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Hindi Vishwavidyalaya

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Editor
Mamta Kalia



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LANGUAGE DISCOURSE WRITING

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Editor's Note

The world of writers and writing is quite unique. It undertakes a voyage of exploration with very little plan or project. The writer is moved by an inner rhythm and often he is as surprised as the reader by the discoveries he makes while developing a daydream. A writer's craft and conviction can generate life and breath in some of the most remote situations. Thus we have Premchand personifying two bullocks and giving them the highest human attributes in 'do bailon ki katha'. The short story acquires the status of a fable in this regard. The conclusions are natural and humane without any attempt at sermonising, Upendranath Ashk uses the symbol of clay toys in an equally dexterous manner bringing alive the short story in a very natural way. Swayam Prakash is equally deft at conveying a message in 'Cremation of a jungle'.

We acknowledge S.H. Vatsyayan Agyey's presence in Hindi by bringing you his rare article on post war modern Hindi poetry that was first published seventy four years ago in 1937 in The Vishwabharti Quarterly in two instalments. It is not always easy to reconcile with Agyeyji's views on poets and poetry but he was different to the point of being disturbing. Shri Bharat Bhardwaj, editor 'Pustak-Varta' has unearthed this archival material for which we feel grateful to him. S.H. Vatsyayan 'Agyey' intrigues us as much by his writings as by his persona. He assumed many identities as if one proper noun was insufficient for him. It is said Vatsyayanji acquired the Agyey identity through the correspondence between stalwarts like Premchand and Jainendra Kumar. The cusp of this classic christening could be traced in his revolutionary days when Agyey was behind bars. He wrote and sent a few short stories to Premchand. Premchand liked one of those and shared the experience with Jainendra Kumar. Jainendraji, said, 'But who is the author? What's his name?' Premchandji said, 'I cannot say who he is. You can call him Mr. Anonymous or Agyey? Thus Agyey was born. In the beginning Agyeyji did not like this name but later he adjusted to it since the Hindi heartland welcomed this pen name. In his centenary year a fresh debate has erupted about Agyey's personality and placement in the literary world, namely what do we call him, a revolutionary or a reactionary, a patriot or a spy? Much has been written

for and against the proposition. As writers we draw some solace from Faulkner's views that a writer's responsibility is totally to his art, he will be completely ruthless if he is a good one.

In our poetry section we have classic and contemporary poets like Bhavani Prasad Mishra, Kailash Vajpeyi, Meira Kumar and Jitendra Rathore. Our great scholar Dr. Namwar Singh writes about Nagarjun's poetry and he picks some unusual poems of the poet. Younger critic Subhash Sharma has some revealing observations on Nagarjun's first novel 'Balchanma'.

Much has been done to establish and propagate Hindi in foreign universities by western scholars. Rupert Snell holds a unique place in this galaxy since he took up the task of analysing Shrilal Shukla's different and difficult novel 'Rag Darbari'. His views as a reviewer on the novel's translation are equally important. Shrilal Shukla's novel is one such work of art that has provoked varied research not only in Hindi but in other languages of the world. The latest laurel for Shrilal Shukla is that he has been honoured with Jnanpith Award for the year 2009.

The Films column appears after a hiatus because of space crunch. Contributors are welcome to send us on line articles on language, films and books at editor.hindi@gmail.com



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MODERN (POST-WAR) HINDI POETRY

S.H. Vatsyayan

The Periodising of poetry, indeed of literature in general, must ever remain an arbitrary process. Providence does not move in well defined steps, its movements are rather like the formless undulating progress of the snail. The process of division becomes more arbitrary and even dangerous when one talks of a 'period' that is too recent to be placed in perspective and examined in retrospect.

Yet this arbitrary division has its reasons as well as its uses, and is generally intelligible to everyone. Each arbitrary period has certain characteristics of form, of content, of tone, purpose or ideal. Two poets of the same period examined at close range may not only be very different from each other but may even have affinities with a poet or poets belonging to a different period; yet it will be discovered that in some essential respect they are of a kind.

This essential is the spirit of the age. In all poetry of any worth, there are discernible two governing influences—the poet's own personality, and the spirit of the age. The personal quality of a poet is obvious to the sensitive reader from the first; the spirit of the age is rarely understood by the age itself. This spirit becomes apparent only when one period is examined in relation to its predecessors and when an attempt is made to understand the forces and influences working on the poets of each age.

The subject of the present paper is 'Modern (Post-war) Hindi

Poetry' The writer is fully aware that his choice is not a happy one. The task of tracing out definite lines of progress in the present labyrinth of conflict and confusion, of inert apathy and electric urgency, is one that would have appalled Daedalus, and it is nothing short of impudence in the present writer to hope to perform it in any measure of success. In failure he will not even have the satisfaction of knowing that the subject was thrust upon him. Yet he was one author and a representative of his age himself, he will, even in failure, have expressed two of the characteristics he will presently examine: namely, a perplexity with the problems of an age that moves too fast, a perplexity bordering on despair; and an almost overweening self-confidence which is in reality the instinct of self-preservation seeking the last resort of despair.

Post-war poetry, as such, did not exist in India. The reason for this is that the war never became a reality to the educated Indian— neither a distant, impersonal but large reality, nor an immediate personal one. For this again there were obvious causes. First, India was not sufficiently highly industrialised to be hard hit by the wrong side of the war. Secondly, the so-called 'martial races' of India constitute a limited, uneducated and culturally insignificant minority. Thirdly, in spite of conscription and Mahatma Gandhi's appeal

to young men to come to the rescue of the Empire, Indian youths did not take to the army, if only because the government in India has always been suspicious of the educated Indian youth.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that the monster of war did not cast its dark shadow over Indian literature. And though a few isolated attempts at picturing the naked realities of war may be found in contemporary literature { chiefly in fiction), so far as the majority of our writers are concerned the war might not have taken place at all.

The utility, therefore, of fixing the war as a dividing point between two periods may not be immediately apparent. Yet any one who has watched Indian affairs at all carefully cannot but notice that the indirect influence of the war brought about deep and fundamental changes in modes of living and thinking, and completely changed, not to say revolutionised, our social, moral and spiritual values. It initiated a period of profound unrest and questioning, not of frustration and chaotic despair as in Europe. The seeds of political consciousness, which had begun to sprout in the early years of the century, and even during the war had already cast forth a few dark flowers, now ripened into a vast growth that shadowed the horizon. A sense of unity and nationhood began to dawn in the minds of the more or less educated young men of the country,

till there hardly remained a person to whom the word 'motherland' had not a definite meaning.

Contemporaneously with this, the twofold attack on traditional religion from the east and the west led to a complex transformation in our attitude towards things spiritual. On one side was the rationalism of the Mahratta and the reformatory zeal of the Arya Samaj, the protest against emotionalism and mental apathy, the scorpion-whip seeking to rouse people from the stupor into which they had fallen after the decadence of the Bhakti movement ; on the other was the Bengali revolt against formalism and dialecticism, the demand for spiritual solace, for communion, for religion as a personal experience. This internal struggle was further complicated by the impact of social theories from Europe ; our culture which had been based on the individualistic doctrine of salvation was brought into conflict with the socialistic philosophy of mass existence. We lost faith in old standards of morality which had failed so hopelessly; our attitude towards sin underwent a change. While we became more tolerant of the individual's failing as being conditioned by circumstances not within the individual's control, we also realised the futility of imposing the responsibility on God or providence or other supernatural powers. In denying individual responsibility we accepted social

responsibility : God's business was taken out of His hands and became man's business even if in order to perform it man felt it necessary to organise himself into a God-equivalent State.

The war did not transform India, it did not revolutionise India. But it helped India to realise itself, to see its own face. And the face that India saw was a new face, with deep furrows of disillusionment, harsh lines of disquiet and the conflict of duties; a face deformed by despair and pessimism, blinded by confusion and perplexity. It was a face that demanded effort and at the same time doubted its usefulness, that defied sympathy, yet craved for solace, that hungered and would not be fed. In short it was a face of challenge.

Did Hindi literature meet that challenge? And does Hindi poetry offer us evidence of awareness of that challenge? It is not the business of poetry to solve problems, but it is the business of poetry as a 'sensitive medium for that perfect expression of experience which constitutes art', to be conscious of the problems that torture the collective soul of the age, whose experience it embodied. Does Hindi poetry then, tell us of the joys and sorrows and perplexities of this most complex age ?

If a one-word label must be given to Hindi poetry today, we may, for want of a better word, call it Romantic. Yet

the inadequacy of the label would be immediately apparent to any one who attempted to follow its progress. The reason for this is that in an age of transition such as ours so many diverse forces are active that it is hard to pick out one as the outstanding feature. Then again the ease with which literary controversy can be started, in this age of publicity, in a country which not only possesses special aptitude for it but also has tradition at its back, and the general lack of proportion and humour which causes writers not only vehemently to argue but also to come out with practical-demonstrations of their theories in print while the reader stands by helpless and amazed, renders judgment more difficult.

Romance, the attitude of wonder, is necessarily the expression of the soul of man in a certain stage of civilisation. It is when the realisation breaks on him that the forces moulding his society and the values governing his world are not absolute and eternal as he has so far believed, but are relative, mundane, that man begins to hunger for a world of wonder and mystery and spiritual beauty.

In this sense it may be said that the romantic revival in Hindi should have commenced about the time of the 1857 upheaval, for it was then that the traditional institutions began to be questioned (or at any rate seriously doubted). And, in fact, the light and fanciful romance lit-

erature that began to appear in this period indicates that our expectation is not unjustified. Those were the early swallows, the harbingers of the full-blown summer we have today. Indeed, we can already notice a shift towards arid intellectualism, and soon the field may be ripe for the advent of a T. S. Eliot.

It is a curious fact that the first and greatest figure in our period is one who really represents the classical tradition—Maithili Sharan Gupta. In this age of denials his is the clear voice of faith. The speed and the garishness of life have not shaken him ; amid the shambles of modern existence he still stands out dauntless and dignified, full of noble sentiment. One may try to explain that by his retired life of moderate comfort and one may urge against him that he has not known the extreme pressure of twentieth century life, but one cannot deny the ennobling influence of his poetry. He is not emotional, though his poetry has poignancy. He is not sentimental, though he is the poet of sentiment par excellence—and very cathartic sentiment too, cathartic in Aristotle's sense. Consciously or unconsciously he has subscribed to the classical assumption that love is an inferior motive and that women are scarcely fit for the position of principal personages. That is why, even in *Saketa* which is woven round Urmila as one of the principal figures, the poet has depicted his women less as merely human figures and more as individuals governed by almost

inhuman ideals.

Sita who, when Urmila expressed her apprehension that Rama may fail to string the bow, says in a supreme expression of faith:

To string the bow

Had he not the power.

My steadfast eyes

Would not have fixed their gaze on him.

or Urmila who says:

‘Be that as it may. I dry my tears and drink in faith : Wherever he is, he is well, since life yet, throbs in me’, are a little more than human; that is to say, they are human embodiments of a superhuman ideal.

On the technical side, too, Maithilisharan has stood for the classical tradition. Indeed, he is mainly responsible for the rigidity in poetical rhythm and diction, which is one of the notable features of Hindi poetry today and to which we shall have occasion to refer later. Yet, in spite of this, Maithilisharan’s contribution to the romantic spirit is large and definite.

Classicism tends to order, lucidity and proportion ; romanticism to freedom, fancy, and caprice. “Classicism is method, romanticism is energy.” To Maithilisharan goes the credit of having roused Indian

youth from apathy. His song touched the heart of young men, awakened in them the pride of achievement and a nostalgia for the age of legendary valour. His was a voice of protest and his is the one voice that has remained most consistently protestant throughout the period that he has been writing.

The individual has limits, but power is infinite.

In action, even death is an achievement in itself

Do not go back for sanctions, be a law unto yourself.

A man who lacks an urge, a passion, a madness in his life, Of what use to the world is his steadfastness ?

*Let our challenge be to Death himself—
Before a new creation let us demand the cataclysm!*

He has not cultivated an attitude of superior intolerance towards society, nor has submitted and fallen back, He has not yelled defiance, but he has never shirked a blow, never sought to escape.

Lakshmi saved herself by entering the ocean. Sati found emancipation through fire, Urmila will live, and wait, and endure.

It is an expression of his own attitude.

(But no:) Pluck at thy sweet will all the blossoms.

*That attract thee by their beauty or
their perfume :*

*The creeper bears them not to wither
away*

But to be fulfilled in proud self-giving.

Nor has he been shut off from the true romantic consciousness of mystery. It may be difficult to read it in his longer works in the epic tradition, but in his earlier lyrics it is apparent. In *Maya*—

She came and clung to me :

She bound me in her slim arms

*Nay, ask me not to what nameless
deeds.*

She led me in numb acquiescence—

one finds a hint of the evil spell of beauty which was so constant a motif with the romantics. The conception of an eternal traveller (Narada) interfering with mundane life, himself detached, is also a romantic conception.

His third great feature is his capacity for concentrated emotion, The couplet appearing on the title-page of his *Yashodhara* is a good example :

This is the story of a woman's life—

*Breasts full of milk and eyes welling
up with tears.*

The real precursor, however, of the romantic movement is Jayashankar Prasad.

He is conscious throughout of a supernatural world of wonder and mystery and his pen has the power of conjuring up vivid scenes of that world which he invokes in such lines as:

*Night's beautiful soft hair is wet, touch
it with your hand, dearest,*

as a ray of the morning sun—

Open wide the doors....

and which he presents vividly before our eyes by the power of his imagination supported by a language rich in imagery and possessing great suggestive and pictorial power:

*For whom is thine emergence. Morning
Light?*

*Bowed to the earth, like prayer, sweet
as a flute, yet wordless.*

Of what unknown world art thou.

The restless pain-messenger?

In short couplets he calls up weird pictures which create a vague yet nonetheless real restlessness:

In all these little things

*The freshness of them that had been
lost to me*

By a thousand fold recurrent seeing

Is still known to you,

Still loved by you,

Still a source of endless mystery,

His gift of thinking saves him from falling into a morass of metaphor like so many of his contemporaries. He has no 'star-dust' stuff. His deep human sympathy goes straight to the heart and strikes a responsive chord in the reader. When in the Outcast Daughter we find the unhappy father asking in agony.

Is my stigma greater than the Goddess's mercy?

In this one thing do I surpass

The immensity of the Mother's love!

we are struck by the 'enormity of his punishment and accord him our fullest sympathy. In this art of adapting social themes to political purposes, of attacking social tyranny and abuse without falling from poetical ideals, Siyaramsharan has no equal.

As example of his touching optimism we may quote a couplet:

The glory of victory is not exclusive to the

Short lived flowers :

It shines forth sometimes from the foot of the

thorn-girt bush.

This is from his beautiful poem *The tryst*, a masterpiece of restrained emotion :

While the unrelenting wave of karma keeps

rising and falling,

Defying all obstacles,

In this counting house of profit and loss, In light as in darkness,

Whose voice is it that my quivering heart keeps hearing ?While the unrelenting wave of karma keeps rising and falling. I know not how far more I have to go, how long the day.

Nor where you dwell,

But in sleep or waking,

My pilgrimage knows no rest.

Thus with untiring steps I march in joy,-

I know not how far more I have to go, how long the day.

In conclusion attention may be drawn to the lack of major achievement in his work. His is the strange case of two virtues combining to produce a failing. His reflectiveness and his benevolence have resulted in a lack of that unbalance which is a pre-requisite for great poetry. His love is undeniable, he sees a unity and continuity in the world through his love; but his love does not attain the strength of passion. As some one has said, he "writes with his tears, but not with his blood".

Subhadrakumari Chouhan is definitely

a product of the post-war nationalist age. Her poetry is direct and simple, and often naive. Her simplicity, too, is not the deliberately cultivated, and hence more or less artificial, simplicity of the conscious artist, not of the art that lies in concealing art ; it is a direct reflection of a straightforward personality. Nowhere do we see her employing the usual artifices of the poet—the ‘tricks of the trade’—nor does she ever become learned or dissertative.

Subhadrakumari Chouhan is pre-eminently a domestic poet. She has an essentially poetical outlook towards the little things of our day to day life, on which her keen receptivity is brought to bear with almost surprising results. The spontaneity of such pieces as *Childhood Rediscovered* is refreshing and more than compensates, nay, is even enhanced by, their naivete, which otherwise would have made them puerile and ridiculous. This is also true of such poems as *At Parting*, *Lovers Quarrel*, *Spurn Me or Love Me*, which are direct expressions of the almost abject self-surrender of love. These poems come dangerously near the line at which poetry becomes personal confession and hence indelicate and even faintly distasteful. All creative art is confession in a sense, but such confession is admissible only in so far as it expresses universal experience and can be enjoyed without an ever-present, identification with the writer ; that is, so long as there is an

impersonal, detached quality about the work. Be it said to the credit of Subhadrakumari Chouhan that she does not falter even though she comes very near the danger line. Her very directness saves her and justifies her. Her poems are not only good poetry, but are revealing of that strange, almost irritatingly self-effacing yet thoroughly lovable model of what we have been taught to regard as ideal Indian womanhood.

Poems which are not domestic generally have a nationalist bias. Subhadrakumari Chouhan is an ardent lover of her country. This love is reflected in several short poems as well as in her powerful ballad *The Queen of Jhansi*, a solitary example of its kind.

Occasionally she has sought identification with nature, but the results have been disappointing. Two poems addressed to flowers, are poor and incomplete. She cannot feel a unity with the ‘Great Outdoors’. Her field is strictly domestic.

Subhadrakumari Chouhan has not written much. There is also a feeling of occasionalness in what she has written. Lately she has practically ceased writing poetry. Possibly the poetic vein is spent—the fire has burned out. A more likely reason is that the hunger which led her to write such touching domestic poetry has found satisfaction elsewhere. Indeed, if such poems as *Childhood Rediscovered*

have any psychological implications at all, our conclusion is the only one that may reasonably be drawn.

We may now pass on to a review of the other poets and examine them in relation to their environments.

The literary artist may react to his environment in one of four ways. He may escape entirely from its impact. This would result in the production of utopias, romances, mysteries. He may bear the impact and face disappointment and cruel disillusionment—resulting in realism of the starkest kind. He may try to snatch a bit of beauty from what he knows to be harsh and ugly—an attitude of restrained protest, of thoughtful optimism—producing often the most delightful poetry. Or he may react with passive acceptance and be overwhelmed by his environment. This group would include cynics,, hedonists, fatalists—all the legions of despair.

We have already surveyed the environment of the modern Hindi poet. Judging modern poetry in the light of the above grouping, we will find that we have a very large output in the first and the last classes—those that yield to the impulse to escape and those that submit completely. The reflective optimists are few indeed, and the realists almost non-existent.

The causes are not far to seek. In a first awakening to the impact of desperate realities, an extreme reaction is the most

likely result. Escape is most urgent, and hedonism most rampant, when reality hits hardest. Our lives have been and are being shaken —and we have sought sanctuary everywhere, while at the same time doubting if we would get it. The age is one of doubt, of denial, of frustration. The strident voice of denial can be heard over all others—indeed, but for a few notable exceptions ours could well be called the age of irreverence. It has become laughable to confess to any faith, or to an attachment to old ideals, yet the urgent need of something to cling to, a bulwark in this flood of reality, is everywhere and most of us in our secret souls jealously guard our cravings, spirit-hungers, and the shreds of such loyalties as have survived. Indeed, the normal channels being closed by the intense pressure of life, hard, unimaginative, exacting, garish, in short, our hungers have become more urgent within, and burst forth at the merest touch ; the least emotional stimulus gives us an unbearable thrill. The appeal of such mystic poets as Mahadevi Varma and even such fatalists as 'Bachchan' can only be explained thus. In a healthier age, they could only have commanded a very limited appreciation, and their admirers would have been rudely put aside as eccentrics or neurotics.

And yet we are waking not only to reality but also to power— it is an age also of self-discovery. We are buying new

lamps for old, and the wonder of it is that the genie inhabits the new lamp. Our soul is coming to a consciousness of great forces, we are tending towards a corporate national existence ; our sympathies are widening and comprise the lowly as well as the distant. This is more obvious in prose and fiction ; in poetry it is not so marked, but is coming surely, inevitably. One may wonder why this is so, because it is generally supposed, and rightly, that the poet is the first iconoclast, the vanguard of the protestants. If one may venture an explanation, this slackness may be ascribed to the poverty of criticism in India generally and in Hindi, in particular. We have no good critics, and almost no critical literature worth the name. Whatever old literature we had is now either inaccessible or otherwise rendered useless by the type of education we have received, which has cut us off from our own literary tradition without having given us a substitute. Even if a critical apparatus based on our traditions were available, we would probably have discovered that it was antiquated and unfit for use without considerable readjustment.

I will end this paper with a few words on the Aesthetes among our modern poets.

The aesthetic school comprises poets-primarily engaged in a quest of beauty. The aesthete is obviously the person who does not face reality and who lives a protected and more or less innocuous life.

He is intensely occupied with nature, with form and colour, and with the presentation of his own inner being in terms of the graceful and rhythmic aspect of nature. He sings of nature, yet his nature is not natural ; by an unconscious selective process he chooses only those aspects of nature which conform to his aesthetic ideal and with which he can seek identification without losing his equanimity : —

The Form

Whose splendour is reflected in the Dawn,

Whose ornament is the fresh-blown spring.

Whose garland is a chain of stars.

Who wears a crown of the sun and the moon,

Whose hair is clustered in cloud, and whose joy-tears

are the drops of dew.

Whose scented breath is the zephyr, mind the ocean. Whose play is the world of waves—Her must you bind in your tender arms, O poet.

Nature as conflict, as elimination, as stern justice, nature as a biological fact, is unknown to him. He does not resist, he is not a protestant, for all conflict is unaesthetic, and protest lacks grace. The aesthete invokes the past sometimes, but here again he invokes the beautiful, the poignant, the graceful in form.

For an examination of the aesthetic tendency we may consider Sumitranandan Pant.

Pant seems to have drunk deep at the fountain of Wordsworth's poetry. He is a nature poet and as such he even has some of Wordsworth's faults—his often deliberate simplicity, the cultivated naïvete which provided such an easy target for nineteenth century parodists. At its best, of course, this simplicity is an intimate revelation of personality in a child. The simple child naming that mountain 'the cloud-home', is almost a 'confidence' imparted to a sympathetic listener, and an indication of the poet's intimacy with nature. But generally it rouses a faint sense of ridicule in the listener.

Pant is nurtured on softness —he is one that has 'lain on the lilies of life.' He lacks resistance. In his poem *Sighs* which, by the way, is a very flimsy story used as a pretext for an orgy of nature description, when his childhood affection is interfered with:

*Love had hardly blossomed yet,
The flush of shyness had not yet faded,
When like a blight came suspicion
And the new-blown bud withered.*

Like many other poets of today, Pant sings of pain but his pain is not felt, it is imagined. He says :

The first poet must have been of the

separated—

And the first song must have burst forth from pain.

Even in dreaming he says :

Comrade, let us think about dreams. Straying a little from the field of strict criticism, one may make a few remarks about aesthetes in general. These are relevant in that they help us to a better understanding of the special qualities and limitations of the aesthetic poet.

The aesthete is generally a subnormal person. His passion is etherialised (not sublimated) to a degree which makes it unreal, arid, even affected. The intense intellectual preoccupation with beauty is itself evidence of the fact that the passionate quality is lacking. The libido-does not accumulate, it continuously distributes itself in countless lesser attractions.

When I behold

*The garden filling the flowercups with
the wine of youth*

To feed the honey-bee,

And the ripple, like a young bride,

*Wavering a little near the flowers on
the bank*

And then gliding on,

When I behold the moonlight lifting

Her thin rainbow-coloured gossamer veil

of cloud,

*It is a glimpse of your face, o my love,
That carries me away in a trance.*

This, of course, rouses the old controversy : is great art possible without great passion ? The present writer wishes to assert, with all the emphasis he is capable of, that the fundamental quality of all great art is passion—passion, of course, in the highest sense of strong feeling backed by a directive will. Without it, a piece may be beautiful, but it will be the beauty of the delicate, weak-kneed, rickety child born before his time. This is what may be said of Pant's long and pretty *Ode to Cupid*.

Let us take an example. Sings Pant in *Woman*

Woman,

*I love the littlest atom of your being;
o frail form.*

Your bosom is the home of all bliss.

Compare this merely graceful avowal with Tagore's majestic *Urvashi*, or even with the pagan Navin's:

*Bound at last in my arms, you queen
of all bonds! Your proud disdain has thawed
into sweet graciousness. o my beautiful
flower, whom I hold in my iron grasp,
See, my heart is welling up anew. The
burning breath of passion sweeps me off
my feet As you abandon yourself to my*

importunate desire!

And the failure of the aesthete is obvious.

The aesthete's libido centres round himself. Almost. invariably he is a narcissist—an admirer of beauty as expressed in his own form. Pant's *Vina* affords several examples of this. This self-admiration, naturally enough, generates a self-esteem, a sort of superiority complex, from which, almost invariably again, all aesthetes suffer. Pant is no exception. Notice the tone of contempt for public taste in his preface to *Vina*: "Readers will probably find the present collection more to their taste than *Pallava* because in reality it is not half as good."

This is not to say that in moments of self-effacement he does not produce beautiful poetry. The vision of beauty slowly unveiling itself in:

*Slowly you are opening the door of
your divine abode. Every moment revealing
your radiant form. o mother, when
shall I see you face to face, You whose
image is mirrored in the world?*

What has been said above about Pant as an aesthete and about the psychology of the aesthete in general is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of Suryakant Tripathi who writes under the pen-name Nirala. In fact the pitfalls to which the aesthete, is liable show up more glaringly in his case. His is another case of artistic ability gone

astray due to overweening self-esteem, of poetry sacrificed to a more or less deliberate attempt at originality. His earlier work was often very good, but later it began to show an irritated obstinacy in the conviction that the main poetic tradition had ossified. He joined the ranks of *les jeunes* who “throw bricks at imaginary Aunt Sallies who maintain that poetry must rhyme, that line-patterns must be regular. and that aeroplanes and complexes are taboo in literature.”

Let us however recognise that his was another voice that rang for the freedom of poetry from rigid formalism.

Come into this half-blown lotus of my heart, O my love,

Leave the narrow path of strict prosody.

O slow-gaited one, that path is narrow and thorny,

How could you ever go through.

The thorns would tear the hem of your robe,

And your garland would be entangled.

And having given him due credit for this, let us say no more. Nil nisi bonum.

S.H. Vatsyayan (1911-1987) born at Kushinagar, he was one of the most adored and debated authors of twentieth century. He is known by several names, like Sachchidanand Hiranand Vatsyayan, Agyeya and Kuttichatan. He wrote famous novels like *Shekhar ek Jivani*, *nadi ke dweep* and *Apne Apne Ajnabi*. His short stories like *Sharandata*, *Hili bone ki battakhen* and *Gangrene* have earned him world renown. As a poet he not only wrote many sensitive poems but also edited ‘*Taar Saptak*’ in 1943 that created a literary furore in Hindi. He is remembered for his travelogues and literary journalism. He edited *Times of India’s Newsweekly Dinman* from 1964 to 1971 and coined its original vocabulary and language, that was different from routine journalism. He was honoured with *sahitya akademi award*, *golden wreath award* and *Bharat Bharti Samman*. He spent long years in prison. He travelled widely at home and abroad. He has penned more than 65 books from different publishing houses. His fans call him the T.S. Eliot of Hindi literature. He passed away in Delhi on April 4, 1987.

THE STORY OF TWO BULLOCKS

Premchand

Translated by
David Rubin

The jackass is held to be the most stupid of animals. Whenever we want to call somebody a firstclass fool we call him a jackass. Whether the jackass really is a fool, or his meek submissiveness has earned him this title, is something not easy to determine. Cows strike with their horns and one who's just calved will spontaneously take on the aspect of a lioness. The dog, too, is a fairly pitiable creature, but sometimes even he will go into a rage. But an angry jackass has never been seen or heard. No matter how much you may beat the poor fellow, no matter what sort of rotten straw you fling down in front of him, not even a flicker of discontent will pass over his features. He may possibly prance around once or twice in spring, but we've never seen him happy. He has never been known to change whether in joy or sorrow, winning or losing, or in any condition whatsoever. Whatever virtues the sages and holy men may possess, all have reached their culmination in the jackass; yet people call him a fool. Such disrespect for virtue has never been seen before. Perhaps simplicity is not suitable for this world. Just look now, why are the Indians living in Africa in such a wretched state. Why aren't they allowed to slip into America? The poor fellows dont drink liquor, they put aside a little money for a rainy day, break the backs working, don't quarrel with anybody, suffer insults in silence. All the same, they have a bad reputation. It's said they lower the standard of

living. If they learned to fight back, well, may be people would begin to call them civilized. The example of Japan is before us—a single victory has caused them to be ranked among the civilized people of the world.

But the jackass has a younger brother who is scarcely less asinine and that's the bullock. We use the expression 'the calf's uncle' in more or less the same way we say 'jackass.' There are some people who would probably call the bullock supreme among fools, but we have a rather different opinion. The bullock from time to time *will* strike ... and even a rebellious bullock has been observed occasionally. And it also has several other ways of expressing its discontent, so it cannot be ranked with the jackass.

Jhuri the vegetable farmer had two bullocks named Hira and Moti. Both were of fine Pachhai stock, of great stature, beautiful to behold, and diligent at their labours. The two had lived together for a very long time and become sworn brothers. Face to face or side by side they would hold discussions in their silent language. How each understood the other's thoughts we cannot say, but they certainly possessed some mysterious power (denied to man who claims to be supreme among living creatures). They would express their love by licking and sniffing one another, and sometimes they would even lock horns—not from hostility but rather out

of friendship and a sense of fun, the way friends as soon as they become intimate slap and pummel one another; any friendship lacking such displays seems rather superficial and insipid and not to be trusted. Whenever they were yoked together for plowing or pulling the wagon, they stepped along swinging their necks. Each would attempt to take most of the burden on his own shoulders. When they were released from the yoke after their day's work at noon or in the evening they would lick and nuzzle one another to ease their fatigue. When the oilseed cake and straw was tossed into the manger they would stand up together, thrust their muzzles into the trough together, and sit down side by side. When one withdrew his mouth the other would do so too.

It came about that on one occasion Jhuri sent the pair to his father-in-law's. How could the bullocks know why they were being sent away? They assumed that the master had sold them. Whether it bothered them or not to be sold like this no one can say, but Jhuri's brother-in-law Gaya had to sweat through his teeth to take the two bullocks away. When he drove them from behind they'd run right or left; if he caught up the tether and dragged them forward they'd pull back violently. When he beat them, both would lower their horns and bellow. If God had given them speech, they would have asked Jhuri, 'Why are you throwing us poor

wretches out? We've done everything possible to serve you well. If working as hard as we did couldn't get the job done, you could have made us work still harder. We were willing to die labouring for you. We never complained about the food, whatever you gave us to eat we bowed our heads and ate it, so why did you sell us into the hands of this tyrant?'

At evening the two bullocks reached their new place, hungry after a whole day without food, but when they were brought to the manger, neither so much as stuck his mouth in. Their hearts were heavy; they were separated from the home they had thought was their own. New house, new village, new people, all seemed alien to them.

They consulted in their mute language, glancing at one another out of the corners of their eyes, and lay down. When the village was deep in sleep the two of them pulled hard, broke their tether and set out for home. That tether was very tough, no one could have guessed that any bullock could break it; but a redoubled power had entered into them and the ropes snapped with one violent jerk.

When he got up early in the morning Jhuri saw that his two bullocks were standing at the trough, half a tether dangling from each of their necks. Their legs were muddied up to the knees and resentful love gleamed in their eyes.

When Jhuri saw the bullocks he was overwhelmed with affection for them. He ran and threw his arms around their necks, and very pleasant was the spectacle of that loving embrace and kissing.

The children of the household and the village boys gathered clapping their hands in welcome. Although such an incident was not without precedent in the village it was nevertheless a great event. The gathering of boys decided they ought to present official congratulations. From their houses they brought bread, molasses bran and chaff.

One boy said, 'Nobody had bullocks like these,' and another agreed. 'They came back from so far all by themselves,' while a third said. 'They're not bullocks, in an earlier life they were men.' And nobody dared disagree with this.

But when Jhuri's wife saw the bullocks at the gate she got angry and said. 'What loafers these oxen are, they didn't work at my father's place for one day before they ran away!'

Jhuri could not listen to his bullocks being slandered like this. Loafers, are they? At your father's they must not have fed them so what were they to do?'

In her overbearing way his wife said, 'Oh sure, you're the only one who knows how to feed bullocks while everybody else give them nothing but water.'

Jhuri railed at her, 'If they'd been fed why would they run off?'

Aggravated, she said, 'They ran away just because those people don't make fools of themselves spoiling them like you. They feed them but they also make them work hard. These two are real lazy bones and they ran away. Let's see them get oilseed and bran now I'll give them nothing but dry straw, they can eat it or drop dead.'

So it came about. The hired hand was given strict orders to feed them nothing but dry straw.

When the bullocks put their faces in the trough they found it insipid. No savour, no juice—how could they eat it? With eyes full of hope they began to stare toward the door.

Jhuri said to the hired hand, 'Why the devil don't you throw in a little oilseed?'

'The mistress would surely kill me.'

'Then do it on the sly.'

'Oh no, boss, afterwards you'll side with her.'

The next day Jhuri's brother-in-law came again and took the bullocks away. This time he yoked them to the wagon.

A couple of times Moti wanted to knock the wagon into the ditch but Hira, who was more tolerant, held him back.

When they reached the house, Gaya tied them with thick ropes and paid them back for yesterday's mischief. Again he threw down the same dry straw. To his own bullocks he gave oilseed cake, ground lentils, everything.

The two bullocks had never suffered such an insult. Jhuri wouldn't strike them even with a flower stem. The two of them would rise up at a click of his tongue, while here they were beaten. Along with the pain of injured pride they had to put up with dry straw. They didn't even bother to look in the trough.

The next day Gaya yoked them to the plow, but it was as though the two of them had sworn an oath not to lift a foot—he grew tired beating them but not one foot would they lift. One time when the cruel fellow delivered a sharp blow on Hira's nostrils Moti's anger went out of control and he took to his heels with the plow. Plough share, rope, yoke, harness, all were smashed to pieces. Had there not been strong ropes around their necks it would have been impossible to catch the two of them.

Hira said in his silent language, 'It's useless to run away.'

Moti answered, 'But he was going to kill you.'

'We'll really get beaten now.'

'So what' We were born bullocks, how

can we escape beating?’

‘Gaya’s coming on the run with a couple of men and they’re both carrying sticks.’

Moti said. ‘Just say the word and I’ll show them a little fun. Here he comes with his stick!’.

‘No, brother!’ Hira cautioned. ‘Just stand still.’

‘If he beats me I’ll knock one or two of them down.’

‘No, that’s not the dharma of our community.’

Moti could only stand, protesting violently in his heart. Gaya arrived, caught them and took them away. Fortunately he didn’t beat them this time, for if he had Moti would have struck back. When they saw his fierce look Gaya and his helpers concluded that this time it would be best to put it off.

This day again the same dry straw was brought to them. They stood in silence. In the house the people were eating dinner. Just then quite a young girl came out carrying a couple of pieces of bread. She fed the two of them and went away. How could a piece of bread still their hunger? But in their hearts they felt as though they had been fed a full meal. Here too was the dwelling of some gentle folk. The girl was Bhairo’s daughter; her mother was dead and her stepmother beat her often, so that she felt a kind of sympathy

for the bullocks.

The two were yoked all day, took a lot of beating, got stubborn. In the evening they were tied up in their stall, and at night the same little girl would come out and feed some bread to each of them. The happy result of this communion of love was that even though they ate only a few mouthfuls of the dry straw they did not grow weak. Still their eyes and every cell of their bodies filled with rebelliousness.

One day Moti said in his silent language, ‘I can’t stand it any longer, Hira.’

‘What do you want to do?’

‘Catch a few of them on my horns and toss them.’

‘But you know, that sweet girl who feeds us bread is the daughter of the master of this house. Won’t the poor girl become an orphan?’

‘Then what if I toss the mistress? After all, she beats the girl.’

‘But you’re forgetting, it’s forbidden to use your horns against womankind.’

‘You’re leaving me no way out! So what do you say, tonight we break the ropes and run away?’

‘Yes, I’ll agree to that, but how can we break such a thick rope?’

‘There is a way. First gnaw the rope a bit, then it will snap with one jerk.’

At night when the girl had fed them and gone off, the two began to gnaw at their ropes, but the thick cord wouldn't fit in their mouths. The poor fellows tried hard over and over again without any luck.

Suddenly the door of the house opened and the same girl came out; the bullocks lowered their heads and began to lick her hand. Their tails stood up while she stroked their foreheads, and then she said, 'I'm going to let you go. Be very quiet and run away or these people will kill you. In the house today they were talking about putting rings in your noses.'

She untied the rope, but the two stood silent.

'Well, let's go,' said Hira, 'only tomorrow this orphan's going to be in a lot of trouble. Everybody in the house will suspect her.'

Suddenly the girl yelled, 'Uncle's bullocks are running away! Daddy, daddy, come quick, they're running away!'

Gaya came rushing out of the house to catch the bullocks. They were running now, with Gaya fast behind them. They ran even faster and Gaya set up a shout. Then he turned back to fetch some men of the village. This was the chance for the two friends to make good their escape, and they ran straight ahead, no longer aware by now just where they were. There was no trace of the familiar road they'd

come by. They were coming to villages they'd never seen. Then the two of them halted at the edge of a field and began to think about what they ought to do now.

Hira said, 'It appears we've lost our way.'

'You took to your heels without thinking. We should have knocked him down dead right on the spot.'

'If we'd killed him what would the world say? He abandoned his dharma, but we stuck to ours.'

They were dizzy with hunger. Peas were growing in the field and they began to browse, stopping occasionally to listen for anyone coming.

When they had eaten their fill the two of them were exhilarated with the experience of freedom and began to spring and leap. First they belched, then locked horns and began to shove one another around. Moti pushed Hira back several steps until he fell into the ditch. Then even Hira finally got angry. He managed to get up and then clashed with Moti. Moti could see that their game was on the verge of getting serious so he drew aside.

But what's this? A bull is coming along bellowing. Yes, it really is a bull, and he's heading right their way. The two friends look around anxiously for a way out. This

bull is a regular elephant, you'll risk your very life if you try to take him on, but even if you don't fight him it looks as though you won't save your life either. And he's coming straight for them. What a terrifying sight!

'We're in for it now,' said Moti. 'Can we get out of it alive? Think up something to do.'

Worried, Hira observed, 'He's gone crazy with pride. He'd never listen to our pleas.'

'Then why don't we run for it?'

'Running away is cowardly.'

'In that case—die here! But your humble servant just wants to get away.'

'But what if he chases us?'

'Then think up something quick!'

'The plan is this, the two of us must attack at once. I'll strike from front, you from behind, and when he gets it from both sides he'll take to his heels. When he turns on me gore him sideways in the belly. We may not come out of it alive, but there's no other way.'

Risking everything, the two friends made their attack. The bull had no experience doing battle with a united enemy. He was accustomed to fighting one enemy at a time. As soon as Hira pounced on him Moti charged from behind. When the bull turned to face him, Hira attacked.

The bull wanted to take them on one at a time and knock them down, but the two were masters of the art and gave him no chance. At once moment when the bull became so enraged that he moved to make an end of Hira one and for all Moti struck from the side and gored his belly. When the bull wheeled around in a fury Hira gored him from the other side. Finally the poor fellow ran off wounded, and the two friends pursued him for some distance until the bull collapsed out of breath. Then they left him.

The two friends went along swaying from side to side in the intoxication of victory.

In his symbolic language Moti said, 'I really felt like killing the bastard.'

'That's all hypocrisy. You ought to strike the enemy down so he doesn't get up again.'

'But how are we going to get home now?—Just think about that. 'First let's eat something, and think afterwards.'

A pea field was right there in front of them. Moti went crashing in; Hira kept on warning him, but to no avail. He had scarcely eaten a couple of mouthfuls when two men with sticks came running and surrounded the two friends. Hira was on the embankment and slipped away, but Moti was down in the soggy field. His hooves were so deep in mud that he couldn't run and he was caught. When Hira saw

his comrade in trouble he dashed back. If they were going to be trapped, then they'd be trapped together. So the watchmen caught him too.

Early in the morning the two friends were shut up in a village compound.

The two friends had never in all their life had such an experience; the whole day went by and they weren't given even a single wisp of straw to eat. They couldn't understand what kind of master this could be. Even Gaya was a lot better than this. There were several water buffaloes here, nanny-goats, horses and donkeys. But no food was set before any of them; all were lying on the ground like corpses. Several were so weak that they couldn't even stand up. The whole day the two friends kept their eyes glued to the gate. But nobody appeared with food. Then they began to lick the salty clay of the wall, but what satisfaction could they get from that?

When they got no food in the evening either, the flame of rebellion began to blaze in Hira's heart. He said to Moti, 'I can't stand this any more, Moti.'

With his head hanging down Moti answered, 'I feel as though I'm dying.'

'Don't give up so quickly, brother! We've got to think up some plan to get out of there.'

'All right, let's smash the wall down.'

'I'm not up to that now.'

'What do you mean, weren't you just bragging about your strength?'

'All the bragging has gone out of me!'

The wall of the enclosure was a crude earthen construction. Hira was very strong indeed; when he thrust his pointed horn against the wall and struck hard a little chunk of clay came loose. With that his spirits rose. Running again and again he crashed against the wall and with every blow he knocked off a little of the clay.

At this very moment the compound watchman came out with his lantern to take count of the animals. When he caught sight of Hira's mischief he paid him back with several blows of his stick and tied him up with a thick rope.

From where he lay Moti said, 'So all you got was a beating after all!'

'At least I used my strength as best I could.'

'What good was it struggling so hard when you just got tied up all the more securely?'

'Nevertheless, I'm going to keep on struggling no matter how much they tie me up.'

'Then you'll end up paying with your life.'

'I don't give a damn. Being like this is the same thing as dying. Just think, if the wall were knocked down how many

creatures would be saved. How many of our brothers are shut up here! There's no life left in any of their bodies. If it goes on like this for a few more days they'll all die.'

'That's for sure. All right then, I'll give it a good try.'

Moti struck with his horn at the same place in the wall. A little clay tumbled down and his courage grew. Again he drove his horn against the wall with such violence that he might have been battling with a living enemy. Finally, after a couple of hours of violent probing the top of the wall gave way, lowering it about a foot. When he struck again with redoubled power half the wall crumbled.

When the wall was about to fall the animals who were lying around half dead revived. Three mares took off at a gallop, then the nanny goats dashed out, and after that the buffaloes also slipped away. But the donkeys were still lying just as they had been before.

Hira asked them, 'Why aren't you two running away?'

One of the jackasses said, 'What if we get caught again?'

'What does that matter? Now's your chance to escape.'

'But we're scared! We'll just stay put right here.'

It was already past midnight. The two donkeys were standing there, wondering whether to run away or not, while Moti was busy trying to break his friend's rope. When he gave it up Hira said, 'You go, just let me stay here. Maybe somewhere we'll meet again.'

With tears in his eyes Moti said, 'Do you think I'm that selfish Hira? You and I have been together for such a long time! If you're in trouble today, can I just go off and leave you?'

Hira said, 'You'll get a real beating-they'll realize this is your mischief.'

Moti said proudly, 'If I get beaten for the same offence that got you tied up with a rope around your neck, what do I care? At the very least a dozen or so creatures have been saved from death. All of them will surely bless us.'

After he'd said this, Moti thrust at the two donkeys with his horns and drove them out of the enclosure; then he came up close beside his friend and went to sleep.

It's scarcely necessary to describe the hullabaloo set up by the clerk, the watchman and the other officials as soon as it was light. Sufficient to say that Moti got terrific drubbing and he too was tied up with a thick rope.

The two friends stayed tied up there for a week. No one gave them as much

as a bit of hay. True, water was given to them once. This was all their nourishment. They got so weak that they could not even stand up, and their ribs were sticking out.

One day someone beat a drum outside the enclosure and towards noon about fifty or sixty people gathered there. Then the two friends were brought out and the inspection began. People came and studied their appearance and went away disappointed. Who would buy bullocks that looked like corpses?

Suddenly there came a bearded man with red eyes and a cruel face; he dug his fingers into the haunches of the bullocks and began to talk with the clerk. When they saw his expression the hearts of the two friends grew weak from what their intuition told them. They had no doubt at all as to who he was and why he felt them with his hands, They looked at one another with frightened eyes and lowered their heads.

Hira said, 'We ran away from Gaya's house in vain. We won't survive this.'

Without much faith Moti answered, 'They say God has mercy on everybody. Why isn't He being merciful to us?'

'To God it's all the same whether we live or die. Don't worry, it's so bad, for a little while we'll be with Him. Once He saved us in the shape of that little girl, so won't He save us now?'

'This man is going to cut our throats. Just watch.'

'So why worry? Every bit of us, flesh, hide, horns and bones, will be used for something or the other.'

When the auction was over the friends went off with that bearded man.

Every bit of their bodies was trembling. They could scarcely lift their feet, but they were so frightened they managed to keep stumbling along - for if they slowed down the least bit they'd get a good whack from the stick.

Along the way they saw a herd of cows and bullocks grazing in a verdant meadow. All the animals were happy, sleek and supple. Some were leaping about, others lying down contentedly chewing their cud What a happy life was theirs! Yet how selfish they all were. Not one of them cared about how their two brothers must be suffering after falling into the hands of the butcher.

Suddenly it seemed to them that the road was familiar. Yes, this was the road by which Gaya had taken them away. They were coming to the same fields and orchards, the same villages. In an instant their pace quickened. All their fatigue and weakness disappeared. Oh, just look, here was their own meadow, here was the same well where they had worked the winch to pull up the bucket. Yes, it was the same well.

Moti said, 'Our house is close by!'

'It's' God's mercy!' said Hira.

'As for me, I'm making a run for home!'

'Will he let us go?'

'I'll knock him down and kill him.'

'No, no, run and make it to our stalls, and we won't budge from there.'

As though they'd gone crazy, joyfully kicking up their heels like calves, they made off for the house. There was their stall! They ran and stood by it while the bearded man came dashing after them.

Jhuri was sitting in his doorway sunning himself. As soon as he saw the bullocks he ran and embraced them over and over again. Tears of joy flowed from the two friends' eyes, and one of them licked Jhuri's hand.

The bearded man came up and grabbed their tethers.

'These are my bullocks', said Jhuri.

'How can they be? I just bought them at auction at the cattle compound.'

'I'll bet you stole them,' said Jhuri. 'Just shut up and leave. They're my bullocks. They'll be sold only when I sell them. Who has the right to auction off my bullocks?'

Said the bearded man, 'I'll go to the

police station and make a complaint.'

'They're my bullocks, the proof is they came and stood at my door.'

In a rage the bearded man stepped forward to drag the bullocks away. This is when Moti lowered his horns. The bearded man stepped back. Moti charged and the man took to his heels, with Moti after him, and stopped only at the outskirts of the village where he took his stand guarding the road. The butcher stopped at some distance, yelled back threats and insults and threw stones. And Moti stood blocking his path like a victorious hero. The villagers came out to watch the entertainment and had a good laugh.

When the bearded man acknowledged defeat and went away Moti came back strutting.

Hira said, 'I was afraid you'd get so mad you'd go and kill him.'

'If he'd caught me I wouldn't have given up before I'd killed him.'

'Won't he come back now?'

'If he does I'll take care of him long before he gets here. Let's just see him take us away!'

'What if he has us shot?'

'Then I'll be dead, but I'll be of no use to him. Nobody thinks of the life we have as being a life.'

'Only because we're so simple ...'

In a little while their trough was filled with oilseed cake, hay, and bran, and the two friends began to eat. Jhuri stood by and stroked them while a couple of dozen boys watched the show.

Excitement seemed to have spread through the whole village. At this moment the mistress of the house came out and kissed each of the bullocks on the forehead.

Premchand (1880-1936) : the greatest among fiction writers in Hindi, wrote about 300 short stories and a dozen novels that had an everlasting impact on future generations of progressive authors. He gave up his govt. job to become a full-time writer. His literary essays, are published in a collection titled, 'Premchand : vividh prasang'.

David Rubin has done extensive research work on Oriental studies in Indian and American Universities. He taught in Allahabad and Rajasthan Universities. He was professor of Modern Indian Languages at Columbia University, New York, U.S.A. and has translated a great number of Premchand's short stories. He is visiting professor of modern Indian languages at Columbia Universty, U.S.A. He has written the book 'After the Raj' a critical study of British fiction dealing with India since 1947. He has also translated Nirala.

THE OLD TOY MAKER

Upendra Nath Ashk

Translated by
Krishna Baldev Vaid

The Old toy maker woke up as the faint light of early morning reached the dark hovel, in an enclosure overshadowed by tall houses. The small heaps of toys scattered round him seemed to be emerging from the twilight like rocks from a heaving sea. The old man sat up, propped on his shaky hands. He arranged his soiled and patch-worked dhoti, whose colour, thanks to filth, was now indistinguishable from the balckness of his body and the hole in which he lived. Then he groped about with near-blind eyes, picked-up his staff, and got up with its help.

Standing for a moment at the threshold of the room, he scanned the enclosure with misty eyes. It presented a desolate scene. In one corner stood the kiln-looking sad and exhausted, like a woman reduced to barrenness by repeated confinements. It had delivered so many batches of toys during the past months. Right next to the kiln was a heap of broken copper-coloured toys. On its left lay a bucketful of sticky clay, whose surface was cracked. The rest of the enclosure was strewn with toys, which had not been completed in spite of the desperate efforts of his son, Roop, and his daughter-in-law, Kamla.

Roop, in fact, had been reduced to idleness a number of days before the fair of Baba Sodal. He had been injured in a row with his brothers during the auction of plots for stalls. The old man had done all that he could to avert that quarrel- he had remonstrated with Roop telling him that he should let his brothers be; that he should not take leave of his senses even if his brothers were bent

upon doing so; that he was after all the youngest, that it did not behove him to stand up to his elders. But who would listen to him...an old, useless cripple... a nuisance to all his sons.

The old man stood at the threshold, engrossed in his thoughts. A row of toy soldiers stood before him, coloured but unpolished. In another corner he could see the nests and sparrows. But the nests were empty, and the sparrows lay about listlessly. The monkeys were not somersaulting on the trunks of the trees, which lay unfinished. There were heaps of mangoes, oranges, apples, grapes, apricots, popcorn and ears of maize. The old man heaved a sigh and stepped tremulously towards the gate of the enclosure.

On this side of the gate he saw toys meant just for display. Roop had been able to take only a few... the finished ones... to the fair. The rest lay uncompleted.

The old man gazed at all this with dazed, lacklustre eyes. All these toys had been prepared in moulds he had made. But didn't they lack that finish, that deftness, which his hands possessed once upon a time? In the good old days, he could have sold these toys for as much as ten or fifteen rupees a piece. But now his sons... He had always looked upon them as his toys; and now they considered him nothing more than a toy, a lifeless thing.

The old man slapped his brow in helpless anger and locked the gate behind him.

A band was playing in front of his neighbour's house. Perhaps the bania there

was going to pay a visit to Baba Sodal, thanks to whose blessings he had got a son. The old man was reminded of the ceremony he had held when the same Baba Sodal had blessed him with his first son, Jaggu. He had taken a vow to go to offer prayers to Baba Sodal with a band and all. Eleven days before the fair, he had sown wheat in four earthen bowls, and had watered them each day, morning and evening, with water fresh from the well.

His joy knew no bounds when, after a few days, he saw the difference between the deep green of his plants and the faint yellowish colour of his neighbour's. This meant that Baba Sodal was particularly pleased with him. He had produced the best available wheat to prepare dumpling for the deity. He had washed it several times before spreading it out in the sun to dry; he had kept watch over it, lest the sparrows render it unfit to be offered to the deity. On the eve of the fair, he and his wife had spent hours preparing various kinds of sweets for distribution at the holy shrine of Baba Sodal.

After Jaggu, he had been blessed with three more sons-Sundri, Hari and Roop. Blessed be Baba Sodal, the giver of sons and of milk, with which to feed those sons. Unfortunately, however, he thought, Baba Sodal doesn't seem to concern himself with what happens later to the sons or to the milk...the sons may turn out to be disobedient rascals, and the milk may go sour.

And, in the old man's case, the milk

had gone sour and the sons did turn out to be rascals.

The old man started down the street, picking his way in the crowd. He cursed his luck and groaned under the double weight of fear and old age. He had a premonition of a wild storm that would blow away the last straw from his nest. He wanted to fly to the fair so as to resist this storm and save his nest and children. But alas He was no better than a bird, whose wings refused to work.

The four brothers...the sons of the old man...had arranged their toy stalls in one corner of the vast fair grounds, next to one another, in a common plot. At one time there had been only a single shop in that corner. Ultimately it got split into four separate shops. Even now, only one shop was apparent, but an invisible wall had grown up between Roop's stall and those of his three brothers.

Ever since morning when the devotees of Baba Sodal had started pouring in, a cut-throat competition had been going on among the four brothers. Roop's stall was nearest the gate, preceding the shops of Hari, Sundri and Jaggu. Roop, who had not yet recovered completely from the injuries sustained in the fight, sat silently because of his weakness. A couple of youngsters just for fun, and a few young men for the sake of a better view were helping Roop sell his toys.

A bevy of young girls, having been confined for months to their prison-like homes, were making the most of this

opportunity for a bit of uninhibited pleasure. These toyshops offered the young men a unique opportunity to appreciate the rare assemblage of feminine beauty. Most of the people stopped at these shops in passing. Many of them also purchased toys. It was therefore, very easy to establish exhilarating contacts...sometimes through a chance touching of pinkish hands and soft fingers, sometimes through gazing at the bewitching eyes of beautiful customers. So the young men were shouting for customers with great enthusiasm.

Roop's toys were selling briskly. This aroused burning envy in the other brothers. Hari and Sundri were feeling particularly agitated, but Jaggu was too sickly to experience such violent emotions as jealousy and anger. He sat like a clod of earth, his belly swollen and his legs sticklike.

Presently, Hari got on to a stool and started shouting for customers at the top of his voice. Sundri followed suit. Seeing this, two of Roop's comrades also took prominent positions and started inviting the customers to his shop.

Roop smiled triumphantly. His heart was somewhat pacified on seeing that he was having much better business than his brothers. He had paid six rupees more than his brothers to secure that vantage-point, and he had nearly been beaten to death for having succeeded in acquiring it. Now he seemed to have forgotten all that, in the glow of satisfaction brought by such brisk sales. If only he had been able to finish all his toys.

Hari, according to Roop, was the real villain who had caused such bad blood among them, Jaggu of course, had been the first to go out of the joint family, but his separation had caused no animosity among them. Even when Sundri seceded from the family after his marriage, relations remained perfectly normal, and the shops were run on a joint basis on the same piece of land. But Hari, because of his cunning and double-dealing, had effected a serious breach in the family after his secession. Roop hated him for his selfishness and greed.

He and Hari had worked together for some time after the elder brothers set up separate establishments. Both of them had raised loans in connection with their marriages. The agreement was that they would help each other to payoff those debts. From the very beginning Roop and his wife had worked very hard to payoff Hari's debts. But as soon as his debts were paid off, Hari had gone away to live separately, leaving Roop in the lurch. Moreover, he had poisoned the ears of the two older brothers against Roop. The result of all this was a joint front against Roop.

Roop felt a wave of disgust rising within him. He cast a scorching glance at Hari. Hari was announcing a reduction in prices in order to attract more customers.

Roop told his friends to reduce prices by a half. The boys started shouting; "Toys worth an anna now for two pice each.' Toys worth an anna..."

If only he had finished all his toys

So far he had always defeated his brothers at the fairs. As his brothers had reduced the price of their toys at the spring festival, so he had decided to make as many toys as possible for this fair so that he could beat his brothers even if he had to sell his toys at fantastically low prices.

Ever since the spring festival he and his wife, Kamala, had been devoting their days and nights to work. They got up in the small hours of the morning and remained engrossed in their work throughout the day. Quite often, they would even forget to take their food. They ate whatever they got, without wasting their time in elaborate cooking. When cramped from sitting they would get up. Roop would start preparing fresh clay and Kamla would busy herself with the toys spread out in the sun. After they had relaxed their limbs they would resume their main work—that of making toys with renewed vigour.

If only they had been able to complete all the toys they had made! He would then have given such a crushing defeat to his brothers. But his brothers had beaten him mercilessly on the day the plots were auctioned, and many of his toys had consequently remained unfinished.

His brothers wanted Roop, being the youngest, to be content with the plot of land farthest from the exit gate of the temple. How could Roop have submitted to this, when it would have meant such poor business on the day of the fair? His kind brothers would have easily grabbed all the customers.

Roop had, therefore, declared that he

would get the first plot. This had meant a raise in the bid, and, whereas the whole plot had previously gone for eight rupees, one fourth of it now went to Roop for the same amount. The other pieces went to the three brothers for only six rupees. But they wanted to punish Roop for having been so obstinate and they had abused him, provoked him into retaliation, and ended up in a fight. Roop had gone home bruised and smeared with blood.

Roop felt a storm rising within him as he turned these memories over and over in his mind. The boys at his shop were shouting. "Come on, come on, toys worth an anna going cheap for two pice each. Toys worth..."

Just then Hari got up and shouted; "Toys worth an anna for a pice and a half each.

Roop got up and shouted; "Toys worth an anna for a pice each."

Kamla appealed to him in the name of his father and pulled him back to his seat. Roop looked at Kamla. But for her, he would not have been able to come to the fair at all. She had applied heat packs to his aching limbs by the hour, night after night. She had continued to work at the toys in the time left her after nursing him and doing other household work. And she came from a family where no one had ever touched clay.

Then Roop noticed that Hari was trying to wean away the customers standing in front of his shop by calling them directly. He could not tolerate this high-handedness;

he got up in an uncontrollable rage. Hari was trying forcibly to pull a customer away from Roop's shop. Roop challenged him; Hari replied with a curse. Roop picked up his staff and pounced upon Hari.

The old toy-maker, bent over his staff and shaking with old age, was now threading his way precariously through the crowd.

All these people, what were they, if not toys? But they had forgotten their Maker. Just as the old man's toys had forgotten him. Perhaps that Great Toy-maker had also grown old like him.

He heaved a sigh. It had taken him four hours to cover the distance which, in his youth, he could have done in less than an hour, and with a load of toys on his head at that. He had met hundreds of people going back to their homes; he had also wanted to go back...it was too tiring. But he had trudged on, impelled by an unknown impulse.

Signs of a storm were taking shape as he approached the fair. And the crowd, the hawkers, the stalls, the water stands, everything seemed to be getting lost in the dust.

He felt as if this storm was bent upon blowing his nest to pieces. He wanted to brave it.

He was able to reach the stalls with great difficulty. But by that time the storm had already started blowing the nest over. Toys lay scattered about and his sons were raining blows on one another.

When the old man saw this, the tremors in his body ceased at once. His back

straightened; his fatigue suddenly vanished! He felt that he was his old self...that his toys had got entangled with one another and that it was his job to rearrange them properly. He rushed into the thick of the storm.

The fair had come to an end. Roop, Hari and Sundri were lying in hospital, wounded and bandaged. Cots, empty canisters and boards that had been shaped into improvised stalls, were scattered about,

with the toys. In the midst of the chaos, underneath a cot, lay the old toy-maker-looking very much like that Supreme Maker of Toys who also seems to have lost his hold on the toys made by Him. He still clutched his staff, as though wanting to get up again and face the storm. But that unknown impulse had obviously run its course and flies were buzzing about his face.

UpendraNath Ashk (1910-1996) (1910-1996), renowned author whose creative output like Premchand was first in Urdu and later in Hindi. He was born and educated at Jalandhar, Punjab and settled at Allahabad in 1948. Except for a few short term jobs in All India Radio and films, he was a whole timer in creative writing. He wrote plays, novels, short stories, poems, essays, memoirs and literary criticism besides editing the famous literary volume 'sanket'. He was a progressive writer who led an eternal struggle against reactionary forces. He wrote regularly from 1926 to 1995. Most of his works were published by his writer wife Kaushalya Ashk from their own publishing house Neelabh Prakashan, named after his illustrious son who is a major poet and an intellectual in his own right. Ashkji's major works are 'girti deewaren', 'pathharal pathhar', 'garm rakh', 'badi badi ankhen', 'ek nanhi kandil', 'bandho na nav is thanv (novels); 'anjo didi', 'tauliye', 'sookhi dali', 'lakshmi ka swagat', 'adhikar ka rakshak' etc. (collections of plays); 'akashchari', 'judai ki sham', 'kahani lekhika aur jhelum ke saat pul', 'chheente', 'ubaal', 'dachi', 'kale saheb', 'palang' etc. (short story collections); 'deep jalega', 'chandni raat aur ajgar', 'bargad ki beti' (poetry collections); 'Manto : mera dushman', 'chehre anek' (memoirs); 'hindi kahaniyan aur fashion (lit. criticism).

Krishna Baldev Vaid, born 1927 at Dinga Punjab is a prominent author with famous novels like Uska Bachpan, Nasreen, Guzra hua Zamana, Nar-Nari and ek naukrani ki diary. He has translated important authors from English to Hindi and vice versa. Besides teaching in Colleges of Delhi and Punjab Universities, he has taught English in New York State University. He lives in New Delhi and frequently travels to the U.S.A.

CREMATION OF A JUNGLE

Swayam Prakash

Translated by
Vivek Sachdeva

Mama Soun was a famous archer of his times.

He used to live in a jungle; he would wear langoti; and would teach archery to the people of the jungle. He would himself make his bows and arrows. The inhabitants of the jungle, the tribals, did not know how to cultivate land. Moreover, it was also not an easy task to cultivate the jungle land. Animal husbandry, the flora and fauna of the jungle were the sources of their livelihood. It was extremely essential for us, the people of the jungle, that irrespective of our sex, we should learn the art of archery.

Mama Soun was always surrounded with children. The people of the jungle respected Mama Soun very much and while sending their sons and daughters to him for their education, they would send plenty of grains, dried meat, animal skin and things made of bamboo for him.

Mama Soun would make bows and arrows matching the physique of his students. He would teach them names of different birds, their habits, which season do they migrate in, places where they prefer to perch, growth and fall of their species and information about their being edible or not. He would lead his students from the front and in no time, his students would be made familiar with every nook and corner of the jungle. In a couple of years, his students would become so skillful at archery that they would kill three or four birds with one arrow.

Mama Soun would teach his students how to make bows and arrows. He would also teach them what kind of arrows are required to kill different animals or birds; how deep the arrow would go and how far a bow can shoot the arrow. It is a hearsay that Mama Soun knew how to build those arrows that would come back to his quiver after hitting the target. Nobody had seen this happening, but there wasn't any reason for not believing this as well.

Gradually Mama Soun became very popular.

Once the Prince, along with his troupe, went to the jungle for hunting. The Prince had no prior experience of hunting, nor did he know how to respect the territory of birds and animals. Consequently, he and his troupe entered the jungle, making a lot of noise. Sparrows wondered at the strange behaviour of this group and they warned each and every member of the jungle. Getting the news of emergent danger, all of them went in hiding in their respective nests, holes and caves. The Prince and his troupe could not find even a single prey.

But why should a lion fear anybody? If you are a king, so am I. If you are a prince, so am I.

Eventually, the lion went up to the Prince and roared to welcome him. Seeing a lion roar in front of them, all the members of the troupe ran amuck and the Prince began to cry. Taking this as a war cry, the lion attacked the Prince.

In the nick of time, one of the students of Mama Soun shot an arrow to divert the lion's attention, which gave the Prince some time to take hold of himself. The student of Mama Soun made the lion chase him and took him far. This is how the life of the Prince was saved. The students of Mama Soun served the Prince and saw him off back to the city safe and sound.

When the Prince told the King his story, the latter was both happy and sad at the same time. He was happy that his son came back home safe; he was sad because his son had grown into a full man, still he could not save himself. How would he protect his kingdom and the subjects? That day, he let his son have a bit of his mind.

On being scolded by his father, he decided that he would also learn the art of archery and that from none other than Mama Soun himself.

The King sent for Mama Soun.

Initially, Mama Soun hesitated; but later on he agreed with a condition that the Prince would have to stay with him in the jungle.

How could the King have any objections to this arrangement?

Mama Soun decided the date of starting the formal education and came back to the jungle.

After some days came a team of masons, blacksmiths, sculptors and carpenters. It was revealed that two palaces would be

built in the jungle to ensure comfortable stay of the Prince.

But why, two palaces?

It came to be known that one palace is being built for the Prince and the second, for *Acharya Shaun*.

By the way, who is this *Acharya Shaun*?

Later, it came to be known that Mama Soun is now *Acharya Shaun*.

It was not limited to that only. Carts full of gifts for Mama Soun also started coming.

There were shoes, diadem, rosary of rare jewels, decked seats and what not. After all, how could someone wearing a simple loincloth be a Prince's teacher?

Such unprecedented activities disturbed the peace of the jungle. Trees were being felled down.

The air was getting polluted. Birds and animals got scared and started running here and there to hide somewhere. They became more aggressive and violent. The people of the jungle also got disturbed by the riot caused by the men of the king and started running off their homes. To make matters worse, the King also prohibited hunting in the jungle so that the people of the jungle should not kill all the animals; at least some animals should be left for the Prince as well. The plea was given that conservation of birds and animals is very essential.

The King also decreed that now onwards Acharya Shaun would teach only the

royalty. News was spread in the neighbouring kingdoms that from the next season of spring, state-of-the-art facilities for training in archery are being made in his kingdom. Those who are interested in taking lessons would have to deposit a particular amount as a tax or fee in the state exchequer, which would entitle them for the training course for a particular duration at the palace of *Acharya Shaun*.

Now, there were buckets full of gold coins in *Acharya Shaun's* hut; but nobody was gifting him grain, dried meat, the skin of animals, things made of bamboo and wild flowers. Mama Soun himself had to arrange all these things for himself. Though he was quite uncomfortable with the recent developments, yet he could do nothing. Some soldiers were always at guard outside his hut. Even when he went out in the morning to relieve himself, he was constantly guarded. Finally, he submitted to his destiny.

One day, the Prince asked Mama Soun, "How many days would it take me to learn complete archery?"

Mama Soun answered, "I have no idea about the complete archery; but even a life's time is not sufficient to learn it. Learning is an incessant process and continues throughout one's life."

The Prince said, "How many days do you need to teach me whatever you know?"

Mama Soun said, "It depends upon the learner; still it will take at least six

cycles of full moon.”

The Prince asked, “Can’t this duration be reduced?”

Mama Soun said, “If you learn with utmost dedication, may be you can learn in five full moon cycles. But you will have to continue the practice. It all depends on how much you practice.”

The Prince thought for some time and said, “I cannot give you more than one month. Teach me fast whatever you can teach me in one month. Otherwise, I shall find another teacher.”

Saying this, the Prince went towards the palace under construction. Mama Soun called him and said, “Before your formal training starts, I wish you walk through the jungle with me to explore and know it.”

“My spies have already told me everything about the jungle.”

“Still, it is better to see it for yourself.”

“What is there to see in a jungle? There are trees everywhere, just like there are trees here.”

“A hunter should know each and every nook and corner of the jungle. Where the land is marshy, where it is dry; where the water is deep, where it is shallow; where there is drinking water for animals; where the bee hives are; where the swarm of ants make their dwelling; where the birds have made their nests; where fox and jackals have given birth to their cubs. You should also know in which season

do birds come and when a bird or animal should be hunted? If while chasing your prey, you happen to damage a bird’s nest, or a bee hive, you will find yourself in a trouble. Even a small wild bee can take your life’.

Listening to Mama Soun carelessly, the Prince said, “I am not going to stay in the jungle forever. I shall go back to the capital, the place of all comforts. It is only when I would get bored of material and comfortable life that I may come to jungle to hunt animals for sport.”

Mama Soun was surprised hearing this. He asked the Prince, “Do you call hunting a sport? It is our livelihood. We hunt to survive. We do not hunt only for sports. We are very careful who should be hunted and who not. When we hunt, it does not affect the total number of the birds and animals.”

Hearing Mama Soun, the Prince interrupted, “It was your livelihood; now it is not. Hunting has been banned in this area. Now, only I can kill whatever number I may kill. Since it is only I who is going to kill, what difference does it make how many I kill?”

Hearing the Prince, Mama Soun was shocked. He came back with a heavy heart. The next morning he went to the Prince’s palace and told him that his training will start soon. Mama Soun asked the Prince to get up early before the sunrise and come to him, “We will take exercise, worship the goddess of the jungle and go to the

training site with our bows and arrows. We will do this daily on a regular basis.”

“Why exercise? I wish to learn archery, not wrestling. I am not used to getting up early; still I’ll try,” said the Prince uninterestedly.

When Mama Soun was about to leave, the Prince mumbled, “Then he will say that I shall have to wear a loin cloth. I think he will transform me into a complete wild savage like him.”

Finally came the day when the training was to start. Worshipping the goddess of the jungle, both Mama Soun and the Prince went to a relatively open ground within the jungle.

Mama Soun said, “Let’s start with sparrows. There are many sparrows on the branch. Look at that sparrow with a long blue beak. She, with her long beak, breaks the eggs of other sparrows. Kill her.”

The Prince shot an arrow. Not even a single sparrow flew from the tree.

He looked disappointedly at Mama Soun.

Mama Soun said, “No problem. There are hundreds of sparrows on the tree. Aim at any one of them and shoot your arrow.”

The Prince shot an arrow. It hit a branch of the tree. All the sparrows flew away.

“But they move”, said the Prince.

“No problem. We stop here and go for a walk,” said Mama Soun.

Next day, Mama Soun brought the Prince to the same place. Even today, there were nearly a hundred sparrows on the tree; they were perfectly still. Mama Soun said to the Prince, “Aim and kill any one of them.”

The Prince shot all the arrows, but none could hit the target. Mama Soun taught him how to hold the bow, how to pull the string back, how to aim properly, but all in vain. Mama Soun himself shot an arrow. He killed at least ten sparrows with one shot. The Prince went ahead to see. All the sparrows were fake. The Prince was ashamed.

“Sparrows are too small,” said the Prince.

“Its okay. We will see to it. Let’s amble for a while.”

That day was also spent in walking, carrying the bow and arrow. Next morning, they again reached the same place.

The Prince saw that artificial sparrows of the size of roosters were hanging there. Mama Soun said, “Shoot ten arrows. At least one will hit them.”

“It is too high”, said the Prince, “When I try to aim so high, my hands shake.”

“No problem. I shall try to find some solution. Let’s go for a walk in the opposite direction today”.

The Prince was getting bored now.

Next day, Mama Soun drew a big sparrow on a plank and asked the Prince to aim at the eye of the bird from the distance of a hundred yards.

The Prince shot ten arrows, only three could hit the bird, but not even a single arrow could hit the eye of the bird.

The Prince started throwing tantrums. Out of anger, he stamped his feet hard on the ground and even broke his bow.

Mama Soun tried to explain to him that if you wish to hunt for sparrows, they would be small in size. Sparrow would always be on a tree. You want they should not move from there, they will even fly. What do you think? Shouldn't they fly? Do you expect your prey to sit dutifully and meekly before you?

The Prince could not understand anything. He refused to go for a walk and went back to his palace to rest.

Next morning, when he reached the site, he saw that a wooden plank was lying on the ground at a distance of one hundred yards. He could not understand anything.

Mama Soun asked the Prince to stand on the plank and shoot ten arrows. The Prince did as he was instructed. Nine out of ten hit the plank, one missed it.

Mama Soun picked a piece of coal from the ground and drew sparrows wherever the Prince had hit the plank and said, "I think, now you can claim that you have hit nine out of ten sparrows.

Practice it for some days. Let's go for a walk now. I will show you hoppers today. They are there these days."

After two days came the minister of the King to enquire how the Prince was progressing. He was told that the Prince was doing fine. After a month's time, the Prince could only learn how to shoot arrows on a plank and kill nine out of ten sparrows.

After a month, the King himself came along with his entire troupe and a small battalion. The sparrows spread the news of the King's visit to the jungle. The King spent no time in gathering that Mama Soun had silently refused to teach his son on the conditions laid down by the Prince. The King got angry at the stupidity of his son, but he was not merely his son, but his prospective successor too—the future king of his kingdom. The King got Mama Soun's arms tied up and told his son to take his teacher as his plank; and asked his son to aim at his teacher. The King wanted that if his son could not learn anything from Mama Soun, no one else should be able to learn anything from him.

Mama Soun knew that this day would come and he was prepared to face it. However poor the Prince might be at archery, but he was able to kill 'nine out of ten' sparrows on the plank. Now there was a living man. Could there be a bigger aim than a living man? Especially when the man is tied; his back is straight against a plank, he is surrounded by the soldiers

and the King himself is standing there to encourage and shelter the hunter.

The Prince put the arrow to the bow and held his breath to aim.

But before the Prince could shoot his arrow, there came a shower of arrows from behind the trees. The soldiers of the king began fleeing wildly and started looking for places to hide and aim. In no time, from all over came bears, monkeys, jackals, tigers, leopards, snakes, scorpions, wasps, bees, eagles, hawks, deer, stags, hyenas, beavers, rhinoceroses, bulls, giraffes and elephants. Roaringly recklessly, they started throwing the soldiers of the king. The sudden attack from the jungle unsettled the trained army of the king. In a great uproar, they started running to save their lives. Some loyal soldiers surrounded the king and the prince to save their lives. Realizing that they would not be able to fight back, they fled from there taking the wounded king and prince along with themselves.

But, scoundrels to the core, they set the jungle on fire before they could leave.

The birds and animals could fight the soldiers of the king, but in front of the God of Fire, they were helpless.

The real loss was that neither Mama Soun could be saved nor his knowledge.

Some people say that better flora would rise from this ash afresh. Some also say that another Mama Soun would also take birth some day.

Whether it happened or not, I do not know.

Presently in cities, the descendants of Mama Soun are selling cane baskets, small baskets and sparrows and parrots made of cardboard.

I have heard a big dam is being constructed in their area, which would ensure development of the country.

The descendants and students of Mama Soun have been thrown out of their native place.

Swayam Prakash, born 1947, is a prominent progressive author, critic and literary activist. Mechanical engineer by profession, he gives a cautious craft to his novels and short stories. He writes about the common man and his struggles. His famous short stories are—Kya tumne kabhi sardar bhikhari dekha hai, Partition, Admi jaat ka Admi, Taza khabar and Manju Faltu. He has written 'hamsafarnama' which portrays his contemporary writers as his comrades. He lives in Bhopal.

Vivek Sachdeva is associate professor in University School of Humanities and Social Sciences at GGSIP University, Delhi.

TAMARINDS

Prem Kumar Mani

Translated by
Minu Manjari

It was a tree. A tamarind tree. Very dense, very old. Just a gentle breeze and the tree danced. And when it danced, the village danced. When it kept mum, the village kept mum. When it slept, the village slept.

It was in the west of our village, or the village was in its east. It was the hallmark of the village. When someone went somewhere and failed to explain his village by its name he would say 'village of the big tamarind' and everybody understood. Identity of our village was safe with the tree there. When outsiders came to our village, the tree served as the pole-star. When we came back from our grandma's, we saw the tree and ah: what a breath of satisfaction we took that now ends our journey.

In a way, it was the Himalaya of our village. Only it was not in the north, but in the west.

Many birds had their nests in the tree. Parrots also. Owls resided in its holes. And if we give ear to that Urdu verse 'Khake Gulistan karne ko ek hi ullu kaafi hai', there were owls enough to ruin the whole world. But they were real owls, not of verse. So they looked very innocent, very well-mannered, sitting and napping on the poles and other such things. It seemed they were ashamed of their existence. My Maths teacher often called me an owl and I attentively looked at those owls to find the reason. After looking deeply at those round eyes, it came out that they are not drowsy but cunning, alert like

those of a spy.

With all these minor matters, there was a very important thing. About a dozen ghosts of different varieties lived on the tree. Stories about the ghost-pranks hung constantly on the lips of the villagers. These tales were weaved with our subconscious, so the tree with its ghosts was almost a part of our existence. It was the home of ghosts, but not haunted to us. It was very old, but always new to us.

To us, the children of the village.

In those old times, there wasn't any hoopla of environment conservation. One or two sadhu-type people talked of saving trees. One such essay was in our text-book also. Its title was perhaps 'Tree is life'. The deep relation of trees with human-beings we understood much later. What touched my heart was the fact that dense forests attract rain-clouds. 'Meghdoot' we read much later but the essay made me believe these fluffy clouds are very tickly. Came the monsoon and clouds began to wander in the sky like compartments of some aero-train. And my heart leapt at all this. I wished my village to turn into dense greenery attracting clouds all the time. I had heard of peacocks dancing with the wandering clouds. All these interrelated beauties seemed to me something special, part of some great mystery – forests, clouds and dancing peacocks.

About the same time I got to read

the biography of Jagdish Chandra Bose. The title was strange – 'trees also laugh and weep.' Bose had worked in Botany and the biographer God knows how, got the idea of such a title. About the works of Bose, especially about *Krisko-graph* we learnt anything much later. At that time we thought Bose to be something supernatural, thanks to that biography. Like most other biographies in our text-books, that biography also was a bunch of solid exaggerations. It stated that Bose was a botanist right from his childhood. He was born only to be a great botanist. And once when his friend started shattering bushes, tears welled up to his eyes and he couldn't eat anything the whole day etc..... etc

But this etc. etc. is today's thing. In those days the weeping Bose came before my eyes and tears rolled down my cheeks also. With the forests, clouds, peacocks, the tearful eyes of sensitive Bose also joined. And then those trees seemed a storehouse of some enchanting power. And the skyreaching twigs of trees seemed to me like kissing the clouds. And strange tickling overwhelmed me – what a romantic play of nature started with the monsoon!

Our village had only a few trees. Unnaturally a few elders said once upon a time their village looked like an orchard. But they too hadn't seen that orchard, they had only heard of it from their elders, as we were hearing from them. They said in the mutiny of 1857 the village had

many rebels. All four were soldiers of Danapur Cant. Who had rebelled against the English in the leadership of Kunwar Singh. They were arrested and hanged. After that the tree began to be worshipped and even its withered leaves were gathered as sacred relics. The place became a pilgrimage. It became so popular that an English officer ordered to cut the tree. Anger seethed but the villagers had witnessed the hanging of the four soldiers. They didn't protest outright. Instead they turned their anger into a gentle way. They celebrated the martyrdom of the four soldiers as tree-worship day. Next year the whole village emerged with dhols and tambourines and every tree of the village was worshipped with roli-chandan. This news reached the English ears and mad with rage they ordered every tree of our village to be cut. Next day a lot of policemen and wood-cutters arrived to chop off all the trees except one.

The only tree left was this tamarind. Tamarinds are not worshipped so it was left out and so what was its misfortune became its fortune. I trembled at this tale. So many policemen, so many axes and saws, so many trees pulled down from their soaring heights. All the sparrows, all the parrots, where would have they gone? How many nests this poor lone tamarind would have accommodated?

Did the dark clouds stop even for a wink for this single tree?

Trees of my village may be said to be the symbol of courage and protest. The mass-cutting of trees must have struck the villagers with a deep terror. And this must have affected decades. Only a few courageous ones would have planted trees and since everywhere cowards outnumber courageous, very few trees were planted. Planting saplings those days would have been like challenging the British empire.

Now back to the tamarind. It is said that trees are the witness of our forefathers. This was the only tree which had seen our forefathers before 1857. In this way the tree was historical, or something more special for us.

But the most important thing about this tree was its fruit, dear to us.

Even today just remember its tangy taste and see how a barrel of water comes to the mouth. In its season, when the tree got covered with its finger like fruits, we felt every pleasure, every beauty of heaven and earth condescended there. We made rounds of the tree hundreds of time a day, how shamelessly we beseeched for just one lobe.

And in one such season we heard the tree was going to be cut. The Government would build here a hospital, a very fine one. We also heard there shouldn't be tamarind trees near hospitals because it poisons air. Baidjee of our village used to tell a story that the Great Lukmaan of Greece wanted to test the skill of India's Dhanwantri. He sent a messenger to him,

instructing the messenger to sleep under only tamarind trees on his way. At last when he reached Dhanwantri, he was covered with wounds. Dhanwantri met him and understood Lukmaan's attitude. He just told the messenger to sleep under neem trees on his return-journey. Our baidjee said the messenger became perfectly healthy till he reached Lukmaan.

Tamarinds poison the air or not, this was the after-thought. The alarming thing was that this story poisoned the whole village against the tree.

And once when I heard even my rational father saying the same, I understood now nobody could save the tree.

We kept making rounds of the tree and it kept dropping tamarinds for us. Now it looked very helpless to me. In breezes it waved and tried to say something in its magical language. I wished if Bose were here, he certainly would interpret the language. But among us nobody was or likely to be Bose.

We worried about the birds, especially owls. Owls cannot live everywhere. They live only in holes. Holes are only in old trees. And old trees, as you know, were very few in our village.

Some women, my mother was also among them, were relieved that this ghostland will be there no more. I had asked my mother – “But where will all these ghosts go? What if they came to our house?”

My mother was really terror-struck. She said – “don't say such a thing:

She kept mum after that and her frightened fingers brushed my hair for quite a time.

I was very perturbed those days. No ray of hope. Father, mother, baidjee, everybody was against the tree. The tree on one side and the whole world on the other side. And we children were like that tree, grieved but mute, for who'd listen to us. But, in that Lanka incarnated a Vibhishan. He said he would hang himself from that tree if it would be cut. He was thought to be the silliest in our village.

They said he couldn't even count money, fits of insanity came over him and he sat under the tree whole nights talking to himself, or to the spirits of the tree, as people said. They said he practised black arts under the guise of madness. They said he had practised ghosts and spirits and now under their spell was against the cutting of the tree.

But Vibhishan talked of sometime else. At his profusions, grown-ups laughed.

He said if the tree won't be there, our relatives would be baffled in finding the way. Our village, it goes, our honour also goes with it. Our thoughts accorded with the old Vibhishan, but who were to listen to us.

After these squabbles a meeting was held in the village. But as governments know the decisions of inquiry commissions beforehand, whole village knew the decisions

of this meeting. Old Vibhishan protested indeed. He said the hospital would be made on his dead body. That there wasn't any need of hospital in the village. That hospitals spread corruption etc. His sons apologized in public saying, 'Don't heed him, he's become crazy'. On this old Vibhishan really flared up. But then recollecting himself, said – 'Ask your mother I'm crazy or what'. Whole meeting echoed with laughter as if hundreds of herons flew from the tamarind.

The tree was cut down. Mad Vibhishan was chained because he was really bent on killing himself. Seeing his turbulence, anybody could say he was in command of ghosts.

It took quite a long time to cut the tree, at least three days. About half a dozen cutters and carpenters worked day and night. Many axes, many saws broke.

The tree did as much as it could to save itself. I didn't go school all three days.

Some of my friends also stuck to the place. We were waiting for some miracle.

We thought all axes, all blades of all saws in the world would break but the tree will remain intact. Won't the ghosts do anything? But when the axes worked, we were angered – "What the hell the ghosts are thinking? Do they think they'll come to our village? Our Ojha will beat them back, and then they'll understand".

On the third day the tree fell down. It fell where carpenters wanted. They had

made many arrangements for this. Thick, strong ropes were used. Dozens of workers held the ropes right. Hundreds were viewers. But we? What could we do?

Our den, our whole playhouse was being demolished.

Owls fluttered out of their holes. Coming out in the daylight was certainly hard for them; they sat on poles and looked at us as if asking, "What have you all done?"

Just as the dust settled, people fell down on the tree like a passel of hounds. Thousands of green tamarinds scattered in the dust far and wide. Dozens of nests and eggs in them lay flat. Many birds died. Don't know why we didn't gather tamarinds that day. We walked ahead, our eyes melting. We saw a little owl blinking helplessly. It hadn't learnt flying yet. A parrot fluttered at some distance. A chip of wood had wounded its eye and it was bleeding. We took up the parrot and the owl. We tied a string in owl's foot and medicined the parrot.

The parrot died. We tried to feed it, but it died. We friends went to a field, made a little grave and laid the parrot, wrapped in a hanky, in it. There used to be a coin 'ikanni', valuing about six paisa. We put an ikanni besides the dead body, prayed and heaped earth on it. We prayed again – "God take this poor thing to your heaven. We are giving our ikanni to you". The owlet lived with us for months.

It became tame. Mad Vibhishan did not live after that. Only after a fortnight of the demise of the tree, he also slept for ever. We were very sad and prayed for him also. However his sons felt relieved. My mother said – “The ghosts took the life of the poor man.”

And that hospital. The tree fell, Vibhishan died, we became as sad as we could be, the parrot reached paradise, the little owl flew away. Owls, parrots, sparrows of the tree made nests in other trees and their grand children were born.

And in a distant town a file, the file of the hospital, moved a little way. It moved like that chained owlet – limp and lazy.

We matriculated, we read about kiskograph, Chipko movement started, Sunderlal Bahuguna’s mug came on the front pages, many governments changed.

Many waves of epidemic swept away many from the village, but the file kept moving. We heard many times the percentages of contractors, engineers, leaders

got settled and unsettled. We heard the file scents like tamarind. We heard a clerk died with his head on the file. We heard there is no need to paperweight that file.

Clerk’s ghost serves as paperweight.

That Clerk’s shraadh was done, his widow got pension, his son got assurance of service. Months and years kept rolling on. Once we read in a newspaper – “Like Ganga in the locks of Mahadev, the hospital is trapped in the pages of files.”

We became voters, all teeth of my father fell, my mother’s hair turned grey, her eyes got cataract, our dreamgirls nursed their children, our old house became scatterlimbed. One day we heard the MLA of our area came like Bhagirath and carried away the hospital to his own village.

No guts were left in the village to protest or do something. No mad person was there to say if the hospital went anywhere else he’d kill himself. The village lay flat like our fallen tamarind, lifeless. Some like owls came out of their holes and brooded. Others were scattered like tamarinds.

Prem Kumar Mani is a well-known writer on the scenario of Hindi. His “Manusmriti: Pratikriya (Manusmriti : A Reaction)” and two short-story collections “Andhere mein Akele (Alone in Darkness)” and “Ghaas ka Gahane (Ornaments of Grass)” have been published. He has been awarded “Srikanth Verma Smirti Puraskar.” ‘Tamarinds’ is a touching tale of children’s attachment with their environment and an irony upon the present system.

Minu Manjari, works in an office of the Ministry of Defence. She translates in many languages. She is also doing her D. Phil. in English from Patna University. She lives in Patna.

Two POEMS

Bhavani Prasad Mishra

Translated by Nishi Tiwari

The forests of Satpura

Enwrapped in sleep
Lie
The dense wild woods of Satpura,
Drowsily nodding,
Impassive forests.
Standing silent
And
Impassive
The tall and short bushes,
Of Satpura.

Silent is the grass
Silent the reeds,
Mute are,
The Shal
And
The Palash, (As if in harmony with solitude).
If you dare,
Carve a pathway
Where the wind
Can't make it's way
Enwrapped in sleep

Lie
The dense wild woods of Satpura
Drowsily nodding,
Impassive forests.

Leaves numerous
And
Variegated
Pave the pathway
Rotten leaves!

Decaying leaves!

Green leaves!

Dry leaves!

Leaves,
Nurtured in mud
Walk on them
If you can
Conquer them,
If you dare.

Repulsive are,
These dense woods
Enwrapped in sleep.

Drowsily nodding,
Impassive forests.

Creepers,
Odd and entangled,
Running wild,
Seize and,
Devour the boughs,

Clutch the feet
Unawares.

Deadly twines
Squeezing the life out.

Threatening, black, snaky creepers.

In the thicket dense.

A forest with creepers profuse
Enwrapped in sleep
Drowsily nodding,
Impassive forests.

Face lost in,
A,
Maze of spider webs,
And,
Hair disheveled
Turned over
The face.

Mosquito bites
Black and red
Are there instead.

Braving the thunder-showers
Walk through them,
Steel'd and unbowed.

A forest of perils
Enwrapped in sleep
Drowsily nodding
Impassive forest,
Impassable,

And python-infested
A forest of seven-mountains
Clothed in
Bushes tall
Bushes dwarf.

Panting with fear
The darkling forest.

Lion and tiger infested
Harken!..... the roar;
Enwrapped in sleep
Drowsily nodding
Impassive forests.

Embedded within,
Unbeholden,
Dwell contended
The Gond, black and strong
Amidst
The woods' solitude,
In,
Huts thatched
Rearing fowls.

Come Holi,
the forest reverberated
Lost in Celebration
With
The Breeze
Caressing the grass;
A drunken forest
Heavy,
With the scent of Mahua
Wafting in the breeze
And

Songs enthralling
With
Resonance of drums.

Enwrapped in sleep
Lie
The dense wild woods of Satpura
Drowsily nodding,
Impassive forests.

Lyric Seller

Oh! Yes, my Lord, I do sell songs
Different types of them,
Various kinds of them.

Lord! See my wares
I'll quote the price.

Worthless
Are they not
look at their worth.

Some,
Written in exaltation
Some,
In dejection.

This song will banish pain
This will charm the beloved
Oh!yes, Hesitant was I
At first
But anon,
It dawned on me
People have
Sold their virtue.

Lord! Be not astonished
For,
With discretion
Do I sell my songs.

Oh! Yes my Lord, I do sell songs
Different types of them
Various kinds of them.

Sing the melody
Of this Matin song;
Enthralling is this song
Feel! Feel! It's power.
Written in seclusion
Was this song
Written in Pune
Was this song.
Ascends the mountain
Does this song
Unplugs the fountain
Does this song.
Satisfies the heart's longing
Does this song.
Enriches a wasteland
Does this song.
Aroma of royalty
Is this song,
Balm of the suffering
Is this song.
Come,
I'll show you
More of these
It's melody
If,
You so desire

I'll chant anew.

Choose,
The metrical
Or,
The non-metrical,
Choose! Choose! from
The eternal
And
The transient.

No, no, nothing there is here
To attend
If it please not,
I'll pen down
New ones again.

Songs do I sell of all types
New ones and old,
I sell of all types.

Oh! Yes, my Lord, I do sell songs
Different types of them
Various kinds of them.

Songs,
Should I write
of
Birth or death
Songs,
Should I write
Of
Victory or defeat.

Song embellished, this is
And This, so plain.

This song is of
This excess
And
That excess.
Songs
There are,
Of varying symphonies
This,
is a song of learning
And this,
is purely filmy.

This,
A song divine,
And This,
So light
Oh! No, no.

This is no joke,
Beware!
For Nights and days
Do I write always
And hence,
churn out
songs ever anew.
Oh! Not spontaneously
Are the songs churned out!
Plenteous are they,
Oh! Let me remove all these.
It's the choice of the readers
I'll make a move.

Or,
Go, go within
And ask once more,
Although,

A sin it is
To sell one's song.

But,
Driven to the wall
I sell my songs.
Oh! Yes, my Lord, I do sell songs
Different types of them
Various kinds of them.

Bhvani Prasad Mishra (1913-1985) a very wellknown poet who excelled in writing poems in a distinct colloquial style. He had strong faith in Gandhian ideology. He was honoured with Padmshree Samman and Sahitya Akademi Award. He wrote 22 books in all including 'buni hui rassi' and 'geetfarosh'.

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 Delhi.

Poetry

THREE POEMS

Kailash Vajpeyi

Translated by the Poet

Choice

If given a chance
What part of life
Would you like to live again?
Asked the shadow of my aging frame
Surprised, filled with doubt
The unseen thread of breath
As it slipped inside
Sighed
The answer has yet to come.

Terra Home (Prithvighar)

When I didn't have a home
Then out in the streets
Pushed and jostled by the crowd
I would imagine myself
In each and every home
on earth
Now when I have a home

And am inside it
The home is no more.
At the stroke of midnight
Just when I am about to sleep.
On my mat of grass
Someone calls out
Come on out from inside the earth
And live in the legacy
That has been yours for generations on end.

By A Cutdown Tree

People took away
your severed trunk
Left behind
Your rooted stump.
Within the earth
There flows a sheet of water
Your roots will wrap themselves
In this sheet
And sing.
Soon a new life will sprout forth
Shoots will cover the wound
That was you.
Cloud caravans
Soft as cotton-wool
Will travel across the skies
Year after year.
You will dance again

Content

In the arms of your branches

Birds will sing their raga.

This never happens

To a decapitated torso–

If only a man were a tree!

Kailash Vajpeyi, born 1936, is an eminent Hindi poet with laurels like Sahitya Akademi and Vyas Samman to his credit. Widely travelled, Kailash Vajpeyi has been professor of Hindi in Delhi University and visiting professor at Mexico's academic institution. He is as much involved with philosophy as with poetry. Some of his famous books are : Dooba sa undooba tara. Hawa mein Hastakshar. Sufinama, Beyond the self (English). He lives in New Delhi.

Poetry

A POEM

Meira Kumar

Translated by
Mangal Murty

The rainbow on your eyelids,
Its colours swim in my eyes.
Between you
And me
O, how are the dreams shared!

I think and
Have been thinking for long.
And know not
Where to find that city
Of my dreams?
My soul restless,
All packed up, ready to go,
And settle there.

Moment to moment,
Tormented, thrown out,

O you, who live on the margin!
How long will you hold out,
How much poison will you swallow?

In the fields and barns,
Factories, open quarries,
In plains or among rocks,
In magnificent palaces,
Or in petty tenements,
In distant villages,
Or out among sea waves,
From one corner of the earth
To the other—wherever my sight goes,
It's the magic of your mighty hands
That casts its spell.

O, daily plodders on live coal,
O, tight-rope walkers,
Change your destinies with your hands.

Let there be a roar,
Let the tornadoes rise.
Worship the work,
Not the birth-mark,
Cast off all else,
O my co-city dwellers!

Come,

Let's dash against the barriers.

You and I alone have that trust.

Ours is the strongest bond,

That commonalty of our dreams.

Meira Kumar, born 1945 is a politician by profession and a poet by option. She has been member of Parliament for 5 times and is the first woman speaker of Loksabha. She is well versed in Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Bhojpuri & Spanish. She lives in New Delhi.

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 Varanasi and is working on an English biography of Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Email: bsmmurty@gmail.com

DO NOT SELL ME, PAPA!

Jitendra Rathore

Translated by
The Poet

Papa! do not sell me.
Oh! sell me not to circus.
I am light of your eyes,
I am dream of your days,
I am blood of your sighs,
I am last of the ray.
Of the house in which dwell ye,
Papa, do not sell me,
Oh! sell me not to circus.

Crush me in a pool of oils,
Throw me in a furnace.
Put me in a pot which boils,
Thrash me in gas-hall base,
To kill me like hell free,
But do not sell me,
Oh! sell me not to circus.
If hungry you can eat me,

And munch each of my bone,
If thirsty drink my blood, ye!
If angry cut my neck own,
For all these you're well free,
But, ah? do not sell me,
Oh! sell me not to circus.

True earth is little, sky is low,
And black the air and light,
Of our share, I too know,
But lose not your heart right,
For one day we'll sail free,
Papa! do not sell me,
Oh! sell me not to circus.

Wait and let me touch sky,
And kiss the moon and the sun,
Embrace the green earth shy,
With sea and hill let me have fun,
And then I'll hail thee,
Ah! Please do not sell me
Oh! sell me not to circus.

For even now I do count,
The wrinkles on your face worn
See your eyes dim, and the amount
Of sadness in your dreams
But believe me, Papa!
I'll settle everything.

Papa! do not sell me,
Oh! sell me not to circus.

We'll fight against darkness black,
For sun, earth and sky blue,
To bring air and light back,
For use of our life anew,
Sounding gloom's death knell free,
So, Papa do not sell me,
Oh! sell me not to circus.

We won't let our foes rest,
We'd make them all traceless,
And burn their buildings best,
Leave them asleep and graceless,
And all which now ails thee,
So, Papa do not sell me,
Oh! sell me not to circus.

We would never forgive those,
Who robbed our rest and dream,
Stole our field and eye's glow
We won't forgive these grimnesses,
We'd crush them down and wheel free,
So, please do not sell me,
Oh! sell me not to circus.

So, wait for a little time,

Till the time I kill them,
I promise I won't fail thee,
Only do not sell me.
Oh! sell me not to circus.

When father sells his son,
Mother her daughter good,
Sister sells honour anon,
And brother his manhood,
Even earth will wail aloud
So, Papa do not sell me,
Oh! sell me not to circus.

For mountains will tumble down,
Seas will go waterless,
And planks will rumble down,
All will be fatherless,
Groping in evil fallen free,
So, Papa do not sell me,
Oh! sell me not to circus.

Jitendra Rathore born 1945, Bihar, writes poetry and fiction in Hindi and English. He has one collection of poems, Zamin ki Aag from which he has himself translated the present poem. He lives in Delhi.

NAGARJUN'S POETIC ARENA

Namwar Singh

Translated by
Nishi Tiwari

It is as essential to classify Nagarjun's poems as it is difficult to categorise them. His poetic arena is vast and unparalleled.

Readers adapted to the smooth arena of poetic creation some times find it difficult to understand and interpret the varying moods and tones of his poetry. Even the seemingly simple descriptions in his poems are highly poetic in themselves, to such an extent that, it is difficult to find fault with them. e.g. "Nevla". In this extremely long poem, he describes the lives of the prisoners living in a jail.

He takes up a seemingly trivial incident (which is very important for those imprisoned there). A baby mongoose becomes the center of attraction for the prisoners, whose activities they watch with utmost interest. He gives a detailed description of the entire event.

A piece of meat tied to a string is hung in order to tempt the baby mongoose. It makes various repeated attempts to get the piece of meat, but, all in vain. This makes him angry and he makes a peculiar sound; kir....kir... Readers may doubtfully question "where is poetry here?". Because till the end the mongoose remains a mere mongoose and does not become a symbol. But, because of the inhumane conditions prevailing in the prison, the activities of the mongoose acquire poetic qualities.

Similarly, in "Lalu Sahu" a sixty three year old man burns himself to death on the funeral pyre of his sixty year old wife.

For Nagarjun, this untoward incident is full of poetic potentialities; otherwise, it has neither emotional appeal nor any poetic qualities.

“Joda Mandir” too, falls in the same category of poems, in which, after death of his parents, a son builds a pair of temples in their memory.

Ordinary commonplace incidents which fail to inspire other poets, affect Nagarjun’s poetic sensibilities deeply. It proves to be Nagarjun’s creative field. In this respect he is a daringly unconventional poet, having the courage to strike out a new note and startle his reader. He was a radical. This remarkable poetic quality in him inspired him to write “Paine danton wali”. (Jamuna kinare / makhmali dubo par/poos ki gungunee dhup me/pasar kar leti hai/ bhare poore barah thano walee/chhauno ko pila rahee hai dudh). In this poem, he describes a female pig suckling her young ones, basking in pleasant sunshine of winter, on the velvety meadows near the banks of Yamuna. In his unique poetic style, he refers to her as the daughter of “Mother India”.

Similarly, in “Katahal”, he waxes poetic at the sight of a jackfruit. “Aha! How ripened is this jackfruit! / Aha! How big is this jackfruit! / Aha! What a delicious aroma has this jackfruit!”

(Ah, kya khub paka hai yah kathal/

Ah, kitna bada hai yah kathal/Ah kaisa mah- mah karta hai yah kathal/Ah kis tarah para hai charo khane chit!)

In another poem jackfruit is used as a simile where he says; “Like the peels of a jackfruit, poverty has been squeezing the blood out of my vitals.”

Only a consummate master having tremendous flights of imagination, could coin such a far-fetched comparison. This particular characteristic of his leads him to paint poverty in its manifold forms in one of his poems, where he describes the life of misery led by a rickshaw-puller. His streaming, sweating body, under a tattered vest, with feet and hands having become gnarled and rough. His famished body, compelled to a life of drudgery, rickshaw-puller’s life of drudgery with dirty cracked heels. Toilhardened hands, rough hardened legs and salty sweet drenched bodies under tattered wax raises various questions in the minds of the readers, wins sympathy and leads to empathy. Had it not been for Nagarjun, perhaps, these aspects of human life would have remained untouched.

Nagarjun excels in expressing those repulsive features of human life, which other poets with aesthetic sense prefer not to touch. e.g. in one of his poems he says; “Lord! Retch out everything

/For, it will banish my hunger”(Prabhu, Tum kar do vaman/ hoga meri kshudha ka shaman). Running the risk of being labeled rustic, obscene and vulgar he dares to talk of the divine urine having become a salty lake.(Phail gaya hai mutra ka lawan-sarovar).And some extremely unmentionable lines. Thus, making room for the most contemptible aspects of life. Although, Sanskrit Literature deals with the nine rasas of life with “Vibhats rasa” forming an integral part of it, it is just a formality. Some poems have been composed on this rasa in Sanskrit Literature, but, Nagarjun is the first poet who has dealt with it, in the socio-political context, and established its importance in Hindi Literature.

His “Mantra Kavita” is one such daring creation which is also unrivalled in poetic style and diction. While Nirala’s, “Kukurmutta” is the historical representation of the thoughts and aspirations of the 1940s, Nagarjun’s “Mantra Kavita” reflects with conviction the thoughts and aspiration of 1969.The irony here is that, his utterance “My grandson will rule forever and ever”(Aur hamesha-hamesha raj karega mera pota).Like a prophecy, is about to come true today.

This does not mean that he is a queer poet. Rather, he is a poet dealing with the common place, ordinary events of life, those aspects, which other poets consider too ordinary to give attention

to. In order to enjoy the experience of “Danturit Muskan”, “Sindur Tilkit Bhal” and the loving act of a daughter, hanging pink bangles in front of her father’s (who is a bus driver) driving seat, one will have to enter Nagarjun’s poetic field. The deep longing with which he views “The dew drops, residue of the night clinging to milky paddy blossoms.(Nisha shesh os ki bundiyon se ladi, agahani dhan ki dudhi manjariyan). And full of elation, he says, (“Sike hue do bhutte samne aaye, tabiyat khil gayi”) here he exhibits man’s deep attachment to his natural rural surrounding. It is a rare experience.

Nagarjuna’s poetic field is embellished with unique features of the beauty of nature which indicates the poet’s deep love and admiration coupled with deep penetrating insight into its beauty. He is remarkable for the minute and precise delineation of natural objects. Second, next to Nirala, it is Nagarjuna, who has written the maximum number of poems on rain and clouds. If on the one hand, as a traveller, he has observed the beauty of the clouds gathering over snow-capped mountains.“Amal dhawal giri ke shikharon par badal ko ghirte dekha hai”, on the other hand, like a farmer he has gleefully rejoiced with nature-“Dhin-dhin dha dhamak dhamak megh baaje.” In fact, like a farmer, he discerns keenly the transitional phase during the junction

of two seasons, on the eve of the approaching rainy season and sings through his verse, thereby, revealing his attitude towards nature, where he surrenders himself completely to the spell that Nature casts upon the human mind.

This reminds us of his poem on fireflies: On a wet rainy moonless night... Strewing sanctified grains of rice in the forest. ("Gili Bhadon, Rain amavas.... Kaise ye Neelam Ujas ke/Achchat chhint rahe jungle mein")

He has written a wonderful lyrical poem on rain in his mother-tongue, Maithili, which reminds one of Vidyapati's couplets and skillfully reflects the Nagarjunic trend. The Refrain-"Flash of lightning eliminating the black clouds". (Shyam Ghata, Sit bijuri reh),

It may be written by Vidyapati, but it strongly resembles Nagarjun's verse- ("Phank jotak timrik dhar/Niwir Vipan ati pathar Dhar/Darid ur, laxmi Janu har/Lohak chadari chanik taar".)

A streak of light /Amidst the deep darkness/A slender brook/In repose,/ In a dense dark grove/A glimpse of prosperity/In the midst of poverty/A silver thread/Woven into an iron sheet. These lines illustrate Vidyapati's "Shyam Ghata mein Ujali bijli ki rekha."

A poem in Maithili says-"Ek phank aankh/Ek phank naak". In which, after catching glimpses of the beautiful face

he goes on. "Kitne der tak rahi nachati kapal ke Bhitari ki Katori Mein / Dharan kiya kramashah takali ke roop/Ek phank aankh,/Ek phank naak."

Besides this, other poems like:-"Tan gayi reedh" and "Yahan Tum thi"

depict female charm.

Nagarjun has also written a number of autobiographical poems, expressing his weaknesses, doubts, agony, and his devotion with transparency. There are three outstanding poems in the poetry collection Khichdi Viprav Dekha Hamney.which fall in this category- "In Salakhon Se Tikakar Bhal", "Thakit-Chakit-Bhramit Bhagna Man", "Pratibaddh". In the first one- the poet rests his forehead against the bars of his cell and wonders about the people who will benefit from it. In the second one when the mind of the poet is astonished, deluded, and dejected, he had apprehensions about old age:- when I grow old/ Will I too/ Have to/Go back to a monastery/In order to regain my vitality?.(To Kya Mujhe Bhi Budhape mein Pushtai Ke liye,/Vapas Nahi Jana hai kisi math ke andar?).In the third one, the most interesting thing is the proclamation of commitment. Nagarjuna is not only committed, but also bound and tied to it, determined to overcome his infatuation. He is inclined to "Sabse aur kisi se nahin aur na jane kis kis se". He is attached to "Swajan, pariyan ke pyar ki dor mein/Bahurupa

kalpana rani ke aalingan pash mein/
Teesri, chauthi peedhi ke danturit shishu
sulabh haas mein.”.These ideas of
Nagarjun are full of virtue, and hence
full of Truth.

But Nagarjun’s most enchanting
poems are those when he laughs at
himself. “This ape / This seventy year
old fool / Tears his hair in ecstasy /
And often whistles to himself in seclu-
sion”.

(Yah banmanush /Yah sattar sala
ujabak/umang se bharkar sir ke baal/
Nochane lagata hai /Akele me bajane
lagta hai sitiyan /Aye din)

If a poet can direct an invective
satire against himself he has the full
right to direct it towards others too.
It is with this right that he vehemently
criticizes the existing order of the day.

The attack become bitter and sharp
where the poet’s indignation turns into
bitter, biting satire : “A black toothed
green/ changes into twitching of strag-
gling mustache”. (“Katthai daton ki moti
muskan/ betarteeb muchchon ki
thirkan”). Similarly, attacking the Con-
gress leaders, he says:- Yesterday/Have
they returned/from Delhi/After wrench-
ing the tickets/see, betel –stained laugh-
ter/as like the grain of /
pomegranate.(“Dilli se laute hai kal ticket
mar ke/khile hain dant jyon daane anaar
ke.” Enraged at the welcome being given
to the queen of England he writes:-“O!

Queen welcome/ we will carry your
palanquin/This,the order of Jawahar Lal
has been.”(“Aao!/rani, hum dhoyenge
palki/yahi hui hai rai jawarhar lal
ki.”).Garnishing his satire with folk song
and folk drama “nautanki”, he gives it
a remarkable finish, making the satire
caustic.

This aspect of Nagarjun’s satire has
immortalized his poetry.

His merits are of a kind not likely
to be affected by time that is why his
poems never become outdated. There
lies the difference between the poems
of Nagarjun and those of his contem-
poraries. So, it has been established
beyond doubt that next to Kabir, Nagarjun
is the undisputed master of satire. There
are so many satirical pictures of in-
dividuals in his poems that they can
be compiled in an album.

Nagarjun is neither considered to be
an experimental poet nor can he be
mentioned in the context of new genre
of poetry.

Yet, the amount of experimental work
he had done on the physical aspect has
hardly been done by any other poet.
Under Nagarjun’s craftsmanship and
intelligent wit, poetry scaled new heights.

In this respect, he is a pioneer. Besides
this, he also excels as a dramatic poet
with a dexterity that is surprising. He
excels in technique too-metrical, non-
metrical, or blank verse. He has manifold

ways of expression. Diction becomes an easy tool in his hands, it has plenty of variety. Having a rich vocabulary ranging from 'theth boli' i.e. local dialect to classical Sanskrit glossary. Here, the vista is so vast and expansive that his readers are overwhelmed. In Hindi literature, after Tulsidas and Nirala, Nagarjun's poems are a unique blend of diversity and enrichment.

In spite of all his merits, there is no dearth of uncertainties in his poems. This is precisely the reason why it took a long time for him to become a renowned poet. But, after his thoughts and ideas matured and reached equilibrium, he produced such marvelously finished

poems that he became a target of envy even by the most renowned poets of his times.

His poems are not only artistically finished, but extremely popular as well. This establishes him as the foremost poet of his times. Dr. Ram Vilas Sharma is of the view that "There are very few poets, who have succeeded in striking a balance between these two aspects of poetry—artistic finish and popularity". It won't be an exaggeration if we state that second to Tulsidas, Nagarjun's poetry appeal to all sections of the society ranging from rural farmers to poetry lovers.

Courtesy : Rajkamal Prakashan, Delhi

Namwar Singh, born 1926, at village Jeeyanpur, Varanasi, is the most prominent literary critic of Hindi. His scholarly stature is revealed in the literary discourses he has undertaken. His views have often resulted in creating a point of departure to the stereotypes of literary thought. He has been professor of Hindi at Sagar, Jodhpur and Jawaharlal Nehru Universities, where he is professor emeritus as well. At present he is Chancellor of M.G. Antar-rashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya, Wardha and Chief Editor of 'Alochana' a quarterly magazine of literary criticism. He writes pre-eminently in Hindi but the above article was written by him in English to address an international audience. Some of Dr. Namwar Singh's published works are: 'Bakalam Khud: Hindi ke vikas mein apbhransh ka yog'; 'kahani, nai kahani'; 'kavita ke naye pratiman'; 'doosri parampara ki khoj'; 'chhayavad'; 'vad, vivad, samvad'; 'kehna na hoga'; 'alochak ke mukh se'; 'Hindi ka gadyaparva'; 'zamane se do do hath'; 'kavita ki zameen aur zameen ki kavita'; 'premchand aur bhartiya samaj'. He lives in New Delhi.

HAS HINDI BEEN DEFEATED BY ENGLISH?

Shivapujan Sahay

Translated by
Mangal Murty

[Only months before his death, Shivapujan Sahay, wrote an article 'Kya Angrezi se Hindi har gayee?' which was published by the famous Hindi poet and writer, Dharmveer Bharati, in the epochal Hindi weekly Dharmyug (July 1, 1962). Bharati was running a series of articles on this burning language issue of the time, and had requested Sahayji for his views on the matter. The relevance of the question is all the more substantial now when things seem to have gone beyond control, with Hindi being pushed behind and discarded increasingly at every step. The full Hindi article, which appeared in a heavily edited form in the journal, excluding the first two introductory paragraphs, is being presented here in English translation for the first time. The original Hindi article is available in volume 3 of the Shivapujan Sahay Sahitya Samagra (10 volumes) recently published. – Translator]

Our national leaders love their power, and not Hindi. We, the Hindi people, could have easily taught these autocratic leaders a good lesson through the ballot boxes if we really had a united force. Unfortunately we don't have that. Even the capable and popular Hindi newspapers which could have actively sustained a movement in this regard are owned by capitalists. No competent leadership for the movement either was allowed to develop. Rajarshi Tandon was ousted primarily for his championship of Hindi's cause. Left alone, Seth Govind Dasji also has become powerless.

Hindi has been deliberately hamstrung and crippled by having English as a burden on its shoulders. The whole Hindi world is deeply discontented by the government's Hindi policy. The idea of promoting a foreign language in an independent nation for nurturing national awareness is a clear sign of the government's lack of foresight. The thought of national integration sans an Indian national language is merely a fool's paradise. Even emotional integration can never be achieved by devaluing the native Indian languages. The enthronement of English through the disregard of the chief Indian languages is a grievous blow to our nationalism.

As our national language, Hindi can fully serve as the language of governance, with the mutual cooperation of all its sister Indian languages. But instead of strengthening and augmenting this natural capability of Hindi, the idea of according supremacy to English is a totally anti-national endeavour – a clear mockery of democratic norms in a great republic like ours. But unfortunately, we have absolutely forgotten what Gandhi had so consistently taught us – the method of compelling even the mightiest government to conceding our demands. We also seem to have lost the capability to use the unassailable weapon which he had given in our hands to bring a government back to the right path; otherwise our own government wouldn't have been able to indulge in such wilful acts. If we had genuine concern for our

language, such injustice couldn't have been forced on us. Regrettably, even the supporters of regional languages would not arise and proclaim that all our Constitutionally approved languages can join hands amicably in managing all the linguistic needs of governance. There is no need to offer the crown to English. But sadly, the regional language supporters also are happy to cut off their noses to spite Hindi's face. It is as if the whole well of the nation itself is polluted with cannabis ['bhang'].

Hindi has always helped in the spread of all the regional and local languages on a nationwide scale. It has rid them as far as possible of their 'frog-in-pondism'. Even so, all those who are intolerant of Hindi's progress are happy to find their antipathies succeeding. Indeed, it is a matter of outright misfortune for a great nation like India. And when we look at the language policies of our neighbouring countries it appears to be all the more disgraceful. It shouldn't be so mortifying to say that though the English are gone, their progenies still remain with us. Countries that gained their independence after India are managing their affairs in their own languages quite well. But a gigantic nation like India which is historically, culturally and civilizationally much older to them can unabashedly profess to the world that it cannot work with its own native language.

It's a matter of the greatest astonishment that even our best educationists,

politicians, and leaders crying hoarse with their nationalist slogans, would not care to look towards Asian nations like China and Japan, but rather gaze fixedly towards England. How exhilarated our erstwhile 'white masters' must be feeling to notice this 'slave mentality' in the Indian people's consciousness! The headache of a Pakistan that they successfully gifted us would, perhaps, cause only a faint smile on their lips, but the spell that they have cast on us through their language, English, would surely make them burst in laughter! The soul of that far-sighted Macaulay must be laughing its heart out on our myopic vision. Our heart bleeds as we say this, but it is like banging our heads against a stone wall if we try to emphasise the integral relationship between our culture and language in a country, the heart of not one of whose leaders is charged with a national spirit.

Numerous ambitious plans are being put forward by our government for the expansion and advancement of Hindi. Various efforts to promote Hindi like publication of books and magazines, translation programmes, book distribution, institutional grants, regional seminars, note-writing in Hindi, etc are being made, but the perpetuation of English has thrown cold water on all that. The Hindi people are not mere children to be diverted by toys and dolls. Whatever ambitious projects are being implemented by the government for the propagation of Hindi, the blind devotion towards

English has put paid to them all. 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. In fact, according to a rustic adage: whom to swear by, when both the husband and the son are equally dear; the government is as much our own as is Hindi – that's the biggest problem. The tyranny on our own by our own is truly insufferable.

It would be quite relevant here to quote rather extensively from an article published in the famous Bangla weekly *Desh*. In its 17 February, 1962 issue, the Head of the English Department of the Yadavpur University and an eminent Bangla litterateur, Shri Buddhadeva Bose has written a heart-touching account of his travel to Japan. The lines are quite eloquent in themselves.

“The part of Japanese life that has

left its deepest impress on my mind is the position of English there. The Japanese are not proficient speakers of English. Even among the intellectual elites, the learned and the scholarly, it is rather rare to find a person who can freely talk in English for long. What is more interesting is that they don't even try, or don't even consider it worthwhile, to try overmuch. Among the ordinary people, most would use the same kind of workaday English; that is, they would mostly remain within a limited perimeter of workaday use of English. Beyond that, they would have no use for another language. I found many ladies always carrying a pocket English dictionary in their vanity bags; if they don't understand an expression they would sooner browse into their dictionary. Even university Deans who taught English or French literature would generally respond only with a mystifying smile, without any apparent sign of having understood or not, the questions I put to them.

“ I think this last observation of mine would turn the brows askew of many of our countrymen – ‘How is that possible, teaching English, but not conversing in it?’ But the straight answer to this is that from the primary to the highest levels of education the medium of instruction there is solely Japanese....Literature, science, engineering – everything in Japan is taught through the mother tongue. Textbooks and examinations are done in mother

tongue only. Criticism, scholarly writing and knowledge discourse – all done in the mother tongue. Commerce, administration, government affairs, disquisition, jurisprudence are all carried only in the mother tongue. That is to say, Japan has consistently been following the most natural, vigorous, and world-acknowledged system of language use. But it doesn't mean that they have turned their back on the world; scholars would frequently publish their researches in French, German or English. And yet they would always encourage foreigners to learn their language, Japanese. Many reputed journals would publish their papers in Japanese with an abstract in English just to attract attention of foreign scholars....For their interest in foreign literature and knowledge, they are always ready to learn a foreign language with seriousness, and would also teach it to their students, but it hardly occurs to these teachers and their students that they would also be expected, or are proficient enough, to talk freely in that language. Presently, it seems, the older generation is drawn towards English due to American influence; but even so, it is inconceivable for the Japanese that culture or education are in any way dependent on English....

“In our country India, English is all too important. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that among all the countries where English is not a native language, the highest proficiency in the use of English is to be found in India....It's

true that a handful of our countrymen have the same degree of proficiency in using the English language as is possible for a non-native user (though there still would be a limitation). But it is also not true that we have any special advantage in the world as a consequence of this unnatural situation. Of course, English is of much use to us as our only window to the world. It has some special value for us because, generally, the world's winds blow on us through this window alone.... But the main issue is whether it is desirable for English to have the kind of stranglehold that it has come to have on us. How can I call it proper when I find that in the whole world we are the only unfortunate people worshipping the stone idol of a foreign tongue – not benefiting from its true spirit, but only wildly exulting with its outer form.

“Whenever foreigners come to India they are paid due respect. Some of them would even mix in our society, or spend years and even their whole life here. But they wouldn't bother to learn much of our language except a dozen or so of our words which they would only have to use with the servants. But in Japan nothing is possible without using Japanese –neither business, education or studies, nor marriage or settlement there. This is the main reason behind Japanese literature being translated into many languages even now. There are full-fledged departments of Japanese language in many American universities.

That is only because it is imperative to know Japanese before establishing any kind of relationship with them. By our sheer subservience to English, we are not allowing our own language to raise its head in pride, and this is why our inner thinking - our heart's voice has not been able to reach out to the world.

“Has Japan retrogressed in any field because of keeping away from English? Is it that we are more conversant with the wealth of world knowledge? I feel sad to say, it's just the opposite. Not only in science, but in literature too, it is they who are the 'world citizens', and we are the 'provincials'. It is, indeed, paradoxical, that the English which we consider as our window on the world, has only obscured our own world from us!

“The view of the Japanese about translated [world] literature is that just as it can be done into English, so also into Japanese. If it's not possible to read it in the original, it is much better in their own language Japanese. If translation [of world literature] is possible into English, it is equally possible in Japanese.

“Japan is an ideal answer to the question : whether the mother tongue can be the medium for higher education in India? Ideal because Japan also is an Asian nation, and its rise in Asia has been phenomenal. One reason for this, certainly, is that even the most updated knowledge in the west is dis-

seminated in Japan through its mother tongue. In spite of its substantial assimilation of the best in the west, it has never committed the suicidal error of the slavery of a foreign language. It is often stated that though literature and such other subjects can be taught in the mother tongue, but for science and engineering education English is inescapable. Yet who are more advanced in the fields of science and engineering [or technology] – we the English-knowing Indians, or they, the mother tongue-educated Japanese? What Mahatma Gandhi had called a ‘slave mentality’ – we have still not been able to shed it off. And the proof of this lies in our helpless, miserable enchantment with English.”

No comments seem necessary on the above-expressed views of a well-known scholar of English, but regarding his last sentence, it must be added that Mahatma Gandhi’s language policy and national reconstruction policy were conveniently put on the back-burner; only his name continued to be utilized as a talisman on the ballot box. It’s a great misfortune that Mahatmaji’s blessing hand is gone forever from over Hindi’s head, otherwise our nation wouldn’t have had to face this humiliation.

As for the question of Hindi’s battle for victory or defeat with English, it’s only a matter of the victory or defeat of the mindset. If the mindset is defeatist, there is defeat, of course; but if it’s victory-spirited, it is victory ultimately.

The mindset of the Hindi speakers is surely never defeatist, nor can Hindi be ever defeated. But as is the wont of our destiny-makers, Hindi can never win in this battle against English. It is only to their [dis?]credit that even after a self-rule of fifteen years they have not been able to build up sufficiently the strength of their centuries-old national language. If they had harboured true Indian nationalism in their hearts, English wouldn’t have secured the enviable position of a darling second spouse. But it is these same people who have forced Hindi’s defeat at the hands of English. This thorn in the Hindi speakers’ flesh would keep agonizing so long as English continues to grind its corn on the chest of Hindi. After bruising the hearts of millions of Hindi speakers with utmost cruelty, the big drum of India’s ancient heritage is being beaten all around the world. It’s a matter of unbearable pity!

What is more amazing is that those occupying the seats of power also consider themselves to be great linguists. They who are totally ignorant of its riches are, in fact, trying to weigh the worth of Hindi. One among them would even brag that there is nothing at all in Hindi literature, and another would profess that all 14 languages are national languages. They speak from the peaks of the Himalayas and their assertions resound throughout the land. But who can hold their tongue? It is these same people who are complicating the issue

and spoiling the atmosphere. If the whole truth were to be revealed, lots of unpalatable facts would also come out in the open. But now it would hardly help or harm the cause of Hindi either to reveal or hide the truth. The pennant of English is firmly fixed on the fort of Hindi. And the soul of Hindi is fled from that fort.

From now on, I think, we should put all our energies into preparing Hindi for the future campaign. At the same time, we must earn the goodwill of the well-wishers of our other Indian languages. But before whom can we play our lute, singing of Hindi's power and the wealth of its literature? Better would

it be for us all to join hands in enriching and strengthening our Hindi language and literature. Acharya Ramchandra Shukla in his book *Goswami Tulsidas*, while considering Tulsī's devotional tradition, has aptly observed – "The richness of Hindi poetry in Sur[*das*] and Tulsī is not because of their high recognition in the royal [Mughal] court; instead the high recognition in the court is the result of that literary richness. That rich literary heritage is the product of Sur and Tulsī, and they themselves are the products of the development of that devotional ethos, the foundation of which is firmly laid down by Rama and Krishna."

Acharya Shivapujan Sahay (1893-1963) was a close associate of Premchand, Jayashankar Prasad and Nirala, and is highly regarded as one of the foremost writers of modern Hindi prose. He is well known for his novel 'Dehati Duniya', a pioneer work in Hindi regional fiction, and as one of the greatest editors after Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi. He edited several famous Hindi journals like 'Matwala', 'Madhuri', 'Jagaran' and 'Himalaya' as well as Premchand's 'Rangbhumi', 'Dwivedi Abhinandan Granth' and Dr. Rajendra Prasad's 'Atmakatha'. His complete works 'Shivapujan Sahay Sahitya-Samagra' in 10 volumes, edited by Dr. Mangal Murty, have been published recently. He was awarded Padmabhushan in 1960. He passed away in Patna in 1963.

RURAL TRAVESTIES : SHRILAL SHUKLA'S RAG DARBARI

Rupert Snell

Shrilal Shukla, administrator turned Hindi author, was born in 1925. Of his background he writes, "A deprived childhood, a student career overshadowed by hard work and anxieties, then a middle-ranking government appointment – there is little point in recounting these experiences because such stories are stale and have been repeated time and time again"¹, Shukla began writing in 1953-54 when in a government post in Bundelkhand, a succession of administrative posts led to his becoming Director of Cultural Affairs in the Uttar Pradesh government in the late 1970s; he is now retired. Like so many Hindi authors, he was unable to base his livelihood entirely on his literary career, which he describes in the following terms:

"Despite the fact that I lived in the town, when I wanted to write I had to do all those things that married men have to do with a mistress: for many years I resorted to car seats, rooms in hotels and dark bungalows, and for some time I rented a second flat; writing novels in particular calls for extended leave and escape to some other place."²

Shukla's published work includes six novels and some collections of satirical essays. He came into prominence in 1968 on the publication of his novel *Rag Darbari*, whose graphically realistic portrayal of Indian village life caused a considerable stir in Hindi literary circles; has subsequently been translated into several other Indian languages, and is currently being filmed for Doordarshan. *Rag Darbari* is set

in village called Shivpalganj, a few miles from a large town somewhere in the Awadhi-speaking region of Uttar Pradesh. The action takes place over the six-month period during which Rangnath, a young research student, comes to stay with his uncle to convalesce after an illness. The opening scene describes a truck in which Rangnath solicits a lift to Shivpalganj at the beginning of his stay;

The city boundary from that point, the ocean of rural India begins.

Just there stood a truck. A single glance showed that its purpose in life was to rape the roads. Like truth, it had a number of different aspects; the police, looking at it from one point of view, might say that it was standing in the middle of the road, while the driver could say that it was parked at the kerb. Following the current fashion, the driver had fastened the door in its open position, spread out like a bird's wing; this both enhanced the beauty of the truck and obviated the danger of any other vehicle being able to overtake it.³

Rag Darbari too is both parked at the roadside and standing in the middle of the highway. On the one hand, it is a novel of Indian village life which belongs to a tradition of rural fiction extending back to Premchand's generation of pre-Independence times; but on the other hand it has the destructive intention of satire, aimed at ridicule rather than correction

or integration and presenting a wilful obstruction to the further progress of its own genre. Though satirical writing is commonplace in Indian literature generally, it is rather unusual to find satire as the backbone of a full-length Hindi novel. From the point of view of its extreme readability, Rag Darbari is worthy of close attention; and is both sufficiently distinct and distinguished a work to merit, without particularly aspiring to it, the label of a "modern classic".

Principal Characters

Much of the action of the novel centres on the extended family with which Rangnath lives in Shivpalganj. The patriarch is Rangnath's maternal uncle Vaidyaji, an ayurvedic practitioner with a finger in many pies; he maintains a tight grip on the running of all the major village institutions, but manages, godfather-like, to keep his hands clean of any actual dirty dealing. Vaidyaji called *Baidji Maharaj*, is the apex of the village's feudal structure. He "is, was, and shall ever remain": it is the Vaidyajis of this world who ensure the impossibility of change and progress, and in whose gift lie all positions of power both real and symbolic. He is a turncoat, adept at aligning himself with the winning side, and thus able to transform himself from onetime supporter of the British Raj to khadi-wearing nationalist. His authority derives in part from his brahmanical status, underlined

by a pedantically maintained Sanskritic style of speech and enforced by a loosely structured gang of goondas under the control of his elder son, the wrestler Badri 'Pahalvan'. As a *vaidya*, he lays great store by the maintenance and promotion of virility (*virya*), especially through the avoidance of the spilling of semen; thus he preaches celibacy (*brahamacarya*) to Rangnath as part of his "cure"⁴ Vaidyaji has also a younger son, an eighteen year old student called Rupan; the two brothers together provide their cousin Rangnath with much of the practical education he is to receive during the course of his village sojourn. The female characters in the family hardly exist for the novelist: in fact there are no female protagonists - apart from one Bela discussed below, and she too is almost always off-stage - though women are prominent among the groups of crouching figures to be discovered at their ablutions in the early mornings. Much the same applies to the portrayal of children: seemingly, only men can sing the Durbari raga.

It is to the durbar-like atmosphere of Vaidyaji's baithak that the novel's title alludes. The raga called Darbari is the most majestic and imposing of all the Hindustani ragas: its slow and ponderous development reflects the solemn dignity of the royal court, of which Vaidyaji's cabal is an almost burlesque travesty.⁵ Typical of the hangers-on at this centre

of political intrigue is the gruesome toady Sanichar, dressed in striped under-shorts "torn in some important places" and to which is added, on formal occasions, a grubby vest; one of the narrative strands of the novel sees him promoted, for reasons of political expediency, from his natural position of bhang-preparer to that of head of the village council. He is Vaidyaji's constant attendant, leaping to his summons "with a monkey-like bound (*aisi bandar-chhap chhalang*) which confirmed the Darwinian theory of evolution"; unquestioningly pious in a mindless sort of way, he responds to the sublime sound of a Sanskrit quotation (never mind if it concerns some medical context) from Vaidyaji's lips by clasping his palms together and falling into a prostration with a cry of "*Jay Bhagvan ki!*". There is, too, the cripple Langar,⁶ a pathetic and sombre figure who spends the entire period of the novel hobbling around the village awaiting the receipt of a copy of a legal document relating to a land-related court case of some years earlier. Amongst Vaidyaji's adversaries is Ramadhin "*Bhikhamkheravi*", Calcutta-returned opium dealer and jailbird, who is the patron of the village gambling den; an aspiring Urdu poet of decidedly modest talents, he takes his *nom de plume* from the nearby village of Bhikhamkhera (whose distance from Shivpalganj is judged from the fact that a nautanki performance in one can be heard in the other.)

The main arena for the politickings planned in Vaidyaji's *baithak* is the local school, the grandly-named Chhangamal Vidyalaya Intermediate College, originally built with government funds diverted from a project intended to provide the village with a meeting centre. The theoretical purpose of the college was to counter the lack of engineers and doctors in the country - an uphill struggle, because *the people of this country are traditionally of a poetic bent. Before understanding a thing they necessarily become enthralled by it and turn to verse. Seeing the Bhakra-Nangal dam they will cry "Ah! Once again God has chosen India as the place to demonstrate His miraculous powers!"*; and *at the sight of a young girl stretched out on the operation table they will begin spouting couplets by Matiram and Biharilal. (P- 21).*

Any real training is of course well beyond the capacities of the college: students would have to go to England or America for that, and the College can only provide a preliminary initiation to such an education - *tek-af-stejvala*. While theoretically intended as a door to a wider world, the college is actually prey to a problem which represents a major theme in the novel - the incompatibility of lofty institutions, conceived far away and on an abstract and idealized plane, with the realities of life on the ground. Any attempt at imposing change or development in the village

context is doomed to failure, not least because of the lack of any linguistic and cultural bridge between the village and the developed world from which the will for change is imported. Incongruities of culture are expressed in and by the absurdities of unrestrained code-switching, the problem being encapsulated in the following dialogue from a ninth-grade science lesson on *apekshik ghanatva* ('relative density'):

One boy asked, 'Master Sahib, what's apekshik ghanatva?'

He replied, 'apekshik ghanatva means "relative density"'

Another boy said, 'See, he's not teaching science, he's teaching English'.

The master said, 'How the hell can you teach sala science without English?'

The boys laughed - not at the dispute between English and Hindi, but because of the master's idiomatic use of the word sala.

The college, whose bizarre and gothic goings-on recall Dr. Pagan's academy in Evelyn Waugh's *Decline and Fall*, is presided over by Principal Sahib. He is, needless to say, Vaidyaji's man. His two specialities are creative accounting, which ensures the maximum government funding for the college, and a tendency to lapse into *Awadhi*⁸ at moments of extreme vexation. In a conversation with Rangnath he confides that a higher academic position had been

denied him after a small incident in his own student career: it was in his salad days just after Independence, and before the Indo-China war, when non-violent historical subjects such as Buddha and Ashoka became all the rage and had streets named after them. He blighted his own chances of advancement in academe by knowing that the Sanskrit word vimana can mean "seven-storeyed mansion", a fact that the professor had been saving up to present as the punchline to a lecture as evidence of his own intellect, (pp. 231-2) The college is not a happy place. While many of the teachers - like Motiram Master, whose only real interest in life is the flour-mill through which he augments his salary, and which can be heard chugging away in the background throughout his ill-disciplined classes - are merely incompetent, a more dynamic negative force is represented by the (action led by Khanna Master, who dares to be critical of the fact that Vaidyaji's position as Manager of the college is not open to democratic challenge. Something of the scholarly status of the college can be inferred from the contents of Khanna Master's personal library:

Dr. Ishwari Prasad's history of India; some history cribs by 'A Graduate', useful for examinations: a selection of titles from the 'Pocket Spy' series; several special issues of the religious periodical Kalyan; and a complete set of the novels of Gulshan

Nanda (P. 379)

The narrative of the novel returns intermittently to the central theme of college politics. A forced election for the chairmanship of the college governors is crudely rigged by Vaidyaji to ensure his continued control of the institution; a further strand to the narrative concerns Khanna's crusade, in which he is joined by Rupan and others but opposed by Badri, who is ever loyal to his father. The rivalry between the two brothers Rupan and Badri is exacerbated by their parallel ambitions with respect to Bela, the village beauty; Rupan sends her love letters concocted from bits of film songs, and the village is abuzz with gossip and excitement at the latent scandal; but it eventually transpires that Bela has set her own sights on Rupan's hunkier brother. This fact emerges when she pays a nocturnal visit to Badri, crossing the rooftops in the best traditions of the illicit tryst, only to discover Rangnath sleeping in Badri's room. Rangnath in turn is amazed to find a female form bearing down on him in the middle of the night, the stone artifices of Khajuraho having been his only experience of such matters previously; but Bela quickly retreats on realizing her mistake, leaving Rangnath to live in the imaginary world which is the lot of a society where boy meets girl with such great difficulty. Even before this briefest of encounters, Rangnath too had become

besotted by the idea of Bela, not least because of the rumours of her being a woman of the world; like Ruppen, he too had to fall back on his stock of images from the film world to make sense of her all too vivid reality :

After being told the story of the love letter on their way back from the fair, Rangnath could not bring himself to ask Ruppen for more details. Now that he was alone his curiosity about Bela could be quelled only by imagination, masturbation and frustration, and since these are to a large extent the inspiration behind our arts, Rangnath was framing these moments in an artistic context. What would she be like? Like Vaijayantimala in 'Madhumati? Like Shubha Khote in 'Godaan? Like Waheeda Rahman in 'Guide? No: these had all become like Mother India figures, but Bela must still be in the flush of youth He tried very hard to compose in his mind a complete picture of a girl, but failed: his imagination once captured a complete torso, but that was no use because it had no face; for a time his brain was dominated by the round circumferences of an isolated pair of breasts. Finally his body tensed, then slackened, and he dozed off under the bedding, (pp. 199-200)

Bela's father, Gayadin, has a cloth agency and is the village usurer. A pessimistic and gloomy man, he also holds the nominal post of Vice-President of the

college management committee; Khanna Master's clique approaches him in this capacity in the hope that he might call a meeting of the committee in order to check the excesses of the Manager (Vaidyaji) and Principal Sahib. During the fruitless discussions, one of the masters unthinkingly uses the word 'morality' (*naitikta*):

Even after all this conversation it was only now that Gayadin's expression betrayed any disquiet. But when he spoke it was in the usual wearied tone. 'Don't talk about morality, Master Sahib, someone might hear you and issue a writ.'

The others said nothing. Then again Gayadin seemed moved to speak. He glanced over to a broken wooden stool in a corner of the room and said, 'Morality is like that stool. It just lies there in the corner. When a meeting comes along a cloth is spread over it and it looks really fine. Then you can fire off as many speeches as you like. That's what it's for.' (p. 121)

Gayadin is in fact hardly better qualified to occupy the high moral ground than anybody else. But his despondent cynicism about the abuse of power does somehow mark him off from those around him. When Vaidyaji approaches him with a reluctant proposal for an inter-caste marriage between Badri and Bela, Gayadin snubs him and concludes with the words "let decent people live in Shivpalganj too" (p. 361): for once a sombre note is struck,

free of irony.

Shivpalganj

Though a number of plots and sub-plots run through the novel, mostly involving the machiavellian subterfuges of Vaidyaji and his chumcha, Principal Sahib, there is no single linear narrative running through all thirty-five chapters. It has been suggested that the character of Rangnath, whose arrival in and departure from the village demarcates the time-scale of the book, is insufficient to provide a structural unity to its various and disparate episodes.⁹ But while it is true that Rangnath's existence supplies an external perspective from which the village can be viewed (and to some extent also facilitates discussion about that old chestnut of Hindi literary controversy, the town-versus-village debate, he is never really promoted to the position of narrative hero. That role is held by the village itself, and by the atmosphere which prevails there, for the characters are all bound to it as inevitably as are R. K. Narayan's characters to the fictional town of Malgudi. The village and its topography are of a piece with the behaviour of its inhabitants, and seem almost to shape and exacerbate the situations in which they find themselves. The residents of Shivpalganj are dubbed 'Ganjaha', and growing familiarity with the place as one reads the novel gives that term a very particular set of implications - mostly derogatory, though often entailing also a certain pride of infamy. A Ganjaha

is fast with an insult or a lathi, but slow to work; he is very fond of defecation (of which more later), quick on the main chance, ever ready to form factions and cliques,, ill-disposed towards official authority, corrupt almost by default.

To assert the centrality of Shivpalganj as being equivalent to a character in its own right is not to label *Rag Darbari* as a novel of "place" in the manner of the so-called *anchalik* school of Renu and his followers, because with the exception of the occasional appearance of Awadhi dialogue there is little direct reflection of the character of the region as distinct culturally from other regions:¹⁰ indeed the point of the novel's satirical stance is to lampoon attitudes and behaviour perceived as universal, not localized. Shukla himself regards the *anchalik* label with suspicion. He argues that village life represents the mainstream of Indian culture, and it is the urban novels, if anything, which should be described as *anchalik*" (for which the literal sense of "fringe" would apply quite accurately in this discussion). In the rarified world of Hindi literary criticism, genre categories proliferate like empty coat-hangers in a taxonomic wardrobe - they rattle about noisily, but to no great effect: thus in contradistinction to the *anchalik* school, one critic designates *Rag Durbari* as an '*un-anchalik*' novel.¹² This seems to be going too far, and one wonders where it will all end: suffice it to say that Shivpalganj

holds a prominent place in the novel, but as 'Anytown'.

Portrayals of village scenery are rarely flattering. Many of the chapters and their sub-divisions beginning with a scene-setting of the following type, where the nature of the place anticipates the actions of its human inhabitants:

On the outskirts of the village there was a small pond, the epitome of village life. Filthy, clogged with mud, stinking. A contemptible place. Horses, donkeys, dogs and pigs were overjoyed at the sight of it; bugs and insects, flies and mosquitoes, all quite untrammelled by the complexities of family planning, flourished there in their millions, indicating to us that if we could only learn their ways the population explosion would cease to worry us.

Any deficiency in the filth of this place was made good by a couple of dozen village boys who would come to the pondside regularly morning and evening - and irregularly at any other time of day, as directed autocratically by their insides - and would deposit there, before returning home unburdened, substances of solid, liquid and gaseous state, (p. 241)

In terms of the traditions of realism in the Western novel, a description such as this may seem unremarkable; even in Hindi literature (at least since the emergence of debunkers such as Nirala) there has been some occasional

concentration on the more malodorous side of life. But the relative shortness of the history of modern literature in Hindi - effectively contained within the present century, and with the added catalyst of rapid political change - means that Premchand's very much more reverential and idealized depiction of the village as a kind of shrine to Mother India still plays over the mind of the modern reader as the exemplar of its genre. Even in *Godan* (1936), where Premchand's earlier didacticism had given way to the sophistication of a more mature narrative style, there is an implicit sanctity and benevolence in the soil tilled by the noble peasant-farmer:

The June sun was rising out of the mango grove, its argent glory bestowing a splendour to the redness of the sky, and the air was beginning to warm up. The farmers working in the fields on either side of the path called a greeting to Hori and respectfully invited him to share a pipe: but he could not afford to indulge himself just now. Still, the craving for respect sitting deep inside him was gratified at the honour and brought a glow of pride to his weathered face.

Leaving the pathway between the fields he came to a low piece of ground which used to retain some moisture after the monsoon floods, so that some greenness was still to be seen even at the height of summer; cows from the surrounding

*villages used to come here to graze. There was still some freshness and coolness in the air; Hori took a few deep breaths, and decided to rest here a while, since he would after all have to toil in the summer wind all day long.*¹³

Though no longer based on the same ideology as Premchand's, post-Independence novels often maintain a similarly soft-focused idealism in their descriptions of the village scene. Phanishwarnath Renu's 1954 novel *Maila Anchal*, which both established the *anchalik* style of fiction and helped it find a name, did for Mithila what Hardy did for Wessex, portraying the countryside as a succulent and lush (if sometimes malevolent) background to the vagaries of human life and death:

*Maryganj is a large village, and is home to people of all levels of society. To the East of the river flows a stream called Kamla River; during the rains the Kamla runs full, and in the other seasons the water collects in great pools - brimming with fish and with lotus flowers! The full-moon day of Paush brings crowds of people bathing here from morning till night, and confectioners and grocers from Rauthat station set up shop nearby. The praise of Mother Kamla is extolled in countless tales by the villagers.*¹⁴

In Shivpalganj, on the other hand, any vacant space inevitably attracts some variety of decadence or defecation, human

or animal. The lyrical skies and bee-loud glades beloved of Premchand and Renu are nowhere to be seen, their place usurped by the lusts and passions of more earth-bound concerns; milk and honey have here given way to urine and pan-stained spittle. Decadence is nowhere frowned upon, even by the more educated members of village society, but merely accommodated, as for example in the hut which functions as Shivpalganj lover's lane:

Some way along the road stood a kachha hut built in the middle of a thick mango grove. It turned its back to the road; its doorway, which had no door, faced the jungle. During the monsoon the farmers would shift their gambling sessions from under the trees to this hut, while for the rest of the year it lay empty. But not for long: men and women would come here to take their pleasure, and the name given in Shivpalganj to this hut would startle even a Henry Miller. A master from the college had watered the name down somewhat, and called it 'Love Cottage', (p. 33)

Language and Identity

Every author makes a judgement, deliberately or subconsciously, about the appropriateness of different language registers within any given context. One of the many variables in this internal and eternal debate in Hindi writing is the position of English words, which survive all attempts at replacement by the factory-fresh

neologisms of today's supporters of Sanskritized Hindi. In urban life, English loanwords have a natural place, and this is reflected in present day Hindi novels with urban settings: Shukla's own novel *Simaye tutati hain* overflows with examples. In the village, however, where English-speakers are few and far between, its incomprehensibility makes it an iconic symbol rather than a means of communication; it develops a semiotic potency equivalent to that of the Sanskrit *shloka* which so impressed the ears of Langar. Shukla exploits to the full the bizarre juxtapositions of register which obtain in modern Hindi usage, as for example in the use of English for anti-malaria propaganda, an incident discussed by Langar and others at the sweetseller's shop:

'One day a load of people in a motor turned up in the village. They set about writing all sorts of stuff in English on all the walls Then, Bapu, they took some blood from my arm and put it in a machine and looked at it. What do you think, Bapu - it's an odd time, this kaliyug, a local fellow like me, and what kind of disease does he get?

A foreign one! Those people who came in the car, they said Langar's a big man now. he's got malaria And then, Bapu, well, just imagine, the people who'd come in the motor, they really got going They went round in twos and threes with

machine-things going 'kirrr-kirrr' at every well, pond, ditch and drain. Two of them went to each house in turn and stencilled up a hymn in English in praise of Malaria Maharani I tell you, Bapu, those words looked so impressive, one look at them and the mosquitoes were off.

The politician said, 'What was it you came out with, Langar

"All that writing in Angrezl

made them macchars run like crazy!"

Vah!, said the sweetseller, 'What a fine verse! Have a jalebi!' (p. 315)

Registers are mixed with wonderful abandon, sometimes to the confusion of the speakers themselves: the police inspector's use of the Arabic-derived word *galatfahmi* ('misunderstanding') in a conversation with Sanichar provokes the perplexed response "*Galatfahmi? What kind of animal is that? Leave off your English and speak our desi language!*" (p. 341). (And elsewhere, further misunderstandings are caused by the traditional use of Persio-Arabic vocabulary in the courts.) Shukla's linguistic skill, in particular through the unexpected juxtapositioning of registers, is an important element in the success of the novel. The example of the mosquitos' terror at the sight of the awe-inspiring English letters is a kind of verbal cartoon; and it is double-edged, mocking not only the ignorance of local human and insect life, but also the lack of judgement of

the propaganda officials blinded by their reverence for an old imperial tongue. So passages like the one quoted above are not mere linguistic slapstick - or rather, their being slapstick does not rob them of a deeper and more subtle significance.

Shukla's translingual puns necessarily defy real translation, as in the example of the College Inspector's bungalow, "called in English an 'office-cum-residence', but in Hindi, '*afis-kam-residens-zyada*' (roughly "*Office? Come! - Residence.*": p. 299), Through the forced equivalence of English and Hindi, Shukla points up the unnaturalness of a situation in which alien institutions are blithely imposed upon a culture inhabiting quite another realm of meaning; and by so doing, he suggests that the failure of such institutions is inevitable and is not to be laid at the door of those unhappy people involved in their implementation. At the same time, the pun helps specifically to characterize the bungalow's resident, quick to exploit two funding agencies for the domestic and official rents of the building (and one could take it further - the punning *cum/kam* is not merely English/ Hindi but rather Latin/Persian, thereby extending the reference a stage further in both directions). Shukla exploits the rich seam of ironies lying in such linguistic situations, and by doing so he brings a welcome honesty and pragmatism to the question of linguistic identity, freeing it from the (important

but) restrictive tatsama vs. tadbhava axis around which such discussion so often revolves.

More conventional monolingual word-plays are typified by a pun on the literal versus idiomatic uses of *marammat* as "repair/beating", in "one of the policemen had given his shoes - which were always eager to deal out the treatment to some individual - for their own treatment at the hands of the cobbler sitting under the banyan tree" (p. 260). It is oddly satisfying for an English reader to find also that the use of graffiti, especially to deflate the puffed-up pride of the officious, is an international art-form: a sign hanging outside Sanichar's shop with the slogan "Do not come in" (*andar mat ao*) - a message wholly out of keeping with the Ganjaha's cherished freedom of access to anywhere he chooses - is promptly amended by the addition of a single vowel sign to read "Piss inside" (*andar mut ao*).¹⁶ ; Shukla maintains a constant playfulness of language use - yielding a continually replenished chuckle, rather than a series of belly-laugh only dimly to be suggested through the citing of such examples.

The one character in the novel sensitive to the appropriateness or otherwise of language register is of course Rangnath. Standing at a *pan* stall with Principal Sahib, he points critically to a picture of Gandhi and Nehru in a gaudy advertisement for a skin-disease remedy:

'See that?'

'Horses for courses', replied Principal Sahib, in Awadhi idiom.¹⁷ 'The picture's not so out of place in a village setting.'

'Village or town, what difference does it make?', Rangnath said, *'Everybody ought to respect Gandhiji'*. He studied the picture for a while and added with feeling. *'Whoever did that painting, I'd like to give him a good shoe-beating'*.

Principal Sahib laughed, to show he thought Rangnath a fool. 'Make of it what you will! What do you expect of a pan-seller? You don't think the poor sod would hang up a Picasso, do you?' Rangnath interrupted hurriedly, *'Stop, Master Sahib, please stop! Don't mention Picasso! I feel all queer when you say a name like that!'* (p. 229)

The reason for Rangnath's dizzy spell, as he explains apologetically to Principal Sahib a little later, is the incongruity of Picasso's name in the surroundings of Shivpalganj. But "It's not your fault, Principal Sahib, nor mine, nor the fault of Shivpalganj, nor of the pan-seller. It's, Picasso's fault." (p. 230)

The Shivpalganj vernacular is so heavily loaded with idiom that the outsider (not least the writer of this paper) is bound to miss some of the references: the city-dweller Rangnath, used to the prosaic conventions of urban Hindi, is himself quite bemused at times. The akhara or wrestling

arena, training ground for Badri's coterie, is one of the locations where the Ganjahas' boli is given free rein. When one of the wrestlers comes looking for Badri, Sanichar tells him that he is at a meeting (discussing the absconding of a Cooperative Union supervisor - one of the minor sub-plots of the novel). The wrestler is unimpressed by the thought of Badri attending such a meeting:

The pahalvan spat without ceremony on the platform where Sanichar was sitting. 'What kind of egg does Badri think he's going to hatch [kya anda dege] at a meeting? He should just pick up the supervisor and flatten him out [dhobipat marte], that would sort the bastard out once and for all! [usi me sala te ho jata] What's the point of all this meeting-sheeting business?'

Rangnath wasn't with it. He said, 'Do people lay eggs at your meetings here?' The wrestler had not expected anything from this quarter. 'What do you expect them to do - pull their hair out? They all moan on and on like a bunch of widows, then-when it comes to getting anything done they just sit there holding their dicks.'(p. 87)

Rangnath muses that the akhara is well equipped to strengthen the modern Hindi lexicon; and later, as a bystander at a Shivpalganj card game, he echoes a thought very familiar to the non-mother-tongue reader of Hindi, namely that the rampant

process of (neo-, pseudo-) Sanskritization (so much more hurried, contrived and banal a process than the Latinization of English, with which it is sometimes compared) is inexorably draining modern Hindi of its true potency as a vernacular language. Rangnath is delighted by the gamblers' assimilations and calques in terms such as *pallas* ("flush", as the name of a card-game), *jor*, ("pair"), *daur* ("run"), *lagri* ("flush"), *pakki* ("running flush") and *tirrail* ("trail"); and he dreams of setting up a little committee of Ganjahas to replace the professional lexicographers of modern Hindi, who are busily inventing a new and incomprehensible language within the four walls of their committee room (p. 215).¹⁸ The artificiality and sheer difficulty of "literary" Hindi is a frequent target for Shukla's ironic barbs. After a rather abstruse passage of reported speech in which Vaidyaji has been asked to offer his resignation (*tyag-patra*) as Director of the Cooperative Union, Shukla makes this aside:

This last sentence sounded as though it had been lifted from somewhere in Jainendra Kumar's writings. But Vaidyaji was a political man, and one could hardly expect him to have read Jainendra Kumar's philosophical works; after all, even Hindi professors have great difficulty in reading twentieth century Hindi literature. In fact, Vaidyaji had no connection with any kind of literature. If it were otherwise, and

if he had read Jainendra Kumar, then he would have recognized this occurrence as a mere assault of verbosity. (p. 351)

Shukla himself is wary of the Sanskritized register; in his usage it often has an ironic tone of the "high-their-speech-but-low-their-deeds" variety. Examples are to be found in his descriptions of such characters as the master perjurer Pandit Radhelal, whose "superior competence" (*ucha koti ki dakshata*) in his craft lends him an "unprecedented prestige" (*abhutpurva pratistha*) amongst court witnesses.¹⁹ In similarly ironic vein, a villager who has been attacked by footpads on a road near the village's haunted peepul tree is described as "suffering from self-pity (*atma-daya*) acerbity (*akrosh*) and several other such literary characteristics", (p. 285)

At the other extreme of the linguistic register is the language of Jognath, the village drunkard. He and his confreres speak a kind of alcoholic argot called *Sarfari boli*, which involves interposing *-rf*-between random syllables; when the police arrest him for a suspected dacoity, he flummoxes the Inspector with phrases like "Whrfo is that barfstard? I'rfm kirflled you srfod, you shoorfing the gurf!"²⁰ Such speech underlines the separateness of the village in cultural terms: the outsider can never gain real access, Shukla's exploitation of registers extends into his use of metaphor and other descriptive devices. His avoidance of an unnaturally Sanskritized

style does not rule out allusions to the classical past of the Hindi tradition, where the Sanskrit heritage has a natural place. Thus when the fresh-faced Rangnath is encountered by the truck-driver at the opening of the novel, he is described in terms of an eulogy of the youthful Rama, borrowed from Tulsidas (and then too from a kind of macaronic verse):

In a single glance the driver took in all the possibilities represented by the woman shopkeeper, then turned and looked at Rangnath: Ah! What an aspect! Lotus-buds his eyes, his mouth a lotus sweet, lotuses his hands, red lotuses his feet' (p. 8)

Similar bathos is achieved in describing Badri's sidekick Chhote Pahalwan as "standing under a tree in the *tribhangi* pose" - a reference to the dandy "thrice-bent" posture, with knee, waist and neck bent in jaunty fashion, of the fluting Krishna. Hindi fiction, it is true, is full of such classical allusions, whether ironic or straightforward; what singles them out in Shukla's writing is the fact that they represent only one extreme of an unusually broad range of cultural references. They stand out in sharp and effective contrast to allusions from the other end of the range, such as the following:

Khanna Master, who until now had been sitting cross-legged, suddenly sat forward with knees bent under and chest thrust forward, emphasising the contours

of his body in a pose made famous by the late Marilyn Munroe (p. 382)

Here the incongruity is of quite another order. But the effect is cumulative: by switching references between, as it were, Vrinda-ban and Holly-wood, Shukla constantly wrong-foots the reader, who is never sure from which cultural direction the next reference is likely to appear.

Narrative and Descriptive Strategies

A puzzling constant of modern Hindi fiction is the "thumbnail sketch" so often used to introduce a new character. Reduced to the barest essentials of physical description, and with the lack of definite or indefinite articles allowing even greater economy than usual in English equivalents, such minimal listings of characteristics read like instructions for an identikit artist: or perhaps they look back to the prolonged nominal compounds of Sanskrit *kavya*. Whatever the case, they are well represented in *Rag Darbari*, lightly seasoned with irony:

At four o'clock, Principal Sahib came out of his office. A slender frame, parts of which were covered in khaki shorts and shirt; a cane like a police sergeant's stuck under his arm; sandalled feet; - all in all quite a smart impression, the more so in his own estimation, (p. 26)

Rangnath looked at him [Ruppan] closely: dhoti-end resting on shoulder, freshly-chewed pan, several litres of oil

in his hair - he looked promising in the hoodlum stakes by any standard, (p. 35)

People called him Langar. A Kabir-panthi tilak on his forehead, a necklace of tulsī seeds around his neck, a bearded face weathered by the extremes of climate, lean-and-thin body dressed in a jacket. One leg had been amputated near the knee, the loss made good by a wooden stick. On his face the expression of those Christian saints of yesteryear who would daily scourge themselves with a hundred lashes, (pp. 39-40)

A cycle-rickshaw was travelling from the town towards the village. The rickshaw-wallah was a lean-and-thin young man in coloured vest, shorts, long hair: his sweat-swathed face was a cartoon - not a photograph - of anguish, (p. 48)

Many an episode is introduced in this way. Elsewhere, a more selfconsciously innovative and allusive style starts a new direction in the narrative. The type of the lethargic bureaucrat is well caught in the following description of the police inspector - a decent enough man, but hardly one of the more dynamic members of the force - "It must once have been some medieval throne, now worn down into an armchair: Darogaji was *both sitting on it and lying on it*" (p. 14). Unsurprisingly in as iconoclastic an author as Shukla, there is also plenty of scope for laconic self-mockery:

Up on the open rooftop there, was a corrugated iron lean-to; under the lean-to was Rangnath, under Rangnath was the charpoy. Next I'll tell you what the weather was like, (p. 106)

So begins chapter eleven, in a manner vaguely reminiscent of J. D. Salinger²² (whose style haunts this book, albeit coincidentally). A similar technique, using the same studied naivety in its adverbial references, is used at the end of a description of Badri; but here it has an unexpected lyrical touch, in marked contrast to the usually wry style -

On his clean-shaven head was the gleam of mustard-oil, and above - high, high above - the blue sky. (p. 259)

More frequently, a robust comedy is preferred, particularly in descriptions of the earthier aspects of Shivpalganj characters. Despite the "thumbnail sketch" tendency, Shukla does not hesitate to make his realism full-fledged and palpably graphic when it suits his ironic tone, especially if the description involves ribaldry, rotundity, or vulgarity:

Despite the chill in the air, the sanitary inspector's forehead shone with sweat. He was wearing shorts, shirt, and a jacket open at the neck. The shorts were tightly secured with a belt, to stop them slipping off the protruding belly, whose area was consequently divided above and below into two portions of approximately equal

dimension (p. 134)

Two wrestlers strolled nonchalantly out of the akhara. One was Badri: the other, Chhote. Both had shaven heads, covered with a plaster of dust and sweat. The backs of their necks were wrinkled like a rhino's; they wore the ends of their loincloths hanging down loosely at the front, like an elephant's trunk. On either side of the narrow loincloth hung the scrotum, at large in the universe, on public exhibition; but just as the indecencies of Henry Miller and D. H. Lawrence are condoned in the name of art, so too these two wrestlers were permitted to let it all hangout in the name of Indian gymnastics (p. 287)

Realism here is a weapon in the arsenal of satire, not of character portrayal. It is part of Shukla's intention to pull the rug out from under romanticism and to denude anything that smacks of the falsely artistic:

God knows where today's sentimental fiction-writers got hold of this favourite notion of the "purifying" effect of suffering. The reality of the matter is that suffering squeezes a man out, then wrings him dry, then gives him a face that makes him look completely gaga and marks it with a couple of deeply-shadowed lines. Then it leaves him there on the road to continue on his way alone in long, long strides, (p. 50)

The bitter realities of suffering and self-interest are all too easily hidden under the humbug of art. Shukla maintains that every reader of *Godan* knows how strong is the bond between a farmer and his land; but the selfish motivation beneath that bond is lost in the rhetoric of romantic novel-writing:

*These matters are not so clearly portrayed in *Godan*, nor is it apparent in the Bombay films - whether for fear of Krishan Chandar and Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, or because of the fifty-percent blindness of the zeal for a progressive attitude, or because of mere boorishness; so they have to be set out cleanly, even though it is hardly the role of the artist to promote cleanliness in his own land. (p. 248)*

References of this kind point to an awareness of the artificiality of literature, of which Shukla constantly reminds the reader. An editorial withdrawal from the narrative may be a common enough feature of the English novel, but has greater claim to originality in Hindi; it is a feature parallel to the self-consciously sophisticated uses of language register referred to earlier. While telling a story-within-a-story about three alternative gambits for winning elections, Shukla interjects; "All this happened like the stories in the *Simhasan Battisi* and *Baital Pachisi*" (p. 253) - thus the narrative commutes between reality and artifice. Descriptions of characters and

their behaviour are frequently likened to stock situations from the formulae of fiction or cinema, as in a passage which uses negative similes to describe the conclusion of a row between Vaidyaji and his increasingly rebellious son Rupan:

This was the last scene of the argument. Badri Pahalwan said sarcastically to his father, 'Did you hear what he said?'

Rupan Babu had stormed out of the room. Vaidyaji stood silently by the charpoy. He did not moan and weep like the father of a hero in the films; nor, on hearing that a commission was to investigate his alleged corrupt practices, did he make a statement saying that first of all one would have to arrive at a precise definition of what 'corruption' was; he did not laugh the contemptuous laugh of the author who, a million thanks to the Text Book Committee, reads an unfavourable notice of his new book; despite hearing such a direct challenge to his conduct, he did none of these things. He just stood there silently. He did not even do what came naturally to a man of his profession: he did not utter the words "He Ram!" p. 313)

Satire and Symbols

Village institutions, the Ganjahas, the village, the village novel - all are the butt of Shukla's satire in one way or another. The world of politics, for example, is here hardly to be accredited with the lofty

designation *rajniti*: rather it is *lidari*, *netagiri*, *gutbandi*, because the people who play these games are the members of factions and cliques, the village wide-boys, the flunkeys of strong-arm men, not the promoters of ideologies. Even (or especially) the positions of officers such as the college principal are grist for the mill of self-interest - "*that se prinsipali kiye jaiye!*" exhorts an acquaintance, untranslatably. on page 32. But the character of Rangnath, the outside observer who is so often shocked and dismayed at the goings-on of village life, is hardly set up as a viable alternative to the monstrosities of Shivpalganj. From the very opening of the book, when the truck-driver who brings him to Shivpalganj lightens his pocket in a kind of initiation to the larger-scale corruptions which are to follow, Rangnath is portrayed as naive and ineffectual; his urban/academic background and his so-called "intellectualism" is ridiculed as inadequate for any kind of useful functions in life ("like any ordinary fool, he had started research work after his MA just because he couldn't immediately find employment" - p. 59), and his education and supposed moral superiority are never actually capable of being translated into effective action. He weakly allies himself to Khanna Master's faction in the college, and strikes up a friendship of sorts with his own cousin Rupan; but everything is done in the abstract, he avoids actual confrontations

and keeps himself aloof from real situations; and ultimately he follows the exhortations of an inner voice which tells him:

Flee to that world where so many intellectuals dwell with eyes closed: the world of hotels and clubs, bars and coffee-houses, the modernistic edifices of Chandigarh, Bhopal and Bangalore, the hill stations with their endless seminars; - those spanking new research institutes built with foreign aid, in which Indian genius is being fashioned - the haze of cigar-smoke, glossy-covered books, the universities blinded by their incorrect but obligatory English; find yourself a niche, and sit tight, (p. 404)

Rangnath's weakness is recognized by at least some of the Ganjahas. Rupan is offended by his assumption of superiority to the villagers, and accuses him of being judgemental, like an England-returned, regarding everyone else as a "little-black-man-crapping-on-the-ground" (p. 344); Badri is unimpressed by his veneer of urban sophistication, and when advocating the use of main force against Khanna's college faction he assures Vaidyaji "Why worry about Rangnath making a fuss? He's from the city, he's like pigshit -useless for wall-plaster, useless for burning" (p. 347). On the last page of the novel, when Rangnath rebuffs Principal Sahib's offer of the lecturership from which Khanna Master has been forced to resign, the Principal says (not without reason), "Babu

Rangnath, your thoughts are on a very lofty plane. But all in all it seems that you're a fool".

From the point of view of narrative technique Rangnath is, of course, the necessary link with a wider reality: "Just as Indian people glimpse the state of affairs in the outside world through the window of the English language, so Sanichar began to have a glimpse of Delhi through the window of Rangnath" (p. 83). But this link serves merely to underline the parochialness of Shivpalganj, it has no positive connotation. Rangnath's would-be intellectualism is second-hand and lacklustre, and even the library resources of his own research area, Indology, subjugate him to a world ludicrously removed from his own realities:

To his left lay Marshall, to his right Cunningham. Winternitz was right under his nose: Keith behind him, nestling against his trousers. Smith had been thrown down towards the end of the bed, where Rhys Davis was also to be glimpsed, higgledy-piggledy. Percy Brown was hidden by the pillow. Amidst this thronging crowd lay Kashiprasad Jaiswal, face-down in a fold of the bedding; and Bhandarkar peeped timorously out from under the sheets, (p. 107)

When Rangnath does make judgements about village practices he is invariably challenged, and quickly backpedals - as for example on a visit to a local fair,

when on the basis of his archaeological expertise he identifies the image in a *devi* shrine as being the secular statue of a male soldier:

The temple priest left off his puja and collections and began hurling abuse at Rangnath for all he was worth. His mouth was a small one, but mighty insults came pouring out of it, spilling over each other in total disarray; for a little while the temple was awash with invective as the worshippers added an abusive chorus to the words of their priest.

A little further on Rangnath said, "It was all my fault. I shouldn't have said anything", (p. 145)

Satire tars everyone with the same brush, its purpose not being to discriminate between sense and folly but rather to demonstrate that folly is universal; and as age-old and world-wide tradition has shown, the surest way to demonstrate the commonality of life is by reference to the scatological. Descriptions of defecation and urination litter the novel like faeces on a Shivpalganj roadside; shitting and pissing (monosyllabic verb-stems such as *hag-* and *mut-* demand parallel renderings in English tadbhavas) go beyond mere physiological functions and join the rather limited range of recreational activities offered in traditional village life - of Nita Kumar's recent analysis of the role of ablutions (*nipatna-nahana*) in contemporary Banarasi lifestyle.²⁵ Lee Siegel

discusses Indian scatological humour as being particularly popular when it concerns Brahmins (with names like "Tatachari", of course).²⁴ Shukla too revels in the comic and satirical aspects of this, the most literally fundamental of all human activities, and finds the Indian setting particularly appropriate for its detailed description: the true definition of an Indian is someone who can search out a *pan* anywhere and who can find a place to piss wherever he may be" (p. 302). Whether one agrees with critics such as R. D. Mishra" that Shukla takes these things to excess is a matter for personal taste, but certainly the author's near-obsession with defecation and all its works ("fart for fart's sake", as one might have said if Walter Redfurn had not said it first²⁶) is a striking aspect of the novel's satire, and one which incidentally puts it at the furthest possible remove from the apparently bowel-less villagers who populate the novels of Premchand's generation.

Where a specific and clearly defined political implication is carried, the satire can tend to become overburdened; to change metaphors, Shukla's satire sometimes seems too blunt an instrument to make clean incisions into the structure of society. While Shukla usually manages to maintain a skilful balance between the narrative and ironic elements of his storytelling, there are some self-indulgent passages where the relentlessly wry style

of his observations begins to pall, as in the following extended example:

“Chamarhi” was the name of a mohalla of the village where the chamars lived “Chamar” is the name of a caste considered to be untouchable. An untouchable is a biped whom people used not to touch in the days before the constitution came into force. The constitution is a poetic work whose seventeenth article eradicates the distinction of untouchability; but because in our country people live not by poetry but by religion, and because untouchability is a religion in our country, the untouchables had separate mohallas in Shivpalganj, as in other villages.

After the constitution came into being an excellent work was done in the area separating Chamarhi from the rest of the village: a stone platform, called the “Gandhi Platform”, was built there. Gandhi, as some people recall even today, was born in India; and when his principles were consigned to the sacred waters of the Ganges along with his ashes, it was resolved that from now on all constructions built in his memory would be solid-built; and it was in the grip of this enthusiasm that the platform was erected in Shivpalganj. The platform was very useful for taking the sun on a winter’s day, a facility mostly exploited by the dogs; and since no bathroom facilities had been installed for them, they would urinate in the corner while sunning themselves, and human

beings soon began to follow suit in the shelter that the platform provided, (pp. 124-4)

It would probably be far-fetched to suggest, by way of apology for such style, that a concentration on a single *rasa* finds its justification in traditional aesthetic theory. The rather monolithic irony and literalness of reference in this passage is at odds with the evident truth that “all humour, and much intelligence, entails an ability to think on two planes at once”.²⁷ Shukla’s subtler ironies, those casually interwoven with the narrative, contrast favourably with contrived set-ups of this kind. Particularly effective are the allusions to the emptiness of rhetorical posturing which is so much part and parcel of the political scene. Rangnath, for example, in nominal deference to Vinoba Bhave’s land-donation movement, wears a “*bhudani kurta*” - the cultural equivalent of the ‘Solidarity’ lapel badge considered *de rigueur* for the designer socialist of 1980s UK; later on, the allusion is recycled to equally apposite effect in “a *bhudani namaskar*. Everywhere the characters in the novel lay great store by the names of things, in the vain hope that realities may be invoked through the pronouncing of their labels in a kind of profanely re-interpreted *nam-seva*. A prominent Shivpalganj *thakur*, Durbin Singh, had been given this name (*durbin*, telescope) by his parents “in the hope that their boy

would do everything in a scientific manner” (p. 63); and of course official titles such as “M.L.A.”, locally pronounced *e-me-le*, have an almost talismanic significance. The following of ideas in name only is a speciality of the likes of Vaidyaji, who temporarily convinces himself of the social benefits of inter-caste marriage when he sees an advantage in wedding his son Badri to the Vaishya girl Bela.

Critics and Critiques

One of the many themes in the books is, without doubt, the impossibility of real change and the sterility of the institutions which seek to impose it. Apparent social or economic development always turns out to be the substitution of one evil by another, just as the village boys learn to gamble with playing-cards instead of cowrie shells, and piles displaces diarrhoea as the most widespread medical complaint in the locality. The prominence of such themes leads the critics of *Rag Durbari* to maintain that the novel concerns itself primarily with declining standards and a loss of innocence. The following judgements seem representative of the critics’ views (though only a cursory survey has been possible here): “the author has bluntly described how the modern corrupt politics has destroyed the simple life of the villages and has created strange patterns of belief amongst the villagers”,²⁸ “Shukla expresses his revolt against the capitalistic and feudalistic structure of society and shows

an inclination both towards traditional and those progressive values which can bring about a rational transformation in the society”;²⁹ “Shukla gave an impressive representation of an Indian village after the breakdown of the old order the crude victory of machiavellism over morals and tradition”;³⁰ a curse which has already plagued the cities is encroaching on the villages, “and that curse is crisis of character... but because of an excess of comic satire the writer’s basic point of view appears obscured [sic]”;³¹ “one can at least hope that after reading the novel some Rangnaths, some Gayadins and some Langars may be aroused and be inspired to seek the light”.³² Such attitudes put quite an unjustifiable pressure on the novel to exist as propaganda for social reform, or at least as a vehicle for some set doctrinal purpose; the critics appear to approach the book with a closed agenda of their own invention, or else borrowed from the idealistic pre-Independence days which saw the passing of Progressive Writers’ Association resolutions about the social “usefulness” of literature. The possibilities of diversity which are allowed to western novelists as a matter of course seem to be denied the Hindi novelist who makes a modest departure from conventional patterns. Shukla himself explains his attitude towards writing the novel by saying that “while writing *Rag Darbdn* I had two options before me; either I could write it with the attitude of an ‘angry young man’, which

I was not, or I could write it as a literate rustic accustomed to the ways of Sanichar, Ruppen Babu, Principal Sahib, Vaidyaji and the others, which I was".³³

Halfway through *Rag Darbari*, Shukla describes Sanichar having his hair cut by a village barber: *The shop was both nowhere and everywhere: there was a tree at the side of the dusty village track and under it sat the barber with a piece of sacking spread out. A brick was set on the ground in front of him. On the brick, Sanichar was neither sitting nor standing - just was. (p. 223)*

Few critics³⁴ seem prepared to allow *Rag Darbari* simply to be, to exist as satire first and foremost; they are reluctant to concede that it is neither particularly this way nor that way inclined, but just is. It would clearly be unrealistic to suggest that satire is remote from political and social commentary; but it does have a *raison d'être* of its own, and to impose a monovalent reading of Shukla's satire as functionally orientated robs it of much of its point. Indeed it seems a moot point whether satire has to be "about" anything at all.

Alongside the obviously pertinent commentary on village life is an equally pertinent reflection on human life generally: we are all defecators, regardless of our politics. With political concerns so high on their agenda, the critics fail to give Shukla the praise he deserves for the

originality of his creation.³⁵ The mood of disenchantment and helplessness which followed 1947 is so often portrayed by Hindi writers in terms of a breakdown in communications, accompanied by the hackneyed spectre of angst-ridden alienation, that it is a delight to find an author tacking against the wind and harnessing the same energies to take him in a completely different direction: it is as though some medieval poet had forsworn the conventional aesthetic code and adopted scurrility as a new *sthayi bhava*.

Rag Darbari opens with Rangnath's arrival in Shivpalganj, looking for rural tranquility and finding a snake-pit of depravity and subterfuge. The novel depicts the immutability of human behaviour in the daily struggle for survival: the more things change, the more they stay the same. As if determined to leave the reader with a final reminder that the complexities and ambiguities of life are not to be contained by any simplistic taxonomy, Shukla closes with an image of cultural plurality in which nothing is resolved:

Rangnath's conversation with Principal Sahib ground to a halt. The monkey-man, ignoring Principal Sahib's vehement advice to go to hell, broke into song at the top of his voice, his drum beating out a new rhythm. A little way off, some dogs began barking, with tails wagging and backs arched; a circle of children gathered round to watch. The two monkeys

sat solemn-faced and ponderous in front of the monkey-man; and it seemed that when they began to dance it would be nothing less than Bharat Natyam that they would perform.

NOTES

1. From an article entitled 'Gardish ke din' in *Sarika*, August 1975; quoted in Sarju Prasad Mishra, *Hindi ke sat upanyas*, Kolhapur Ajab Pustakalaya, 1977, p. 107
2. *Ibid.*
3. Shrilal Shukla, *Ragdarbari*, New Delhi: Rajkamal Paperbacks, 1985, p. 7 All page references are to this edition.
4. The same concern is reflected in the priorities of another practitioner in the novel, a *babaji* who offers treatment for such complaints as wet dreams, premature ejaculation and impotence (p. 253).
5. The title is superbly apposite; its irony is deepened by the idiomatic senses of raga in expressions such as *rag gana*, *rag alapna*, "to sing one's own tune, blow one's own trumpet", so wholly applicable to Vaidyaji. The contrast between the classical connotation of the raga name and the provinciality of Vaidyaji's intrigues is also pointed up by the title - it is almost as though unscrupulous dealings in some parish council were to be set to the music of 'The arrival of the Queen of Sheba'.
6. A passage discussing the use of derogatory titles as personal names cites the following further examples: *Sure*, for a blind man; *Tutte*, for a man with ears damaged in wrestling bouts; *Shukracharya*, for a one-eyed man; *Bahre Baba*, for an old man; *Chattoprasad*, for a man whose face is scarred by smallpox; and *Chhagur Ram*, for a man with six fingers, (p. 316)
7. Of all the colourful abuse in the novel, it is that stock favourite *sala* (lit. "brother-in-law", implying "I've slept with your sister, you're nothing and neither is your family") which is the least translatable. Used adjectivally, "bloody" is almost certainly too lily-livered a rendering; as a noun, it sometimes has the vituperativeness of "bastard", to which must be added something of the vulgarity of the transatlantic "mother-f***er" and, at the same time, the possibility of the more affectionately derogatory connotations of "old bugger". An additional sibilant adds vitriol: 'स्साले! गंजाहपन झाड़ रहे हो!' (P. 320)
8. Occassionally mixed with English, as in जौनु हुकुम है, तौनु कैरी आउट करौ। समझ्यो कि नार्ही? (P. 27)
9. Peter Gaeffke, *Hindi Literature in the Twentieth Century*. Wiesbaden. Otto

- Harrassowitz, 1978, p. 70.
10. The characteristics of *anchalik* fiction are discussed in Indu Prakash Pandey, *Regionalism in Hindi Novels*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974; for Renu's reservations about use of the term *anchalik* see his interview in Lothar I. utze, *Hindi Writing in Post-Colonial India: a Study in the Aesthetics of Literary Production*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1985, p. 127.
 11. Sarju Prasad Mishra, *op. cit.* p. 116.
 12. Viveki Rai, *Svatanttryottar Hindi katha sahitya aur gram-jiwan*, Allahabad: Lokbharti Prakashan, 1974, p. 150
 13. Premchand. *Godan*, 10th ed. Banaras: Saraswati Press, 1949, p. 6.
 14. Phanihwarnath 'Renu', *Maila Anchal*, New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 1982.
 15. लिखे देख अँगरेजी अच्छर भागे मलेरिया के मच्छर।
 16. Equivalent to that standard English graffito, the addition of a medial "I" to a signboard reading "TO LET"
 17. जवाब में अवधी की कहावत, 'जइस पसु तइस बँधना'.
 18. Shukla's own language has its fair share of calques and the like, some of them no doubt tongue-in-cheek with self-irony, *klas lena* (p. 27), *prem me girna* (p. 259) *itihās apne ap ko dohrayega* (p. 1 39), *naye khun ko protsahit karna* (p. 37), *kauve udnevali lakir ko pakarna* (p. 333), *chithra* ("rag", i.e. cheap newspaper; p. 336).
 19. There is an echo here of Premchand's Sanskrit-spouting brahmin, the self-important Pandit Moteram.
 20. कफ नै है सफ ला?...मर्फ गफ ये सफ लि गर्फेरी चर्फानेवाले.
 21. नवकंज लोचन कंजमुख करकंज पदकंजारुणम् [Vinaypatrika 45]
 22. "If you really want to hear about it. the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it. "Opening sentence of *The Catcher in the Rye*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958, p. 5
 23. Nita Kumar, *The Artisans of Banaras. Popular Identity and Culture, 1880-1986*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988
 24. Lee Siegel, *Laughing Matters: Comic Tradition in India*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, chapter 7.
 25. Rama Darasha Mishra [sic], *Modern Hindi Fiction*. Delhi: Bansal, 1983, p. 251
 26. Walter Redfurn, *Puns*, Oxford: Basil

- Blackwell, 1984, p. 173.
27. Walter Redfurn, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
28. Rama Darasha Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 251.
29. Sulochana Rangeya Raghava, *Sociology of Indian Literature a Sociological Study of Hindi Novels*, Jaipur: Rawat Prakashan, 1987, p.34.
30. Peter Gaeffke, *loc. cit.*
31. Laksmisagar Varshney, *Dwitiya mahayuddhottar Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas*, Delhi: Rajpal, 1973. p. 125
32. Sarju Prasad Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
33. *Ibid*, p. 119.
34. Except Ishvardayal Gupta, 'Vyangya rag ka vilambit alap, in Sundarlal Kathuriya *Adhunik Sahitya: vividh paridrishya*, Delhi: Vani Prakashan, 1973, pp 196-201, and Sarju Prasad Mishra, *op. cit.*
- 35 The criterion of "originality" is often dismissed as inappropriate in the appreciation of Indian literature: yet most works of abiding significance do seem to possess it willy-nilly The element of tradition (for which read "lack of originality") always seems more evident in the art of another culture than in one's own.

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PREMCHAND'S VIEWS ON HINDU MUSLIM UNITY

Madan Gopal

PREMCHAND had a passion for Hindu-Muslim unity, and was, therefore, critical of the fanatically inclined, be they the Muslim mullahs or Brahmin priests. It was from this angle that he viewed the policies pursued by the political parties.

Because of his advocacy of Hindu-Muslim unity, Premchand was bitterly critical of the movement for conversion from one religion to the other. "I strongly disagree with this movement," he wrote to Nigam, "and even though I have practically given up writing anything in Urdu, I am writing a short article against this movement for *Zamana*. It'll reach you in three or four days. The Arya Samajists will raise a hue and cry. I am sure, nevertheless, that you'd give it some space in *Zamana*."

The article, entitled "Malkana Rajput Mussalmanon ki Shuddhi," was published in *Zamana* of May 1923. Herein Premchand took up cudgels on behalf of the Muslims who deprecated the *shuddhi* movement launched by the Bharatiya Hindu Shuddhi Sabha, formed by several sections of the Hindu society, including the Sanatanists, the Arya Samajists, the Jains and the Sikhs. While Premchand agreed that the *shuddhi* movement had been originally started by the Muslims, the launching of the *shuddhi* movement by all sections of Hindu opinion to him signified a grave danger to the Muslims. They had not been afraid of the movement carried on by the Arya Samajists,

he said, but apprehended danger in the combined, opposition by all sections of the Hindus. There were many among the Muslims, said Premchand, who were leaving the Congress fold because, according to their thinking, Congress *raj* would now be synonymous with Hindu *raj*. This trend, Premchand thought, would, therefore, weaken the movement for swaraj. This being so, the movement which gave spiritual satisfaction to a few individuals, but hurt a large section of the people, should be called off. The Hindus, he added, were better educated, were politically more conscious, and were greater patriots. Propagation by them of the shuddhi movement, when they had earlier opposed the movement launched by Muslims, was regrettable. Their policy in effect amounted to one of “retaliation.” While the conversion movements during the Moghul rule were motivated by religious objectives, this shuddhi movement was basically political in character. It was indeed sad, he maintained, that people viewed problems from the communal angle rather than from the national angle: “Hindus thought of themselves as Hindus first and Indians next.”

One of the aims of the movement was to ensure an increase in the Hindu population and a consequent reduction in the number of Muslims. “But numbers never prove anything. Wasn’t England with a smaller population ruling the millions

of India?” All that it might lead to was a few more seats for the Hindus in the legislative councils. This gain was hardly worth endangering Hindu-Muslim unity and the prospects of swaraj. Hindu Muslim unity was the foundation of the movement for swaraj. It was a sad thing that the obsession of a few misguided religious bigots was posing a great danger to that foundation. “While I had full confidence in the wisdom of Hindus and was certain that no harm could come from them to Hindu-Muslim unity,” the “first blow has been struck by the Hindus themselves.”

Premchand posed a few questions to the advocates of shuddhi, e.g. why didn’t they win over these sections of the Hindu society, the untouchables, who were being gradually converted to Christianity, and thus strengthen themselves? The contention of the advocates of shuddhi that the Malkana Rajput Muslims (from Tonk) had the same traditions, bore Hindu names, observed the same customs, worshipped the same deities, called Brahmin priests for the ceremonies, and did everything that the Malkana Rajput Hindus did—except burying their dead—meant nothing; what was more important was the entry in the old records. In conclusion, Premchand emphasised that Hindus’ sense of tolerance was proverbial. “Now is the time for showing such tolerance; otherwise, it would be too late.”

While Muslim readers praised the “lib-

eral mindedness” of Premchand, there was criticism from the Arya Samajists. One of them, Sriram, M.A., in a rejoinder in the journal’s issue of June 1923, wrote that Premchand who had been so lavish in regard to tendering advice to the Hindus had said nothing to the Muslims who were determined that Hindu-Muslim unity or no unity, foreign rule or swaraj, they could not call off their shuddhi movement; that he had not raised his voice against the movement for conversion to Christianity; that he and the Congress were silent in regard to the Buddhist mission’s activities in Malabar Is it only the poor Hindus whose activities arouse his ire?”

Opposition to the movement from among the Hindu according to the rejoinder came only from those people who were “obsessed” by political objectives, who had never bothered about the future of the Hindus and who as Hindus never had done anything for the Hindu. Referring to the plea of danger to Hindu-Muslim unity and the adverse effects of shuddhi on the congress movement, the writer said; “Does work for the congress imply any special obligation and favours to the Hindus? And does the Congress work for swaraj mean that it is done to make the Hindus feel grateful? If that is not so, why this threat?”

In conclusion, he pointed out that the Hindus engaged in political work should recognise that the weakness of the Hindus

would weaken the country. “So long as the Hindus are weak, and the Muslims know that the Hindus are weak, Hindu-Muslim unity is meaningless.”

Premchand was a great admirer of the two brothers, Mohammed Ali and Shaukat Ali. (The former was the editor of *Hamdard* for which Premchand wrote, and there seems to have been regular correspondence between the two) “I consider the transformation in the idea of the Ali brothers,” he wrote to Nigam, “to be genuine. Only such conversion, shuddhi, can be lasting.” The reference presumably was to the presidential address to the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Cacinada a fortnight earlier.

When, in the later days of the non-cooperation movement, the Swarajya group came into being and Nigam asked him which party he supported, Premchand wrote back: “I favour neither. This is because neither of the parties is doing any practical work. I am a member of the party to be, that is, a party which would undertake political education of the masses. The manifesto issued by the Khilafat party has my wholehearted support. The surprise, however, is that it has been issued by one party only. Both the parties, I think, should have agreed to it.” Premchand maintained that while the eminent leaders were in prison, the reactionaries, with the support of the British rulers, had strengthened themselves. Those who had been left be-

hind in the non-cooperation movement utilised this opportunity to rehabilitate themselves, through communal propaganda. The main blame lay on the shoulders of the candidates for the elections to councils.

Premchand's ideas, according to Nigam, corresponded to those of C. R. Das who too blamed the Hindus for rigidity in approach to the shuddhi movement and Hindu-Muslim unity.

Premchand was all praise for the sacrifices of and the ideas of swaraj as propagated by the Ali brothers on their release from prison. He compared their thoughts to those of Rama and Lakshmana, the highest praise that a Hindu could pay to the Muslim leaders.

In an article entitled "Qahat-ur-Rijjal" (or a famine of wise men), in *Zamana* of February 1924, Premchand wrote that in the light of the Muslim approach to the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity, the Hindu attitude was not above board. He felt sorry that the Hindus had not understood nor cared to understand the implications of the Khilafat movement. In fact, they had looked upon it with suspicion, and not from a wider angle like that of Gandhiji. The Maulana, he said, had equated swaraj with Hindu-Muslim unity and had given his all for the cause. "The attitude of the Hindus shows that the nation has gone bankrupt. If the Hindus had even one Kitchlew, or Mohammed Ali, or Shaukat Ali, the movement of the

Hindu *Sangathan* or shuddhi would not have led to such heat," and would have resulted in the reduction of incidents that had taken place under their impact.

"It is, indeed, sad that even though the Congress as an organisation has not had anything to do with these movements, its individual members have left no stone unturned for the shuddhi movement. Not one of the top leaders of the Congress has openly raised his voice against these movements. Even leaders like Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Bhagwandas and Sri Prakasa who, one hoped, had the moral conviction to come out with their *views* openly, expressed themselves one day against the movement, and contradicted their statements the next day."

Premchand could boast of his prophecy. In a letter dated September 30, 1924, he told Nigam; "The Hindu-Muslim riots are continuing. I had prophesied it, and what I had said is coming true, every word of it. The Hindu Sabha may create obstacles in reaching an agreement at Delhi. In Lucknow the provocative action was that of the Hindus; they committed excesses, but having done so, they disappeared from the scene". (Premchand at this time was working in Lucknow.)

What pained Premchand deeply was an attempt to divide the nation on communal lines. He was, therefore, happy whenever he saw attempts being made to bring the different sections of the Indian

people together. With the idea of making the Islamic history and culture better understood by the Hindus, he himself wrote a drama. *Karbala*.

The drama, published by the Ganga Pustak Mala of Lucknow in November 1924, is built round the cruel death of prophet Mohammed's son-in-law Hussain, his relatives and friends at the battlefield of Karbala. That Premchand was deeply moved by the event is clear from the fact that in August 1922 he wrote to Nigam to send him a copy of the collection of elegies on the martyrdom of Imam Hussain at Karbala, which he had seen with Khwaja Saheb, the Manager of Zamana, and also published a longish essay on Karbala in the November 1923 issue of Madhuri at Lucknow.

Volumes had been written on the subject of the battle of Karbala by eminent Muslim writers, but there appeared to have been very little by Hindu writers. The exacerbated differences between the Hindus and Muslims, in fact, made it difficult for the Hindus to have an idea of the principal characters of Muslim history. It was for Premchand to cut a new ground in order to introduce the Hindus to the great men of Muslim history. For, to him, greatness was the important thing, the religion to which a person belonged was not.

In fact, the drama includes references to the presence of Hindu soldiers in the army of Hussain whose martyrdom creates

the impact of tragedy on the reader. The language of this work, incidentally, is more Persianised.

Divided into five acts and further subdivided into forty-three scenes, the drama is built round the tragedy perpetrated at the battlefield of Karbala and is meant for being read and not staged.

While Hussain stands for the higher ideals of sacrifice and truth, Yezid is the very picture of lust for power and wealth. Hussain, however, is superhumanly idealistic. The drama has no female character worth the name, possibly because the inclusion of women in a drama of religious importance is disfavoured by the Muslims.

Mention should also be made of some of the stories woven round the themes such as the life of the Prophet and glimpses of the Muslim characters in Indian history.

Nyaya purports to be a chapter from the Prophet's life. His son-in-law, we are told, has not yet joined his new fold. When the Prophet's difficulties force him to undertake *hijrat*, the son-in-law is captured during a skirmish. He agrees to his wife being held as a hostage and is released. Back to his trade and his caravans, he finds that once his caravan is caught and he is to be tried. The Prophet who is trying everyone else, leaves the chair; for, he says, justice must not err and he should be the last person to disobey

the laws prescribed by himself in favour of some one who is near to him. The son-in-law is so touched at the impartiality of justice that he joins the fold of his father-in-law, the Prophet.

Rajyabhakta recaptures the times of the nawabs of Lucknow just at the beginning of the nineteenth century when British intrigues at the court had taken a concrete shape. A court intrigue against Raja Bakhtavar Singh who was a loyal servant of the nawab and the country, leads to his house arrest. Afterwards, the British soldiers and the local deserters create chaos and rob the people. A stage comes when the life of the nawab himself is in danger from the British soldiers and their local stooges. Just at that time comes Bakhtavar Singh who risks his own life to pull the nawab out of the quagmire. The nawab now knows who is loyal to him and to the kingdom, and who is a deserter. Bakhtavar Singh regains his position of trust. The British Resident lets down the five accomplices and tells the nawab that he has complete authority to punish them, but they are not seen anywhere.

Pareeksha portrays Nadir Shah's contempt for the depravity of the Moghuls which had made them and their princesses and begums lose all sense of shame and honour. Ordered to present themselves and to dance before Nadir Shah, the princesses and begums come and stand

mutely. To test their courage, Nadir Shah feigns sleep, but none dares pick up the sword (that he has kept by his side) and thrust the steel into him. He is disappointed: "As there is not one among you, the descendants of Timur, who could stand up to protect her honour, this kingdom is doomed and its days are numbered."

Vajrapat portrays the massacre of Delhi at the hands of Nadir Shah's soldiers, and shows how the conqueror manages to get the precious, world-famous diamond, the Mughal-i-Azam (Kohinoor). The gem brings bad luck to his son, for, no sooner does he put it in his tiara at the court, than he is murdered before his father's very eyes. Nadir Shah ascribes bad luck to the diamond. A moving event is the effect on the conqueror of Delhi of a verse saying that you have killed so many that you must bring the dead back to life in order to carry on your mission of killing.

Kshama is the story of the times of the Arab conquest of Spain. A Christian leader is shown to give the invaders a stiff fight. Besieged, he quietly slips out of the fort. There is a prize on his head. Involved in a duel, he kills the only son of an Arab chief. Being chased from pillar to post, the Christian leader is forced to take shelter in the house of an old man who is none other than the father of the young man he has murdered. The old man, not knowing the identity of the fugitive, agrees to give him shelter. Told

of the identity, he stands by his word, saves him from the wrath of those out to kill him, and gives him his own camel to enable him to escape. The Christian is impressed by the moral values of Islam which could make people behave in such a noble manner.

Laila's locale is Persia where there is a conflict between the king's love for the pied-piper type Laila and the conservative elements' insistence that the king send her away, even though in actual fact it is Laila who is responsible for several liberal measures that help the subjects of the king.

Fatiha which appeared a few years later, is a story wherein a tribal chief from the North-Western Frontier Province loses his infant son who is admitted into the orphanage and subsequently when he grows up, joins the army. He now fights against his own people, the tribals. He distinguishes himself and is the favourite of his Hindu boss, a colonel. Once he kills a chief and is chased. While talking to his boss, he sees an Afridi woman. This woman is none other than the chief's daughter who had once saved the life of the colonel taken prisoner and held to ransom. To win her sympathy he tells her a lie that his wife was dead. The woman arranges his release. A few years later she leaves her parents and goes to the man to find that his wife is still alive. As the wife stands between her and him,

she stabs her and chases the man who had let her down-without killing him, for she still loves him. A little later, the orphanage-bred soldier, Asad Khan and she have a scuffle. Her eyes fall on a snake tattoo mark on his hand. She too had one. He is her lost brother, and she tells him that he had killed *his* own father. The story is hard to believe, but the available evidence shows that they are brother and sister. They search out the body of their father and recite *fatiha*, the requiem.

Shatranj ke Khiladi (or *Shatranj ki Baazi*) is a pen picture of decadent Lucknow in the last years of Wajid Ali Shah. It portrays the life of various sections of the urban community, all steeped in debauchery or useless pursuits like cock-fighting, kite flying etc. at a time when the British were making inroads into the kingdoms of Oudh and Lucknow. The principal characters are two nobles who devote all their time to playing chess. The game is in fact an obsession to them. They play to the exclusion, of everything else. Indeed, their indifference to other things, including their families or the duties to the State, is startling. So, in fact, is their sense of value even though they can indulge in a duel in defence of the preservation of the name of the ancestors! While the British forces enter Lucknow and make Wajid Ali Shah a prisoner, the two nobles are still engaged in the game of chess!

Another story in a lighter vein is *Vinod*. It depicts how some students at college make fun of a simpleton. He falls a *victim* to a ruse played by them through letters supposedly sent by an Anglo-Indian girl who asks him to change his ways, his dress and his habits, and how he obliges her and even gives a farewell dinner to all of them, to be told, how he has been fooled.

Premchand used the art of caricature to make fun of the vested interests who stood in the way of hindu-Muslim unity. He exposed the hypocrisy of the so-called “leaders of religion” –the Brahmin priests and the Muslim *mullahs*.

Satyagraha, which echoes the non-violent struggle for freedom, caricatures the Brahmin priests of Banaras. When the city decides to observe *hartal* on the visit of the viceroy, the ‘reactionaries’ stage a counter-satyagraha through a Brahmin priest who undertakes fast unto death if the city-dwellers carry out the satyagraha. The Brahmin is a glutton. He gorges enormous amount of food as a precaution against hunger. But the idea of sweets is tempting. He feels sorry for the self-inflicted fast and devises stratagems to waylay a sweetmeat-seller, and eats up his sweets. When the Congress secretary (who, incidentally, bribes the policeman posted by the district authorities) takes sweets which look and smell tempting, the Brahmin yields, and breaks his fast.

“Why should I kill myself when others do not bother about me?”

The central character of this story, Moteyram, whose prototype we first met in *Jalva-i-Isar* (1912), became the precursor of several caricatures later.

Mandir aur Masjid is woven round the characters of a Muslim zamindar, Choudhury Itarat Ali, and his extremely loyal Rajput *chaprasi*, Bhajan Singh. Itarat Ali holds in equal respect both Hinduism and its temples and Islam and its mosques. Itarat Ali is what a good Hindu or a good Muslim ought to be. Because of his liberality towards his Hindu subjects, the fanatical Muslims dislike him. They plan to stage a showdown. Janmashtami day is seized by them to attack a Hindu temple. Bhajan Singh who is deputed by Itarat Ali to go to the scene of the incident is furious at what he sees and, strong as he is, he beats up many of the Muslims who had entered the temple. Among those killed is the son-in-law and heir-apparent of Itarat Ali. Bhajan Singh is remorseful and wishes to kill himself. But Itarat Ali is a man of strong character; he saves him and is not sorry that his son-in-law who had defiled the Hindu abode of God, has been rightly punished. He goes out of his way to hide Bhajan Singh from the arm of law, and, when the latter surrenders himself for the sake of safety of Itarat Ali, he ‘defends Bhajan Singh much to the chagrin of the Muslim fanatics.

When acquitted, Bhajan Singh is made a hero by the Hindu fanatics who have been planning to take revenge for the earlier affront. On the following Janmashtami day, it is the turn of the Hindu fanatics, with Bhajan Singh as their head, to precipitate trouble by singing in front of the mosque and then entering the mosque and beating up the Muslims. Itarat Ali, who had done all to save Bhajan Singh and had pardoned his crime of murdering his son-in-law who had defiled the

temple, is deeply pained at the defiling of the mosque. He questions the propriety of this act and wishes to kill Bhajan Singh who sees his own mistake. Bhajan Singh is ready and willing to be sacrificed. "You saved my head, master, it belongs to you; I am merely its custodian. You are merciful and cannot behead me. And if you do so here, there would be a furore Send someone tomorrow morning to my house to take it. Who can guess as to who killed me at my own house? Pardon my failings."

Madan Gopal devoted his life to a study of Premchand's contribution to literature and society. He compared Premchand to Gorky and Tolstoy. His literary biography of Premchand from where this extract is taken was considered a major work of note. Another book by this author 'My Life and Times' has been published by Roli Books in 2006.

NAGARJUN'S 'BALCHANMA' : A SOCIOLOGY OF LITERATURE PERSPECTIVE

Subhash Sharma

Nagarjun's novel "Balchanma" was first published in 1952, though it was written a few years before that and the period of plot relates to 1930's in pre-independence India. This novel is a short one with only 172 pages and is divided into eight parts. It starts in 'I' style: "At the age of fourteen, my father died. My family had grandmother, mother and one sister. We had a thatched roof house – 9x7 'hands' (one and half feet is equal to one hand). It had a small courtyard. On the left side we had a small agricultural field, about eight to ten 'dhurs' (one – twentieth of one viswa/Kattha)." Thus in the beginning itself one gets acquainted with the poor family background of the hero – without economic support. The novelist further tells how Balchanma's father Lalua (Lalchan) died due to the merciless beating by the landowner as he had taken away two 'Kisunbhog' mangoes from his garden! This reflects the prevalence of physical torture by feudal landowners even for small theft in the Mithila region in the then Bihar. Further the novelist is intelligently telling the sociological causes of distortion of names from Balchand to Balchan and further to Balchanma:, his father's name is also distorted from Lalchand to Lalchan to Lalua. These examples falsify the saying of William Shakespeare, 'What is in a name'. Actually economic background, social status and education do have a bearing on names.

Obviously Balchanma has no option but to work as a cowherd simply to get both ends meet. Though the landlady used to scold, beat and abuse Balchanma, he became used to it slowly with the passage of time. However, his family had also taken loan from the landord's family and was tired of paying interest over the years without clearing the principal amount. Their problem compounded because Balchanma's mother agreed to exchange two 'Katthas' of paddy land for four 'Kathas' of upper land but did not get the latter, nor their loan was adjusted. This shows depiction of double exploitation. Nagarjun has vividly depicted that the lower castes used to eat leftovers at higher castes' festivals/feasts. A dalit writer, Om Prakash Valmiki, wrote later an autobiography 'Juthan' showing how dalits used to eat leftovers at higher castes' houses on important occasions like marriage or religious feasts. As Nagarjun described this practice long back in his novel 'Balchanma,' dalit writers like Om Prakash Valimiki should give credit to Nagarjun for that because the latter had a vision, and also had 'declassed' and 'decasted' himself for such a realistic literary creation. However, unlike most of dalit writers, who are narrow-minded and hyperbolically depict the social exploitation of dalits by upper castes, Nagarjun is broad-minded and depicts the class character of exploitation too.

The landlady exploits the poor widow of Phoodan Misir (upper caste) as she dishonestly changed the weights and measures while giving food grains on loan and receiving these back.

Subsequently Nagarjun also shows how the ghosts and spirits haunt the women, especially the issueless women. While chanting 'mantras', the 'Ojhas' (sorcerers) used to close the doors and were alone with the spirited women. This shows not only superstitions but also the lowest status of issueless women as well as their sexual exploitation. But society accepted presence of 'Ojha' (male, outsider, healer) to be in close contact with the spirited woman (the patient, the victim, the insider). Thus, sociologically speaking, male prevailed over the female, outsider prevailed over the insider, and the healer prevailed over the patient. Undoubtedly this is a quite realistic depiction of the prevalent social customs, yet the novelist does not hint at questioning of such superstitions through a character. Hence due to this depiction 'naturalism' prevails over 'critical realism'.

Nagarjun has also depicted the gender dimension of social reality. For instance, the landlady was the only child of her parents but got only twenty-five bighas of land, though one thousand bighas of land was owned by their ancestral family – the sons of her uncle got bigger share

than her. Therefore, Balchanma makes a passing comment that the discrimination against girls/women is more pronounced in upper castes. Later Balchanma, as a domestic help, follows Phool Babu (landlady's cousin's son) who joins the law degree course at Patna. Phool Babu later joined Congress in struggle against the British rule. But along with others he was caught at Sadaqat Ashram while breaking the salt law. When he is released from jail, he does not keep Balchanma as a domestic help because Gandhiji had advised to be self-reliant to wash one's clothes, to cook one's food and clean the night soil. Subsequently he went back in his village to serve the old landowner but his younger brother – one day teased and seduced his (Balchanma's) younger sister Rebani who cried. At once he blamed her that she is spirited. Yet she did bite in his hand. He had told her that her mother is his kept. He had pressurised Balchanma's mother to send Rebani to him but she refused to do so. When Balchanma came to know this incident, he challenged him: "Certainly I am poor. You have huge property, family and lineage, name and fame, and I have nothing.. But I will fight with you till my last breath you will not be able to make my mother and sister your keeps." Here the novelist has rightly and overtly taken a progressive stand through showing courage of a poor boy, a lower

caste (Yadav) boy against the socially (upper caste) and economically strong man. The novelist later not only shows different customs among different communities but also depicts Balchanma's questioning of the fatalist attitude of villagers who think that the god will provide food to one and all. Balchanma also tells that the landowners do not pay the minimum wages to agricultural labourers. For instance, they get only one bundle out of thirty-two harvested bundles. However, during agricultural works like cropping there used to be singing sessions by touring singers and these songs helped those labourers to forget the drudgery of tasks. Nagarjun cites one example of intricacies of social, political and cultural aspects of human personality. One person first became a Congress volunteer, then became a touring saint with coloured dress, and finally became an activist of Yadav Jati Sabha. While his first role was national, secular and broad-based anti-colonial, his second role was withdrawal from worldly life of mainstream society, and his third role was narrow, local, and purely casteist. Thus he degenerates from national identity to a mendicant identity and finally to caste identity. It is notable that Nagarjun had a vision to see such a degeneration of national identity into caste identity politics that became a new social reality in 1990's and is kicking even today where the

so-called middle or backward castes have managed the bigger share of the political cake and have got reservation in jobs and education on the caste basis.

Then Nagarjun depicts the mobilisation of peasants and agricultural labourers for waging the struggle against the feudal Zamindar who used to collect rent and cess from farmers. There he brings in a lively character called Swamiji (Sahjanand Saraswati) of Kisan Sabha who advised the peasants and labourers in a public gathering: be united and organised, do not leave the land, and do not go to the court. Thus he does not recognise the British court. Then there started a clash because the Zamindar's cronies started shouting slogans like 'Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai', 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and 'sit down Swami Ji' but the peasants and labourers retaliated strongly. Another peasant leader, using a Hindi couplet of Rahim, advised them to snatch their rights. The peasants and labourers also raised slogans like 'land to the tillers', 'death to British Rule,' 'long live revolution' etc. It is also revealed during struggle that peasants did not get rent receipts while Zamindars dishonestly managed huge areas in their names. Thus a very pertinent sociological trend emerges: clash between oral tradition and written tradition. India has been a vast country with ancient civilisation having both oral

and written traditions. Masses have lived their daily life primarily through oral traditions, folk lores, oral histories, etc. in different ways for ages but the British colonial rule gave primacy to written documents (like rent receipts, sale and purchase deeds) over the oral practices like actual tilling and possession of lands. Thus contradiction has been cemented since independence though the fact remains that illiteracy does not mean ignorance- an illiterate peasant knows many skills and practical knowledge of quality of soil, need of irrigation (time and frequency), quality and quantity of seeds, use of fertilisers/manures and insecticides, soil preservation etc. Nagarjun, however, has shown that after the mobilisation of peasants a Hindi newspaper called 'Kranti' (revolution) was brought in the village so that more news of problems and struggles of peasants could reach them. Thus peasants' consciousness increased and in the direct conflict with the Zamindars, the local Police and court took the side of the Zamindars but the peasants succeeded in harvesting the paddy despite legal restraint. Interestingly the Congress leader Phool Babu took the side of the Zamindar and pressurised the mill owners not to purchase the sugarcane of such local peasants. During the late 1930's when there was Home Rule, mainly by the Congress leaders, the Zamindars were happy and their

cronies attacked the peasants who were watching at night their standing crops in the fields. Balchanma got badly injured in such an attack and became senseless. There ends this novel showing its tragic character.

As sociology is the study of social relations, these are vividly depicted in this novel. Famous sociologist C.Wright Mills in his book 'The Sociological Imagination' talks of three dimensions of social reality : biography, history and society . While the biography denotes an individual's life, history denotes the past, and society denotes context and collectivity . That is, a literary creation may be analysed in terms of these three aspects which are interrelated. Actually the sociological imagination distinguishes between the 'private troubles' and 'public issues', that is, only when private troubles become public issues the sociological imagination begins. In this novel Nagarjun begins with the private troubles of Balchanma's family but subsequently he links the larger social/public issues like Zamindari System and exploitation of labourers/peasants therein, or the contradictions of Congress party that serves the interests of the Zamindars, hence peasants/labourers get organised under the auspices of Kisan Sabha or prevailing derogatory customs like child marriage and polygamy or superstitions about spirits, sexual exploitation of servant's family's women etc. Nagarjun

has rightly observed that upper class/ caste women usually do not work in the fields. Similarly he has also observed through Balchanma that during the earthquake Congress leaders discriminated against the poor labourers. Through Kisan Sabha he shows a new dream of redistribution of land among the landless, education and health facilities for all, and a new class identity.

However, the sociology of literature is also concerned with the literariness (art and craft, diction, style etc). On this count this novel suffers because there is less artistry and more and more sociality. Often Nagarjun forgets that he is writing a novel, not a sociological monograph or thesis, especially when he gives minute details of names of beneficiaries of relief, actual food grains distributed, and more quantity of food grains shown on paper. Actually the truth of a literary creation differs from that of social reality itself because of creative imagination, fantasy, new ideas etc through selectivity. As Premchand had once rightly remarked: "When there is more scope for the imagination of a reader in a story or novel, it will be more interesting." Unfortunately Nagarjun has not left enough space for the reader's imagination in this novel. Hence due to lack of a creative balance between the literariness and the sociality, this novel could not become a classic as Premchand's many novels like Godan,

Rangbhumi, Karmbhumi and Nirmala have become, though both of them took up the relevant major issues of peasantry during British rule. Actually Nagarjun's greatness lies in his great poetry (where he has flourished in diverse ways with different forms of experiment and rhythms). Undoubtedly he is a major Hindi poet but by and large in Hindi criticism there is hardly honesty in

literary evaluation of writers and poets – either one is overrated or underrated, depending on the faction, association, background, ideology/perspective or region of the critics. Regarding the evaluation of novels like 'Balchanma,' Nagarjun should not be overrated as it is, of course, a good novel, but not a great novel, and actually good is the enemy of the great.

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TOWARD ESTABLISHING ENDURING TIES BETWEEN INDIA AND JAPAN THROUGH LITERATURE

**A Brief History of Accepting Modern Indian Literature in
Japan After 1952**

Teiji Sakata

Various Modern Indian Languages with Rich Tradition

Literature will spring up when an individual feels something awful or joyous, and the individual desires to share the feeling with other individuals. In order for the feeling to be shared, it must find oral expression and be listened to by other individuals.

A community consisting of some individuals has its own peculiar way of expressing itself through language. Thus, literature will spring up in an individual and find vocal expression of language to be received by others.

In a huge country like India, there are many communities with peculiar languages. To count languages with more than 10 million speakers, we will find more than ten languages including Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. Most of these languages enjoy a long history of about one thousand years and have rich literary tradition.

The Beginning of Academic Studies of Modern Indian Languages in Japan

Japan has been accepting Indian culture conveyed with Buddhism since the 8th century. For the study of Buddhism and related subjects, major Buddhist temples established some colleges in the 8th century and after.

But systematic study of modern Indian languages was started much later. Since the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Japan has been very eager to open its mind and doors to the world. The government of Japan adopted the policy to open some institutions for the study of foreign languages. In this trend, the Department of Hindostani was established in the Tokyo School of Foreign Languages in 1911, and also in the Osaka School of Foreign Languages in 1921. These departments served as centers for the study of Hindostani, Urdu and Hindi. The members and the graduates of these departments published introductory books for language learning for Hindostani, Urdu and Hindi and translation of literary works. Reiichi Gamoo and Eizoo Sawa were pioneering leaders of these results before and sometime after 1952.

Along with these specialists, some people deeply interested in the literature of modern Indian languages studied and translated some works of Indian literature through English translation. Their role has been important in that they attracted the interest of the general public to works of modern Indian literature that were pre-

viously unknown and prepared ground for systematic and academic studies. Shizuka Yamamuro is noteworthy, though he was a specialist in north European literature, he had a good eye to cherish poems of Rabindranath Tagore and published *Selected Poems of Tagore in 1943*.

1952 and After: Studies in Modern Indian Languages and Literature in Japan; Publication of Books on the Languages and Translation of Literary Works

Diplomatic relations were established between Japan and India in 1952. This fact is to bear rich fruits hereafter. Kyuya Doi, who later edited and published the first Hindi-Japanese Dictionary, left Tokyo in 1953 to study Hindi at Allahabad University as a scholar under the Japan-India Cultural Exchange Program. A brief introduction to Hindi literature and Urdu literature was offered by Kyuya Doi: "Modern Indian Literature in India and Pakistan" in five pages in the volume of India in the series titled the Culture and Geography of the World in 1954.

A. Invitation of Literature in Modern Indian Languages:

Publications of an Anthology and a History of Literature

Chikuma Shobo published *An Anthology of Indian Literature* in 1959 among the 100 volumes of the Grand Selection of World Literature. This monumental volume of 510 pages offers extracts from

important literary works from ancient Vedas to modern Premchand with a detailed background explanation. Kyuya Doi who studied under the guidance of Dharendra Varma translated *Godan* of Premchand into Japanese.

This is followed by *A Historical Survey of Indian Literature From the Vedic Literature to Nai Kahani*, published by Meiji Shoin in 1967. This book of 261 pages covers the survey of classical Indian literature by Otoya Tanaka and of modern Indian literature including Hindi, Urdu, Bengali and Tamil literature by Teiji Sakata.

Publication of an anthology and a historical survey of Indian literature is the joint fruit of endeavoring studies by related scholars and reflect a deepening interest in India among Japanese people.

In 1960's, many students of Reiichi Gamoo, Eizoo Sawa and Kyuya Doi were offered the opportunity to study in the universities of India and Pakistan.

B. Seeding for the Future: Studies in Languages and Publication of Language Teaching Materials

Since this stage of deepening interest in India, beginning in the 1970's, many books for learning modern Indian languages have been published. Two publishers. Daigaku-shorin and Hakusuisha, are very active in this matter.

Their publications include Basic Grammar Books, Dictionaries, Conversation

Guides and Readings.

Daigaku-shorin has been publishing, to mention very important publications only, Basic Hindi by Katsuro Koga, Basic Urdu by Takeshi Suzuki, Basic Punjabi by Hiroshi Hagita; the Hindi Dictionary by Kyuya Doi, Handy Urdu Dictionary by Takeshi Suzuki; Hindi Conversation by Kyuya Doi, Urdu Conversation by Takeshi Suzuki, Punjabi Conversation by Tomio Mizokami; Readings in Urdu by Yutaka Asada,

Short Stories of Premchand by Kyuya Doi, Hindi Folktales by Teiji Sakata, Readings in Punjabi by Hiroshi Hagita. Publication of Kyuya Doi's Hindi-Japanese Dictionary in 1975 is monumental in the history of cultural relations between Japan and India.

Hakusuisha has been publishing two important series: one for Introductory Books for Language Learning, another for Conversation Guides. The former includes attractive word "Express" in the titles: Express Hindi by Toshio Tanaka and Kazuhiko Machida, Express Punjabi by Norio Okaguchi and Express Bengali by Kazuhiko Machida and Kyoko Niwa. The latter, which are conversation guides, limit the glossary to be employed in the conversation to only 250 words. This includes Hindi in 250 Words by Norio Okaguchi and Yoshiko Okaguchi. It is regretted that no such book is published on Dravidian languages. For these languages, teachers are obliged either to

prepare classroom materials of their own or to rely upon the books written in English or other foreign languages.

C. Appreciating Literature in Modern Indian Languages: Many Japanese Translations to find Readers

Since the 1980's, students interested in modern Indian literature and enjoying much better conditions for learning languages from their predecessors are working by themselves and guiding newcomers. Thus, much enforced crops of scholars have been trying to find literary works important by themselves and, at the same time, attractive to Japanese readers.

Below given is a chronological list of important novels and short stories translated into Japanese and published for the general public from the 1980's.

For each publication, the name of author, original title (original language), the name of translator and the publication year of Japanese translation are given in their respective order.

1. Ravindranath Thakur. *Selected Works* in 12 volumes by Tatsuo Morimoto et.al., 1981-1993.
2. Krishan Chandra. *Peshawar Express* (Urdu) by Shurei Sha et.al., 1986.
3. A. F, Qasmi. *Parmeshwar Singh* (Urdu) by Takeshi Suzuki, 1987.

4. Premchand. *Pus ki Rat and Other Stories* (Hindi & Urdu) by Teiji Sakata et.al. 1990.
5. Upendranath Ashk. *Girti Diwaren* (Hindi) by Yuichiro Miki, 1991.
6. Bhasham Sahni. *Tamas* (Hindi) by ToshioTanaka, 1991.
7. Mahashwetta Devi. *Jagmohaner Mrityu* (Bengali) by Masayuki Onishi, 1992.
8. T. Tejaswi. *Karvalo* (Kannada) by Kyoko Inogue, 1994.
9. Jayakanthan. *Akkinippiravecam* (Tamil) by.Hiroshi Yamashita, 1996.

It is noteworthy that works in Dravidian languages, including Tamil and Kannada were translated although the languages have no introductory books in Japanese. A small group of scholars are painstakingly pioneering the way.

Most of the Japanese translations are centered on novels and short stories, but some poetical works in modern Indian languages are sometimes translated as below:

1. Rabindranath Tagore. *Gitanjali: Poems of Tagore* (Bengali) by Shoko Watanabe 1977.
2. Jibananda Das. *Rupasi Bangla* (Bengali) by Masayuki Usuda, 1992.
3. Nazrul Islam. *Poetical Works* (Bengali) by Kyoko Niwa, 1993.

4. Faiz Afmad Faiz. *Poetical Works* (Urdu) by Hiroji Kataoka, 1994.

literary works written in English

by Indian writers and non-resident-Indian writers are also attracting the interest of Japanese readers. They are aiming at a rather extended range of readers and some of them may be more accessible than those written in indigenous Indian languages. Some important translations will be given below:

1. R. K. Narayan. *The Guide* by Soyoko Morimoto, 1995.
2. Rohinton Mistry. *Such a Long-Journey* by Takayoshi Ogawa, 1996.
3. Anita Desai. *In Custody* by Akira Takahashi, 1999.

Translated works of some other genres will also be mentioned here.

Though very limited in number, premodern works have been translated as follows.

1. Mir Taqi Mir. *Ghazals of Mir* from 18th century Urdu by Kouko Matsumura, 1996.
2. Tiruvalluvar. *Tirukkra* from 5th century Tamil by Takanobu Takahashi, 1999.
3. Kabir. *Bijak* from 15th century Hindi by Taigen Hashimoto, 2002.

These are very important works to have the idea how people of the day thought and behaved. There is no need to say

that more translations of such kind of works should reach Japanese readers.

Literature for children is sometimes translated from English into Japanese: a few examples are; Tagore. *Kabuli Wala and Other Stories* by Shizuka Yamamuro, 1971.

AWIC (ed.) *On the Trail of Blue File and Other Stories* by Chitose Suzuki et.al., 1998.

Autobiographies and Folktales may not be included in literature in the strict sense, but they may show the innermost part of human mind. Some recent publications are given here.

Autobiography of M. K. Gandhi was translated from its original Gujarati by Toshio Tanaka in 2000.

Folktales from India, Nepal and Srilanka was published in 1998 by the joint efforts of eight specialists under the editorship of Teiji Sakata. *Indian Animals Folktales* contains the stories told by Santals in Bengali to Naoki Nishioka and its Japanese translation was published in 2000.

As seen above, various genres of modern literature translated from many Indian languages into Japanese have reached Japanese readers in these 50 years.

Toward Building more Intimate Ties between India and Japan through Literature

Friendly ties between Japan and India

since the 8th century invite a broad range of interest in India among Japanese people. In general, elder Japanese are interested in Buddhism and the sacred places related with Buddhism, active men are more interested in business relations; some young people are attracted by the “Spiritual and Eternal India”. Literature, however seems to attract a limited number of Japanese.

Classical Indian literature, including Buddhist literature, has a long history of acceptance in Japan, and some people have known it. Buddhist monks, philosophers learned much from it to establish one’s thoughts. Compared to classical Indian literature, modern Indian literature is not so common with Japanese people.

In spite of these unfavorable conditions, Japanese studies of modern Indian languages and their literature since 1952 may be estimated to have attained no bad results. These results are the fruits of painstaking scholars working to respond to the interest of general public.

As for the publication of not very well-known modern Indian literature, contribution of some publishers and foundations must be confirmed here.

Translated literary works from modern Indian languages usually find very limited readers in Japan. It means that the publications seldom pay the publishers. Even under such a situation, some publishers have been trying to publish what is im-

portant in their own policy. Two publishers, Daigakushorin and Hakusuisha, have been taking special interest in the books for language learning and deserve to be mentioned first.

Two more publishers, Heibonsha and Mekhong-sha, also deserve to be acknowledged. All the three pre-modern works given in Chapter III (Tiruvalluvar and Kabir), were published by Heibonsha in its Toyo Bunko series or “Books of the East”. Most of the novels and short stories (by Krishan Chandra, Mahashweta Devi, Tejaswi etc.) were published by Mekhonsha in its series of ‘Selections from Modern India”.

The efforts of scholars and the publishers found meaningful cooperation of two foundations in the 1980s. The Toyota Foundation has been extending grants for the publication of Indian literary works (e.g. Kabir’s *Bijak*) and The Daido Life Insurance Company Foundation for International Culture has been extending grants for the publication of modern Indian literature (e.g. Qasmi’s *ParmeshwarSingh*).

In translating literary works of modern India, Japanese scholars have been asking the cooperation or the guidance of the Indian specialists or authors of the novels to confirm their understanding. Such beneficial communication between scholars of India and Japan will engender rewards in the future.

Japanese scholars working on modern Indian literature may, in return to what they have been given by India, assist Indian scholars in selecting and translating Japanese literature. We may adopt a grand project on this auspicious occasion to communicate the thoughts and the feelings of the peoples of India and Japan. Shusaku Endo's *Fukai Kawa* or *The Deep River* would be excellent primary material for this project. Endo discovered important phases of human nature at the riverfront

of Ganga in Varanasi and incorporated them in his novel *The Deep River*. If it is translated into important Indian languages such as Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil, *The Deep River* would convey current Japanese beliefs of present day India to Indian readers. Japanese scholars working on Indian languages may cooperate in this project with the advice of Japanese specialists on modern Japanese literature.

Courtesy : Manak Publications

Teiji Sakata is professor of Hindi at Takushoku University, Tokyo, Japan. A prolific writer and researcher, he has written several books on history of Indian literature, He has also published books of folktales. His other books are, 'Cosmos of Ramayana' and 'Saints of India' in Japanese language. He was visiting professor in Delhi University in the year 2000. He now lives in Tokyo, Japan.

TRANSLATION AS A DIALOGIC ACTIVITY

Minu Manjari

“And now it is the shudder of meaning I interrogate, listening to the rustle of language, that language which for me, modern man, is my nature”(Barthes:1996:2)

For a translator it is mandatory to hear the shudders of meaning in the rustle of language. While trying to hear these s/he becomes conscious of the deep connection between word and its context. It is here that the dimension of culture comes into the field of translation because the context of a word is essentially shaped by the culture to which it belongs. Culture and intercultural competence and awareness that rise out of experience of culture, are far more complex phenomena than it may seem to the translator. The more a translator is aware of complexities of differences between cultures, the better a translator s/he will be. It is probably right to say that there has never been a time when the community of translators was unaware of cultural differences and their significance for translation.

Translation theorists have been cognizant of the problems attendant upon cultural knowledge and cultural differences at least since ancient Rome. Cultural knowledge and cultural differences have been a major focus of translator training and translation theory for as long as either has been in existence. As Homi Bhabha says-“translation is not simply appropriation or adaptation; it is a process through which cultures are required to revise their own systems and values by departing from their habitual or ‘inbred’ rules of transformation.”

Language and Culture

The main concern has traditionally been with words and phrases that are so heavily and exclusively grounded in one culture that they are almost impossible to translate into the terms – verbal or otherwise – of another. Long debates have been held over when to paraphrase, when to use the nearest local equivalent, when to coin a new word by translating literally, and when to transcribe. All these “untranslatable” cultural-bound words and phrases continued to fascinate translators and translation theorists.

It began to be noticed that literary texts were constituted not primarily of language but in fact of culture, language being in effect a vehicle of culture. In traditional discussions, the cruxes of Translation i.e the items which proved particularly intractable in translation are often described as culture specific, For example-maya, payal, dupatta etc. But it was increasingly realized that not only were such particular items culture specific but indeed the whole language was specific to the particular culture to some degree or the other. The Sapir- Whorf hypothesis, to the effect that “a language defined and delimited the particular world view of its speakers, in the sense that what they could not say in their language was what they could not even conceive of” seemed to support the view that the specificity of

a culture was coextensive with the specificity of its language. The increase valorization of diversity and plurality in cultural matters also lent strength to this new understanding of language and culture. The unit of translation was no longer a word or a sentence or a paragraph or even a text, but indeed the whole language and culture in which the text was constituted.

Mounin introduced a theory in this respect in 1963 which underlined the importance of the signification of a lexical item claiming that only if this notion is considered will the translated item fulfil its function correctly. The problem with this theory is that all the cultural elements do not involve just the items, what should a translator do in the case of cultural implications which are implied in the background knowledge of SL readers?

The notion of culture is essential to considering the implications for translation and, despite the differences in opinion as to whether language is part of culture or not, the two notions of culture and language appear to be inseparable. In 1964, Nida discussed the problems of correspondence in translation, conferred equal importance to both linguistic and cultural differences between the SL and the TL and concluded that differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure. It is

further explained that parallels in culture often provide a common understanding despite significant formal shifts in the translation. According to him cultural implications for translation are thus of significant importance as well as lexical concerns.

Nida's definitions of formal and dynamic equivalence in 1964 consider cultural implications for translation. According to him, a "gloss translation" mostly typifies formal equivalence where form and content are reproduced as faithfully as possible and the TL reader is able to "understand as much as he can of the customs, manner of thought, and means of expression" of the SL context. Contrasting with this idea, dynamic equivalence "tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture" without insisting to "understand the cultural patterns of the source-language context". According to him problems may vary in scope depending on the cultural and linguistic gap between the two (or more) languages concerned.

The Cultural turn in translation

It can be said that the first concept in cultural translation studies was cultural turn that in 1978 was presaged by the work on polysystems and translation norms by Even-Zohar and in 1980 by Toury. They dismiss the linguistic kinds of theories

of translation and refer to them as having moved from word to text as a unit but not beyond. They themselves go beyond language and focus on the interaction between translation and culture, on the way culture impacts and constraints translation and on the larger issues of context, history and convention. Therefore, the move from translation as a text to translation as culture and politics is what they call it a Cultural Turn in translation studies and became the ground for a metaphor adopted by Bassnett and Lefevere in 1990. In fact Cultural Turn is the metaphor adopted by Cultural Studies oriented translation theories to refer to the analysis of translation in its cultural, political, and ideological context.

Since 1990, the turn has extended to incorporate a whole range of approaches from cultural studies and is a true indicator of the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary translation studies. As the result of this so called Cultural Turn, cultural studies has taken an increasingly keen interest in translation. One consequence of this has been bringing together scholars from different disciplines. It is here important to mention that these cultural theorists have kept their own ideology and agendas that drive their own criticism. These cultural approaches have widened the horizons of translation studies with new insights but at the same there has been a strong element of conflict among

them. It is good to mention that the existence of such differences of perspectives is inevitable.

The purpose of translation

Translating cannot be seen in isolation. The translator's role is embedded in the broader context of a communication process whose purpose will be different in each instance and where the number and identity of the interlocutors will also vary. Indeed, the very same text can sometimes be made to serve different purposes on different occasions and can therefore require a different translation each time. To do full justice to any text, we have to think and feel ourselves into the relevant context. The more thoroughly we can steep ourselves in the background, the more effortlessly and naturally we will be able to produce the quality of work which is required for each occasion.

In the mid 1980s Vermeer introduced skopos theory which is a Greek word for 'aim' or 'purpose'. It is entered into translation theory as a technical term for the purpose of translation and of action of translating. Skopos theory focuses above all on the purpose of translation, which determines the translation method and strategies that are to be employed in order to produce a functionally adequate result. The result is TT, which Vermeer calls translatum. Therefore, knowing why SL

is to be translated and what function of TT will be are crucial for the translator.

I Reiss and Vermeer in their book with the title of 'Groundwork for a General Theory of Translation' concentrated on the basic underlying 'rules' of this theory which involve: 1- A translatum (or TT) is determined by its skopos, 2- A TT is an offer of information in a target culture and TL considering an offer of information in a source culture and SL. This relates the ST and TT to their function in their respective linguistic and cultural context. The translator is once again the key player in the process of intercultural communication and production of the translatum because of the purpose of the translation.

Culture in practical translation

In 1988 Newmark defined culture as "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression", thus acknowledging that each language group has its own culturally specific features. He also introduced 'Cultural word' which the readership is unlikely to understand and the translation strategies for this kind of concept depend on the particular text-type requirements of the readership and client and importance of the cultural word in the text.

Peter Newmark also categorized the

cultural words as follows :

1) Ecology: flora, fauna, hills, winds, plains

2) Material Culture: food, clothes, houses and towns, transport

3) Social Culture: work and leisure

4) Organizations Customs, Activities, Procedures,

Concepts :

- Political and administrative
- Religious
- Artistic

5) Gestures and Habits He introduced contextual factors for translation process which include:

1-Purpose of text

2- Motivation and cultural, technical and linguistic level of readership

3- Importance of referent in SL text

4- Setting (does recognized translation exist?)

5- Recency of word/referent

6- Future of referent.

He further clearly stated that operationally he does not regard language as a component or feature of culture in direct opposition to the view taken by Vermeer who stated that "language is part of a culture" (1989:222). According to

Newmark, Vermeer's stance would imply the impossibility to translate whereas for the latter, translating the source language (SL) into a suitable form of TL is part of the translator's role in transcultural communication.

Language and culture may thus be seen as being closely related and both aspects must be considered for translation. When considering the translation of cultural words and notions, Newmark proposed two opposing methods: transference and componential analysis. According to him transference gives "local colour," keeping cultural names and concepts. Although placing the emphasis on culture, meaningful to initiated readers, he claimed this method may cause problems for the general readership and limit the comprehension of certain aspects. The importance of the translation process in communication led Newmark to propose componential analysis which he described as being "the most accurate translation procedure, which excludes the culture and highlights the message".

Newmark also stated the relevance of componential analysis in translation as a flexible but orderly method of bridging the numerous lexical gaps, both linguistic and cultural, between one language and

* Some strategies introduced by Newmark for dealing with cultural gap:

1) Naturalization: A strategy when a

SL word is transferred into TL text in its original form.

2) Couplet or triplet and quadruplet:- Is another technique the translator adopts at the time of transferring, naturalizing or trying to avoid any misunderstanding; according to him it is a number of strategies combined together to handle one problem.

3) Neutralization: Neutralization is a kind of paraphrase at the level of words. If it is at higher level it would be a paraphrase. When the SL item is generalized (neutralized) it is paraphrased with some culture free words.

4) Descriptive and functional equivalent: In explanation of source language cultural item there are two elements: one is descriptive and another one would be functional. Descriptive equivalent talks about size, color and composition. The functional equivalent talks about the purpose of the SL cultural-specific word.

5) Explanation as footnote: The translator may wish to give extra information to the TL reader. He would explain this extra information in a footnote. It may come at the bottom of the page, at the end of chapter or at the end of the book.

6) Cultural equivalent:-The SL cultural word is translated by TL cultural word

7) Compensation:-A technique which is used when confronting a loss of meaning,

sound effect, pragmatic effect or metaphor in one part of a text. The word or concept is compensated in other part of the text.

In 1992, Mona Baker stated that S.L word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. It can be abstract or concrete. It maybe a religious belief, a social custom or even a type of food. In her book, *In Other Words*, she argued about the common non-equivalents which a translator comes across while translating from SL into TL, while both languages have their distinguished specific culture. She put them in the following order:

- a) Culture specific concepts
- b) The SL concept which is not lexicalized in TL
- c) The SL word which is semantically complex
- d) The source and target languages make different distinction in meaning
- e) The TL lacks a super ordinate
- f) The TL lacks a specific term (hyponym)
- g) Differences in physical or interpersonal perspective
- h) Differences in expressive meaning
- i) Differences in form
- j) Differences in frequency and purpose of using specific forms
- k) The use of loan words in the source

text

It is necessary for a translator to have knowledge about semantics and lexical sets. Because in this case: S/he would appreciate the “value” of the word in a given system knowledge and the difference of structures in SL and TL. This allows him to assess the value of a given item in a lexical set. S/he can develop strategies for dealing with non-equivalence semantic field. These techniques are arranged hierarchically from general (superordinate) to specific (hyponym).

The Politics of Translation

Lawrence Venuti mentioned the effective powers controlling translation. He believed that in addition to governments and other politically motivated institutions which may decide to censor or promote certain works, there are groups and social institutions which would include various players in the publication as a whole. These are the publishers and editors who choose the works and commission the translations, pay the translators and often dictate the translation method. They also include the literary agents, marketing and sales teams and reviewers. Each of these players has a particular position and role within the dominant cultural and political agenda of their time and place. Power play is an important theme for cultural commentators and translation scholars. In both theory

and practice of translation, power resides in the deployment of language as an ideological weapon for excluding or including a reader, a value system, a set of beliefs, or even an entire culture.

In 1992, Coulthard highlighted the importance of defining the ideal reader for whom the author attributes knowledge of certain facts, memory of certain experiences ... plus certain opinions, preferences and prejudices and a certain level of linguistic competence. When considering such aspects, the extent to which the author may be influenced by such notions which depend on his own sense of belonging to a specific socio-cultural group should not be forgotten.

Applied to the criteria used to determine the ideal ST reader it may be noted that few conditions are successfully met by the potential ideal TT reader. Indeed, the historical and cultural facts are unlikely to be known in detail along with the specific cultural situations described. Furthermore, despite considering the level of linguistic competence to be roughly equal for the ST and TT reader, certain differences may possibly be noted in response to the use of culturally specific lexis which must be considered when translating. Although certain opinions, preferences and prejudices may be instinctively transposed by the TT reader who may liken them to his own experience, it must be remembered that these do not match the social situation

experience of the ST reader. Therefore, Coulthard mainly stated that the core social and cultural aspects remain problematic when considering the cultural implications for translation.

Postcolonialism and Translation

Postcolonialism is one of the most thriving points of contact between Cultural Studies and Translation Studies. It can be defined as a broad cultural approach to the study of power relations between different groups, cultures or peoples in which language, literature and translation may play a role. Gayatri Spivak's work is indicative of how cultural studies especially post-colonialism has over the past decade focused on issues of translation, the translational and colonization. The linking of colonization and translation is accompanied by the argument that translation has played an active role in the colonization process and in disseminating an ideologically motivated image of colonized people. The metaphor has been used of the colony as an imitative and inferior translational copy whose suppressed identity has been overwritten by the colonizer.

The postcolonial concepts may have conveyed a view of translation as just a damaging instrument of the colonizers who imposed their language and used translation to construct a distorted image

of the suppressed people which served to reinforce the hierarchical structure of the colony. However, some critics of postcolonialism, like Robinson, believe that the view of the translation as purely harmful and pernicious tool of the empire is inaccurate.

The scope of translation studies needs to be broadened to take the account of the value-driven nature of sociocultural framework. Venuti used the term invisibility to describe the translator situation and activity in Anglo-American culture. He said that this invisibility is produced by:

1. The way the translators themselves tend to translate fluently into English, to produce an idiomatic and readable TT, thus creating illusion of transparency.

2. The way the translated texts are typically read in the target culture:

“A translated text, whether prose or poetry or non-fiction, is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or the essential meaning, the foreign text, the appearance, in other words, that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the original.”

(Venuti, 1995)

Venuti discussed invisibility hand in

hand with two types of translating strategies: domestication and foreignization. He considered domestication as dominating Anglo-American (TL) translation culture. Just as the postcolonialists were alert to the cultural effects of the differential in power relation between colony and ex-colony, so Venuti bemoaned the phenomenon of domestication since it involves reduction of the foreign text to the target language cultural values. This entails translating in a transparent, fluent, invisible style in order to minimize the foreignness of the TT. Venuti believed that a translator should leave the reader in peace, as much as possible, and he should move the author toward him.

Foreignization, on the other hand, entails choosing a foreign text and developing a translation method along lines which are excluded by dominant cultural values in target language. Venuti considers the foreignizing method to be an ethno deviant pressure on target language and cultural values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad. According to him it is highly desirable in an effort to restrain the ethnocentric violence in translation. The foreignizing method of translating, a strategy Venuti also termed 'resistancy', is a non-fluent or estranging translation style designed to make visible the persistence of translator by highlighting the foreign identity of ST and protecting

it from the ideological dominance of the target culture.

In his later book *'The Scandals of Translation'* Venuti insisted on foreignizing or, as he also called it, '*minoritizing*' translation, to cultivate a varied and heterogeneous discourse. As far as language is concerned, the minoritizing or foreignizing method of Venuti's translation comes through in the deliberate inclusion of foreignizing elements in a bid to make the translator visible and to make the reader realize that he is reading a translation of the work from a foreign culture. Foreignization is close adherent to the ST structure and syntax.

Venuti also said that the terms may change meaning across time and location.

Translation and Gender Questions

In 1996, Simon mentioned that cultural studies brings to translation an understanding of the complexities of gender and culture and it allows us to situate linguistic transfer. A language of sexism in translation studies, with its image of dominance, fidelity, faithfulness and betrayal has been prevalent. Simon mentions the seventeenth century image of "les belles infidels" (unfaithful beauties), translations into French that were artistically beautiful but unfaithful. She goes further and investigates George Steiner's male-oriented image of translation

as penetration.

The feminist theorists, more or less, see a parallel between the status of translation which is often considered to be derivative and inferior to the original writing and that of women so often repressed in society and literature. This is the core feminist translation that theory seeks to identify and give a critique of the tangle of the concepts which relegate both women and translation to the bottom of the social and literary ladder. Simon takes this further in the concept of the committed translation project. Translation project here can be defined as such: An approach to literary translation in which feminist translators openly advocate and implement strategies (linguistic or otherwise) to foreground the feminist in the translated text. It may seem worthy to mention that the opposite of translation project occurs when gender-marked works are translated in such a way that their distinctive characteristics are affected.

Ideology and Translation

With the spread of deconstruction and cultural studies in the academy, the subject of ideology became an important area of study. The field of translation studies presents no exception to this general trend. It should also be mentioned that the concept of ideology is not something new and it

has been an area of interest from a long time. The problem of discussing translation and ideology is one of definition. There are so many definitions of ideology that it is impossible to review them all. For instance, as Hatim and Mason (1997) stated that ideology encompasses the tacit assumptions, beliefs and value systems which are shared collectively by social groups. They make a distinction between the ideology of translating and the translation of ideology. Whereas the former refers to the basic orientation chosen by the translator operating within a social and cultural context. In translation of ideology they examined the extent of mediation supplied by a translator of sensitive texts. Here mediation is defined as the extent to which translators intervene in the transfer process, feeding their own knowledge and beliefs into processing the text.

In 1999 Hermans stated that Culture refers to all socially conditioned aspects of human life. According to him translation can and should be recognized as a social phenomenon, a cultural practice. He said that we bring to translation both cognitive and normative expectations, which are continually being negotiated, confirmed, adjusted, and modified by practising translators and by all who deal with translation. These expectations result from the communication within the translation system, for instance, between actual

translations and statements about translation, and between the translation system and other social systems.

In 2002, Hervey and Higgins bring in the concept of complete cultural translation. According to them accepting literal translation means that there's no cultural translation operation. But obviously there are some obstacles bigger than linguistic ones. They are cultural obstacles and here a transposition in culture is needed.

According to Hervey & Higgins cultural transposition has a scale of degrees which is toward the choice of features indigenous to target language and culture rather than features which are rooted in source culture. The result here is foreign features reduced in target text and is to some extent naturalized. The scale here is from an extreme which is mostly based on source culture (exoticism) to the other extreme which is mostly based on target culture (cultural transplantation):

Exoticism— Cultural Borrowing—
Calque— Communicative

Translation— cultural transplantation.

1) Exoticism The degree of adaptation is very low here. The translation carries the cultural features and grammar of SL to TL. It is very close to transference.

2) Calque-Calque includes TL words but in SL structure therefore while it is unidiomatic to target reader but it is familiar

to a large extent.

3) Cultural Borrowing It is to transfer the ST expression verbatim into the TT. No adaptation of SL expression into TL forms. After a time they usually become a standard in TL terms. Cultural borrowing is very frequent in history, legal, social, political texts; for example, “La langue” and “La parole” in linguistics.

4) Communicative translation— Communicative translation is usually adopted for culture specific clichés such as idioms, proverbs, fixed expression, etc. In such cases the translator substitutes SL word with an existing concept in target culture. In cultural substitution the propositional meaning is not the same but it has similar impact on target reader. The literal translation here may sound comic. The degree of using this strategy some times depends on the license which is given to the translator by commissioners and also the purpose of translation.

5) Cultural Transplantation— The whole text is rewritten in target culture. The TL word is not a literal equivalent but has similar cultural connotations to some extent. It is another type of extreme but toward target culture and the whole concept is transplanted in TL. A normal translation should avoid both exoticism and cultural transplantation.

Translation in the Global World

Nico Wiersema in his essay “*GLOBALIZATION AND TRANSLATION*” stated that globalization is linked to English being a lingua franca; the language is said to be used at conferences (interpreting) and seen as the main language in the new technologies. The use of English as a global language is an important trend in world communication. Furthermore, globalization is placed in the context of changes in economics, science, technology, and society. Globalization and technology are very helpful to translators in that translators have more access to online information, such as dictionaries of lesser-known languages. Such comments can be extended to the readers of translations. Should the target text be challenging for a reader, the internet can help him understand foreign elements in the text. Thus the text can be written in a more foreignising/exoticising manner. He mentioned a relatively new trend wherein culturally bound elements (some, one might say, untranslatable), are not translated. He believed that this trend contributes to learning and understanding foreign cultures. Context explains culture, and adopting (not necessarily adapting) a selection of words enriches the target text, makes it more exotic and thus more interesting for those who want to learn more about the culture in question. Eventually, these new words may find their

way into target language dictionaries. Translators will then have contributed to enriching their own languages with loan words from the source language (esp. English).

He considered this entering loan words into TL as an important aspect of translation. Translation brings cultures closer. He stated that at this century the process of globalization is moving faster than ever before and there is no indication that it will stall any time soon. In each translation there will be a certain distortion between cultures. The translator will have to defend the choices he/she makes, but there is currently an option for including more foreign words in target texts. Therefore, it is now possible to keep SL cultural elements in target texts. In each translation there will be a certain distortion between cultures. The translator will have to defend the choices he/she makes, but there is currently an option for including more foreign words in target texts.

According to him the translator has three options for the translation of cultural elements:

1. Adopting the foreign word without any explanation.
2. Adopting the foreign word with extensive explanations.
3. Rewriting the text to make it more comprehensible to the target-language audience.

According to Nico Wiersema (2004), Cultures are getting closer and closer and this is something that he believed translators need to take into account. In the end it all depends on what the translator, or more often, the publisher wants to achieve with a certain translation. In his opinion by entering SL cultural elements:

- a) The text will be read more fluently (no stops)
- b) The text remains more exotic, more foreign.
- c) The translator is closer to the source culture.
- d) The reader of the target texts gets a more genuine image of the source culture.

Cultural Presuppositions in Translation

In 2004, Ke Ping regarding translation and culture paid attention to misreading and presupposition. He mentioned that of the many factors that may lead to misreadings in translation is cultural presuppositions.

Cultural presuppositions merit special attention from translators because they can substantially and systematically affect their interpretation of facts and events in the source text without their even knowing it. He pinpointed the relationship between cultural presuppositions and

translational misreadings. According to him misreadings in translation are often caused by a translator's presuppositions about the reality of the source language community. These presuppositions are usually culturally-derived and deserve the special attention of the translator. He showed how cultural presuppositions work to produce misreadings in translation. "Cultural presupposition," refers to underlying assumptions, beliefs, and ideas that are culturally rooted, widespread.

Following Features of Culture are Generally Agreed upon :

- 1) Culture is socially acquired instead of biologically transmitted;
- 2) Culture is shared among the members of a community rather than being unique to an individual;
- 3) Culture is symbolic. Symbolizing means assigning to entities and events, meanings which are external to them and which cannot be grasped alone. Language is the most typical symbolic system within culture;
- 4) Culture is integrated. Each aspect of culture is tied in with all other aspects.

According to Ke Ping culture is normally regarded as comprising, with some slight variations, the following four sub-systems:

- (1) Techno-economic System: ecology

(flora, fauna, climate, etc.); means of production, exchange, and distribution of goods; crafts, technology, and science; artifacts.

(2) Social System: social classes and groups; kinship system (typology, sex and marriage, procreation and paternity, size of family, etc.); politics and law; education; sports and entertainment; customs; general

(3) Ideational System: cosmology; religion; magic and witchcraft; folklore; artistic creations as images; values (moral, aesthetic, etc.); cognitive focus and thinking patterns; ideology.

(4) Linguistic System : phonology and graphemics; grammar (morphology and syntax); semantics and pragmatics.

Each ingredient in these four sub-systems can lead to presuppositions that are fundamentally different from those bred by other cultures, and hence might result in misreading when translation or other forms of communication are conducted across two cultures.

Translation As A Dialogic Activity

The broadening field of translation theory interlinks it with all cultural aspects including politics, sociology, economics etc. By its very nature it acts as a stage where multiple voices can be articulated. Harish Trivedi says- “ Literary translation is regarded as a repeatable ,collaborative and explicit activity. An element of

collaboration is seen as been built into the very process of translation, which is a dialogic engagement between at least two authors ,the original and the secondary and two languages, the source and the target.

The term Dialogic emerges out of Mikhail Bakhtin’s famous contrast between Tolstoy’s novels and Dostoievsky’s. In his book “Problems of Dostoievsky’s Poetics(1929)he says Dostoievsky’s are in the dialogic form i.e. his characters are liberated to speak ‘a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices’. Translation also gives validity to a totally different voice emerging out of the same text.

The increasing practice of translation has been successful in dispelling, at least partially, the notion of languages and thus cultures being insulated. The prevalent hierarchy has been like this: “The speakers of language A translate item X from language B because language A does not have item X, nor have the speakers the means and capabilities of creating an X”. A lot of people believe this even now. However two thousand years of translation practices have changed the situation so much that translation has become a bidirectional activity, both A and B taking turns as donor languages. Today speakers of A translate Xa from B but they also transfer Xb.....Xn from a number of other

sources (culture, science or language). This is because in the shrinking world technical communication is becoming faster. This kind of bidirectional activity then forces the original donor language to take into account this new conceptualization of X.

This bidirectionality of translation has another aspect as well. It is not only synchronic but also diachronic. In this respect it is deeply connected to history and its implications are quite important. Translation has been significant in the study of Indian freedom struggle and in dispelling the myths surrounding its episodes by foregrounding various folk narratives such as local so called vernacular chronicles. The idea of Translation possessing a polyphonic sound can be summed up in the words of Derrida that translation behaves like a 'child' which is not just a product subject to the law of reproduction but has in addition the power to speak on its own in a new and different fashion, supplementing language and surrounding the 'babelian note' which causes languages to grow.

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MODI AND HIS FILMS

Amrit Gangar

Shakespeare and Sohrab Modi

Sohrab Modi was fond of acting from a young age. After finishing school, he became a travelling exhibitor in Gwalior with his brother, Keki Modi. At the age of 16, *he* used to project films in Gwalior's Town Hall. Ten years later, together with his brother, he set up the Arya Subodh Theatrical Company. It was here that Sohrab Modi's voice was trained — the 'voice' that was to become a unique 'tone' in the Indian talkie. From 1924 to 1935 he moved around with his travelling theatrical company and performed in almost all the cities from north to south of India. Sohrab Modi and his brother also founded the Western India Theatres Company that owned a number of tent cinemas and permanent theatres. In 1932, the company opened the New Elphinstone in Madras that screened the best of Hollywood films.

In 1935, Sohrab Modi established his own Stage Film Company and produced his maiden film, *Khoon ka Khoon* (1935) which was a free adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In this film, Sohrab Modi played the lead role of Hamlet, while Naseem Bano, mother of the well-known actress Saira Bano, made her screen debut as Ophelia. With her natural beauty and the most gorgeous eyes, Naseem Bano went on to act in several of Modi's films.

Mehdi Ahsan's Urdu version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* had been put up on stage earlier and was familiar to audiences all over India. Bombay's leading Parsee actor-producer, Cowasjee Khatau, had also successfully staged it for 40 years. About Modi's film adaptation,

the *Times of India* (10 January 1936) noted, “*Khoon-ka-Khoon*, as it is called, is about the best presentation of *Hamlet* that we remember to have seen and it is no surprise that it has been packing the Minerva at every show for the last fortnight. The supreme domination of Modi’s *Hamlet*, however, puts the play on such a sure level that the other characters do not matter very much and Modi carries the entire picture on his shoulders with conspicuous success.” While praising the film’s resounding dialogues rendered in pure Urdu, the reviewer advises the readers that they “should on no account miss seeing it”. Modi enjoyed a tremendous sense of fulfilment every time the curtain came down and the audience clapped. Naseem Bano’s mother, Shamshad, also acted in *Khoon ka Khoon*.

The film’s advertisement announced: “For the first time in the history of Indian films...a masterly adaptation of Shakespeare’s most famous tragedy, *Hamlet*. The director, Sohrab Modi, gives a magnificent characterisation in the main part. Lovely Naseem plays Ophelia. And Shamshad Bai is Gertrude, the queen.” In *Hamlet*, Modi retained the principal cast that had previously played in the stage version. While making this film, the well-known film historian, Firoze Rangoonwalla, recalled, “They had no pretensions about it. The whole thing was meant to be enacted like a drama. So

it was staged inside the studio against stage-like backdrops and filmed from different angles.” In his comparative study of theatre and film, Prof. Satish Bahadur gives the example of Modi’s film *Khoon ka Khoon* as a straight filming of Agha Hashr Kashmiri’s rendering of *Hamlet* for the Parsee Theatrical Company. “The first shot of the film showed the opening of the proscenium curtain with a whistle and the bang of a cracker, and the play began. The dominant camera composition was the full frontal view of the whole stage, but often the camera would move in to closer angles on the actors.” Citing the example of Bal Gandharva’s play, *Sadhvi Meerabai* (1936), Prof. Bahadur said that it was also filmed with the same technique but with disastrous results.

Modi’s next film, *Saeed-e-Havas* (1936) was based on yet another Shakespearean play, *King John*, adapted in Urdu by Agha Hashr Kashmiri. Sohrab Modi is rightly regarded as the man who brought Shakespeare on to the Indian screen. But, both the films were not very successful at the box-office.

Parsee Theatre: A Glimpse

Parsee Theatre was a professional theatre movement sponsored by the Parsees and the Zoroastrian traders who migrated from Parsa in Iran to India, to first settle on Gujarat’s coastal areas, close to Bombay, during the 17th century. Parsee Theatre’s aesthetics and strategies have greatly

influenced the concept, organisation and production of modern Gujarati, Hindi and Urdu theatres in India and in turn the Hindustani cinema, both during the silent and the talkie eras. The Parsees in turn derived inspiration from the English stage and in 1853, they started staging their own Parsee-Gujarati plays in Bombay. Their first drama company was named Parsee Natak Mandali or the Parsee Drama Company. Faramjee Gustadjee Dalal (pen-name Falugus) was the proprietor of this drama company and the first drama they staged at the Grant Road Theatre in Bombay was *Rustam and Sohrab*. Also performed along with it was a satire, *Dhanji Garak*. Thereafter, from 1853 to 1869, 20 more Parsee drama companies came into existence. These companies travelled with their plays to various parts of India. The repertoire of these companies included adaptations of English plays besides Indian and Persian historical, mythological and social dramas. Besides providing entertainment to the Indian masses, the Parsee Theatre played an important role in sending across messages of social reform.

The initiative of presenting plays in Urdu was taken by a Parsee scholar, Dadabhai Patel, affectionately called Dadi Patel. It was he who produced the first Urdu musical play, *Benazir Babremuniron*. Parsee drama companies also travelled with their Urdu-Gujarati plays as far as to Rangoon, Singapore and London. Their

performances of *Harishchandra* and *Alauddin* in London are said to have been graced by the presence of Queen Victoria and Edward VII.

From 1882 to 1922, there were over 4,000 shows of Victoria Drama Company's *Harishchandra* and *Nal Damayanti*, both episodes from the epic *Mahabharata*. Many comedy plays and skits were also quite successful. Nusserwanjee Eduljee was the top comedian of the day. Kabrajee Boman Nawroji was another pioneer of the theatre who produced and directed many adaptations of classical plays from English. Due to the scarcity of female artistes, young Parsee males often played female roles. Early Parsee pioneers were the real promoters of stage drama. Besides Kabrajee, two others—Maneckjee and Khori Eduljee—also promoted the theatre in India.

In the history of Parsee Theatre, some of the famous dramatic companies were Parsee Natak Mandali, Victoria Natak Mandali, Alfred Natak Mandali, Elphinstone Natak Mandali, Zoroastrian Natak Mandali, Natak Uttejak Mandali, Gujarati Natak Mandali and Baliwala Theatre.

The Parsee Theatre was a confluence of various theatrical streams of English and Indian dramatic styles. It had varied musical scores drawing on Western, Indian and Arabic musical heritages, making use of different *ragas* of Indian classical music and a variety of songs and dances. It used impressive stage decor with newer

techniques. Integrating the best from among all these sources and assimilating them, the Parsee Theatre entertained and thrilled Indian people with some of the best dramas. The Parsee Theatre performed a grand spectacle called *Indrasabha* and for the first time in this country had a woman act on the stage.

Indrasabha was an adaptation of Sayyed Aga Hasan Amanat's play written in 1853. It was written for the Lucknow court of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah. Though it did not succeed due to protests from the conservative sections of the community, it did bear fruit when, after a few years, women entered the world of drama. When Madan Theatres produced the same play as a talkie-film in 1932, it is said to have contained 69 songs familiar from the stage productions. This impressive figure has remained untouched in the history of Indian cinema so far. The film had absorbed Parsee theatrical strategies, while assimilating European opera aesthetics. Kohinoor Film Company had produced a silent version of this film, aka *Sabz Pari*, in eight 'enchanted reels' featuring Miss Zubeida and Sultana. It was shown at Bombay's Imperial Cinema, having four daily shows at 5, 7, 9 and 11 p.m. with extra shows on Saturdays and Sundays at 8 p.m.

Writers such as Agha Hashr Kashmiri, Syed Mehdi Hasan 'Ahsan' Lakhnawi, Pandit Narayan Prasad Betab and Hakim Ahmad Shuja were steeped in the conventions

of the Parsee Theatre that emphasised rhetoric and an essentially flamboyant style of acting; its best representative in later years being the inimitable Sohrab Modi. They mainly drew on Sanskrit and Persian mythology, medieval Indian legends and English plays (Shakespeare was very important) and novels for their creations.

The modern Indian film industry with its sub-plots, its rhetoric (the 'dialogues'), its songs and dances and its fate-driven plots cannot be understood without the pervasive influence of the playwrights of Parsee Theatre. Scenarist and the best-known early 20th-century Hindi playwright, Agha Hashr Kashmiri (1879-1935), for instance, had a strong influence on Parsee Theatre productions. He was attached to Alfred Theatre in Bombay during 1901-5 and then after 1916 to the Madan Theatre's Elphinstone and Corinthian companies in Calcutta, providing adaptations of Shakespeare. Most of the plays written by him were repeatedly filmed in the silent and in the early sound periods.

Parsees, the Pioneers of Indian Cinema

In 1918, J.F. Madan, the Parsee pioneer of cinema in Calcutta, claimed to control over one-third of the 300 cinemas in India.

Madan had contracts for the supply of films with both British and American companies. His audience generally comprised of British officials, British troops

and Anglophile Indian elites. Saraswati Devi, India's first woman film music composer, composed songs for several of Bombay Talkies hit films, such as Achhut Kanya, Janmabhoomi, Jeevan Naiya, Durga, Kangan, Bandhan, Jhoola, et al. The first Bombay Talkies film, *Jawani ki Hawa* (1935), for which she composed the music, became controversial among the Parsee community. The controversy concerned two main issues – the status of cinema in the eyes of society and the fact that it was Parsee women and not men who had joined the film industry – in this case, Khurshid Manchershah Minocher-Homji (Saraswati Devi's real name) as a music composer, and her sister as an actress. The Homji sisters were already popular as radio artists. Saraswati Devi worked briefly with Sohrab Modi too after leaving Bombay Talkies and composed the music for Modi's Prithvi Vallabh and Parakh.

Ardeshir M. Irani, another Parsee, produced the first talkie of Indian cinema, *Alam Ara*, thus becoming the father of the Indian talkie. Sohrab Modi, J.B.H. Wadia and Homi Wadia of Wadia Movietone were the other eminent Parsees who made significant contributions to the founding of Indian cinema. There are many other Parsees too who contributed to different branches of Indian filmmaking. Eventually, with the advent of sound films, Parsee Theatre declined. Modi set up the Stage Film Company to rescue this dying art.

He was the one to produce *Jhansi ki Rani* (1953).

Minerva Movietone and the 'Atmatarang' Experience

In 1936, the Stage Film Company was transformed into Minerva Movietone whose emblem was the roaring lion. Made after two Shakespeare films and *Khan Bahadur* (1937), *Atmatarang* was an important pre-Independence 'social' film, along with *Jailor*, *Talaaq* and *Meetha Zahar* that came in later. But it was *Atmatarang's* failure at the box-office that shattered Modi's heart as early as 1937. In fact, he had decided to quit filmmaking forever. But fortunately, something interesting happened in one of the screenings of the film that inspired Modi to stay put in his chosen vocation and keep on making films through which he could "give something back to the public." At that eventful screening of *Atmatarang*, a dejected Modi sat outside the cinema hall, as there were barely 20-25 people inside. When the show was over, he saw four gentlemen coming out of the balcony. But as they were about to leave, someone spotted Modi and they went to congratulate him for making an excellent film such as *Atmatarang*. They inspired Modi to make more films like that and assured him that one day he would be at the top in his field. Later, when Modi enquired about those four gentlemen, he found out that they were judges of the Bombay High Court. Modi told himself,

* 'My God, if the judges of the Bombay High Court have asked me to make pictures like *Atmatarang*, I must continue doing so.' That was indeed a turning point in Sohrab Modi's life. *Atmatarang* dealt with the virtues of celibacy. At that time, Modi had become a member of the Ramakrishna Mission.

'Onward Minerva! 1940 is Yours!'— that's how Modi's Movietone was advertised in the Times of India of 1 January 1940. It further said, "The Minerva Movietone gratefully acknowledges this mighty message of 1939 and makes a new promise, humbly though proudly, of greater efforts in the New Year on new pictures designed to be still worthier of the unprecedented success of 1939. Mighty was 1939 but mightier still shall be 1940!" While wishing a Happy New Year to its patrons all over the country, the studio announced three films, viz. *Bharosa*, *Sikandar* and *Firdousi* "under preparation". Another film, *Vasiyat* (Will) was announced as "coming soon with a bang!"— a different picture with a refreshingly novel treatment to capture the hearts of cine-fans with its ennobling humour! Directed by Multani, it starred Sheela, Jagirdar, Eruch Tarapore, Sunalinidevi and a host of Minerva artistes. *Mai Haari* (Defeat), directed by Jagirdar was announced as 'ready for release at any moment'; it had

Naseem, Navin Yagnik, Mayadevi and Eruch Tarapore in its cast. Incidentally

we don't find some of these titles in Modi's filmography: perhaps they weren't made or released.

A Social Trilogy: *Jailor*, *Meetha Zahar* and *Bharosa*

Although Modi went beyond the Parsee Theatre for his choice of themes and even tackled such themes as illicit passion in *Jailor* (1938, remade in 1958) and incest in *Bharosa*, his formal approach remained closer to it. It evoked the way Parsee Theatre looked and sounded using frontal compositions and staging the narrative in spatial layers with copious use of Urdu dialogue.

C. Ramchandra (Ramchandra Narhar Chitalkar), who later became a well-known composer, had even played minor roles in Modi's *Saeed-e-Havas* and *Atmatarang*. He was also a harmonium accompanist for Minerva composers, Bundu Khan and Habib Khan at one time. Soon after Modi made *Jailor* for which Ameer Haider Kamal, better known as Kamaal Amrohi, wrote the story and lyrics. It was Modi's first psychodramatic role of a liberal man becoming a tyrannical jailor. He loses his wife to a lover, who then goes blind. The jailor locks up his wife, Kanwal, in their own home, forbidding any contact with their child, Bali. Later, the jailor himself falls in love with a blind woman, Chhaya, only to lose her as well. Leela Chitnis played the lead role opposite Modi. Modi chillingly portrayed the transformation of

a rational man into a tyrant. *Jailor* was premiered in Lahore in 1938, when the leading director-producer-exhibitor, Dalsukh M. Pancholi, and the then film journalist, B.R. Chopra (now one of Bollywood's best-known directors) were present among the other dignitaries.

As B.R. Chopra, who edited *Cine Herald* from Lahore, recalled, Sohrab Modi once asked him to bring out a special edition of his journal on *Minerva Movietone*. An advertisement of his film, *Jailor*, appeared on the cover page and the film went on to become a big hit. Modi always regarded *Cine Herald* as his lucky mascot. Chopra also cherishes fond memories of meeting Mehboob Khan in Lahore. Khan had gone there hunting for talent for his film *Ek hi Raasta*. "To this day, I feel privileged that I was a part of the team that selected Govinda's father, Arun Ahuja, to play the lead role in Mehboob's *Ek hi Raasta*, and when Chopra first came to Bombay in 1938, there were two cars waiting to receive him at the airport. One belonged to Mehboob Khan and the other to Sohrab Modi. "I can never forget their warm, generous hospitality," said Chopra.

Modi's early films at *Minerva* dealt with contemporary social issues, such as the evils of alcoholism in *Meetha Zahar* (*Sweet Poison*, 1938) while *Talaq* (*Divorce*, 1938) dealt with the controversial subject of a Hindu woman's right to divorce. However, Modi doesn't seem to have taken

an unequivocal stand on this issue in the film. *'Bharosa'* (*Trust*, 1940) was a social melodrama that had Chandramohan, Sardar Akhtar and Mazhar Khan in the lead. A story of incest is launched when Gyan (Khan) goes to Africa and entrusts his wife Shobha (Akhtar) to his bosom pal, Rasik (Chandramohan). The two have an affair, resulting in the child Indira (Sheela). On his return, Gyan assumes the child to be his own and is delighted when later Indira falls in love with Rasik's son, much to Rasik's and Shobha's consternation.

In those days *Bharosa* was considered to be quite revolutionary in its social theme and as Rangoonwalla said, "It had such a thematic climax, so daring, that today's filmmakers might not risk touching it." *Film India* magazine, edited by the acerbic Baburao Patel, who wasn't so friendly with Sohrab Modi, headlined the film's review as: '*Sohrab Modi Directs His First Good Picture*'. While commenting on an advertisement in which Modi compared *Bharosa* to *Pukar* of 1940, the *Film India* review of September 1949 said, "That is condemning *Bharosa*. *Pukar* may have made more money for Sohrab Modi but that does not mean that it was a better picture than *Bharosa*." *Bharosa* was released at *Minerva Talkies* in Bombay on 15 August 1940. There was also a comment that Modi had a streak of misogyny in him, as was apparent in his social trilogy.

For the story of *Talaq*, Modi

collaborated with Gajanan Jagirdar who also played the lead role opposite Naseem Bano. The story revolves around Roopa, wife of politician Niranjan. She leaves her husband to fight for more progressive divorce laws. Chhabilal, the editor of the radical journal Anadhi, helps her for exploitative reasons. Roopa gets her divorce validated by law but she is disillusioned by her legal achievement when Amarnath, whom she marries, uses the same law against her. Niranjan rescues and falls in love with the already married

Shanta but since he does not approve of the divorce law, they cannot marry. Jailor too echoes the issue of sexual infidelity. Though these films did well, what attracted Modi were the historical themes with larger-than-life characters and the opulence of royal courts. Minerva Movietone will always be remembered for its famous trilogy of historical spectacles that were to follow - Pukar (1939), Sikandar (1941) and Prithvi Vallabh (1943), and for Jhansi ki Rani much later in 1953.

Courtesy : 'Wisdom Tree, Delhi'

Amrit Gangar is a writer who is passionate about heritage of Indian Cinema. He has worked for Films Division from 1949-1993.

SHRILAL SHUKLA'S RAAG DARBARI

Rupert Snell

Shrilal Shukla's Hindi novel *Raag Darbari* was published to great acclaim in 1968. It has since been translated into some fifteen Indian languages and has been adapted for television, also picking up a Sahitya Akademi award in 1970. The novel's success derives from its no-punches-pulled descriptions of village politics in the 1950s in the Rae Bareli district of Uttar Pradesh, and from its energetically iconoclastic tone. In a comment reported in the translator's introduction, Shukla himself describes this approach as the antithesis of contemporary Hindi writing on rural life, which 'either emphasized misery and exploitation or presented an idyllic rustic picture'. Shukla's fictional village of Shivpalganj does indeed seem to be on a different planet from the villages of Premchand, Renu and other novelists given to the bucolic ideal; far from idyllic, Shivpalganj is the scene of open machination, denigration, and defecation; it is peopled by a cast of characters headed by Vaidyaji, the Machiavellian don of the village scene, aided and abetted by a motley group including his elder son Badri the Wrestler (who has real balls, as revealed both by the plot and by the inadequate folds of his loincloth) and his nephew Rangnath, a student of Indology whose six-month recuperative home-visit to Shivpalganj marks out the time-scale of the novel.

The introduction to Gillian Wright's very welcome translation of *Raag Darbari* tells us that the novel has its origins in a series of anecdotes themselves based on Shukla's own experiences of U.P. village life, especially those from a period spent in government service in rural areas of the state. The resulting episodic narrative is held together

by a satirical tone, sustained very skilfully through descriptions of the antics of a wonderfully varied and often grotesque group of characters. No section of society is safe from Shukla's barbs: an author whose definition of an Indian is 'someone who can track down a paan and a pissing-place wherever he may be' is unlikely to be warned off any sacred cows, far less mere humans. The novel scuds along at a brisk rate of knots, finding humour and folly in every context from the scatological to the scatological; what keeps the narrative afloat, apart from its headlong pace, is Shukla's eye for linguistic register, whose wide-ranging variety on the one hand gives each character and event an entirely appropriate place in the socio-cultural scheme of things, and on the other sets an almost impossible task for the English translator. Gillian Wright's version, though far from perfect (there are numerous blemishes in the detail of comprehension and translation), has met this challenge with skill and wit, and has added to the still very short list of modern Hindi works readable in English.

Shukla's writing draws on a linguistic continuum reaching from the prestigiously Sanskritic at one extreme to the earthily vernacular at the other; various points on the continuum comprise such vital idiolects as the college Principal's racy Awadhi, the drunken lisping of the decrepit Jognath, and the occasional brave venture

into English (or its local sub-variant) by officials such as the slogan-writers of anti-malaria campaigns. The translator has somehow to transmit something of the flavour of these different voices, since it is through the dialogue more than the narrative itself that the sounds, sights and smells of Shivpalganj reach the reader's senses. Conscious of this fact, Wright rashly substitutes a regional English voice for the Principal's Awadhi: she makes him speak in a B-movie version of northern English, bizarrely mixed with Hindi vocatives: 'Bhaiya, iftha' goest on like this tha' canst forget Vice Principal. Next year I'll damn well see thee out on the street, with no job!' (p. 23). Aye, and trouble at mill too, no doubt. To be fair, this is the least convincing of Wright's narrative voices and is not typical of the book as a whole; elsewhere, the whippets are kept indoors and she manages a much happier rendering, with a less ambitious but at least safer selection of speech patterns.

Much of the comedy of this novel derives from cultural incongruities of a type familiar everywhere in (especially non-metropolitan) India, these incongruities themselves being expressed through contrasts between various linguistic registers. Thus when Badri the Wrestler reveals himself rather too fundamentally (in the scene referred to above), the Hindi strikes an ironically lofty Sanskritic tone: *[unke] andakosh brahmand me pradarsit*

ho rahe the', 'his scrotum was displayed for the scrutiny of the universe at large'; the play on *andakosh and brahmand* is admittedly elusive, but Wright's flat 'testicles ... displayed to the world' (p. 239) makes little of the nicely rounded irony. Similarly, Shukla targets the literary pretentiousness of 'fine writing' generally when he describes a villager after a mugging as 'suffering from self-pity [*atma-daya*], acerbity [*akros*] and several other literary characteristics'; but Gillian Wright has inexplicably omitted this line (p. 236). Her blue pencil has also struck through a delightfully unexpected metaphor when Shukla describes college teacher Khanna Master - the very archetype of parochialism 'suddenly sitting up with knees bent and chest thrust forward in a pose made famous by the late Marilyn Monroe'.

Elsewhere too, in an alarming aspect of Wright's translation technique, the English version compresses or omits whole sections of narrative. Chapter twenty-nine contains a key passage in which Vaidyaji's authority is challenged by his younger son Rupan. A strong reaction to such insolence is naturally expected; but Vaidyaji 'did not bellow with the cry of a film hero's father; nor did he issue a statement as would a leader who, hearing that a commission was to investigate accusations of his corruption, insists that a universal definition of "corruption" be agreed upon before proceedings can

continue; nor did he laugh the contemptuous laugh of a writer who, secure in the great wealth which follows the listing of his books on college syllabi, reads a critical review. None of these things did he do when he heard such a strong challenge to his behaviour. He did not even do what came most naturally to a man of his profession: he did not say "*He Ram!*": 'Wright's translation cuts this passage down to the single last sentence, emasculating the irony of the whole episode. Other such cuts include nearly two whole pages from the opening of chapter six, and a passage from chapter five which memorably describes the pious toady Sanichar arriving inside Vaidyaji's house 'in a single monkey-like bound which confirmed the Darwinian theory of evolution'. Nowhere are these cuts admitted to or explained (there is no note to suggest that Shukla himself has approved them); some examples remove inter-textual references which would be obscure to the reader without a knowledge of Hindi literature (as on p. 295, where a paragraph alluding ironically to the novelist Jainendra Kumar falls to the cutting-room floor); others may reflect a consciousness that the incessantly ironic tone of the novel, unleavened by the original Hindi's variety of register, can make for heavy reading. Despite the often felicitous touch of Wright's translation, and the usefulness of at last having a readable translation of this important novel, it has to be said that

her English version is like Sanichar's underwear in having 'holes in some important places'.

Book reviewed : Raag Darbari
Author : Shrilal Shukla
Publisher : Rajkamal Prakashan,
New Delhi-2

HINDI ALOCHANA KA VAMPAKSHA

Nilima Mishra

Critique i.e. 'critical reflection' is a highly intellectual activity which has as its prerequisites, deep understanding of the subject matter and knowledge of criteria and norms of its evaluation which are analysed and reanalysed during the course of reflection. Rationally reflecting on this 'critical reflection' is all the more intellectually demanding. The writer of the Book 'Hindi Alochana ka Vampaksha'. Dr Asha Upadhyaya undertakes this arduous task and accomplishes it with aplomb. The subject of the book is very profound but simplicity of language and fluidity of style make it easy to grasp.

In this book Dr Asha Upadhyaya clarifies the nature of 'critique' in the context of Hindi literature as according to her, literary critique, in its ideal form, is not only an explanation of a literary work or writings, it is almost a new creation and also provides creative satisfaction. Asha distinguishes among various kinds of critiques. As progressive approach of critique forms the subject matter of Dr Asha Upadhyaya's book, she tries to understand western influences on Hindi criticism and challenges arising out of it. Marxism is a progressive life philosophy, it is pro-people, it is a scientific view-point. The leftist critique, understandably, is also taken to be man-centric and scientific. If the aim of literature is the good of ordinary man, then it is absolutely necessary to delineate minutely the structure of society and its eco-political distresses. Progressive views and literature make us humane and create a social or collective consciousness. This fact is dealt with in this book rather elaborately in a very simple, straight but effective manner. Hence even the ordinary student who wants to learn about this kind of critique, can do it without much difficulty. Progressive critique advocates changeability of aesthetic-literary norms-they are not eternal as

they develop and die out in the course of time. Progressive critique does not recognise a literature which is not concerned with ordinary people. Literature, according to it, ought to be simple and this simplicity makes it humane. The main emphasis of this kind of literature is on facts or reality of life, not on figurative language etc. An art divorced from ordinary man or society is not an art, according to progressive or leftist critique, and to bring both of them close, it is mandatory that the common man becomes the subject-matter of literature and art.

This book underlines the concept of 'modernity' as well. In this context, the writer analyses the meanings of modernity and tradition. According to her, traditions are dynamic, not static. Modernity is actually a present stage of tradition. This dynamism helps in man's progress. Artistic and literary traditions are also open to change and experiment. Without understanding all this, Hindi critique and society of today can not be evaluated properly. Hence, the writer analyses views of various thinkers and tries to clarify the meaning of modernity in the correct sense. In 'Hindi Aalochana ka Vampaksha', Asha Upadhyaya reflects on the dispute between literature and science. She agrees with Dr Shivadan Singh Chauhan who opines that literature and science are not poised against each other as they both try to discover the reality in their own individual way. Science, literature and art, all three put

together can work to the enrichment of human life. Therefore it is necessary for literature to take science under consideration, then only it can represent and analyse its time and society. In this context, on some pages the writer discusses minutely the problems of communalism—the biggest crisis of today. In Dr Upadhyaya's opinion, creative literature works firstly on the level of sensitivity and finally on the level of values. It is literature's power or capability that provides new and healthy direction to those who have lost the way. Since the main interest of a creative writer is man (common man), in this light the critical appraisal of the basic characters of modern criticism and conventional criticism have also been done in this book. Amrit Rai, Muktibodh, Dr Ramvilas Sharma, Namwar Singh, Dr Manager Pandey, Dr Shiv Kumar Mishra and many other progressive–marxist critics, all come here under literary evaluation of the writer with analytical views and explanations. A new focus has been thrown on almost all progressive critics of today and yesterday. Asha opens some new facts of progressive criticism and elaborates upon them with proper logic. It could be said that this book reveals the new chapters of progressive criticism and writings. The fact is that Asha Upadhyay analyses almost every Hindi critic much objectively, which makes this effort of the writer very mature and laudable when complicated groupism is mounting in Hindi literature, especially

in criticism.

Criticism is not only an explanation of a writing. It is a new writing on the writings. Following this doctrine Asha takes some kind of risk too but she is clear about her content and each and every line follows the path of new criticism. The new criticism goes beyond what has been written. It emphasises how and when it was written too, because how and when it is written is the reflection of our time, our socio-economic atmosphere, our thoughts, our political system and reaction of our society. The whole literature is for socio-economic and man's improvement and this is the next truth that the 'public literature' comes through the struggle of socio-economic, cultural and political disparity and conflicts. Progressive critics try to reach the root cause of this kind of difference. Therefore, progressive criticism goes into poetry, fiction or any other form of creative writing. It is very difficult to discuss what society

needs but a writer knows what is the need of time and society. Moreover, a progressive literary critic knows what is the need of time and what is the thinking of society. Asha Upadhyay knows or deeply wants to know what Hindi literature needs now. Perhaps, it is time to say that Hindi literature needs a lucid, faithful, honest and dauntless review or criticism. Asha Upadhyaya has been able to do this job very well.

At this time, when a heavy shadow is trying to make or overtake the future of Hindi, 'Hindi Aalochana ka Vampaksha' by Asha Upadhyay throws light on Hindi criticism, its content, its intricacy and its spirit. This kind of book is the need of the time. This one is Asha Upadhyay's third book. Her two books, published before 1. 'Stree, Samaya, Samaj aur Shabd' and 2. 'Alochana Drishti aur Dr Ramvilas Sharma' have been very much appreciated by readers and students. The latest book Hindi 'Alochana ka Vampaksha' will also fulfill the necessary expectations of a large field of Hindi criticism.

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