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EDITORIAL

From the Desk of the Editor-in-Chief

It is a great pleasure that we have been able to publish Volume 2, Issue 3 of our coveted journal The Contour. It is declared that the views and observations presented in the writings are solely of the respective authors, not of the editor/editorial board of the journal.

We sincerely express our indebtedness to all involved in this venture. We express a deep sense of gratitude to the members of the editorial board and the contributors for their active support. Special thanks should go to Suman Saha and Samarpan Chatterjee who with their expertise in computer have worked strenuously and sincerely for giving the shape to the journal.

31/01/2016



Susanta Kumar Bardhan
Editor-In-Chief
The Contour

ARTICLE

In Custody: Deven's Alienation from Self

Subrata Kumar Rana

Abstract

*The term 'alienation' is a word with scores of connotations. According to Webster's Dictionary, it means "a withdrawing or separation of a person, or his affections, from an object or position of former attachment". Alienation is that sense of estrangement which is generated by failure on the part of a person to fulfil one's desire. It is the concealed affliction of an individual soul. In theory such alienation may be traced back to the doctrine individualism, when man considers himself secluded, insecure and anxious for his physical, cerebral, and metrical wellbeing. Deven, the central character of Anita Desai's illustrious novel *In Custody* (1983), published in 1984, seems swayed that if and when he falls, nobody will pity and help him. Each man, in a sense, considers himself an alien in this world, and so he remains. He does not question why he is alone or why the world seems to be unresponsive to him. He is born alone, and is probably haunted by the feeling of loneliness or psychosomatic marginalization.*

Key Words: alienation, individualism, psychosomatic marginalization.

Speaking of her fictional mode, Anita Desai, the youngest of the major Indian English novelists, explains:

By writing novels that have been catalogued by critics as psychological, and that purely subjective, I have been left free to employ, simply the language of the interior. Even when two characters meet, they use this particular type of language—the language of their thoughts, their interior selves which has nothing to do with geography and can be written in any language. (Das 78)

It is clear from the above statement that Anita Desai is more interested in the “interior selves” (Naik 241) than in the social and political realities. Her protagonists are individuals for “whom aloneness alone” (Naik 241) is “the sole natural condition, aloneness alone the treasure worth

treasuring (Naik 241). Writing for her, “is an effort to discover, and then to underline, and finally to convey the true significance of things” (Naik 241).

Desai’s distinguished novel *In Custody* (1983), published in 1984, “dramatizes a conflict which is central to several of Desai’s novels: that between a passive and reflective mode of existence and more outward and passionate engaged life” (Ali 725).

Here, timid protagonist Deven, the denizen of a neglected town, Mirpore, where the inhabitants appear to be devoid of dignity in their sphere of life, the son of a middle-class widow who has to accept the drudgery of an ill-paid job of a lecturer in Hindi literature in a college (Lala Ram Lal College) has been represented as an alienated self.

The term ‘alienation’ is a word with many connotations. According to Webster’s Dictionary, it means “a withdrawing or separation of a person, or his affections, from an object or position of former attachment”. Alienation is that sense of estrangement which is generated by failure on the part of a person to fulfil one’s desire. It is the hidden suffering of an individual soul. In theory such alienation may be traced back to the doctrine individualism, when man considers himself isolated, insecure and anxious for his physical, mental, and metrical wellbeing. He seems convinced that if and when he falls, nobody will pity and help him.

So man stands in the state of alienation. Each man, in a sense, considers himself an alien in this world, and so he remains. He does not question why he is alone or why the world seems to be unresponsive to him. He is born alone, and is probably haunted by the feeling of loneliness in his childhood. As he grows up, he understands himself more in relation to the world and his fellows. With the understanding comes selfish love. It makes him respect the society for the sake of his safety and security. He gets attached to his family, his house and the material with which he works. His selfish love makes him respect the world with which he in conflict.

From her studies of human nature, Desai has formulated her doctrine of alienation: Aloneness is man’s real condition. In her novel *In Custody* she has laid stress on the doctrine in her own way. According to Desai we believe that each man is an alien, a stranger in this world, and so he remains. She suggests that the feeling of alienation oppresses a man because his mind is a creation of this world. By world she means the values prevalent in the modern society. She also points out that the symptoms of alienation in man’s mind are a feeling of loneliness, anxiety, despair, and a vague sense of fear. These symptoms are evident in every modern individual. So Deven in Desai’s

Novel *In Custody* is not an exception in this world because, Deven's lack of fulfilment is highlighted through the progression of his thoughts which deal with the tension between his dream and actuality, between his aspiration and achievement. His agony puts him in an unfathomable despair and alienates him from not only this world, but also from his own self.

Deven, who is conscious of his own inadequacy, finds his world turns upside down when he becomes involved with one of Delhi's leading poets, the mercurial Nur, a poet of Urdu Literature, a figure he has previously idolized. The conflict between two modes of existence is also played out on another level, with the safe comfortable language of Hindi, the subject Deven teaches, being contrasted with the passionate outpouring of Nur's Urdu verse. In the first of the two passages extracted here, Deven is commissioned by his friend Murad, the son of a wealthy Kashmiri carpet dealer in Delhi, a spoilt rich boy, and an editor of a magazine- *Awaz*, to interview Nur; in the second he goes to do so. Murad begins to influence Deven again and again to collect some special articles for his journal. For a moment confused Deven thinks it is not Nur who is the comet but Murad who has come from Delhi to show him light; he is willing to believe everything. Deven assures Murad by saying that he would be extremely happy if he could do something for his magazine but he is unable to give up his job, his only source of income for, he has to support his family consists of his wife Sarla and a son, Manu. "I know, I know, Murad", Deven sighed 'How happy I would be to join you on the staff, work for you, for the journal. But I can't give up my job here. I had to take it when it was offered. I was married, Sarla was expecting, you know [...]' (15). Deven dreams of restoring Urdu (Urdu Poetry of Nur) to its original pedestal glory. Deven dreams of becoming a poet to have an individual identity in this modern world. Now he lives in an ivory tower.

However, Deven starts his journey with the intention to have an interview with Nur to bring out a magazine where Urdu language, especially, Urdu poetry of Nur may be kept alive. Led by a boy Deven nervously enters the room where he reveals his identity to Nur and informs him that he has come from Mirpore with a letter from Murad beg, an editor of *Awaz*- which contains a special request to allow him an interview on Urdu poetry. Nur reacts against it and tells him that Urdu poetry is dead and waiting to be buried. But Deven assures him that they would never allow that to happen. His assurance impresses Nur in certain ways.

On the other hand, it is very pathetic that he is becoming detached from his family as a consequence of his new responsibility his acquaintance with Nur has given him.

Deven rattled homeward by bus swimming in the current of frustration as he fails to have the proposed interview for which he went to Delhi bearing all his problems of day-to-day life. He thinks sorrow visits him with the advancement of dawn and daylight. His embittered mind decides not to go home to see Sarla's stony face but he thinks it would be better for him to go to the college directly to heave a sigh of relief for the moment. However, he comes back home like a stranger where Sarla keeps herself aloof from him and consequently he writes in the state of alienation from his wife and son: "When he did get home, Sarla was standing in the doorway with her arms and her sari wrapped about her shoulders [...]". (65) "[...] and satred at him as if he were stranger, an interloper" (66). Deven could not make out what he would do because, he cannot deny his duty to his son and his family. He cannot let them starve. The question of educational responsibility to his college students arises in his mind, where if he fails to perform it, he will be isolated from his college students. His irresponsibility to his college students has already made him alienated as a teacher: "that was what made him a boring teacher [...]". (12)

After a long mental struggle he decides to see Nur after receiving his letter. It is the birthday celebration of Imtiaz Begum when Deven comes to meet Nur for the second time where he wants to know from Nur if he has sometning to dictate to him for which he needs someone to help him as his assistant. But he does not actually want what Nur wants. He only wants to have an interview to write an article for the journal. Even he desires to record Nur's voice and recitation.

Deven dreams that if he succeeds to publish Nur's poetry after fifteen years of silence, it will be "a whale in a pail of water" (98). But he needs a tape recorder which Abid Siddqui, the head of the Urdu Department of his college, supplies him.

On the day of third attempt of Deven to have an interview with the help of an operator of tape-recorder but unfortunately Nur denies and asks him to go back to his house and to leave this out of his mind. Nur rebukes him and Nur's wife demands a large sum of money to arrange an interview. Deven is terribly upset as he has no money to pay Nur's wife.

Here, we see that Deven is mentally depressed. Sarla has begun to suspect him for his frequent visit to Delhi because, she thinks he (Deven) goes to Delhi for some undisclosed affair or enjoyment. Misunderstanding vitiates the whole relationship. The tragic conflict that lies at the

core of personal existence is something completely private, something hidden from public view, and revealed only in glimpses as the story-teller develops her tale. Existentialism points to the meaninglessness of human life. He thinks himself as a caged animal in a zoo. “Marriage, family and job have placed him to this; now there is no way out of it.”(131) “In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile [...] (Petersen 187).

Siddiqui, the head of the Urdu Department, sanctions money for Deven to pay Begum for the proposed interview which gladdens him so much. Deven is in hope in hopelessness. Deven hands over a flat envelop to begum and thus gets the permission to talk to Nur. There, intoxicated Nur began to recite some verses and poems but it is Chiku who fails to record properly, has recorded mainly all his abuses, his order for palatable dish and drinks along with some poems. “By doing this he (Deven) draws attention very emphatically to the falseness of any scheme of order, and there by highlights the violent and chaotic reality of modern life” (Peck 110). The innermost thoughts and feelings of Deven are laid bare through a sort of cinematographic close up. It very clearly indicates his alienation or his psychological marginalization.

Within a few days Deven, with the help of Pintu, another nephew of Murad is capable of writing something which is enough for an article, or perhaps a monograph which the colleg printing press may like to print, otherwise the Urdu Department may print it. He, then, goes to Murad and hands over the article.

Nur’s agonizing death shocked Deven too much. It also made Deven feel his unfathomable responsibility to enliven Nur through the publication of his works, as his interior monologue reflects:

“He had imagined he was taking Nur’s poetry into safe custody, and not realised that if he who was to be custodian of Nur’s genius, then Nur would become his custodian and place him in custody too”. (203) “He had accepted the gifts of Nur’s poetry and that meant he was the custodian of Nur’s very soul and spirit. He could not deny or abandon that under any pressure”.(204)

Deven’s dream of restoring Urdu to its original pedestral of glory has been partially (or in a fashion) fulfilled through his association with Nur. The great question to Deven is, how does he feel about life? What, in the last analysis, is his professionalism and from his fantasticalness. This

is isolation of an artist from his own world. Like Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*, *In Custody* seeks to focus the mind of Deven lost in darkness of his confused purposes and thwarted ambitions. Pip, in Dickens's *Great Expectations*, is a boy, an alien in the sordid and vulgar surroundings but rises above it and tries to become a gentleman. The play, *Look Back in Anger* by John Osborne, is a frightening study of alienation of Jimmy, an uneducated working-class man in a social milieu hostile to his aspirations and needs. His cynicism, bitterness and anger are Hamletian, and betray his pain and anguish for the purposelessness of his life. In Deven's case it is not only just the disparity between his dreams and actuality, but the fulfilment of his dreams, his values self-created and self-realised, though hopelessly disproportionate to the circumstances he is trying to control.

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Sri Aurobindo: A Postmodern Sublime Poet

Dr. Atal Kumar

Among all the leading poets of the early twentieth century Indian English poets Sri Aurobindo is vibrant with the contemporary literary ethos—modernism vis-a-vis postmodernism. His modernism was not haunted by what T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound found during the First World War rather pressed by his inner urge of Sublime. Sri Aurobindo's Muse was drenched in the showers of Sublime. He had been a great Indian religious, philosophical and social thinker as well as postmodern sublime poet. The great spiritual master was born on 15 August 1872 in an aristocratic and anglicised family in Calcutta. Sri Krishnandan Ghose, his father, was among them who first went to England for his medical education and returned with anglophilic blood in his veins. Certainly, the early life of that mystic poet was moulded under the parasol of his father's anglicised habits, ideas and ideals. His father's anglophilic disposition induced him to keep his children away from the Indian ways of life. On the contrary Sri Aurobindo's mother Swarnlata Devi belonged to the clan of great Indian Renaissance man of the nineteenth century, Rishi Rajnarayan Bose. She was the adviser of the new composite culture of Indian soil. Dr. Krishnandan Ghose's inner temperament forced him to nurture him in English atmosphere and not from native ways and native language. As a result of that Sri Aurobindo along with his elder brothers Sri Manmohan Ghose and Sri Benoy Bhushan Ghose were admitted to Loreto Convent School at Darjeeling. Evidently, he was accustomed to use English language as his mother tongue. In 1879 they were sent to England to continue their study without acquainted with native language and customs. At the tender age of seven Sri Aurobindo got his early education under the care of Rev. William H. Drewett and Mrs. Drewett who trained him in English, Latin, French and History. In 1884, he got admission at St. Paul's School, London and studied there for six years. The excellence and talent of Sri Aurobindo caught the attention of Dr. Walker, the headmaster of the school. Showing classical languages and literature during school days enriched his creative genius and cultivated the soil to bear fruit. During his very

childhood he was conferred with the 'Bedford Prize' in history and 'Butterworth Prize' in literature. That legendary figure spent a tough life in England. Due to his father's extravagance, his resources were meagre. For many years he had to often survive on a frugal diet which made himself reliance and perfect. He won a scholarship that facilitated him to enrol in King's College, Cambridge where he obtained graduation degree with a first class in classical Tripos. At Cambridge, Oscar Browning was remarkably captivated by the wisdom and intelligence of Sri Aurobindo. He was well versed in European languages such as English Greek, Latin, French, German and Italian. Despite his full time involvement in spiritual solitude, meditating, contemplating and writing he was associated with other worldly life.

After attainment of realisation Sri Aurobindo administered his creative and spiritual work a new orientation. He was liberated from this world on 5th December, 1950 but considered as the finest flower of Indian Renaissance which began with Raja Ram Mohan Roy and finally culminated in Indian Independence.

Sri Aurobindo plunged himself into inner and outer activities of India. In the early phase of his life he was a powerful nationalist which was not merely a Chauvinistic approach to anti-colonialism. In his opinion, nationalism is a 'yajna' and he worshipped his motherland as Goddess. He was a staunch advocate of the liberation of humanity from the colonial yoke, which moulded his mind as a postmodernist thinker. From 1905 to 1910, he emerged as a 'meteor' in the firmament of Indian Freedom Struggle. He became the spokesperson of the conscience and aspiration of the Indian masses. During his 'ashramvas' (imprisonment), he was spiritually enlightened with the philosophy of Upanishad:

"Ishavasyamidam Sarvam yat Kincha jagatyam jagat¹ .

The entire universe is pervaded by the same spiritual power. He was deeply involved in spiritual quest. He propagated the philosophy of Integral whole - i.e. life cannot be compartmentalised into the intellectual, the emotional, the material, the psychological and the spiritual. He was aiming at the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. He was charged with extraordinary knowledge and wisdom. He produced a large number of great seminal works viz. – 'The Secret of Vedas',

'Essays on the Gita', 'Life Divine' and 'Savitri' etc. These divine creations placed him at the height of sublimity.

A realised spiritual French lady Mirra Alfasa popularly known as Mother came into contact with Sri Aurobindo. This was one of the greatest spiritual meetings of human history. It was mother who conceived the concept of Auroville. It has come up against a lot of problems, a lot of difficulties and conflicts. It finds the inner door and opens on to deeper consciousness in this hour of darkness, strife and unrest. It is reminiscent with Omar Khayyam:

There was a door to which I found no key,

There was veiled past which I could not see,

Some little talk a while of thee and me

There was, and then no more of me and thee².

Sri Aurobindo combined an intellect of the highest order with a rarely equalled spiritual force that transcended the limits of time and space. He had an unshakable faith in the future of this great country. His post modernistic view forced him to foresee a world union providing a fairer, brighter and noble life for all humankind. He advocated for dual or multicultural citizenship and interchange or fusion of different cultures. Thus, he was a global visionary, which is one of the ingredients of Postmodernism.

The postmodernism is a literary movement which developed from the trend of modernism or aestheticism. It is a literary movement exists in the penumbra of the umbra of modernism. It is not a departure of modernism. It makes man empirical. It is a movement based on liberal ethics. It champions the cause of depressed classes. It propagates the message to preserve Mother Earth or maintain balance in Eco-System. It believes in World Unity. It propagates the message of Universal brotherhood. It advocates about society free from narrow division. It tries to revive ancient philosophy with empirical mind. Postmodernists raise voice against the abuses of science and inhuman use of natural wealth. They worry about the fatal

condition of the world in near future. Postmodernism is just like a reawakening of diseased mind. It is a movement which has similarity with the movements developed during the age of satire. Postmodernists move forward to change the go of society.

Postmodernism is a medicine to cure the chronic diseases of society viz.- immorality, animal passion, lust, corruption, slavery of sense organs, pseudo-pride, terrorism, pollution, treachery, lack of nationalism, pseudo-power-consciousness, pseudo-rationality, or empiricism etc.

It is his creativity that forces him to highlight the geniuses of the greatest classicist of world literature. He also deals with the good qualities of Bengali literary artists. He adopted their qualities and characteristics for his mental richness. He tried to suggest people to follow footprints of these writers. His poems are inspirational in nature. These are the mantras of reformation and reawakening which stood him as a postmodern poet with sublime vision. Thus, his Early Poems also reflect his empirical view. His long narratives provide solution for post-modern unrest and dissatisfaction. His early poems are effusions in terms of sensuous and impassioned verse of a rich adolescent sensibility. After Yogic practice, he felt his inner power of lyrical vein. He attained perfection to project sublime, perfect and the maturest poetry. His early lyrics are expressions of his spiritual states and consciousness. Some of his early philosophical poems are projected from his vedantic ideas and ideals. They also provide solution for eradication of vices from society. It is Sri Aurobindo who propagated the message of peace, pleasure and solace which are the demands of the postmodern society. The poet has rendered his mystical experiences and spiritual consciousness in these poems.

Most of his sonnets present his philosophic concept. They are the reflections of delight of divine realizations. There are the poems of concentrated purity and the language of intuitive expressions. It comprehends dimensions that are cosmic and supracosmic. Its classical story deals with the victorious fight of love against death. The complete 'Savitri' is the fruit of almost twenty five years of Sri Aurobindo's mental exercise.

Thus, the canvas of Savitri is as wide as cosmos. It is the treasure house of mysticism, occultisms, philosophy, and history of evolution, history of man, empiricism, sublimity and seeds of post modernism. It is the outcome of the richest symbolic mind of Sri Aurobindo. It depicts the Vedic idea of strife between powers of Light and Powers of Darkness. The poem reflects man's unquenchable thirst for perfection and the thirst for immortality. It is based on these postmodern ideas of later twentieth century. The story attains its cosmic significance and the fate of Satyavan rings with the destiny of man. This story turns impossible into possible. Savitri very firmly challenges the rule of nature, which echoes the post modernistic view of the poet. Man is capable to change his destiny without the help of divine grace. Sri Aurobindo himself remarks:

It has been planned not on the scale of Lycidas or Camus or some brief narrative poem, but of the longer epical narrative almost a mirror, though a very minor-Ramayana, it aims not at a minimum but at an exhaustive exposition of its world vision or world-interpretation that is

the method. I have chosen in Savitri³ .

The vastness of subject matter and treatment distinguishes "Savitri" from the other epics. The great classical poet Dante describes of Inferno, Hell through which the human spirit has to pass to arrive at purgatory to be purified of its dross to reach the vision Divine and the earth remains condemned as a 'vale of tears'. Milton also wants to 'justify the ways of God to Man'. However, they could not succeed in their mission. It is "Savitri" which refracts the 'hope and fulfilment' on earth. It weaves the conditions of man's highest fulfilment in its epic pattern. A B. Purani has very aptly remarked that:

In raising this basic problem of elimination of the Inconscient, the cause of man's subjection to his imperfection, suffering and evil, Savitri is unique and goes deeper than other epics towards its solution. It calls out the Divine that is hidden at present in the human mould to deal direct

with the problem of man's emancipation and establishment of the Divine
Kingdom on Earth⁴.

"Savitri" was composed at the highest pitch of mental consciousness. It is the mixture of highest manner and poetic technique. It is a beautiful poem of sublime thought.

Thus, Sri Aurobindo in his poetry fused the concept of empiricism. From his Cambridge creation to Pondicherry creative workshop, he has shown sublimity vis-a-vis postmodernism. His poetry is just like a dormant seed of Post-modernism latent for centuries in the fertile soil, which ultimately takes its full shape during latter half of the twentieth century.

Sri Aurobindo is an evolutionist and gradualist who is always ready to transform the Universe. His concept of 'Internationalism' has been emerged out of his concept of 'Nationalism'. It is rightly observed that nation is essentially spiritual in its origin and character. In his metaphysical vein, he affirms that the nations of the world are different manifestations of an indivisible spiritual principle, the Virata Purusha, the Great Being. His emphasis for world union reflects his ambivalence of political sociology.

Broadly speaking his leading ideas are sociological in formulation despite metaphysical in origin. Sri Aurobindo is the advocate of middle path of Lord Buddha. He is in favour of avoiding extremes of this universe. That is just like a bondage or hindrance in the path of divine success. It is not wise to ignore empirical view. Really speaking he attained perfection to reach at the apex point of mental and spiritual consciousness. He projects his perfection, spirituality and sublimity in his writings. Despite his whimsical escapism, he established himself as the Sublime and Postmodern thinker of this world. To tell the truth Sri Aurobindo remains a perfect example of Hero as poet and Hero as a Man of Letters as propounded by Thomas Carlyle.

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Interplay of reason and unreason: Interrogating Lear's Fool as the Commentator

Ritushree Sengupta

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Visva-Bharati

Shakespeare's characters are far from being type characters. Their respective qualities mark them with all their differences from each other. Shakespearean Fools are no exceptions in this regard. They appear in different plays to perform particularly individualistic functions. In King Lear, the Fool serves a very complex role. Through his caricatures and witty remarks he perfects the role of an efficient entertainer and also the monarch's alter ego. There has been much debate about the function of the Fool as characterised by Shakespeare in many of his plays. This paper attempts to explore the apparent limitations of the role in particular and the degree to which it transcends it. Considering the interplay of reason and unreason, it further interrogates Lear's Fool as the ideal commentator much needed for a complete understanding and appreciation of the play.

It was neither Shakespeare nor Erasmus who invented the wise fool. If traced minutely one can find this paradoxically behaving character almost as old as Socrates. The fool in motley, cap and codpiece was chiefly associated with fertility rights. A strange amalgam of an entertainer as well as a critic is what we locate in a Fool and in his comments we observe a strong sense of wisdom combined with a fine sense of wit. It has been repeatedly argued by various literary scholars that Shakespeare took the wise fool of Erasmus and set him moving on the Elizabethan stage. Shakespearean fools are much more than theatrical prototypes, they are finely carved out complex individuals clearly distinguishable from each other. Shakespeare adopts the tradition but transcends it brilliantly. One can never trace prominent similarities between Touchstone, Feste, Lavache or Fool—Touchstone is a comic realist in the romantic forest of Arden; Feste is an observer and a detached participant in the world of harsh realities, while Lear's fool is a personification of the Christian doctrine of wise folly.

The very entity of "Professional fools" became much prominent in the mediaeval England, approximately during 13th century. The rigid structure of medieval society relied on these reality

maintenance constructs, to create a sense of release for and in the population. Ultimately the role was meant to re-affirm the hierarchy and strictness of the medieval system. However much later in Elizabethan times, a tradition of maintaining or rather keeping fools usually in courts, though trends to keep fools in households also survived (there was a “fool” in St. Thomas More’s household–Henry Patenson) was quite in fashion. Elizabethan stage not only saw Robert Armin, the sophisticated clown in Shakespeare’s company (1599) but before him there was William Kemp, the master of jig and table side entertainments. But even before him there was Richard Tarleton whose very appearance on stage made the audience laugh. Perhaps it was the incoming of these comic personas that afforded Shakespeare to construct such strong characters behind those merry cloaks. Without the influence of Kemp and Armin, we would have had no Touchstone, no Feste and certainly no Fool of Lear. In the mediaeval period there were certain festivals where the fool was elevated to a high level and celebrated promiscuously. Such as if we recall *Twelfth Night*, we can remember how it marked the end of a festive season in which there were other occasions alluded to by Shakespeare, notably the *Festum Stultorum* or Feast of fools, though at times it was celebrated on St. Stephen’s Day (26th December) or New Year’s Day, rather than Twelfth Night. So, one can certainly come up with a statement that fool was not only a known figure but also a well-accepted one in the society as well as on the stage.

The court jesters however fell into two groups: they could be born idiots with a natural knack for jesting; or, they could also be witty and accomplished professional entertainers. The Fool in *King Lear* belongs to the first category for he is ‘nature’s natural’. It takes a wise man to be a fool, though an ardently paradoxical statement, but it is somehow true. To modern readers or audience or readers the Fool may appear to be a bizarre kind if character, but the jester figure was not only familiar but very popular to Shakespearean audience. One reason behind this perhaps is that a large proportion of his audience hailed from the groundling sections. The fool played a stock character on the stage, linking actors and the audience, playing tricks on the characters in the play and thus amusing the spectators. But other than that, as a traditional court jester, the fool was not only dear but also a privileged person in the royal courts, who as Jacques puts in *As you like it*, could ‘blow on’ anyone he pleased. With the power of his wit, he could comment with complete freedom (certainly the fear of being whipped lurked) on some odd traits or stupid actions of men much above his rank. Interestingly, whipping is a symbolic comic punishment. The fool is licensed with the authority to comment on his subjects or patrons, we can trace back to Gonerill’s statement

citing Lear's fool as the "all licensed fool" but paradoxically whenever his comments somehow disturbs his patron, he is whipped or at least threatened to be whipped. Though apparently it is a mere punishment, but actually it is symbolic, in a comic way it keeps the balance of power alright. However, Lear's fool ignoring Gonerill's infuriation and all the threats of whipping throughout the play keeps on making comments without the least hesitation that no one else would have dared to utter in front of the mighty king.

What possibly distinguishes the Fool of *Lear* is that although he speaks quite like the other fools of Shakespeare, but most of his statements are somehow pointed towards Lear, trying too hard to 'rub in' the mistakes of his 'nuncle.' His apparently happy comments somehow project the darkest realities and it has been suggested by William Empson that the fool represents in an embodied form, the conscience of Lear. Shakespeare perhaps had an intention to lay threadbare the strange puzzles of human life and fool was perhaps the best instrument that he could use.

More than the witty comments of the Fool in *Lear*, what appeals to us ardently is the wisdom behind those statements. Nature has not only blessed him with wit, but also with a strong sense of wisdom. He apprehends much earlier the consequences which may befall on Lear while the wise king fails to behold even a bit of it. The Fool always advises others, to disdain the company of Lear for he has fallen from grace, but ironically enough the fool never deserts the king. He constantly reminds Lear of the wrongs that Lear had done to Cordelia and at times it becomes too harsh to bear and in rage the king calls him "a bitter fool". Well aware of his status, the fool still crosses his limit ignoring the threats of whipping and boldly states – "Truth's a dog must to kennel" implying that though men desire to have truth, they can hardly stand it, so truth like a dog is whipped back to the kennel. Again, it is this "bitter" fool who rushes out with Lear in the storm ignoring every tinge of self-interest and comfort, shouting "Tarry, take the fool with thee" and he sings, "But I will tarry but the Fool will stay". The fool at the same time plays a dual role. Firstly, as an objective commentator constantly commenting on the follies, mistakes and the blatantly incorrect decisions of Lear and secondly as a subjective sympathizer, who perhaps criticizes Lear on the surface but also loves him dearly.

Evaluating the comments or the remarks of Lear's fool, one can certainly observe that other than wisdom, the jester also has his own share of common sense – certainly his deflating common sense projects more vividly Edgar's feigned madness and also Lear's ravings:

LEAR: Could'st thou save nothing? Would'st thou give'em all?

FOOL: Nay, he reserved a blanket; else we had all been shamed.

Again when Lear attempts to tear off his clothes to become like Tom O'Bedlam (Edgar in disguise) - "poor, bare, forked animal", Fool terminates his desire by saying - "Prithee, Nuncle, be contended 'tis a naughty night to swim in". Often that has been marked as fool's mad babblings and tasteless jokes are in reality shrewd comments on the dramatic action. Shakespeare through the comments of the fool sums up the exact position of the king "thou should'st not have been old till thou had'st been wise" and when Kent says, "this is not altogether fool, my lord," he is evidently correct.

Classical drama had the tradition of using chorus, a group of singers who commented on the dramatic actions of the play with a collective voice. However, Elizabethan stage did not witness the chorus. Rather they turned towards comic characters, a striking combination of intelligence and buffoonery. But somehow the functions remained the same - while the chorus commented on the dramatic action with a collective voice, the fool performs the same but only with his own voice. Other than that, as the tragedy advances towards a graver tragic ambiance, with the increasing pity and fear, it becomes necessary to provide moments to release the tension, not wholly for that might spoil the mood altogether, but of course partially. These are known as moments of comic relief and Lear's fool certainly attempts to provide comic relief. But again, even if the purpose of the fool is to provide comic relief, he is not a master of that art, for his long and winding speeches defies and neglect the very essence of comic relief, which is at its best when kept short, brief and humorous. His speeches are certainly humorous but one can hardly find them short and brief.

The character of the fool is so well devised that it often compels us to wonder if he is the second important character after Lear (at least in the early sections of the play). Such is the insight of the clown that he easily reduces the king to the level of a fool.

FOOL: The one in motley here

The other found out there!

LEAR: Dost thou call me fool boy?

FOOL: All thy other titles thou hast given away that thou wast born with.

However, in the comments of the fool, apart from the wit, dark humour, grotesque jocularity another thing which strikes us is a sheer presence of irony which successfully provides the clearest insight into the play. Paying no heed to the fool's sayings, Lear cries: "Who is it that can tell me who I am?" to which the fool answers "Lear's shadow". The fool as a commentator not only remarks or criticizes the dramatic action, may be on the surface he does, but more than that for what he stands remarkably distinct is that he develops the moral tone of the play.

King Lear has been described as a play about Christian justice and a play about Christian patience; it is also a play about Christian folly, which is paradoxically to be interpreted as a kind of wisdom. By popular tradition, if not classical precedent there had always been in English drama prior to Shakespeare a tendency to mix low comedy with serious action. One need only to check the morality plays with their comic "vices" and the popular tragedies such as Horestes or Cambises, to apprehend this peculiar Elizabethan taste for unorthodox combination. But in *Lear* the presence of the comic element is quite different, for it is more intensely linked with the tragedy. In fact it is through the foolery that an important aspect of the Christian theme is conveyed to the spectators.

According to St. Paul, whom Tillyard regards as the principal biblical source of Elizabethan and Jacobean theological doctrine, true wisdom comes only from God, and is virtually opposed to the worldly wisdom which man uses to justify his own fallen nature:

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise."

And again, more apt to the situation in *Lear*, St. Paul states:

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."

"Confounding" is exactly what the fool does to *Lear* and *Lear's* pitiful plea to Cordelia that he is "old and foolish" echoes the words of Ecclesiastes – "Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king who will no more be admonished."

We cannot assume exactly what instigated the construction of the character of the fool; rather we can glance at the Elizabethan theology advocating the curious fact that man must be "convicted of folly" in order to become aware of spiritual truth. The theological doctrine which admitted man's

reason to be “foolish” without divine aid is found comprehensively projected in Torneur’s The Atheist’s tragedy, written almost at the same time when Shakespeare was framing King Lear. In the Act V, Scene I of Torneur’s play, D’Amville, the murdering atheist is confronted by Montferrers’ (the victim) ghost, who warns him:

D’Amville! With all thy wisdom th’art a fool
Not like those fool that we term innocents,
But a most wretched miserable fool
Which instantly, to the confusion of
Thy projects, with despair thou shalt behold.

The ghost in his speech perfectly marks two different kinds of foolishness, both of which are found in Lear. We almost see the accurate prophecy of the ghost echoed by D’Amville in his dying speech:

There was the strength of natural understanding. But nature is a fool. There is a power
Above her that hath overthrown the pride
Of all my projects and posterity.

The statements or dialogues in Torneur do highlight the thoughts underlying the action of Lear. It functions as a key to apprehend the symbolic function of the fool in Lear. Like the fool in Twelfth Night and Timon of Athens, he highlights the mortification, not of flesh but of mind. Ambiguously enough, the fool utters, “Marry, here’s Grace and a cod-piece; that’s a wise man and a fool. “These wise fools had another dramatic function, which was to deflate their master’s pride by speaking out bitter truths about their deeds and hence bringing them to the light of spiritual wisdom. Lear refuses to hear the truth from his own daughter, but accepts it when chided by the fool. Unlike Feste, Lear’s fool is never intentionally unkind, but is a true innocent – a “natural” fool, whose wisdom is not self-fashioned. His bitter comments are born out of a deep sense of affection and loyalty that instead of curbing the tragic effect, it enhances the gravity of the pathos.

The fool's natural power to unveil obscured mysteries of the soul is important as it foreshadows Lear's flashes of "reason in madness" during the Dover scene, when he is transformed into – "the natural fool of fortune", a performer on "this great stage of fools". Often it has been said that the fool disappears at the end of Act III, for it is Cordelia who takes his place as Lear's spiritual guide. However this is perhaps not exactly accurate for during the Dover scene, Lear himself becomes his own fool, uttering all the moral truths that he himself failed to accept when he was sane. When Lear was in his proper senses, the fool was his entertainer, but as he loses his sanity, we see him drawing imaginary bed curtains around him "So, so, we'll go to supper in the morning". The fool echoes his master's paradox and slowly vaporizes from the play – "I'll go to bed at noon." The Fool's function is exhausted. [2052] But this can be viewed from another angle as well. From the theatrical production point of view, the Fool and Cordelia can never stay together for both of the roles were played by a single actor – Robert Armin. Thus, following Armin's (Fool) departure from the stage, Armin (Cordelia) makes her stage appearance again. So, the character of the fool had no other choice than to leave the stage.

If we judge the fool by his comments, then we can see how he provides different shades of comments. It is not merely political commentary; rather it is more of an ethical and philosophical commentary. The fool is besotted with barbed, double-edged and ambivalent dialogues which are apparently humorous and amusing but more than that he is invested with an insight deeper and farther- reaching than that superficial wittiness that makes a popular court jester. In fact he is the sage fool who beholds the naked truth and his role more than its emotional significance is remarkable for its intellectual quality.

However, *King Lear's* Fool is not Feste the jester—he is a Fool trapped in a tragedy rather than a comedy. Feste has some responsibility towards the end of the comedy making it clear for the audience: he changes the phrase, "For the rain it raineth every day," with which ends each stanza of his song to "We'll strive to please you every day" in the last stanza. Feste's comment on the actions of *Twelfth Night* is needed until the 'show' ends. But *Lear's* Fool cannot be there till the end; his commentary on the actions of Lear or the other characters could not save them from their inevitable ending. Rather than becoming cheesy or campy, *Lear's* Fool is therefore gloomy, sad, and a man whose comments had the value of a chorus but lacked proper ears except the audience of this harrowing tragedy.

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THE CONTOUR

Faces of the New Eve: Chick Lit and Social Reality

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Abstract

This paper is about the urban women of this era who are bold and beautiful and ready to achieve any goal either with talent or with charms. These women are enjoying the fruits of the liberty which they have found after a long struggle against this patriarchal world and are still moving on. In this postmodern era, these post-feminist women challenge the conventional system by accepting the challenges for their rights. But this time the challenges are a bit different from the previous ones. This paper has taken two bold women writers Shobha De and Advaita Kala to illustrate the endeavors through their writings.

Keywords: Urban women, Power, Dominance, Liberty, Chick Lit, Feminist discourse, Subalternity, Stereotype, Indian Womanhood, Education

The roles that the women are playing in the twenty first century India are phenomenal. They have come a long way from being just a daughter, a wife, a mother, two potent forces that are shaping the country. They have crossed the threshold of their homes and stepped out into different professions that are significantly important for the economics of the country. Everyone is aware of Indira Nooyi, Swati Piramal, Falguni Nayar, Chandra Kochar and their likes who have carved niche for themselves and are taking full advantage of the fruits of globalization. This has been possible because of education which has given this new found independence. They now have a room of their own from the vantage point of which they speak a language of Independence. This was echoed many decades ago by Simone de Beauvoir, who had said that “the independent woman is one who like men can move from immanence to transcendence in her public life activities and avoid sadomasochistic relationships in her personal life” (670). This comes from her feminist treatise *The Second Sex* (1949) in which she has ripped apart the veneer of the prevailing social order and has tried to instill that sense of grit and rebellion in women that is needed to fight against

male hegemony. Culminating the long standing debate begun by writers such as Margaret Fuller in the nineteenth century, Beauvoir also asserts that women can only free themselves by “thinking, taking action, working, creating on the same terms as men” (727). It is obvious that thought is changed by education and the ability to work and create comes from the power that is thus generated.

Earlier, because of unawareness and primarily due to traditional bondages women had willy-nilly agreed to subordinate themselves; and because of their lack of resources had taken the unequal distribution of power between man and woman as being predestined. Susan Moller Okin in *Justice, Gender and the Family* (1989) sums this up very succinctly

When we look seriously at the distribution between husbands and wives of such critical social goods as work (paid and unpaid), power, prestige, self-esteem, opportunities, for self-development, and both physical and economic security constructed inequalities between them, right down the list.(136)

What has happened today has been a redistribution of resources which has enabled a woman to gain a semblance of equality and shaken the shackles of dominance. Due to their strident endeavour to get out of the subaltern syndrome, women today are also breaking the walls between the object and the subject position. It was this that was the root cause of their oppression and clearly, linked to their body and to sexuality. Such notions are now being reconceptualised. But this is true of urban, middle class working women alone and we restrict to those and the texts referred to are by and about this seeming minority. We say *seemingly* because the reality of new India is that a much larger percentage of women are working than is statistically recognized.

Women continue to play a marginal and peripheral role despite constituting almost half the population with a critical role in production and social processes. The initiative taken by the early social reformers did resolve certain basic issues about the socialization process which resulted in better opportunities for education, employment, earnings, empowerment and entitlement to property, but still there is a long way to go and the fight against the long standing prejudices has yet not been resolved. Women in India still face enormous pressure to conform to social mores and the need to conform to traditional roles within families poses a barrier. Though women have made great strides in the corporate world in the last three decades, they are still too often discouraged

from having careers that infringe too much on family life. On the other hand, it is also true that women who have achieved academically and economically are seen to be smart and savvy, often not in a positive way. Working women from the lower classes often take their economic independence too literally and fall a prey to violence, but harassment at the work place is a pan-global phenomenon and India have its share of the evil. However, there is another side to the question. It is widely observed that earning power has allowed women to find a voice and form opinions of their own; women are increasingly becoming aware that a career will not cost them the neglect of their family and children but allow them greater power to spend not only on others but on themselves as well.

The new situation in which Indian women are now finding themselves in has made them more vocal about their experiences and writing about their felt worth has changed over the years. Gone are the days when women had to write under pseudonyms or write what was expected of them. Today, women can talk about anything and write it as easily. From Baby Halder, a domestic help who transcribes her life (*A Life Less Ordinary* 2006), the harshness of growing up- oppressed to Ravathi, a hijra telling the truth about herself, to Sagarika Ghosh, a journalist (*The Gin Drinkers* 1998) who writes about her experiences as does Barkha Dutt to others from different professions the writerly scape is growing every day. There are those who have received acclaim as novelists in their own right such as Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapoor, Gita Hariharan, Jaishree Mishra, Kiran Desai, and those who are in different professions and translate their experiences into the printed page for the world to recognize their being and becoming.

Women writers are a major force to reckon with and form a good seventy per cent of English writing in India. This was largely because of the opportunities that women have been given and the reforms enacted in the past couple of decades, especially in the field of education. As a result of promoting women's education more and more girls belonging to the middle class graduated and entered into the job market. Undoubtedly, they were subjugated and not only were the women's jobs considers secondary to the men's but also they were economically not at parity with the men's job- Nurses, teachers, stenographers and bank clerks was what they began with but gradually the new working woman made her mark and today through several years of agitation, litigation and gender sensitization as well as sexual harassment she has acquired a status of her own and at parity with her working counterparts. Today it seems that in India gender has become irrelevant in the new professions and as the world opens up wider and wider opportunities are increasing for those

who have made ambition their prime goal in life. The old struggles are now irrelevant to the new age women and it seems that the Indian woman has definitely come of age. If we look at the writing and the publishing industry in India we witness a sea change, a complete face-over. Women are gathering more laurels and their work are being appreciated for the precision, the meticulousness and the added humane touch which has delivered more goods than even before.

Travelling down the history lane from a Sarojini Naidu and Toru Dutt through the wide-reigning realm of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande to the now overly popular Diasporic writers on the one hand and 'chick lits' like Shobha De on the other, one is appalled by the quantum of output. And today in the era of *Metro Reads* one finds women from different professions trying to make a new mark through the narration of their diverse experiences- a woman from the media writing her reportage, a bank CEO, a head of a food industry, from the science and technology sector, from those in the upcoming call centers, everyone has a lot to lend to the feminist discourse of the day.

Shobha De is perhaps the first woman writer to write about the man - woman relationship with our inhibitions. Of Course there is Kamala Das who, through her poems and her *My Story* brought out the hypocrisy that pervades all human relationships. De differs from Das in the sense that De is more familiar with the darker side of the so called sophisticated section of society which parades as a decent crowd when there is sunshine. The sunset brings about a great transformation in social actions and cosmetics take over in bright lights or in more fashionable candle lights. Morality takes a back seat and people become shadows. De is familiar this world and she watches everything and writes beautifully about the women who have decided to refuse to continue with the conventional patterns of sexuality, subalternity and gender specific roles and attains sexual independence by moving against sexual subalternity.

Whatever Shobha De has portrayed, she has done it with a conviction that the readers may have a real feel of the life of people who are rich and powerful. In fact De's women are contemporary, urban; middle-class Indian ladies who are not out with a sole aim to overthrow the establishment or the social system in order to grab power. They are a set of well-equipped women- filthy rich, well-educated, talented, and unbelievably ambitious. These women are calculative and use men as means to an end, the end being a fulfillment of their aim to become rich, famous, and independent, as her novel *Snapshots* has rearranged the equation of the power game wherein woman either controls power or is in a position to ignore the prescriptions of male authority. The drama of the

novel has the backdrop of Bombay in the last decade of the present century. None of the critics have analyzed the novel in light of Shobha De's women struggles of attaining economic independence while moving against economic subalternity. Historically, thematically, economically and culturally *Snapshot* depicts woman against subalternity.

A very striking group of new modern women is emerging stealthily in Indian aristocratic society, which De presents in her novels with enthusiasm and creative energy. Her women in the novels show a continuation of similar behavioral traits of the new women. They are all daring women and have lots of stamina to face the stress and strain of the high society they live in. They are not afraid of facing every brick thrown in their way in their way in their endeavor to lead lives on their own terms. Power, money, and fame are the three biggest aspirations of these women.

Let us extend the argument raised by Shobha De to women who are working and single as in the case of Advaita Kala's novel *Almost Single* which takes up the issues related with the hotel industry of today. The book is a racy rehash of the Bridget Jones' Diary, where the life of a twenty-nine year old career woman battling weight, wavering between self-esteem and hangovers and woefully complicated love life, captures the imagination of the readers. She typifies the hyperactive single woman in a big city who has to 'make it' in a man's world. She drinks, smokes, takes up challenging assignments is always on the verge of nervous breakdowns, and is a very conceivable stereotype of a guest relations manager in a five star hotel. Though almost irreverent of Indian womanhood, it is a reflection of the growing confidence of women working in metropolitan cities. The very fact that they are away from home and inhabit two worlds- the cosmopolitan city and the absolutely westernized ambience of a five star hotel- gives them a freedom that very few in India can think of. Their motto seems to be 'to enjoy life is empowerment'.

Like Pope's heroine Belinda in *The Rape of the Lock*, eleven o'clock is too early to get up after a particularly dense hangover. This is Aisha Bhatia, Guest Relations manager who's 'most nights these days are girl's nights out'. She is an avowed alcoholic. She simultaneously tolerates her job, hates her boss, annoys her X, bonds big time with friends Misha and Anushka and routinely suffers umbilical cord whiplash. As part of her work she meets the rich, the bold and the beautiful (ugly as well), dines at five star luxury hotels, stays in them during her travels, can name old and new world wines with élan. Though well paid, her salary gets sucked by her breezy lifestyle.

The case that Advaita Kala's novel *Almost Single* makes though indirectly is that a good, profession oriented education is a key to a better life. The social, political, filial and even biological wrongs done to women which the women accepted and tolerated quietly not because they were not gritty or defiant, but because, being ignorant, illiterate and uneducated they had not been able to recognize these as wrongs at all. A woman can recognize her own worth, can identify her need to be an individual in her own right, and assert herself in her own independent capacity only when she is educated. Education is the weapon she can use to fight the war of inequality between the illiterate and the educated. Education is the ornament that beautifies a woman forever and knows no barrier of age, race, class, or status. Education is the ticket that allows a woman to proceed on the journey towards economic independence. Education helps in raising the status of women in four ways. Education helps a woman to (1) earn an income in later life; (2) participate actively in public life; (3) determine her own fertility; and (4) achieve personal autonomy. The educated woman has both the choice and the bargaining power in getting a job and salary, unlike her uneducated sister. She can also exercise a choice about the location of the job in the sense that she may or may not choose to go out of the home in order to get productive work. The fact remains that the higher the level of education attained by a woman, the more likely is she to enter and remain in employment for a longer period.

Getting back to the polemics that Simon-de-Beauvoir floated with *The Second Sex* (1949) about women not being biologically but socially the other, chick lit dwells largely on the extremes of otherness that educated, urban young women can fall a prey to. In order to profess difference gendered entities like Aisha, Misha and Anushka flaunt their sexuality, which becomes the hallmark of women in 'show' spaces. They affirm to the notions projected by the French feminists regarding sex and sexuality, the cultural agenda of radical feminism.

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CREATIVE WRITING

POEM

Pangs of Anxiety....

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A Pangs of anxiety,
Why with you,
Everyday realizes and promises
Not to do,
Then again why with u?

I know and realizes
We can't be together
Then why with u and
Why with u?

What a strange waiting
And waiting
Although I know
You and I are different
Then
Why with u?

I fail to understand
What a bond I share with you

I don't know what a bond
You share with me,
I sail through you, without
Commitment and trust
I sail through you with insecurities
But I fail to understand
Why this strange anxiety with you?

I don't know about your emotions
May be they are play tricks,
I know about my own self?
I know if I can't hear your voice
I feel restless,
Again why I feel a strange
Pangs of anxiety with you?

May be you are indifferent
And counts for money
I am happy and contended
In my own life
But then I look for opportunity
To be with you,
For a second, for a minute
Why this strange pangs of anxiety with you?

I feel you are a part of my own self?
If you hurt me even
I feel the pangs of suffering
Then, also look for you

That where are you?

To think of you and your well being

Is that same with you?

Why these pangs of anxiety with

You and only you?

I know it's of no use

No sense, no mind

But then why this strange

Dilemma and anxiety for you and

Only you?

Heights of Life

Tanmoy Bhattacharjee

**Raiganj, North Dinajpur
West Bengal, India**

I voice the words
Lined up on my tongue
I try the views I have inherited.
To weather each my storm
My efforts are wheeling above

Hardly did I have any win
Tears well up ... sometimes
I am not used to.
My appeals are worded enough.
It's been whiled away, although
My smiles are tutored now,
And wishes stationed.



Hope

Tanmoy Bhattacharjee

**Raiganj, North Dinajpur
West Bengal, India**

Dear me

Come out of the life

Of a match-box.

See there ... nothing

Nothing is lost.

The morning sky so appear

Still ... with a vermillion

Listen...

Earth too hear of us

Even carefully

She protects the dewdrops.

See, nothing is lost

Nothing...

TRANSLATION

Short Story

Chotto Meyer Budhi (Intelligence of a Little Girl)

Sukhalata Rao¹

Translated by Snigdha Bardhan²

Two brothers set out to travel the country. One of them was poor and the other was rich. Both the brothers had one horse each, the poor one had a mare and the rich brother had a vigorous horse and also a hackney carriage. At night they stopped to take rest at one place.

At night the poor brother's mare gave birth to a colt. The new born colt rolled down under the rich brother's hackney carriage. The next day, morning the rich brother awakened the poor brother and said, 'Wake up, wake up brother. Look what kind of young is born of my carriage.'

The latter rose and after seeing this incident, he said, 'Can a car give birth to a kid?' It must be my mare's colt.

- 'If it were the kid of your mare, you would find it near your mare.'

In this way they started quarrelling with each other. They ultimately went to court for justice. The rich brother bribed the judge.

Where will the poor fellow get the money? He told only the truth.

At last the incident reached to the king. The king called two brothers and said, 'At first, I shall tell you four riddles and you will answer them. The riddles are – which is the fastest? What is the thickest? What is the softest? And what thing is the dearest to all?'

The king granted three days for them to think. He said, 'On the fourth day, you should answer the questions before me.'

Thinking awhile, the rich brother went to his god-mother for consultation. God-mother patted him and asked, 'Why are you looking so sad?'

The king has asked me four riddles and has also granted me a time of three days to think over them.

- 'Let me listen to the riddles.....'

- 'First, which is the fastest and most powerful in this earth?'

- 'Is it a riddle? No doubt our horse is speedy. As soon as it is whipped, it starts running with a huge speed just like whirl wind and it can catch a rabbit.'

- 'Second is: what is the thickest in the world?'

- 'Our piglet is very fat. It is so fat at the age of two that it cannot stand up.'

- 'Now, the third- what is the softest thing in the world?'

- 'Oh! Where is the difficulty? Nothing is as soft as feather bed.'

- 'Last riddle is: what is the dearest in this earth.'

- 'There is no doubt that my grandson Ivanuskai is the dearest.'

- 'Pranam, god-mother. Now I have known what to say to His Majesty.'

What did the poor fellow do? He returned home weeping. His seven years old daughter was standing near the door. He had none, except this girl. The girl asked, 'Why are you crying, dad?'

- 'Oh! What else shall I do but crying? King asked me four riddles. I would never be able to answer his questions.'

- 'Say, what the riddles are?'

- 'The riddles are - which is the fastest and powerful? What is the thickest thing? What is the softest? What thing is the dearest?'

- 'Dad, you will say to His Majesty- wind is the fastest and most powerful too. Soil is the thickest, because it supplies the food to every living being. The softest is the man's hand because when a

man lies, he keeps his head on them. And the dearest thing in the earth is slumber.’ The girl answered.

Three days later, two brothers appeared to the king. Hearing their speeches the His Majesty asked the poor brother, ‘Are these answers yours or somebody else’s?’

-‘Majesty, I have a daughter of seven years who told me these answers.’

-‘Oh! If your daughter has enough intelligence then, you give her this silken thread and ask her to make a flower-designed towel within next morning.

The poor brother returned home with the silken thread and with a gloomy face. He told his daughter, ‘It is the news of great adversity. Majesty asked you to make a towel with this thread for him within next morning.’

The girl answered, ‘Don’t think, dad.’ Then she broke the rod from the broom and she offered that to her father and said, ‘Give this rod to His Majesty. He would make his workers prepare a loom from this rod. I shall weave the towel in that loom.

Poor brother gave the rod to the majesty and said to him what the girl said.

Then the king gave him fifty eggs and said, ‘Give these to your daughter and say that she must hatch these eggs and she will give me the young ones within next morning. The poor brother returned home with a very gloomy face. Each day new trouble comes. He told his daughter to hatch the eggs as per His Majesty’s order.

-‘Don’t feel sad, dad.’- answered the girl. She boiled the eggs and kept them aside for the snack in the afternoon and dinner at night. Then she advised her father to ask His Majesty, ‘Say majesty that to feed the chicks it is necessary to provide they corn .Popcorn seeds must be sown and harvested within a single day, otherwise chicks will not peck a single grain.

Being amazed and perplexed His Majesty challenged the little girl with the last question. The Majesty told her father to tell his certain conditions- she might come wearing dress or not wearing a dress. She might not come on foot or not on horse. She should not provide me a gift but would gift me one.

The poor brother thought, ‘Alas! Can she do such a queer job? All have gone.’

But the seven years old girl said, 'Don't worry. You buy for me a living titlark and a wild hare from hunters.

Next day, at dawn the girl left her own cloth and wore a fish net. Then she took the titlark in hand and set out to go to the palace sitting on the back of hare. At the door of the palace she met the king.

The girl paid her regards to the king and said, 'I have brought this gift for you?' Then she stretched her hand to present the bird to His Majesty. No sooner did the girl gift it to the king, it flew away.

- 'Ok, ok; what I said, you have done all. Well, you are poor, how do you maintain your livelihood?'

- 'Dad catches fish on dry land; he does not keep net in river's water. I bring the fishes putting in my clothes. We cook *Suruya*³ with that. It tastes well. You will also like it.'

- 'Foolish girl, who gets fish on dry land? They stay in water.'

- 'Oh! The wise king, where did you see a carriage bearing a child? Mare can bear a young, not a carriage.'

Then the majesty became glad and gave the colt to the poor brother.

Footnotes

1. Sukhalata Rao (1886-1969) was a Bengali social writer and children's book author. She was born in Kolkata in Bengal province of British India. She was the daughter of Upendra Kishore Roychowdhury, and sister of Sukumar Roy. She graduated from Bethune College, Kolkata. Later she had a career in teaching. She got married to Dr. Jayanta Rao of Cuttack. Shukhalata then founded the Shishu-o-Matri Mangal Kendro (Centre for the Welfare of Children and Mothers). She also established the Orissa Nari Seva Sangha. She was given the Keiser-e-Hind award by the Government of India in 1956 for her book *Nije Pora*. Shukhalata was the editor of *Alok*, a newspaper. Her writings include children's stories, and fairy tales. Her books include *Galpa-ar-Galpa*, *Galper Boi* (1912), *Aro Galpa* (1916), *Khoka Elo Beriye* (1916), *Natun Para* (1922), *Natun Chhora* (1952), *Bideshi Chora* (1962), etc.
2. I express my gratitude to my English Teacher Manasi Halder who gave me the opportunity for taking up this translation as a part of my English Project Work. I also express my gratitude to Sadhan Bannerjee, Subhadip Ganguli and Pallab Saha. But for their help to improve my translation could not have been completed.
3. *Suruya* - a type of sweet

Book Review

Linguistic Criticism and Literary Studies: Theory and Practice

Prashant Mishra and Susanta Kumar Bardhan

New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers. 2015. XXII + 333 pages. Rs. 1100/-. ISBN 978-81-8435-446-1

It is a known fact that without language there can be no writing whatever the linguistic signs may be. With literature there is a nuance, for only here language unfolds its unique potentialities. Therefore the notion of a literary work remains incomplete unless we realize the legacy of language. Dr Susanta Kumar Bardhan and Dr Prashant Mishra, two renowned linguists in India, have edited *Linguistic Criticism and Literary Studies* to appreciate the very questioning of literary texts on the basis of stylistic differences. The book, written as a Festschrift to eminent linguist S.V. Parasher who always dreamt of a marriage of language and literature, is indeed an apt tribute. Critics have been traditionally interpreting literary works either from historical point of view or by giving textual elements such as plots, characters and themes undue attention. The problem of extra-textual or plot-based exegesis is that it often sets aside the importance of language without which a text cannot even break the ice.

How language works is, therefore, equally significant while discussing literature. To be precise, literature is being and language is responsible for the becoming of that being. The book essentially intends to apply language not simply as a constituent of any writing but rather as a critical tool itself. We know that structuralism first hinted at the arbitrary nature of language. From that very point of time, the stability of literature was also put into question. The introductory essay by the editors reminds us of the history of linguistic criticism that began with the unmaking of language behind the making of literature.

T.Sriraman's 'Postcolonial Stylistics' tries to impart a new hue to postcolonial literature through its indication of a new area – the application of language to analyse postcolonial writing. We know that postcolonial writing is fundamentally a criticism of the hierarchical order of the world where

some nations are stereotypically more important than the others. There is more than one reason behind this marginalization. Sriraman opines that language is one of the key factors in postcolonial criticism. The popularity of English as a language for writing still confuses the critics whether we have really come out of the cocoon of colonial domination. Z. N. Patil's 'Aspects of Linguistic Politeness in Indian English Novels' is a very interesting study of what constitutes politeness and impoliteness in Indian imagination. Though the study is more culture-specific, it shows that even on a universal scale behaviour seems to be a misleading trait of a man. As one's extent of politeness depends on the addressee, there is also a gap between how much polite or impolite one intends to be and how much one ends up being through the application of linguistic specificities.

Vijay Singh Thakur's essay discusses the interconnectedness between language and relationship through a close study of Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*. Baisali Hui's article is about the retrospective state of both language and literature, especially their performative purport in Chinese and Ukrainian folktales. Ivy Lai Chun Chun is more concerned about language as a generic force. In 'Literary Stylistics', Chun shows how the same story written in prose has to be considerably different in the poetic version in terms of meanings and patterns. Achal Deep Dubey's paper is a subtle analysis of some Indian novelists who, in their writings, have made an 'English' of their own through the inevitable introduction of native words and expressions.

'A Pragmatic Study of Eugene O'Neill's *Thirst*' by Susanta Kumar Bardhan and Prashant Mishra is a probe into the play's tragic situation engendering quite appropriately tense language with a tone of selfishness. Suresh Kumar Agarwal's essay focuses on the contribution of language to identity formation, especially how gender influences and is influenced by the choice of language. Prasun Banerjee in his article on John Fowles' *The Collector* traces the limitations of language on which textuality is inherently reliant. Fowles leaves the text open-ended for the readers to create and interpret but finally the readers realize that a text is always incomplete and words are often questionable.

Prashant Mishra and Susanta Kumar Bardhan's 'Stylistics of Deferment in Frost's Poetry' analyses Robert Frost's poetic language the tone and the text of which get intermingled to accentuate the uncertainty of life. Pradeep Sharma's essay is an attempt to capture the transition of psychoanalysis from the classical one to the Lacanian version of the theory that views human mind from linguistic perspectives and how this change had a substantial impact on literary trends. Marlia

Fontaine-Weisse in her article takes the example of J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and shows the immediacy of postcolonial narratology that circumvents stylistic metanarratives. Apurba Saha makes a unique approach towards language. His 'Creole and Calypso on Gavaskar' is a wonderful study of a representative 'Calypso' on the Indian Cricket legend, Sunil Gavaskar, thereby exemplifying the euphonic synthesis of English and Creole in calypso songs.

Susanta Kumar Bardhan's 'Vakrokti and the Poems of Jayanta Mahapatra: A Critical Study' analyses Mahapatra's poetry from the point of view of Sanskrit poetics where the sound and the sense are equally important for poetic harmony. B. V. Rama Prasad's paper treats linguistic structure and literary narratives in the same manner and shows how the essential nature of language and literature is identical, for both can be split into different units, thereby adding sense to a sentence (linguistic) or a dialogue (literary). Veerendra Kumar Mishra, in his paper, observes that language as a means of pure communicative action has failed and therefore scientific objectivity in linguistic criticism no longer holds water. Prashant Mishra in "Indianness in Style: Nissim Ezekiel's 'The Patriot'" discusses the Indianized language of the poem where the colloquiality of the words such as '200%', 'Hindiwallas', 'lassi' or 'Indira Behn' is entwined with the central theme of the poem i.e. patriotism. Sagar Mal Gupta and Nagendra Nathawat's article is experimental in tone. They try to see whether speech act theory can be applied to drama and finally they discover that the way language is used plays a key role in determining the dramatic intentionality. Utsab Mukherjee's essay is a review of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* from narratological perspectives.

Lastly, the volume may not be new in understanding literature through linguistic theories or fathoming the contact zone of the two, but the approach has perhaps never been so diverse. There are multiple articles in the book but they are very different from one another in terms of thoughts and themes. It attempts to bridge the gulf between language and literature through profound insights beyond the horizon of apparent similarities. The authenticity of that sincerity is evident from exhaustive sources, appendices, a good index and individuality of the articles. The book remains to be an interesting read for students, researchers and teachers of all phases.

Reviewed By Prof. Tausif Ahamed Assistant Professor of English, Suri Vidyasagar College, Suri, Birbhum, West Bengal