

Manto Reconsidered

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Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955) has the distinction of being the much maligned yet the most widely read short story writer in Urdu. No other Urdu fiction writer has so ruthlessly exposed the hollowness of middle class morality and unmasked its sordid aspects with such telling effect. A master craftsman and a short story writer par excellence, he blazed a trail of glory in Urdu fiction unmatched by any other writer. His way of telling a story may well appear to be simple, but the treatment of his subjects and themes and the light he shed on human nature were marked by refreshing, rather devastating originality. His stories, one after another, sent shock waves through complacent minds. So much so, that some of them were even branded as obscene or lewd and he was unceremoniously expelled from the fraternity of newly emerging progressive Urdu writers. He was considered a reactionary and even degenerate in his thinking. He was hauled up before the law courts on the heinous charge of peddling pornography, not once but several times. No abuse was too great for him and no humiliation too small. The 'progressives' as well as the traditionalists bestowed these largesses on him in generous measures. But this in no way blunted the rapier-sharp thrust of his pen, nor diminished the boldness of his thinking. Manto spent the last years of his life in great penury. Poverty, lack of a regular income, excessive drinking, removed him from our midst at the young age of forty-three.

It is well known that Manto's characters mostly comprise the fallen and rejected members of the society, the so called fallen and rejected who are frowned upon for their depravity. Undoubtedly, his best stories, and the ones for which he is remembered most, are those in which he depicts, with great mastery, fallen women and prostitutes against the backdrop of filthy lanes and slums. Here touts and pimps rub shoulders with tarts, drawing customers into their coils. The stories unfold their lives layer by layer, offer one revelation after another. Manto takes no sides, holds out no pleas. He only reconstructs the spectacle of life as it passes before him. With ruthless objectivity, he unmask those hypocrites who masquerade as the

custodians of society and who day and night dole out, parrot-like, moral homilies, but are in fact the lords of oppression and are solely responsible for the degradation of women. Spurned by the society, these women are ground between two millstones. Manto does not go into the reasons for their downfall, nor does he lament over their loss of innocence and grace. He only gives a glimpse of that humane space which they have vicariously created for themselves in this hell for their survival. Most of his characters are condemned to a sordid existence, yet they transcend it.

While rereading Manto after a long lapse of time, a few things strike the mind rather sharply. Manto was a supreme rebel, he was up against doxa, be it in arts, literature, customs, manners, social norms, morality or whatever. Anything that was conventional, familiar, acceptable, or belonged to the realm of the so-called *ashrafiya* (the elite, bourgeoisie), was rejected by him and he rebelled against it vehemently. At the core of his creative effort lies a total rejection of all forms of doxa, and a radically different view of literature and reality which sent shock waves among his readers as well as his contemporaries. He was way ahead of others, and perhaps no other fiction writer of Urdu in his time was as clear about the nature of literature as he was. The predominant climate in Urdu at that time was utilitarian and didactic as propounded by Hali in his *Maqaddama* and taken to ecstatic heights by Akbar and Iqbal. Manto, while defending his writing, said that it was painful for him to record that "After Iqbal, may his soul rest in peace, it is as if the Providence has put locks on all doors of literature and handed over the keys to just one blessed soul. If only Allama Iqbal were alive!" (Comments on the court case regarding "Boo" (Odour), vide, *Lazzat-e-Sang/Dastavez*, p. 57). At another point, regretfully he quips, "Most of the respectable journalists who are considered to be custodians of literature are in fact fit to be termed, *tila furosh* i.e., peddlers in drugs for potency" (ibid, p. 57).

Manto was dragged to the courts, time and again, and his patience was stretched to the utmost. On such occasions, while facing a utilitarian readership and an equally ill-informed judiciary, he seems to give the impression that for a while he too favoured the reformist role of literature:

If you cannot tolerate my stories, this means the times are intolerant. There is nothing wrong with my stories. The wrong which is ascribed to my stories, is in fact the rot of the system. ("Adabe-Jadeed," 1944, included in *Dastavez*, p. 52)

He goes on "If you are opposed to my literature, then the best way is that you change the conditions that motivate such literature" (ibid, p. 53).

Manto here seems to be supporting the view that if social conditions change, the need for literature to attend to the woes of fallen women will be obliterated. In yet another defence, he emphasises:

Maybe my writings are unpleasantly harsh. But what have humans gained from sweet homilies? The *neem* leaves are pungent but they cleanse the blood. ("Afsana Nigar our Jinsi Mailan" – The story writer and the subject of sex, in *Dastavez*, p. 83).

But these were simply positions of defence to absolve himself of the charges that were levied against him and thwart the warrants of prosecution. In actual fact, by his terribly dispassionate realism and totally uncompromising attitude, he had introduced Urdu fiction to an absolutely new concept of art, i.e., the relative autonomy of aesthetic effect not subservient to any demands of the *ashrafia* morality or social reform. When free from the exigencies of judiciary and prosecution, he elucidated his point of view much more convincingly. He knew that the questions he was involved with were much deeper. They touched the labyrinths of human psyche, and were some of the perennial questions to which there are no simple answers. Thus:

If humanity could have listened to the exhortations that stealing or lying is bad, then one Prophet would have been enough. But the list of Prophets is large....We writers are no Prophets, whatever we understand, true or false, we present it to our readers; we do not insist that the readers should accept it as the only truth....We criticise the law, but we are not law-makers, we criticise the political system, but we do not lay down the system; we draw the blue prints but we are not builders; we speak of the malady, but we do not write out prescriptions (ibid, pp. 81-82).

In yet another essay, "Kasoti" (Touchstone) he said:

Literature is not a commodity that like gold or silver it should have a rising or falling index. It is made out like an ornament, so it has some adulteration. Literature is not pure reality. Literature is literature or non-literature. There is no *via media*, as man is either man or he is an ass (*Dastavez*, p. 84).

It need not be overemphasised that Manto's concerns were different from any of his contemporaries. He thus ushered in an altogether new form of realism, which the Urdu literati took time to understand and accept. Having assimilated his Russian and French masters at an early age, Manto knew that the fire that raged within him was of a different order. In 1939, when he was barely twenty-seven, he wrote to Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, "Whatever the situation, I remain restless. I am not satisfied with anything around me. There is something lacking in every thing" (*Nuqoosh*, Manto Number).

It is in this context that his delineation of fallen human beings and his constructions of fictional situations needs to be reassessed. The obvious, the familiar, or the conventional face of reality, i.e., the doxa never triggered his creativity, rather he always endeavoured to expose it. While giving an address at Jogeshwari College, Bombay, a few years before partition, he had said in his peculiar style:

In my neighbourhood if a woman is daily beaten by her husband and if she cleans his shoes the next morning, she is of no interest to me. But if after quarreling with her husband, and after threatening to commit suicide, she goes to see a movie, and her husband is terribly worried, I am interested in both of them. If a boy falls in love with a girl – it is no more important to me than somebody catching common cold....The polite, decent women and their niceties are of no consequence to me.

Obviously Manto's fancy thrived on his disdain of doxa. Given his urge to look at the other side, the non-conventional, the basic question about the core characters of Manto, especially his fallen women, is whether they comprise only what they seem to be? Isn't it a paradox of Mantoiana that the fallen characters of Manto were misunderstood during his lifetime, and they continue to be misunderstood even after this death, though the nature of misunderstanding in either case is different. During his lifetime, Manto was opposed tooth and nail and all that was written about him was trivial and perfunctory. The criticism of Manto during his lifetime is indiscriminatory, bordering on total rejection. The climate changed after his death. If he was totally rejected before, he was a eulogized after his death. The rejection all along was for reasons sentimental and highly subjective. So was the later eulogization. Both lacked on objective, scrupulous, critical base in literary appreciation. Generally, the critical eulogization of Manto was the obvious, the subaltern, the socially degraded, and of the perennial flesh trade and women's right to it. The later Mantoiana suffers from a glut of this eulogization of

the obvious, with the result that the image of Manto, which has gained currency, underscores Manto as a writer of prostitutes, pimps and perverts; as one who rejoices in the portrayal of the seamy side of life. This perhaps calls for some reassessment.

It may be recalled that Manto time and again laid stress on the maxim that "A *veshya* is a woman as well, but every woman, is not a *veshya*" ("Ismat Furosh," Prostitute, in Dastavez, p. 92). He says, "We do not go to the prostitutes' quarters to offer *namaz* or *dorood*, we go there because we can go there and buy the commodity we want to buy." ("Safed Jhoot," White Lie, in Dastavez, p. 73).

Manto's concern is not the commodity, but the pain, the suffering, and the loneliness of the human soul that sells it. The two are not the same. You can pay for the commodity, but you cannot set a price on the dignity of the human soul. Manto laments the attitude that for many people the very existence of a woman or the very nature of man-woman relationship is obscene. If this were so, why then did God create woman? He is equally critical of the man-made codes of morality that do not equate the two. He asks, "Isn't morality the rust on the razor-edge of society which simply is there because it is left there thoughtlessly?" He makes it abundantly clear that he is not a sensationalist: "Why should I take off the *choli* of society, it is naked as it is; of course I am not interested in covering it up either, because that is the job of tailors, not of the writers" ("Adab-e-Jadeed," *New Writing*, *ibid*, p. 53).

It is no coincidence that time and again Manto's insights scan the interior landscape of these fallen and marginalized women. He strongly believed that a majority of these women though they plied the trade, in fact despised it and possessed a heart purer than those men who came to buy them (*Dastavez*, p. 88). The semantic field of Manto's characterisation needs to be examined afresh. His themes are intricately intertwined with the anguish, the suffering, and the loneliness of the soul he is trying to chart. It is not the body but the being, the inner self, or the air about the 'misery-ness' of the misery which Manto tries to recapture and recreate. It shouldn't, thus, be out of place to take a fresh look at some of the core protagonists of Manto's stories.

In "Kali Shalwar" (Black Shalwar), the most touching part is where Sultana, having been deceived by both the Khuda (God) and Khuda Bakhsh (her man) and having lost her business after moving from Ambala Cantonment to Delhi, feels forsaken and forlorn:

Early in the morning, when she came out into her balcony, a weird sight would meet her eyes. Through the haze she could see the locomotives belching out thick smoke which ponderously rose in columns towards the grey sky, giving the impression of fat men swaying in the air. Thick clouds of steam would rise from the railway lines, making a hissing sound and then dissipate in the air in the twinkling of an eye. Sometimes a detached bogey, getting an initial push from the engine, kept running on the track by its own momentum. Sultana would feel that an invisible hand had also given a push to her life and then left her to fend for herself. Like the bogey which switched from one track to another under a locking device manipulated by an invisible cabinman, an invisible hand was also changing the course of her life. And then a day would come when the momentum would be spent up and she would come to a dead stop at some unknown spot where there would be no one to take care of her (*The Best of Manto*, ed. and translated by Jai Ratan, p. 15).

There are moments in a *veshya's* life when, shorn off *veshya's* costume, she remains only a woman, a tender-hearted woman. On such occasions generally the archetypal image of woman shines through Manto's writings. Sugandhi in "Hatak" (Insult) is a frail, yet strong woman. Madho, her lover from Poona, has been making a fool of her by taking advantage of her and even fleecing her of her earnings. Sugandhi, though clever, is not really so clever, since she can be fooled by simple words of love and affection, and Madho is a past master at this game.

Every night her new or old lover would say, "Sugandhi, I love you". And Sugandhi, although she knew that the man was telling a lie, would melt like wax, deluding herself in the belief that she was really being loved. Love – what a beautiful word it was! How she wished that she could dissolve the word and rub it over her skin, letting it seep into her being.

So overpowering was her desire to love and be loved that she tried to put up with the vagaries of all the men who came to her. Among them, were the four men whose photographs now adorned her wall. Being herself essentially a good soul, she failed to understand, why men lacked this goodness of heart. One day when she was standing before the mirror the words escaped her lips: "Sugandhi, the world has given you a raw deal" (*Ibid*, pp. 27-28).

Isn't the whole concept here built around the archetypal mother-image of woman? Does't *prem* (incarnate love) permeate her total

existence, everything that is within and without; doesn't it draw the being into its fold and put it to sublime sleep attuned to the music of the eternal lullaby? This feeling of deep compassion, *karuna* or *mamata*, by whatever term you call it, flows through the whole narrative till Sugandhi is rejected by a *seth* in the middle of the night. Shocked and dejected, having finally seen through the hypocrisy of man, she takes out her rage on Madho who happens to be visiting her at that time. The anguish and loneliness once again rend the soul, there is emptiness all around. The metaphor of a lonely shunted train deserted on the rails of life is once again invoked in this story, and telling effect thus:

Sugandhi looked up startled, as if she had come out of a reverie. The room was steeped in an eerie silence – a silence she had never experienced before. She felt as if she was surrounded by a vacuum – as if a train on a long haul, after depositing the passengers en route was now standing in the loco shed, looking deserted and forlorn. An emptiness seemed to have taken root in her heart (ibid, p. 38).

The most baffling and unusual story is, "Babu Gopi Nath," in which a neo-rich man is fond of the company of pimps and hangers-on, and peers and *faqirs*, because he maintains that if one wants to deceive oneself, then there is no better place to go to than the *kotha* of a *veshya* (den of a prostitute) or the *mazaar* of a peer (mausoleum of a saint) since these are the places that thrive on sham and deceit. At the *kotha*, they sell the body, and at the *mazaar* they sell God. Babu Gopi Nath is involved with the young Zeenat, a Kashmiri girl, utterly naive and uncouth, who could never learn the tricks of the trade. Babu Gopi Nath is trying to find a man to wed Zeenat so that she can have a home. In this, he is prepared to go to any length and spend all his wealth. It is an unusual situation. On the one hand, there is an undercurrent of dark humour in the naivety of Zeenat, and the cleverness of pimps and hangers-on; and on the other, it is the benevolence of Babu Gopi Nath that permeates the events. One cannot help thinking that in Babu Gopi Nath, Manto has created a male protagonist, who in fact is such an embodiment of the qualities of the mother-image. The situation is full of irony, and it is through Babu Gopi Nath that the milk of compassion and the spirit of sacrifice and service flow through the story and render it unique.

If there is a female parallel to Babu Gopi Nath, who else could it be than the humane and motherly Janaki (in the story of the same name) who, though not in the profession, changes hands from one

man to another, and yet is full of the tender feelings similar to that of *mamata* for the men she comes across. She hails from Peshawar where she was committed to Aziz. She cares for Aziz day and night. She tends to his needs, takes care of his food and clothes, nurses him through his illness and lives him. She comes to Bombay looking for a job and in the course of events gets involved with Saeed, while at the same time she nurtures feelings of love for Aziz as well. This is resented by Aziz. Eventually Saeed also forsakes her, but in turn she gets involved with yet another person, Narain. She adores him and bestows the same care and affection on him. Men come and go, but Janaki remains the same, a fountain-head of love and devotion who like a goddess nurtures her men.

This leads us to consider if there wasn't a cherished mother-image lurking somewhere in the labyrinth of Manto's unconscious. None of his biographers has dwelt on his relationship with his mother, but whatever sketchy information we have confirms that he had a harsh and cruel father, and a host of step brothers. Maybe, the only thing that filled this deprivation was the affectionate care of his loving mother, Babi Jan. One gets the feeling that Manto was profoundly familiar with suffering from his earliest days. Imploringly, at one point, he says, "O God, take me away from this world! I cry where I should laugh, and I laugh where I should cry." ("Pas-manzar," Context in *Dastavez*, p. 159). His *dukha*, *udasi* and *karuna* seem to have a Buddhist ring. But for Manto, perhaps suffering, compassion and love were different faces of the same for reality. "Suffering is ordained, a predicament," Manto says, "Suffering (*alam/dukha*) is you, suffering is me, suffering is Saadat Hasan Manto, suffering is the whole universe" ("Kasooti," p. 86). He perceived one through the other. Repeatedly, he stresses that the body can be bartered or branded, not the soul ("Ismat Furosh," *Dastavez*, p. 90). He elaborates that many of the women in the flesh trade are god-fearing, devotionally attached to icons and images, and observe religious rituals. Maybe because religion is that part of their self which they have saved from the trade, and through which they redeem themselves.

Nonetheless, Mozel is entirely different as she pokes fun at religious observances, whatever their form. This is yet one more example of Manto's dialogic art in the sense Bakhtin uses it. Isn't it amazing that one comes across such a large variety of men and women in Manto's fiction? Mozel is a bohemian girl of Jewish descent, vivacious and carefree, she is full of ridicule for religion that divides man from man. She makes fun of the turban, *kesha* (hair) and other manifestations of Trilochan, who is a Sikh. But the same playful Mazel

comes to Trilochan's rescue when riots break out in Bombay, and without caring for her personal safety, saves Trilochan's fiancée, Kirpal Kaur, and in the process becomes a victim of the killers. One can see that once again a woman of doubtful character rises to the occasion and, through her compassion and devotion, delivers the persons around her from destruction.

In this context it is needless to belabour "Boo" (Odour), one of Manto's best-known stories. Suffice it to say that this story of consummate copulation can refreshingly be read as a story of the cycle of seasons, falling raindrops and the soaking of the virgin mother earth, i.e., the union of the elements where Randhir is Purush and the Ghatin girl Prakriti, who lies dormant, but is the giver and receiver of pleasure in abundant measure.

"Sharda," "Fobha Bai," and "Burmese Girl" are some of the other stories where the protagonists are moved by the same underlying force of benevolence. In "Burmese Girl," we have a fleeting glimpse of a girl who shares a flat with two young boys for a few days and is soon gone like a whiff of soft breeze. In her short stay, she leaves behind sweet memories of setting the house in order and infusing the whole place with an atmosphere of affection, charm and motherliness. But before the boys get to know her better, she is gone. In comparison, Sharda and Fobha Bai (dialectal variation of Shobha Bai) are actual mothers. Sharda is a complete embodiment of womanhood as she is simultaneously a mother, a sister, a wife and also a whore, and none of these roles is in conflict with one another. Fobha Bai has tragic strains in her, as she has to sell herself in the city to protect the mother within her by sustaining a young son back home. But the son dies, and with this the woman who sold herself for his sake is also devastated. Similarly in "Sarak ke Kinare" (By the Road-side), motherhood is accomplished, but remains unfulfilled in the sense that as an unwed and forsaken woman, she cannot bring up the child. In the dead of night, the child is left by the roadside. Manto raises the question, "Is the coming together of two souls at a single point and then giving up everything in a cosmic rhythm mere poetry? No. Certainly this is the merging of two souls, and then rising to enfold heaven and earth and the whole universe. But then why is one soul left behind wounded, simply because she helped the other to rise to the heights of the cosmic rhythm?"

This is the kernel of unmitigated suffering, the predicament from which there is no escape. The infinite sorrow in Manto at the deeper level sustains his creativity, through which are constructed his fallen women. Once, opening his heart to Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, he

wrote: "I, in fact, have reached a point in my thinking where faith or disbelief becomes meaningless. Where I understand, I do not understand. At times, I feel as if the whole world is in the palm of my hand, then there are times when I feel insignificant, as insignificant as an ant crawling on the body of an elephant" (*Nuqoosh*, Manto Number).

Manto, in his finer moments, is attuned to the symphony of the mystery of creation, and in this symphony his dominant note is the note of sorrow. The sorrow of existence, the loneliness of soul, and the unfathomable suffering, *dukha*, which is part of the music of the infinite. Many of his protagonists turn out to be more than life-size, more durable, more lasting than mere frail men and women of flesh and blood. They become the embodiment of something more pervasive, more universal; that is, the benevolence or compassion incarnate, the sublimest of the sublime, the fountain-head of *mamata* and *karuna* which flow through the emotional space of Manto's narrative, and with which we all identify.

INTER-UNIVERSITY CENTRE NOTES

Linguistic Diversity and National Integrity in India

The notion of 'national integrity' has become an obsessive concern not simply with the Indian state but even for a large number of scholars and statesmen. As seen in relation to the process of nation-building, 'national integrity' certainly is a noble concern, but only when it is envisioned in terms of peoples, cultures and societies. Unfortunately, in recent years, the entire 'national integrity' enterprise has been perverted into territoriality. Thus, there has been so much of rhetoric on provincial and national geographical boundaries in recent years. This rhetoric manufactures populist consent that legitimizes the apparatus of governance at different levels to embark on a large scale war, declared or covert, for even 'an inch of our land'.

The obvious and natural consequence of such a pathological concern for national integrity has been that the country has built up a massive military and bureaucratic establishment which is used to annihilate chosen adversaries. In the process, we end up destroying our own best defenses. We have sacrificed our health, wealth and the best hands and minds to the false gods of domination (if not, assimilation) and war. Why have we come to such a pass? Why have we tied ourselves to military options? In fact, any voicing of equality, pluralism and democratic solutions is seen as a threat to national integrity and security. This results in a vicious circle where yesterday's solution becomes today's problem. The issue can well be illustrated through our national language policy and planning.

Since the Constituent Assembly Debates on India's language policy, both the rulers and scholars have found the country's linguistic diversity an untractable problem. It's a different matter that the number of language and speech varieties spoken within the territory of India have kept fluctuating from census to census. Through the constitutional provisions to the innumerable legislative and executive measures, the attempt, by and large, has been to reduce the number of languages to be used in public domains such as the school, the court of law, in different technical spheres and the like. This, in consequence, has provoked people to engage in language

movements and conflicts throughout the country ever since Independence. A case in point is the Eighth Schedule (hereafter ES) of the Constitution of India.

Why do groups and communities want their languages to be included in the ES? No doubt, it is an enterprise that seriously concerns most people who speak non-scheduled languages. These people feel their mother tongues as being endangered because of the encroachment of certain exogenous languages, particularly Hindi and English, into their communicate space, both public and private. The moot point that is intriguing is the fact that both the parties negotiating the struggle, i.e. the people who demand the inclusion and the Central Government (irrespective of party colour) that refuses to take cognizance of the demand, search for a set of criteria for their inflexible standpoints. I want to suggest that while each criterion on each side may have its own merits, it is ultimately by appeal to a sense of justice, a sense of morality that we might find a basis for the inclusion of a people's language in the ES. Thus, the entire exercise of both linguists and non-linguists searching for a set of 'objective' criteria ends up in a frustrating experience. After all, what set of criteria can be presumed for the inclusion or otherwise of certain rights as 'fundamental rights'? Why is 'freedom of speech' a 'fundamental right' and not the 'tiller's right to land'?

Furthermore, language, identity and related issues are not ends in themselves, but are rather means to other ends. These 'other ends' range from mundane concerns of day-to-day interaction and existence to self-realization at all levels within a framework of a sense of justice and of morality. Languages and cultures reflect a collectivity's image of the 'self' and the 'other'. In fact, one of the most basic functions of language is the construction and creation of a collective self-definition in order to socialize each new generation to seeing itself, its own world, and its relation to the 'other' world much as others do.

It is precisely on the basis of the above understanding that one can assert that every language policy reflects a particular world view, a sense of justice and of morality. Bilingual education (BE) in the U.S. for ethnolinguistic minorities like the Blacks and Hispanics provides us with an illuminating illustration. Since the 1960s, the heightened commitment to BE on the part of the U.S. administration has been moral, not educational. In 1978, the Director of the U.S. Office of Bilingual Education maintained that BE could not be evaluated since it was a philosophy. In fact, as has been proclaimed, it was a sense of cultural sin, not educational failing, that was the driving force behind

the original U.S. Bilingual Education Act of 1968. A large number of scholars have argued, however, that it was the perception of the cultural sin committed by the 'White' Americans on the Blacks for centuries which realized itself in the Civil Rights Movement, which in turn forced the U.S. federal government to legalize and fund BE.

We might see a parallel to American BE in the Three Language Formula in the Indian context. The original TLF of 1961 was graduated and modified in 1964-66 (Kothari Commission) to include a provision which specified that while Hindi would continue to be taught as a second language in non-Hindi-speaking areas, in Hindi-speaking areas a language other than Hindi, preferably a south Indian language be taught as a second language. This provision is not based on any linguistic, applied linguistic or pedagogic theory but on a sense of equality, in terms of language load in schooling. It is a different matter that such a sense of equality is unfortunately negative. If you can't make people strong, make them equally weak.

Clearly, the central basis of demands (and their denial) for official status and recognition of languages is from the language community's sense of justice. It is interesting to note here that recent research in the fields of neurology and bio-chemistry has come out with findings which indicate that the definition of a sense of justice depends on the combination of emotion and cognition resulting from a matching of experience with hope. It has also been hypothesized that while the rules and norms that define the sense of justice (and injustice) are typically culture specific, the processing mechanism underlying them seems to be universal and innate in the genetic make-up. One hopes that further research might throw greater light, but the need to explore the interplay of nature and nurture, of our genetic make up and the environment is real and urgent. Such research contains significant potentialities for moral theory as well as language policies, even though arguments based on a sense of justice and sentimentality are difficult to prove, especially to the powers-that-be who decide language policies and programmes.

The overall implication is that, for example, demands for the inclusion of a language in the ES need to be supported on the simple ground that a community of speakers strongly feel about it and request it. Else, the ruthless and increasing marginalisation and displacement of minority, tribal and other indigenous languages may (perhaps it already has) lead to the becoming of human beings without any language, or what I would prefer to call 'language refugees'. We need to develop a sense of justice and on that basis a language planning framework whereby the 1652 mother tongues

(1961 census) spoken in this country will be transvalued from something of a burden into a rich reservoir. Then the linguistic diversity will not make our country appear as a 'sociolinguistic giant' or a 'linguistic madhouse'. Like the rich bio-diversity of tropical rain forests which might contain solutions to future bio-genetic problems, our linguistic diversity contains a valuable source of alternative worldviews, sense of justice and morality and ways of living in harmony with one's natural and cultural environments. Such a framework would also transform conceptualisations of national identity and integrity, which could be accomplished only through genuine processes of mutuality and reciprocity. Hopefully then, neither linguistic diversity nor national integrity would remain academic pariahs.

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A.K. Ramanujan's Poetry: A Bird's Eye-View

A.K. Ramanujan is one of the few poets who brought about a welcome change to Indian poetry in English after Independence. Critical opinion, though divided earlier, has now come around to accept him as one of the most gifted and original poets of the later half of the twentieth century. Certainly, with his new approach, admirable linguistic skills, keen power of observation and uncanny but delicate critical touch he breathed new life into Indian English poetry.

Attipat Krishnaswami Ramanujan, born in 1929 in a family of Tamil brahmins in Mysore was able to capture the attention of the English-speaking world as early as 1966 with his first collection of poems, *The Striders. While Relations* (1971) and the *Second Sight* (1986) continue in the direction indicated in *The Striders*, the fourth and last collection, *The Black Hen*, published posthumously (1994) adds a new dimension to his poetry. Besides these, Ramanujan has to his credit original writings in Kannada and has translated into English great works of Tamil and Kannada. His translation of classical Tamil anthologies and U.R. Anantha Murthy's *Samskara* into English have won much critical acclaim.

As one reads the poems of Ramanujan one is convinced of the aptness of R. Parthasarathy's observation: 'The family for Ramanujan is one of the central metaphors with which he thinks'. Though he was

abroad for about three decades, his awareness of the Indian heritage and his Indian sensibility remained keenly alive and formed the firm staple of his poetic output. Perhaps, the objectivity, the irony, the satirical tone and the critical stance we perceive in his poems are the result of the freedom he enjoyed while living away from home. All these are clearly perceived in the fondness as well as the bitterness with which he treats the loving as well as the mercenary aspects of family life. There are poems which reminisce the affectionate anxiety and the loving care only a mother can show towards her children. The poem 'Of Mothers, Among Other Things' beautifully brings out the close intimacy between mother and child:

I smell upon this twisted
blackbone tree the silk and white
petal of my mother's youth.

A.K. Ramanujan is thoroughly modern, and keeps his voice distant from the poetry of romantic effervescence. Just as his approach to family and relations, his approach to love also is matter-of-fact and at times cynical. He is more interested in exposing the evanescent nature and futility of love than in extolling its glory and splendour. But at the same time, his poems do not display the anxiety that marks the poems of Parthasarathy. As in his poems about family relations for probing the nature of love also Ramanujan often goes back to his past and childhood memories. These memories, articulated by a western trained man fully conscious of his Indian heritage, cannot but be sceptical. This is further accentuated by his keen sense of irony and his eye for the absurd. His portraits reveal situations of lovelessness more often than those of loving relationships.

The poem 'Love Poem for a Wife 1' begins with a prosaic statement in cold words:

Really what keeps us apart at the
end of years is unshared childhood

'Routine Day Sonnet' presents an outburst of odious hatred between husband and wife:

... But I wake with a start
to hear my wife cry her heart
Out as if from a crater
in hell: she hates me, I hate her,
I'm a filthy rat and a satyr.

Ramanujan is sensitively alive to the oddities, idiosyncrasies and

contradictions in man. In portraying them he adopts an amusingly satirical tone. The poem 'Entries for a Catalogue of Fears' is a fine example:

. . . . to the old old fear
 of depths and heights,
 of father in the bedroom,
 insects, iodine
 in the eye,
 sudden knives and urchin laughter
 in the redlight alley,
 add now
 the men in line
 behind my daughter.

The poems included in *The Black Hen*, as Kritika Ramanujan remarks in the preface to *The Collected Poems of A.K. Ramanujan* 'are metaphysical and full of a frightening darkness' and they 'seem to press towards death and disintegration and even beyond to transmutation'. A few poems see birth in death and death in birth and also life-in-art and art-in-life. The poem 'The Black Hen' speaks of a creator, terrified by his own creation:

and when it's all there
 the black hen stares
 with its round red eye
 and you're afraid

His exposition of the connection between human body and nature expressed rather tentatively in *The Striders* finds a subtler and more complicated form in *The Black Hen*.

It is remarkable that though A.K. Ramanujan lived almost half of his life in the United States he is among the least alienated among all the expatriate Indian poets. Unlike Dom Moraes, Nissim Ezekiel or Parthasarathy he was not deeply affected by expatriation. His trilingualism and life in two cultures stood him in good stead, enabling him to resist any overwhelming sense of alienation.

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Autonomy and Femininity: Psychoanalytic and Feminist Insights

Women are considered the carriers of certain crucial but problematic aspects of human existence: those concerned with emotional connectedness to others rather than with the enhancement of autonomy; with serving the needs of others rather than establishing and satisfying their own. The problem for women has, therefore, been one of creating a basis for worthiness other than that bestowed by the dominant culture. Nevertheless, in the context of the upsurge of the women's movement in several countries during the past three decades or so, it can be said that women today are seeking to enlarge their vision of life – they are trying to grow. This search for self-definition is engaging women to move from perceptions into action rather than resignation.

The present project explores the notion of autonomy for women, drawing from literary, psychoanalytic and feminist sources, in the context of man-woman relationships. The 'data' for this project are the writings of the early 20th century Telugu writer, Chalam whose continuing relevance to the present lies in his characterisation of women's oppression and in his, what we may now term as 'feminist' conviction in equality and independence for women, their access to birth control measures and the right to abortion and their right to sexual pleasure.

The cultural history of 19th century India is commonly characterised as a conflict between the social reformers agitating for improvement in women's condition and the traditionalists who were opposed to such moves. However, what is striking to us today is that the contrasting images of femininity offered by the traditionalists and the reformers are only seemingly so: the similarities are illustrated by the insistence of both sections on control of women's sexuality, norms of good wifely behaviour and so on.

Chalam began writing in the 1920s and turned his passion, his 'critical and intense' passion, upon the condition of the polity, more specifically, the condition of women. He had an adversative view of culture where individual subjects are irretrievably caught but to which they in no way simply belong. It is to the extent that the individual (or the woman in this case) lives out this adversative relation, grinds up against and thrashes at the norm that she is a human subject at all. Chalam's tales of love and power, however, while celebrating the women's spiritedness, initiative and aggressive eroticism, and decrying the repressive social conditions, are rife with ambivalences. Chalam

seemed to be making an almost heroic effort to reconcile the traditional romantic notion of yearning for eternal love and the unity of the two souls and the existentialist belief in freedom and contingency. Passionate love, especially for the women characters, uproots them from the mundane and generates a preparedness for radical options as well as sacrifices. Thus the thinking, sensitive women seduce not merely by their beauty and virtue but by their minds as well. But can such an enterprise be successful under patriarchy? While the husbands are rogues, indifferent or just weak-willed, the lovers fare no better. Exposed to the duplicity and cowardice displayed by the men in their sexual dealings, the women often spontaneously face the fundamental ambiguity of existence in their attempt to live authentically. Existentially speaking, under patriarchy women risk more, fall deeper and rise higher than men. That is why, perhaps, the men in Chalam's fiction pale in comparison to the women, for whom the stakes are higher and there are more victories and more failures than there are for men.

Thus although the stories unfold as what appear like ideal romance, the women are not happy or content. Their anguish and struggle to define themselves in the context of the conflict between autonomy and love, between the need to assert themselves and the need to be overwhelmed, in short, between freedom and control, often end tragically in death, mysterious disappearance or in a self-sabotaging outcome of their love.

This project attempts to explore the notions of autonomy, the need for dependence, reciprocity and authenticity not only in Chalam's 'women' but in the present context of changing definitions of femininity and masculinity, using psychoanalytic and feminist insights.

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Folk Songs of India: Some Observations

The study of folk songs scattered in different part of our country may go a long way to help national integration. If they are presented in Hindi they might come closer to the common people in many parts of the country who may enjoy reading about the life-styles and culture of each other. A strong thread can easily be made to run through different flowers of songs having various colours and fragrance.

In this short survey, I intend to present a summary of the material collected. It may be mentioned, however, that the material gathered so far is rather incomplete.

A purely academic and conservative approach to folk songs often overlooks and even ignores one of the most important categories – the protest songs. They are the songs that express, in various ways, the struggle of oppressed people through the ages, against an unjust social order. These protest songs can be further classified into two categories: socio-economic and political. The former raised a voice against the feudal order of our society, with its caste-system and economic exploitation. The latter category of songs is mainly a product of our national movement and the numerous peasant rebellions against British rule.

Our folk song researchers very often fail to see the social content that lies behind the religious and spiritual trappings of songs of the former category. While assessing the second category, too, they are apathetic and sometimes even refuse to accept them as folk songs. Scholars have often regarded them as the compositions of 'politically motivated individuals' who have gone off the time-worn track of tradition.

In a broader sense a good number of the love and marriage songs or songs known as *Bārāmāsā*, *Birhā* or *Dehotallva* etc. indirectly express a protest against the prevalent social system. The village lovers always protested against any censor from above. An Assamese *Bihu* song says:

God created the earth first
And then created life
If this God can fall in love
Why should we not?

(Hemango Biswas, *A Glorious Heritage*, p. 166).

To our village girls the husband's house seems to be a stranger's house for the first time, as another *Bihu* song has it:

The birds brought up their offsprings
To beautify the branches of the tree
O' my mother brought me up with love
only to adorn a stranger's house.

(Hemango Biswas, *A Glorious Heritage*, p. 166.)

Let us now proceed to some other parts of our vast country in order to have a glimpse of the different kinds of song flowers with

various forms and colours that have an old but everfresh fragrance. Without going through theoretical details, we shall see here the nature and subject matter of the songs which are popular in different regions.

To begin with Bengal we find that *Bhatiāli*, *Bhawaiyā*, *Bārāmāsā* and *Māhut* are the most popular forms of folk songs here. The *Bāul* songs of Bengal are often interpreted by scholars as philosophical and mystic songs. They are taken to be obscure and esoteric. The secrets of these songs, they maintain, can only be discovered by those who belong to that cloistered sect of mystics. If that had been so, the *Bāul* songs would probably cease to be considered as folk songs. But the robust social content and appeal of the *Bāul* philosophy as expressed in their songs is a direct challenge to the conventional religions that create divisions between men. For them man is above all religions. The philosophy of the *Bāul* is the philosophy of the outcast and the downtrodden. To them the temples and the mosques are hindrances to the realization of their '*Moner Manush*' or the man within for whom they search. Those acquainted with the lifestory of the great *Bāul* composer and a well-known teacher of *Bāul* philosophy Lalan can easily make out the meaning of his song.

Every body asks me; what caste
do you belong to, Lalan
But Lalan replies –
I have not seen, what caste looks like.

(Hemango Biswas, *A Glorious Heritage*, p. 168)

The *Bihu* is the most popular form of Assamese folk songs. More than a thousand *Bihu* songs have been published so far. They are still being composed but not with the same zest as in earlier times. These songs are marked by a feeling of spontaneity. They thrive best in agricultural and pastoral settings. The *Bihu* songs were born close to the soil at the spring festival. *Bihu* songs today are undergoing a change because of the influence of western education and the indifference of the urbanized class towards folk culture. All these have tended to discourage the dances and songs of the *Bihu* festival. The sadness that is associated with such a turn of events is well expressed in modern *Bihu* songs.

The songs of Uttar Pradesh or of the Bhojpuri region can be broadly divided into three categories. The first category comprises of the songs which have either *Pauranic* or religious themes as their subject matter or which possess a devotional background. The songs of this category naturally show great affinity with classical music

because they have been greatly influenced by the Bhakti movement of the middle ages which has left its impact on the whole of northern India. Among such songs can be mentioned, the *Nirguṇa*, the *Purvi*, the *Parāti* and the *Devī* songs. Under the second category of songs we can count the type that is of a more independent nature. They are not connected with the tradition of the past but are the actual outcome of a modern society. The *Kajari*, the *Birhā*, the *Chaiti* and the *Bidesiya* may be included in this category. The third category of Uttar Pradesh or Bhojpuri folk-songs may be said to be those which are more clearly influenced by the music of various tribes scattered all over this region. Trilochan Pandey (*Bhojpuri Folklore and Music*) notes that, 'Tribal music has some of its own peculiarities. The ascent and the descent of the *swaras* in such folk songs may appear, at times, ridiculous to those who are accustomed to listen to the so-called "cultivated music". Out of the twelve notes employed in classical music, we find about nine of them being used in the ceremonial and ritual songs of this region.' Seven of these notes are pure (*suddha*) notes and the remaining two are the *Komal Gāndhār* and *Komal Niṣād*. Such songs generally employ the notes of *Kāfi* and *Khmāj thāts*. Other Bhojpuri songs like *Kaharvā* and the songs of washermen employ mainly the notes of *Vilāwal thāt*. The *rāgas* belonging to these three *thāts* are comparatively easy to grasp. Hence the tribal singers adapt them easily in order to intensify their different modes of expression.

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Archaeology and the Study of Sangam Society in Tamil Nadu

Earlier studies on Sangam literature concentrated exclusively on the cultural and political history of Tamils. They perceived a highly advanced society with the development of a full-fledged state apparatus. These works further treated the society as static and stagnant over a long period of time without any appreciable change. This tendency towards glorification needs to be corrected in order to understand the multi-faceted nature of the society. Except in certain favourable economic pockets Sangam society was in the nature of a tribal society gradually being transformed into a farming society wherein a complex state apparatus had not yet fully developed.

The development of any society is considerably influenced by

geographic and physiographic variations. These variations were classified into different ecological zones known as *tinai* by the early Tamils. *Tinai* literally means a situation. This could be either a behavioural or ecological situation. In the past three decades a rigorous analysis has been made on the concept of *tinai* and their inter-relationship. These studies are based extensively on the Sangam literature and its grammar. These studies have, however, failed to focus on the actual nature of the society. Recent discoveries in the field of archaeology, epigraphy and numismatics have thrown new light on several aspects of the society which have, by and large, been ignored by literature.

An attempt needs to be made to reconstruct our understanding of Sangam society. This could be based on Sangam literature but should be extensively supported by archaeological material obtained from excavated sites. It could use Tamil-Brahmi epigraphical records engraved on stone, metal, shell and pottery. The study of racial features drawing upon skeletal remains, and the manner in which natural resources like iron ore, semi-precious stones, etc., were exploited would further enrich such research.

The impact of the trans-oceanic trade and commerce on the contemporary society can be observed by the study of sea-level fluctuations, palaeo channel, river migration and siltation of river mouths which in fact disturbed the utility of the port, navigation and ship-building technology. Likewise the introduction of iron and steel technology transformed the nature of agricultural and industrial production. An increased production lead to a larger surplus and subsequent social stratification based on specialization. These data can be procured only through a field study and not from literature. The material support provided by the king pressurized the Sangam Age poets to speak more about the political authority of the king. This glorification left out the down-trodden classes. Therefore, the advancement that has been noted in the particularly favourable economic zones does not apply to the remote, economically weak and socially backward regions. The above discussion suggests that different social groups with a varied economic status were bound to coexist. This was because of the varying degrees to which they could exploit natural resources. An attempt is being made to reconstruct the varied nature of the society in different ecological zones based on archaeological and literary data.

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A Study of Rituals of Tibetan Bonpos at Solan, Himachal Pradesh

In 1959, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and around 85,000 Tibetans were forced to leave Tibet to seek refuge, primarily in India, Nepal and Bhutan. A group of Bonpo lamas and laymen also left Tibet and took shelter at Kulu and Manali in Himachal Pradesh. Because of climatic differences between India and Tibet and the lack of help from charitable organisations, the conditions in which they were compelled to live were very pitiable. A large number of them passed away including Sherab Lodro, the abbot of Menri (sMan-ri), the main Bonpo monastery in Tibet. From the mid-sixties onwards, a determined effort was made to establish a proper refugee settlement. With the help and sponsorship of the Catholic Relief Service, Tenzin Namdak, the former chief tutor of Menri monastery settled at Dolanjee, near Solan in Himachal Pradesh along with about seventy families from Manali. In 1969, the settlement was firmly established and named Thobgyal Sarpa, after the village Thobgyal in Tibet that was situated near the monastery of Menri. At present this Bonpo community consists of approximately one hundred households and a monastery (housing about a hundred monks), which is situated above the village. In the monastery, there are about thirty adult monks, many of them fully ordained (drang-strong). There is also an equal number of younger monks, attending the eight year monastic school in order to obtain the degree of dge-bshes. About forty boys live in the monastery as novices, under the personal care of the Abbot (mkhan-po), named Sangye Tenzin Jongdong, who was elected as the 33rd Abbot in 1968, and is considered as continuing the sMan-ri lineage of abbots.

The monastery is open to the needs of the local community of which it is a part. It is also a centre of religious life for thousands of Bonpos in India and Nepal and a place in which religious life is carried on faithfully along traditional lines. An attempt is made here to discuss the rituals, performed by the Tibetan Bonpos at Dolanjee, near Solan in Himachal Pradesh.

The religious activities of the monks are, generally speaking, of two kinds. The first of these are scholastic studies and calendrical festivals and the second the performance of the rituals by the monks. The calendrical festivals are generally held on the days of the birth and death of Ston-pa-gshen-rab, as well as of certain other important lamas, Losar etc. Death rituals fall in the latter category. They are commissioned by the relatives of the deceased and usually performed

by two or three monks, in the monastery or in the chapel of a private house.

The rituals are taken from the so-called 'Drid-med gzi-brjid rab-tu 'bar-ba's mdo, which contains the biography of Lord gShen-rab mi-bo in twelve volumes of sixty-one chapters. It is presented as a series of *sutras* (mdo) delivered by Shenrap to his followers. In twelve of these *sutras* Shenrap delivers the instructions and liturgies for twelve rituals (cho-qa bcu-gnis), which are performed regularly to this day by the Bonpos. There is a difference in the Bonpo rituals and the Buddhist rituals. The latter have no canonical basis (in the sense of actual or purported Buddha-word) in their existing form. The liturgical and actional units which constitute them are derived either from the tantras themselves or from the ancillary sādhana and other ritual literature, much of which is extra-canonical, often of an acknowledged recent date. Historical traditions exist as to how the rituals were built up in Tibet into their present forms. In the case of Bonpos, we have complete and developed rituals with their liturgies specified in minute details in the basic canon (bka'-'gyur) [Cf. Denwood, Phillip, 'Notes on Some Tibetan Bonpo Rituals' in the *Buddhist Studies: Ancient and Modern*, Curzon Press, 1983, pp.12-19].

The Tibetan Bonpo rituals are known as the 'Universal Mandala of the Five Bodies' (Kun-dbyings sku-lnga dkyil-'khor). Shenrap has outlined the thirty one stages in performing the rituals. The text gZi-brjid (Vol. ga. f. 122) describes both the actions of the rituals and their accompanying liturgy, both of which are in thirty one sections. The introductory section (sngon-dro) comprises ten preparatory rites (*vidhi*), which set up the *mandala* and ritually prepare it. The text clearly envisages the careful construction of an actual three dimensional *mandala*, but since it is the mental part of the activity which is more important, it is not strictly necessary to make the physical *mandala*. The ten rites are :

1. Raising the foundations
2. Building up the *mandala*
3. Marking with strings
4. Placing the pure clothing
5. Making preparations
6. Drawing the *mandala*
7. Describing the *mandala*
8. Arranging the ornaments
9. Arranging the offerings
10. Meditating on the *mandala* with the three kinds of samādhi.

The main part (dngos-gzhi) comprises fifteen rites. First are the five 'consecrating' rites concerned with inviting and bringing the divinities to their places in the *mandala*. These are:

1. Offering of seats
2. Invitation
3. Delighting
4. Establishing
5. Consecration

Then come five rites of pleasing the divinities:

6. Salutation
7. Confession
8. Worship
9. Praises
10. General Worship.

Then follow five 'activities' :

11. Receiving the five strengths
12. Praising by means of one's good qualities
13. Worshipping the major divinities
14. Regarding the six classes of beings with compassion
15. Prayer

The concluding section (rjes-jug) comprises five rites. These are:

1. Opening the doors to the mandala,
2. Revealing the faces of the divinities
3. Invitation
4. Generation of the divinities
5. Generation of the seats and palaces.

The whole process closes with a prayer.

The death ritual of Bonpos asserts to be non-Buddhist and at times even anti-Buddhist. Before the death of the King Gri-gum btsan-po, who was the first king not to clamber back into heaven up the heavenly ladder, the Bonpos had no specific death ritual. His body was, therefore, buried by his sons under a pointed tent-shaped tumulus of stamped earth. It is interesting to note that the Tibetan Bon-pos were not sufficiently acquainted with the appropriate rites and therefore had to bring in three Bon priests from the west, from Kashmir, Gilgit and Guge, one of whom possessed the necessary knowledge. This man carried out an operation known as the 'Taming of the Dead' – apparently with a magic knife. At a later period, the

Bon-po codified all the chief rites and laid down '360 ways of Death', 'four ways of preparing graves', and 'eighty-one ways of taming evil spirits' [Cf. Sarat Chandra Das, 'Contribution on the Religion, History of Tibet', in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1881, Part I, p. 204].

There are three independent rites, which together make up the whole business of helping the dead find salvation beyond the process of existence :

1. 'pho-ba. It means the 'transference of consciousness', which is a post-mortem rite performed by a monk. It consists of the traditional guidance of the deceased's consciousness by way of textual recitation (thos-grol) aiming at final liberation.

2. byang-chog. It is known as the 'drawing-ritual', which is the gradual guidance of the deceased's drawn effigy towards liberation.

3. The last step is the cremation of the corpse, which is followed by the Klong-rgyas ('extended vastness') ritual.

Per Kvaerne in his book *Tibet: Bon Religion* [Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1985, pp. 1-34] has described in great detail the byang-chog, accompanied by a series of informative illustrations and drawings which enable us to gain a clear and overall idea of the whole ceremony. Initially a ransom (glud) of the deceased is offered, in the shape of a little effigy made of dough. Being presented to the malignant spirits, they are most earnestly solicited not to interfere in the rite, whereafter the figure is thrown away. Then the consciousness of the deceased is summoned ('gugs-pa) to the place and is eventually transferred onto a tablet (byang-bu), a drawing of the dead, followed by a so-called aspersion Khrus-gsol of the ritual drawing i.e. of the body of the deceased, with lustral water. This is succeeded by the writing of a series of seed-syllables, each with their symbolic value. A number of symbolic offerings then follow, all presented to the dead person and depicted on special cards (tsag-li), especially designed for this rite. These cards show respectively a dwelling, bodily form, the six sense-objects and six animals (representing mental qualities) of which three animals – the yak, the horse and the sheep – played a salient role in the ancient funerary rites of the Tibetan kings. Some aspects of the ritual fall into the category of adaptations from standard Buddhist practice, while others are traced back to pre-Buddhist observances, which includes the ransom offering, the use of tsag-li (ritual cards) for the presentation of offerings and other purposes, and the choice of a yak, horse and sheep to show the consciousness, the way of liberation. The role of these animals really separates the Bonpos from their Buddhist counterparts: the ransom and the use of

tsag-li are well known to Buddhist tradition, too.

Per Kvaerne then enumerates the group of deities which subsequently confront the deceased in his journey towards liberation. Four groups of deities, each drawn on tsag-li cards, take part in the ceremony, respectively the Six Subduing qShen, the Thirteen Primeval gShen, the Four Main Blessed Ones and finally a drawing of the All-Good (Kun-tu bzang po: Skt. Samantabhadra). In each step, Kvaerne provides ample information about their ritual function and their attributes. The deceased, having now passed from a mundane realm to a supramundane sphere, is subsequently bestowed with four successive consecrations (dbang): the vase (bum-pa), the Root deities, the Cake (gtor-ma) consecration and finally the Nectar Consecration, thus differing considerably from the traditional four Buddhist consecrations. At this stage of the ceremony, the deceased is no more a mortal being but a so-called Eternal Spiritual Hero (gYung-drung sems-dpa'), who, it is supposed, finally will proceed through thirteen successive stages, and ascent resembling the bodhisattva's career in Buddhism. Finally, the byang-bu is dismantled and the drawing is burnt.

Now, the question arises as to how these rituals are being experienced by the Bonpos in theory and in daily practice? Philip Denwood says that as far as theory is concerned, the whole range of Bonpo practices from the simplest rite to the most refined meditation is schematized under 'Nine ways'. These rituals fit in the third of these, translated by Snellgrove as the 'Way of Shen of Illusion'. The basic tantric theory behind them is that as the nature of the phenomenal world is illusory, the practitioner by attaining realization of his unity with divinity to whom the rite is addressed, is able to manipulate that illusion to (a) any particular desire end and (b) for the benefit of living beings in general [Denwood, Philip, *op.cit.*, pp.17-18].

When I visited the Bonpo monastery at Dolanjee on May 5, 1995, the abbot of the monastery Sangye Tenzin Jongdong told me a very interesting story relating to the death ritual.

Tenzin Namdak was entrusted with the task of purchasing the land for the settlement of Bonpos. He was negotiating the purchase of the land with the landowner at Solan. The people, who were cultivating the land were however, not inclined to vacate and leave the place. When the people did not agree to leave the place, the landowner called a meeting at night and said, 'I have been asked by the Government of India to sell the lands to the immigrant Tibetan Bonpos. So, you people have to vacate this place. 'Kindly take some

money to settle in another places.' Even after the repeated requests of the landowner, the cultivators did not appear to be in a mood to vacate the place. Thereafter, the landowner made a false story about the Tibetan Bonpos and said to the cultivators, 'These Tibetan Bonpos eat the flesh of human beings. So, I am leaving the place. If you people like to stay here, you can live here, but the responsibility will be yours'. The people of Dolanjee became frightened after hearing this concocted story about the Tibetans. Immediately after that they agreed to vacate the land and were given some money by the landowner to settle elsewhere. After that, the land was sold to the immigrant Tibetan Bonpos.

It is evident from this that the other inhabitants of Dolanjee, were not interacting with the Tibetans. This would account for their readiness to believe that the Tibetans were taking the flesh of human beings. The death rituals of Bonpos are being performed in a very secretive manner unlike those of the Hindus and the cremation does not take place upon the bank of the river. Actually, the death rituals of Bonpos are conducted over about 4-5 days and the corpse is kept for this duration. Thereafter, the cremation follows in a very neat and clean place. Previously, the Bonpos also feared the disapproval of the people of nearby villages because of their practice of keeping the corpse for several days in order to complete the ritual. The abbot of the monastery, therefore, requested the local authorities (police station) for permission to keep the corpse for this period in order to perform the rituals. The authorities told the abbot of the monastery that they had no objection to this practice as long as it did not create problems for the other people. Then, the abbot of the monastery used to perform the death rituals as usual. The people of the nearby villages, however, continued to believe that the Bonpos were consuming human flesh and for that reason performed the death rituals in a very secret manner and cremated the body during the night only and that too not on the bank of the river. Subsequently the abbot of the monastery was successful in removing even this misconception amongst the local villagers. In the meantime another incident occurred. A man of a nearby village died and the corpse was taken to the bank of the river outside the village for cremation. When the pyre was about to be lit, the 'dead body' got up slowly from the pyre. The man, it appears, had not actually died and is still alive and well. From then on, the people of the nearby village have begun believing that the dead body should not be cremated immediately after the person dies.

When the people came into friendlier and closer contact with

abbot of the monastery and other Bonpos the false story of the landowner came to surface. Now, the people of nearby villages participate in the death rituals of the Bonpos and the Bonpo priests are also called on by the local people to perform the death rituals. Whenever religious functions are celebrated in the monastery all the local people are also invited to participate. Some of the professors of Dr. Yaswant Singh Parmar University of Horticulture, Solan are also invited to attend the function. These functions are an important part of the monastery's activities whose daily, monthly and annual timetable is marked by a regular series of rituals, performed by the monks. Additional rites are also performed on the demand of the local people.

The Bonpos are also propagating ideal ways for the local people to lead a happy and prosperous life. The latter have stopped meat-eating and taking alcohol and developed greater faith and devotion towards the Bonpos. Even the wives of local people are discouraging their husbands from taking alcohol. Thus, the Bonpos have contributed towards the spiritual development of the local society.

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The Advaitic Ontology and its Epistemological Foundation

'Is-Ought' problem is very popular among the Moral philosophers specially in the West. They try to dilute the dichotomy between 'Is' and 'Ought' or the actual and the ideal as well as fact and value with the help of Hedonistic Ethics and Kantian Ethics.

Bradley among the critics of Western Ethics makes a very pertinent observation about the incompleteness of both these Ethics. Hedonistic Ethics is pleasure for the sake of pleasure which by and large rests on Psychological Hedonism. This is merely the statement of a fact and which through subterfuge is merely raised to the status of a moral ideal. Actually it presents the 'Is' without 'Ought'. So being one sided it is unable to preserve both 'Is' and 'Ought'.

Kantian ethics which is duty for the sake of duty is also one sided in the sense that it presents the 'Ought' without the 'Is'. This remains an ideal which has no moorings in actuality. This was also observed by W.H. Urban in 'Kant and Modern Axiology' when he says that in

Kant's philosophy, value predominates reality (*The Heritage of Kant*).

After making his observation on the incompleteness of both these ethics, Bradley attempts to solve this problem. Religious experience is suggested by him as a solution to the problem. But Bradley himself finds it inadequate because God in his philosophy is appearance, for God without a devotee has no meaning. If this is so, then God becomes relational and anything relational is appearance and not reality. Even in self-realization this gap between the 'Is' and the 'Ought' cannot be closed. Hence in his 'My Station and its Duties', Bradley concludes that even in self-realisation this dichotomy remains. This to him, remains a regret. Hence, there is asymptotic relation between the real and the ideal. For this reason, Bradley is seen to maintain in his Ethical Studies that morality is an endless process.

The problem which remains unsolved in Western philosophy finds a solution in the Advaitic philosophy of Sankara. In Sankara's philosophy, the Ultimate Reality – Brahman – is a complete unity of the actual and the ideal. And for this reason the Atman has been identified with Brahman and Brahman has been defined as *saccidananda*. It is a total, inseparable, inalienable unit of the ontological category called *sat* and the moral category called *ananda* and in between these two pervades a light, the *cit*, which is intelligibility supreme, not lighted by another light but such as is of the nature of self-luminosity. Atman of Advaita Vedanta is as of illumination at the higher level, as of value at the crest of things.

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Bhakti and Prapatti as Expounded in *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam*

In Śrīvaiṣṇavism, *bhakti* and *prapatti* are considered to be *upāyas*, the means to attain *upeya*, the goal, i.e., *mokṣa*. Piḷḷai Lokācārya (1205-1311 A.D.) wrote *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam* in which the theology and philosophy of the system are discussed with the authorities. Maṇavālamāmuni (1370-1443 A.D.) wrote a commentary upon the text in which he incorporates his own views along with the traditional belief for more clarity.

To the system the self is eternally as subservient and dependent imbued with the Lord. It does not have an independent status to

protect by itself and to make efforts for its own emancipation (*pāratantriyam*). The self before the Lord could be metaphorically inferred as servant (*dāsa*) to Him, the Master. It, as *śeṣa*, should feel that its essence is for the sake of *Śeṣi's* enjoyment in which it becomes the object to be enjoyed by Him (*svarūpayāthātmyābhāvam*). When the self follows the *upāya*, it should completely surrender to the wish of the Lord (*Paragataśvīkāram*). It should think that the Lord Himself is the *upāya* which is already a fulfilled one and accompanied by its existence (*siddhōpāya*).

Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam verifies that, since the self has to follow the *upāya* without destroying its *svabhāva*, the *bhakti* form is not suitable. To substantiate it, Piḷḷai Lokācārya and Maṇavālamāmuni systematically analysed, the demerits of *bhakti*: (i) It destroys the *svabhāva*: since *bhakti* induces egotism in the self, the self would not have the chance to attain a spiritual abode but it will collapse the nature of the self itself. (ii) It creates a danger: since *bhakti* is practised out of self effort, it dangerously destroys the self's *pāratantriyam*. (iii) It creates fearfulness: since the devotee knows the danger of the other *upāyas*, he fearfully requests the Lord not to avoid him by granting other *upāyas* because due to its egoistic content, it drags the self away from the Lord's Abode. (iv) It generates suffering. The other *upāyas* due to their demerits cause suffering to the devotee. (v) It stimulates egotism. If a drop of liquor is poured into pure water, it becomes impure. Similarly, though *bhakti* in one sense seems to be perfect, it becomes impure because of its egotistical tendencies. (vi) *Upeya* is not equal to *upāya*. Certain island people usually exchanged rubies for shells because they used to wear only the latter as jewellery. But this did not make the two equal. In the same manner, though the Lord satisfies in *bhakti* and grants the *upeya*, the *upāya* is not valued as equal to it. (vii) It maintains its lower status. Even if the ruby for shell is acceptable, the devotee has nothing to reciprocate for the Lord's Grace. Since the devotee's whole being is the property of God, he as a dependent has to prostrate before Him. Out of ignorance the devotee assumes that the Lord's property is his own and tries to offer the same even to Him. So the truth value behind *bhakti* is lower and meaningless.

By evaluating the *upāyas*, Piḷḷai Lokācārya and Maṇavālamāmuni confirmed that *prapatti* is aptly correlated to the *svābhāva*, *pāratantriyam* and *svarūpayāthātmyābhāvam* of the self. This is because in it there is no trace of egotism. It is so simple because in it the responsibility hails not on the part of the devotee but on the part of the Lord, where the Lord gets eternal pleasure by initiating,

activating and inviting the self to His spiritual domain.

The views derived from the discussion above could be a desideratum to the current problems faced by the individual with respect to his worldly affairs. If an individual practises *prapatti*, it is well and good; if not, by abrogating egotism, he will be standing as *stithaprajñā*, the man of steadfast character, whose mental balance will not be disturbed against the opposites of success or failure, good or bad, etc., and he will discharge his duties with the sense of 'duty for deity sake' instead of 'duty for duty sake'. If it is so, the restrictions among the individuals to understand each other could be minimised and through this the societal differences would be amicably settled.

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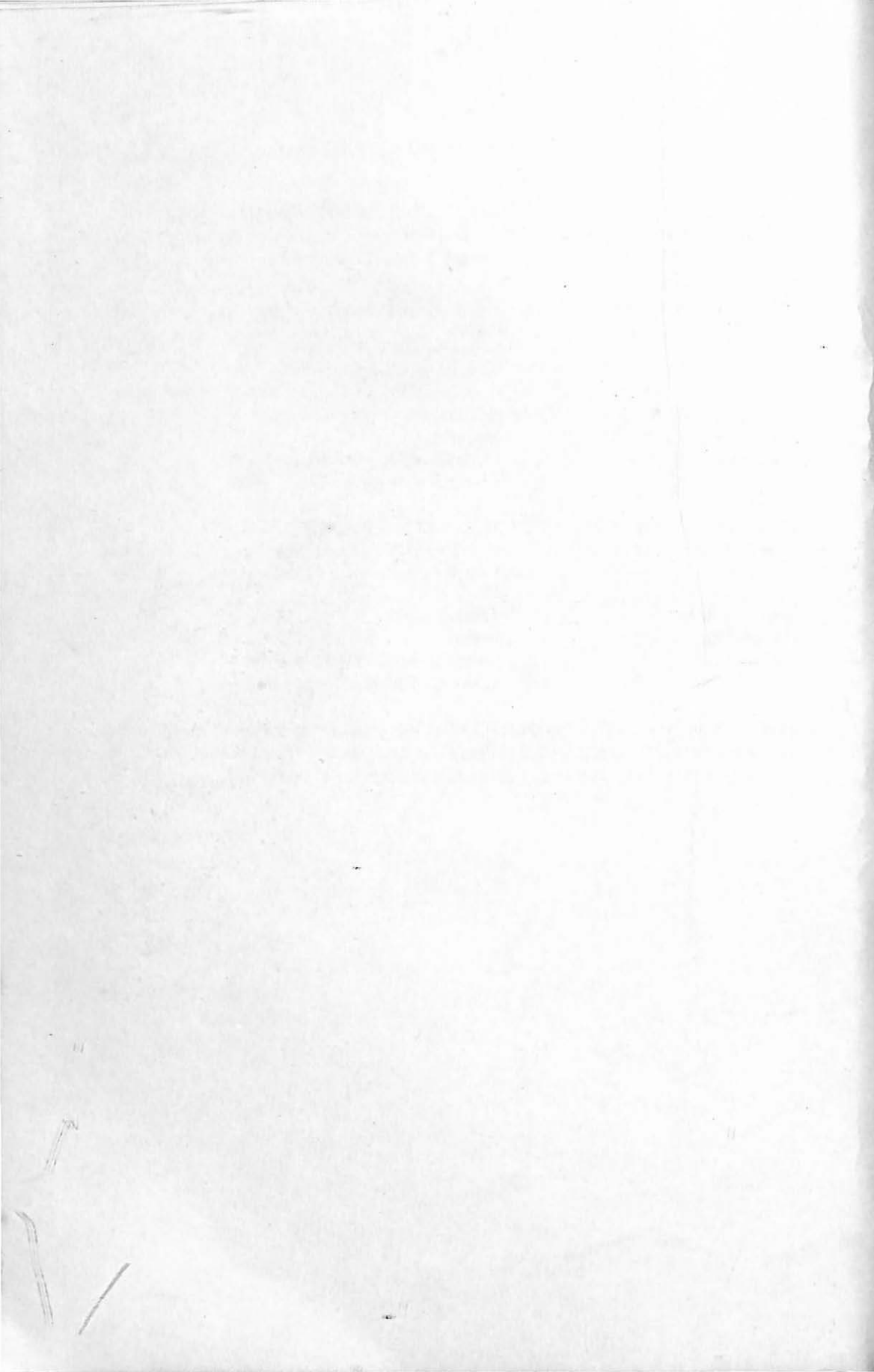
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