. Abbas, Gulshan Nanda, Sahir Ludhianavi, Majrooh Sultanpuri and Kaifi Azmi are associated with this work. Now, if a film written in Urdu can be called a Hindi film, it is logical to conclude that Hindi and Urdu are one and the same language.” A noble soul, Balraj Sahni failed to see the duplicity of the Hindiwallahs who would insist on the so-called “shuddh” (Sanskrit-laden) Hindi but would deny Urdu its rightful place by describing even “Mughal-e-Azam” as a Hindi film!

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**Kuldeep Kumar** : a well known author and journalist who writes on current issues of social concern. He studied at JNU. He lives in NOIDA.

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## Hindi Teaching in Osaka

Hiroko Nagasaki (Japan)

Translated by  
Pramila Garg

The Hindi language was being taught in the famous Osaka Foreign University of Japan since the First World War but its history is even older in Tokyo Foreign University. Three years after the merger of Osaka Foreign University and Osaka University the Hindi Department was established in Osaka University. This event was important not only for Osaka but for the whole Japan because Osaka is one of the seven traditional Government Universities and for the first time in history of Japan Hindi was introduced in such a big university. This is how a new chapter of Hindi teaching started at Osaka University. I want to give you some information about Hindi teaching in Osaka University.

In our Hindi Department there are three Japanese teachers—Takahashi ji, Neeshioka ji and I, Nagasaki and one Indian teacher who also teach Hindi there, besides us there are many outside teachers who come and teach there. This year in first class there are twenty five students and in Toyonaka premises students would study mostly Hindi along with other subjects.

One period is of one and a half hour. The teaching starts from Hindi alphabets and goes on to word recognition, grammar, dialogues and translation of small stories in Japanese and Japanese stories in Hindi. A student who fails in one teacher's class will have to sit in the same class next year. Every year at least three or four students fail in Hindi. In our university Hindi department is considered to be very strict, Hindi students are afraid of their teachers as if

the death God has come in front of them but Takahashi ji told me something to be proud of.

In our first class we teach Hindi using Mc Gregor's grammar. Great difficulties are faced by the students learning Hindi—for Japanese students to differentiate between 'Mein ghar banata hun' and 'Mein ghar banwata hun' is hard to express as in Japanese the meaning of both the sentences would be 'Mein ghar banata hun', whether we make or don't make the house ourselves. Similarly the difference between 'Ramkumar ko bulvaiyen' and 'Ramkumar ko bulain' is not clear to the Japanese students. In 'Ramkumar ko bulvaiyen' the first person or the other person doing the job doesn't come to the Japanese mind immediately. Their confusion starts because of the difference in the basic structure of the two languages. After studying grammar for one year the students start understanding it well.

The classes of second year students are held in Mino premises. In my class they practise translation from Hindi to Japanese and from Japanese to Hindi also. There would be listening exercises. In this class I get the student to translate modern Hindi poetry, the newspaper excerpts and essays. For listening exercises I download video clips of You Tube from internet and make them listen to them. Actually this idea came to me when Ritupurnoji organized an International Hindi Conference where an American academician told about the internet. Please listen the following clip, since the sound is less you have to listen

attentively :

'Slumdog Millionaire

Chal

Kidher?

'Pet mein ( ? ) daur rahen hein'

What is running in the stomach, the student will have to guess the word 'rat' to fill in the blank. This way they can learn a Hindi idiom also.

Look at the example where one verb has different meanings :

'Arre yeh nahin chalega

Yeh toh chalega bahinji

Arre bhaiya mujhe toh samajh mein nahin aata

Doosra dedo na.

Mein dekhun kya? Mujhe dedo, aaja...aaja

Aaja aaja, aaiye na

Shee...shee...uth, uth'

'Arre kya bhaiya, yeh nahin chalta hai'

'Parle Monaco khaiye

Life namkeen banaiye'

This is an interesting video by which students learn easily the two meaning of the verb 'chalna'. In the end they come to know that the use of the word 'namkeen' is not only for biscuits containing salt but also it means a life full of gusto, 'Life namkeen banaiye'.

The students take great interest in looking at such videos because in Japan they don't find many Indians to talk with on very few occasions. In such situations the practice of talking is only limited to class only, but at least listening exercises can be done through internet up to some extent. The most important thing is that

this way they can learn the natural way of speaking, just see :

‘Aaj aarahin hun mem, Suneel ko ab yad aagaya hoga’

‘Mere husband aur time pe’

‘Sangini hi roshni, sangini hi har khushi.’

This Hindi is different from earlier two videos. What’s the difference? Here more English words are used, those husband and wife must be living in a big city and working in a good company. They use the word parking as this has become a normal word in Hindi usage. It’s o.k. to use ‘husband’ in place of ‘pati’ and ‘time’ instead of ‘samay’, but ‘missing’ must have been used by highly educated people living in big cities only. Instead of saying ‘pata hai tum kitne special ho’, if I have to speak I would have spoken ‘Patidev aap mere liye Ramchandra jaise tejasvi ho’, but not ‘heera’. The persons purchasing diamonds don’t use such Hindi language.

All those who speak Hindi their language is as much diversified as they themselves are. Some speak pure Hindi while others speak Hindi mixed with Urdu and still others in the big cities and among the educated world mix English with Hindi normally. This is also a normal phase of Hindi. I show to the students of third and fourth class the videos of English-Hindi mix so that they can understand the Hindi-English mixture better.

As compared to the second class in the third and fourth class I make them translate more difficult excerpts from Hindi stories, novels, and essays and with the help of

dictionary each student reads all types of Hindi. In our library we have collected maximum number of Hindi books which help our students to do research work.

In third and fourth class besides Hindi students are taught many Indian languages like Sanskrit, Pali, Bengali and history so that they can get all the related information about India. In one of my classes Braj bhasha is taught. Since the topic of my research was ‘Bhakti Kaleen Hindi Sahitya’ this class is the most interesting for me.

‘Manus hon toh vahi Raskhan  
Bason Braj Gokul gaun ke gvaran  
Jo pashu hon toh kaha bus mero  
Charon nit Nand ki dhenu majharan  
Pahan hon toh vahi giri Jo dharyo  
kar chhatra Purandar dharan  
Jo khag hon toh basero karon  
Mili Kalindi-kool kadamb ki daran’

One can get from this small poem of Raskhan all the information about the devotion towards Krishna, Govardhan mountain of Braj and also about the mythologies which are useful for the students’ studies.

If any student wants to study in India he can go to the Central Hindi Academy at Agra on Government of India scholarship. This year two boys and one girl are studying at Agra.

In the fourth class it is mandatory to present a research dissertation. The research papers which are being written under my guidance, their topics are as follows : ‘Dahej aur nari ki sthiti’, ‘Ramcharit mein Hanuman ka Bhakti Bhav’, ‘Amar-Chitrakatha aur Adhunik Hindu Dharm’,



Guru Nank ki Mahayatrain', 'Haridwar ka Mahatmya', Bharat mein Vilasita ki Samagri (luxury items). They write the research papers in Japanese but I make them translate them in Hindi in abridged form. The commendable thing is that the students of Hindi language reach this level in merely four years. The Japanese are very

hard working students, if they are interested in higher studies they can do M.A. and Ph.D. also.

Mostly after getting B.A. degree they start working in various fields all over the world. Quite a big number of students is working in India after acquiring the knowledge of Hindi from this University.

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**Hiroko Nagasaki** : teaches in the Hindi Department of Osaka University, Japan. She speaks fluent Hindi.

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## Zinda Hone Ka Zordar Saboot

Manoj Mohan

Translated by  
Pramila Garg

JABIR Husain has acquired a great recognition amidst Hindi and Urdu writers by his 'Katha Diariyan'. Gulzar has said about him, "Sir Jabir Husain is one writer the lines of whose one hand are written in Hindi and of the other in Urdu."<sup>1</sup>

(The dedication page of the Urdu edition of 'Pichhle Panne')

The same Jabir Husain's new collection 'Katha Diariyan' with 'Zinda Hone Ka Saboot,' published by Rajkamal Prakshan, has reached the readers. As we read this collection of Katha Diary not only the difference between Hindi and Urdu gets erased but also the difference of facts and imagination and of report and stories has also been removed. This was possible only because in spite of remaining in politics he has continuously worked for saving his cultural and social conscience. The book Katha Diariyan is the proof of this achievement.

When in 'Doosri Dunia' of Katha Diary children ask the grandmother, "Why do you tell the stories of kings and queens only, why don't you tell the stories of ordinary people." The answer that the grandmother gives is still relevant in highlighting the condition of women in today's Indian society, "I haven't seen this world son, I have never gone out of the courtyard of my house. I have not seen those settlements, or those people whom you see around you, hence I can't tell the stories of these people."

Socially Jabir Husain is standing with that deprived section of

society who initiates with all its pride and self-respect the struggle against the existing power structure of the government. In today's conditions the change in this deprived section is speedily culminating into casteism. He is worried about it and he is forced to say in 'Soha ka Nam', "If our calls for human concerns do not reach the new generation how will they play a meaningful role amidst the panorama of ever intensifying mental tensions," after sixty five years of freedom. In spite of that he does not bring his Katha Diary to the readers like the news items which appear transparent. In this collected work he depends on abstractions which compel the readers to think after going deep into the water. Peeli Ibarat or 'The Yellow Writings on White Paper' appears like carved images, sometimes silent and at others vocal. The images that are silent are more vocal than the vocal images. Otherwise also the implied meaning of the words is more deadly than the transparent meaning of the words. The inner voice of The Yellow Writings should be seen in the context of modern times.

While reading these Katha Diaries one cannot say that they depict only the realities of Bihar, but it would be more proper to

say that the characters that Jabir Husain creates are the ones who move around him every day. They are the people who are truly the faces of the normal common man in India who is oppressed everywhere and in every possible way and who is standing stunned at the loss of his emotional being. That is why in the end of 'Lekin Mein' in Katha Diary he says, 'Tularam went up to his house climbing the narrow staircase' 'Lekin mein?'

'I am still standing on the last step of the narrow staircase of Tularam's home wearing the cover of Tularam's name.'

The reality of today is that those who want to walk on the right path with the help of truth they are helplessly bound to face Tularam's fate.

In the end I want to quote the lines of 'Gumbad Hai Khali' for those unknown and unnamed people who try to find their image in the Katha Dairyyan :

'Chali hawa toh larajne lagi

Munder pe shab

Utha gubbar toh deewar-o-dar se khwab gire'.

This is one collection which remains in people's mind for a long time though it affects the reader's heart and mind rather slowly. This is the significance of the writer!

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**The Book Reviewed :** Zinda Hone Ka Saboot

**Author :** Jabir Husain

**Published by** Rajkamal Prakashan Delhi.

**Pages :** 151

**Price :** 300

**Manoj Mohan**, is a freelance author and literary journalist. He lives in Delhi.

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## A Divine Journey

Deepak Sharma

Translated by  
Gagan Gill

Cutting into the heart of a corpus of travel narratives Gagan Gill's *Awaak* (Speechless) is a striking account of her pilgrimage to Kailash-Manasarovar—a phantasmagoric chimera for most of us.

Merging fable, myth and history with theology, Gagan Gill whisks us off along her peregrination—undertaken as a proxy for her husband, Nirmal Verma, whose longstanding desire to visit Kailash-Manasarovar in her company could not be fulfilled. What began as a growing compulsion metamorphoses into a new penchant for life.

What adds further power and value to the book is the sweep and texture of its language. Rich in meaning and visual content, it not only conveys the author's inner spirit but also manifests her genius almost unfailingly. She uses its full potential with a heightened sense of self-awareness as she mobilizes its image-making capacity while also creating a strong rhythm.

Gagan Gill packs her text with people and events with the close, clear gaze of a miniaturist with the result that during the time that is occupied with its reading, many magical moments come forth to bespeak her literary prowess, and we get all set to receive them readily with the same 'willing suspension of disbelief' with which the author and her fellow-pilgrims experience and accept those moments. Some of these moments are personal and some shared with others.

What she encounters at Manasarovar is highly personal.

Manasarovar, as we all know, is the highest fresh-water lake of the world, situated at 14,950 feet above sea level and Gagan Gill and her fellow-pilgrims had reached there from Kathmandu-via-Dhuli-Khel, Koddari, Nayalam, Saga and Piyang, with one overnight stay at Dhuli-Khel, one near Nayalam, one at Nayalam, one at Saga and one at Piyang. It was after these five nights, that on the sixth night, when they were all camping at Manasarovar that Gagan Gill was suddenly woken up by a tearing abdominal pain as if a pair of pincers was pulling her vitals out. Unable to bear the pain she moved out of the dark tent where she was camping with her six companions.

And there, outside the tents in the open sky glittered several stars, each more radiant than the other. Mesmerized by the bright, sparkling sky she envisaged that it was that time of the night when the Devas descend on Manasarovar. As the story goes, Manasarovar was created in the mind of Lord Brahma and is a combination of the words, Manas (Mind) and Sarovar (Lake). In Sanskrit, it is called manas Sarovar, in Tibetan it is Mopham Yutso and Buddhists associate the lake with the legendary lake known as Anavatapta in Sanskrit and Anotatta in Pali where Queen Maya is believed to have conceived Buddha. Coming back to Hindu mythology, sacred birds and the Devas too descend to bathe in the lake between 3 and 5 a.m. (this time is known as Brahma Muhurta) as did Brahma's sons, for whom Brahma had created this beautiful lake.

Gagan Gill also points out here that

the night of the full moon (Purnima) had gone past eight days ago and yet she witnessed a full lit sky. On reaching her tent she checks the time : it was a quarter past two!

Again on reaching Mt. Kailash (known in Tibetan as Khang Rinpoche), which lies towards the north of Manasarovar at an altitude of 22,028 feet above sea level at Tara Devi, as Gagan Gill places Nirmal Verma's last-used shirt along with her father's head-scarf, her dead niece's hand written page inscribed with 'My name is Tanupreet Kaur', her living mother's stole and her living friend Samdhong Rinpoche's broken nail and bids the final farewell to her late husband (with a prayer to the Goddess Tara Devi, 'Protect my Nirmal. Take hold of him, whom I could not hold'...), to her father and Kanupriya, she experiences peace, a serenity.

Hindus identify Mt. Kailash with the paradise of Lord Shiva while the Tibetans and Buddhists believe that it is Mt. Sumeru, the cosmic centre of the Universe and all the planets revolve around it. Some people even compare it to the Mountain Kaf in Arabian mythology. Pilgrims of several religions believe that circum-ambulating Mount Kailash on foot is a holy ritual that will bring good fortune. Hindus and Buddhists make the 52 km. long peregrination in a clockwise direction while the followers of Jainism and Bonpo religions do it counter clockwise.

Gagan Gill went around it on behalf of her exiled, Tibetan friend, Samdhong Rinpoche, to whom she has also dedicated

this book. Actually it was he who encouraged her to publish this manuscript inspite of the doubt that another friend of hers, Professor Daya Krishna had cast in her mind saying that a narration of one's Kailash experience may not measure up

to its grandeur, where prose must transcend the language of this world. On hearing this Rinpoche had said, 'If we make this demand on all prose writings, the travel narratives like those of Hiuen Tsang would not have reached us'.

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**The Book Reviewed : Awaak**

Author : Gagan Gill

Published by Vani Prakashan Delhi.

Price : 400

**Deepak Sharma** : born 1946 published fifteen collections of short stories in Hindi including Hinsabhas (1993), Ghoda ek Pair (2009) and Uncheeta (2012). She has been professor of English at Christian P.G. College Lucknow. She lives in Lucknow.

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# Contributors' Addresses

1. **Ashok Patel**, Gharola Mohalla, Ward No. 13, Patel Dairy, Shahdol, M.P. 484001, M. 9098389331.
2. **Manoj Kumar Jha**, C/o- Suresh Mishra, Diwani Takiya, Kathalwari, Darbhanga, Bihar-846004.
3. **Nishi Tiwari**, C/o-Mr. Loknath Tiwari, House No. 274, Chandni Chowk, Chandwe, Kanke Road, Ranchi.
4. **Divik Ramesh**, B-295, Sector-20, Noida, 201301, Divik\_ramesh@yahoo.com, M. 9910177099.
5. **B.S. Mangal Murty**, Rajni Gandha, 1/9, Virat Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow.
6. **Kuldeep Kumar**, A-97, Shivalik, Sector-35, Noida-201301, M. 9810032608, email-kuldeepkumar55@gmail.com
7. **Manoj Mohan**, LP 61B, Pitampura, Delhi-110068.
8. **Mrs. Sarla Jairatan**, C-12/14 DLF City, Phase I, Gurgaon-122002.
9. **Gayatri Kamleshwar**, V-4/116, Eros Garden, Surajkund Road, New Delhi-110044.
10. **Harjendra Chaudhary**, E-1/32, Sector-7, Rohini, Delhi-110085, email-visproharwar@yahoo.com
11. **Raji Narsimhan**, B-107, Gulmohar Park, New Delhi-110049.
12. **Mrs. Deepak Sharma**, B-35, Sector C, Aliganj, Lucknow-24.
13. **Ms. Vazda Khan**, G-264, II Floor, Sector-22, Noida (U.P.).
14. **Ms. Madhu Saxena**, K-23, Nivedita Kunj, Sector 10, R.K. Puram, New Delhi-110022.
15. **Kumar Anupam**, 1048/22, Block, Lodhi Colony, New Delhi-110003.
16. **Satyendra Srivastava**, Flat 25, 8 Newton Street, London WC2B 5EG, United Kingdom.
17. **Ms. Jutta Austin**, 4, Pershore End, Colchester, Essex, C03 9UZ, United Kingdom.
18. **Lalitya Lalit**, B-3/42, Shakuntala Bhawan, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi-110043 email-lalitmandora@gmail.com
19. **Ravi Nandan Sinha**, Editor 'The Quest', 202, Preeti Enclave, Chandni Chowk, Kanke Road, Ranchi-834008.
20. **Jai Prakash Kardam**, B-634, D.D.A. Flats, Chitrakoot Colony, East of Loni Road, Delhi-110093, email-jpkardam@radiffmail.com

21. **Namita Singh**, 28, MIG, Avantika-1, Ramghat Road, Aligarh-202001.
22. **Pramila Garg**, 5/19, Roopnagar, Delhi-110007.
23. **Manoj Mohan**, LP 61-B, Pitampura, Delhi-110068.
24. **Rajeev Ranjan Giri**, II Floor, Shiva Apartments, C-1/3 DLF Ankur Vihar, Loni Ghaziabad-201102, email-rajeev.ranjan.giri@gmail.com, M. 91-9868175601.
25. **Mohini Mehta**, WZ III B, 74, Vishnu Garden, New Delhi-110018.
26. **Hiroko Nagasaki**, nagasaki@osaka-gaidai.ac.jp
27. **Mr. Jabir Hussain**, 247, MIG, Lohianagar, Patna-800020.
28. **Dr. Gauri Mishra**, Flat No. 11, Tower B, Prateek Royal Cliff apts. Crossings Republik, NH-24, Ghaziabad-201001 (Uttar Pradesh).
29. **Pawan Karan**, 'Savitri' 1-10, Site No. 1, City Centre, Gwalior-474011 (M.P.), Ph. 0751-2234430 (Residence) M. 094251-09430, E-mail-pawankarn64@rediffmail.com
30. **Dr. Rashmi Bajaj**, HOD, Dept. of English, Vaish P.G. College, Bhiwani (Haryana), India.

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