

STUDIES  
IN  
HUMANITIES  
AND  
SOCIAL  
SCIENCES

VOL. XIV, NUMBER 1, 2007

*General Editor*  
B.L. MUNGEKAR



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY  
RASHTRAPATI NIVAS, SHIMLA

S  
H  
S  
S

STUDIES IN  
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

*General Editor*

PETER RONALD DESOUZA

*Director, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla*

UMA CHAKRAVARTHI  
*Anand Niketan, H.No. 4  
Dhaura Kuan, New Delhi*

G.C. TRIPATHI  
*National Fellow, IIAS*

AKHTAR UL WASEY  
*Zakir Hussain Institute of Islamic Studies  
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi*

RAJEEV BHARGAVA  
*CSDS, 29 Rajpur Road,  
New Delhi*

SASHEEJ HEGDE  
*Head, Sociology Department  
Central University, Hyderabad*

TEJASWINI NIRANJANA  
*Centre for Study of Culture and Society  
Bangalore*

PULAPRE BALAKRISHNAN  
*A-4, Laxmi Apartments  
P.O. Chalappuram, Kozikode*

HARSH SETH  
*Seminar, New Delhi*

*Assistant Editor and Production: DEBARSHI SEN*

*Annual Subscriptions:*

INSTITUTIONS: Rs. 300 (Inland); US \$ 30 (foreign)

INDIVIDUALS: Rs. 200 (Inland); US \$ 25 (foreign)

STUDENTS: Rs. 160(Inland); US \$ 20(foreign)

Cheques/drafts should be drawn in favour of  
Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla-171005  
Enquiries concerning manuscripts, advertisements  
and subscription may be addressed to:

Sales and Public Relations Officer  
Indian Institute of Advanced Study  
Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla-171005  
email: proiiias@gmail.com

KEYA SENGUPTA

New Paradigm of Development Economics:  
A Study of Human Development in North East India

MUKESH KUMAR

Slavery in Colonial Bihar during the  
Nineteenth Century

LATA SINGH

'Modern' Theatre in India: Middle Class  
Quest for Respectability

RAVI JAUHARI

Adolescence in Ruskin Bond's  
*The Room on the Roof*

GOPA BHATTACHARYYA

Free Talk, Taboos and Concealed Fears:  
Existential crisis portrayed  
by Virginia Woolf in Rachel Vinrace

BHAWANA JHARTA

Education and Empowerment of Women:  
Some Critical Issues

KAUSTAV CHAKRABORTY

The North Indian *hijra* Identity:  
Sexual and Gender Stratification

---

ISSN: 0972-1401

STUDIES IN  
HUMANITIES AND  
SOCIAL SCIENCES

Journal of the Inter-University Centre  
for Humanities and Social Sciences

---

VOL. XIV, NUMBER 1, 2007

*General Editor*

B.L. MUNGEKAR



INTER-UNIVERSITY CENTRE FOR HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY  
RASHTRAPATI NIVAS, SHIMLA



## CONTENTS

New Paradigm of Development Economics: A Study of Human Development in North East India KEYA SENGUPTA	1
Slavery in Colonial Bihar during the Nineteenth Century MUKESH KUMAR	21
‘Modern’ Theatre in India: Middle Class Quest for Respectability LATA SINGH	35
Adolescence in Ruskin Bond’s <i>The Room on the Roof</i> RAVI JAUHARI	57
Free Talk, Taboos and Concealed Fears: Existential crisis portrayed by Virginia Woolf in <i>Rachel Vinrace</i> GOPA BHATTACHARYYA	69
Education and Empowerment of Women: Some Critical Issues BHAWANA JHARTA	83
The North Indian <i>hijra</i> Identity: Sexual and Gender Stratification KAUSTAV CHAKRABORTY	103
<i>Contributors</i>	115

# New Paradigm of Development Economics: A Study of Human Development in North East India

Keya Sengupta

I

## *Introduction: Development Strategy for North East India*

The development strategy for north east India has recently been drawing the attention of policy makers and academicians. Numerous efforts notwithstanding the region has continued to lag behind the rest of the nation in terms of economic development. Though various strategies of development have been experimented in the region, no strategy has yet touched the humanistic aspect of development problems. This strategy has recently been given great emphasis by researchers, though policy makers still have a long way to go as far as adopting the latest strategy of development is concerned.

A humanistic approach of development model based on human development paradigm should be the main focus of attention of these models. Various aspects of human well-being such as food, nutrition, shelter, education, health and various other amenities, which constitute a good quality life, should occupy the centre stage of all development efforts for north east India. Such objectives, if carefully researched, studied, analyzed and integrated into growth models, need not be at the cost of rational economic behaviour and anti-growth. In fact, such growth models can ensure sustainable development. The basic forces of market economy, ensuring optimum allocation of resources can no doubt be satisfied, but the human crisis of the pure neo-classical model of growth cannot be overlooked either. The problem of development in the modern world is not only multi-dimensional but unique as well.

The traditional economic approach may not always be helpful in clarifying such problems and unconventional approaches may often have to be adopted to solve what may superficially appear to be conventional economic problems. Though the traditional economic approach can play a useful role in improving our understanding of development problems, it should not act as an obstacle to the realities of local conditions in less developed countries. Hence the necessity of ensuring state intervention for synthesizing economic rationality of market forces and welfare of the common man.

The essence of all these issues such as education, health and various other factors which determine the conditions of living of the common man are captured in the newly emerged concept of human Development. The acceptance of this new idea has significantly broadened the narrow conventional development paradigm. The response of new development economics to the changing realities of life in the developing countries and the new theoretical advances made in mainstream economics has been both positive and negative, which is evident in the greater emphasis on human development. This is also evident from the regular publication of the *Human Development Report* by UNDP, since 1990. The basic reason for this report is an attempt to reduce the unacceptable levels of economic inequalities, poverty commonly experienced in the less developed countries and even certain neglected regions of large and developed countries. Adequate attention needs to be paid to these aspects related to development experience in the less developed nations, because as Myrdal (1984) highlights,<sup>98</sup> “what is needed to raise the miserable living levels of the poor masses is instead radical institutional reforms. These would serve the double purpose of greater equality and economic growth.” Tinbergen also emphasizes the importance of substantial income transfer to correct the present income differences between the rich and the poor. Any study of human development, therefore, emphasises the need to achieve social justice and enhance human happiness for which we need to create institutions that transmute the longing for a better world into a set of policies, which begin by raising the welfare of the deprived sections.

Economic growth and well-being of the common man as measured by human development are therefore not contradictory, as some economists wrongly tend to opine. In fact, they are complimentary and no economic growth can be initiated and sustained at a low level of human development just as a high-level of human development can only be sustained with resources obtained through a high rate of economic growth. Growth does not automatically transform itself into



human development. All depends on the nature and extent to which policies and programmes of an economy are geared to harmonize economic growth with human development. Achieving these two goals simultaneously should form a part of every development goal and effort. It is here that the role of the state assumes importance and the study of human development assumes significance from the point of view of policy perspective. The widespread criticism of the 'trickle down theory' which has proved ineffective in the Indian context, and least of all for the north-eastern region, can be made a meaningful exercise through changing the entire perspective of policy formulation. As Haq (1996) opines under the circumstances the focus of attention of most policies would be the people rather than production only. Policies according to him should contain certain elements missing from most of the policies today. For instance, policies should begin with a detailed profile of its people in terms of education, health, poverty, cultural and political aspirations and all other factors that go to constitute a good quality of life. This exercise should be undertaken both for the rural – urban division, and also for various social, religious and most importantly, across spatial dimension. Lack of knowledge about the people for whom policies are to be formulated cannot be expected to provide satisfactory results. Hence, our present study assumes crucial significance from this point of view.

Policies focusing on human development should also make people equal partners in development. Encouragement should, therefore, be provided to people to participate in the development process. Assessment of the progress of an economy should be made from the point of view of not only macro economic indicators, but also social indicators. It is only then that development efforts can be made more meaningful. The study of human development in the north eastern region from this point of view is extremely important.

At the same time, it is also crucial to focus attention on the fact that too much emphasis on either economic growth or only human development may result in unbalanced growth of the economy, which may once again jeopardize the very process of long-term sustainable development (Sengupta, 2003). Sustaining the process of development is the pivotal issue of the human development paradigm. If the states of the north east have to survive on aid from the center on a permanent basis, sustainability of developmental efforts in the region will be seriously impaired. Making the growth process sustainable by emphasizing on human development implies that enough of the resources created at present should be invested in the education and health of today's generation. These people, in turn, may sustain the

process of economic development of the future generations also, so that the future generation need not pay the debts of today's generation.

The main tenets of the paradigm of human development are therefore the people. Every aspect of economic development is assessed from the point of view of the people. The objective of growth is the betterment of people's lives and not merely expansion of production processes. This paradigm further necessitates that people should not only build capabilities by building their health, education and skills, but must also be provided with all the opportunities to use these capabilities through adequate employment opportunities. Full expansion of the GDP and the macro-economic variables which are considered as means of economic development are as important as the end, which are the people. Apart from the pure economic factors, non-economic factors such as the political, cultural and social factors also play an equally important role in determining human development.

In the 1950s and 1960s many nations had experienced economic development, yet the living conditions of the masses remained extremely deplorable. It was only in the 1970s that realisation dawned upon the planners that something must have gone wrong somewhere. The fact that development was purely an economic phenomenon in which the GNP growth would trickle down to the masses for the wider distribution of economic and social benefits of growth did not seem to work. This resulted in discarding GNP as a true indicator of growth. Direct attack on poverty, low level of living, inequitable income distribution and rising unemployment were the pivotal issues which were incorporated in the new concept of human development, and were gradually forming a part of development policies. Similar was the view of the World Bank, which during the 1980s championed economic growth as the goal of development and had taken a much broader view of development. This is evident from the 1991 WORLD Development Report, in which it maintained that "the challenge of development is to improve the quality of life. Especially in the world's poor countries, a better quality of life generally calls for higher incomes—but it involves much more. It encompasses as ends in themselves better education, higher standards of health and nutrition less poverty, a cleaner environment, more equality of opportunity, greater individual freedom and a richer cultural life."

The fact that it has still not been possible to solve the problems of hunger, illiteracy, malnutrition and poverty of the states of the north eastern region where the condition of quality of life in most places is much lower than the all India level, only reveals the choice of wrong strategy of development for the north east. The assumption of the 'trickle

down theory' has totally failed in the region like the rest of India. Western paradigms are, therefore, no longer accepted blindly with the same degree of fervour.

The result of all the futile efforts over the years—at developing the economy particularly that of north-east India, reveals that we have once again to rediscover the basic truth of all development strategy—that people should occupy the centre-stage of all development. In other parts of India, different states have developed at different rates, in spite of similar physical investment. States with rich natural resources or heavy capital investment have not displayed any satisfactory record in terms of economic development. In contrast, some states with insufficient resources, both natural as well as financial, have performed much better, when the people of those states have greater capability and are therefore much more hard working and efficient. Kerala emerges as the most important example. The north eastern region in India is one of the richest in the endowment of unique type of natural resources, yet the extent of economic development is the lowest here in the whole country. The crucial factor that can be identified here are the people, and their skills, ability and capability which make the major difference to development. Therefore, it will be futile to think of developing a nation / region without developing the people themselves. This has been the fallacy of development of the entire country, over the past decades. Though the rest of the country has realized this error and is talking more in terms of placing the people at the centre stage of development, the north eastern region is still lagging behind.

It is with this aim in view that the present work will make a detailed analysis of the human development index of the various states as well as some important districts of the region. The main purpose of such an analysis will be to assess the inter-state and inter-district status of the human development index and also view them against the performance of the country as a whole.

## II

### *Methodology of the Study*

Though quality of life can be evaluated by various indicators, for the sake of comparability we shall adopt the UNDP methodology of calculating the HDI. The simple average of the life expectancy index, educational attainment index and the adjusted real GDP per capita index is the human development index HDI. This is derived by dividing the

sum of these three indices by 3.

The estimation of HDI for the various north eastern states of India will follow the above methodology, on the basis of which inter-state and inter- and intra-district analysis of the level of living will be attempted to be assessed. Analysis will also be made to examine the HDI across different socio-economic and religious groups residing in various states of the region. Due to limitations of various natures, though, such an analysis may not fully represent the differences in quality of life, nevertheless it may draw the broad contours. In view of the difficulty of adopting all indicators of a good quality of life the computation of HDI, according to UNDP method, is based only on three indicators: longevity as measured by life expectancy at birth; educational attainment, measured by a combination of adult literacy (two-third weights); and combined primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment have been accepted, which are as follows:

- (i) Life expectancy at birth: 25 years and 85 years.
- (ii) Adult literacy: 0% and 100%.
- (iii) Combined enrolment ratio: 0% and 100%.
- (iv) Real GDP per capita.

The general formula for the computation of individual indices for any component of HDI is as follows:

$$\text{Index} = \frac{\text{Actual } X_I \text{ value} - \text{minimum } X_I \text{ value}}{\text{Maximum } X_I \text{ value} - \text{minimum } X_I \text{ value}}$$

For the purpose of this study we have collected primary data from six states of the north eastern region, following the multi-stage stratified purpose sampling method. Data could not be collected from Manipur due to the socio-economic turmoil of the state, which has not only made traveling to the state extremely difficult, but the collection of the data too was seriously impaired. We have selected twenty per cent of the districts from each state, out of which another twenty per cent of the blocks have been chosen. From these selected blocks we have then selected twenty villages/towns, and from each of the villages or towns, thus selected 20 households have been interviewed to acquire the requisite information.

### III

#### *Analysis of Human Development Index (HDI) of the NE States*

In the present section, we shall examine the achievement of the various

states of North East India, in terms of HDI, which is expected to provide an important insight into the level of human development in the respective states. The method hereby enables us to use a common measuring rod, by way of this composite index, to measure the socio-economic progress of the respective places.

Table No. 1  
Human Development Index (HDI) of the North Eastern States of India

<i>States</i>	<i>HDI</i>	<i>HDI Ranks</i>	<i>Extent by which HDI of India exceeds the HDI of the states</i>
1 Assam	0.389	5	1.5
2 Meghalaya	0.393	4	1.5
3 Tripura	0.401	3	1.4
4 Nagaland	0.491	2	1.2
5 Mizoram	0.556	1	1.06
6 Arunachal Pradesh	0.358	6	1.6
7 N.E. States	0.431	-	1.4
8 India	0.590	-	-

The above table reveals that considerable difference marks HDI in the states of north east India, notwithstanding the fact that they all belong to the same region, and face certain common constraints during development efforts. Mizoram is the only state in the region with 0.556 HDI and ranks first in terms of HDI ranking. Arunachal Pradesh with 0.358 HDI ranks the lowest in terms of HDI ranking. In fact, HDI in Mizoram is 1.6 times higher than that of Arunachal Pradesh, revealing the wide diversity in human development, even within the region itself. It also focuses attention towards the extremely heterogeneous nature of the region's economy and society. The achievement of the economy either in terms of its economic development or human development cannot be understood in composite terms. It is, therefore, essential that the experiences of the north eastern economy presuppose some information at a disaggregative form and in a detailed manner, at least as far as the development experiences of this region is concerned.

Mizoram's progress is remarkable in comparison to all the other states of the region, though economic development of states like Assam is much higher than Mizoram. This has been made possible by highly satisfactory progress with respect to literary and health sectors, the two important indicators of social sectors which are highly correlated. The favourable effect of this has far outweighed the disadvantage with respect to economic development. On the other hand, Arunachal

Pradesh has failed to achieve both economic as well as human development and has therefore, lagged totally behind all the other states of the region, both in the economic as well as in the social sector. In fact, if the state was treated as an independent nation, it would have occupied one of the lowest ranks among all the nations of the world. Existence of vast natural resources notwithstanding, the state has been unable to achieve any level of economic development worth mentioning. This has been reflected commensurately, in extremely poor performance with respect to literacy and health. It also needs to be mentioned here that inadequate economic development need not always mean inadequate human development, if efforts are made on policy fronts. A clear example of such efforts is evident in the case of Sri Lanka, whose HDI is much higher than that of India. In India, Kerala is a unique example of what a small state can achieve in terms of human development inspite of low level of economic development, given the strong will of civic commitments as well as strong policies in this respect. Therefore, the low level of economic development in Arunachal Pradesh cannot be a satisfactory explanatory factor for the low level of human development. As there are instances where the 'trickle down theory' has failed to be effective in case of those states which have achieved a high level of economic development, there is therefore no reason why it should be effective in case of those regions which are economically backward.

The above table further reveals that Nagaland ranks second with 0.491 HDI, followed by Tripura with a HDI of 0.401. The reasons for this could be explained by the high literacy rates in both the states, coupled with some conscious policy efforts—perhaps due to political commitment—particularly with respect to Tripura. It is significant to note that though Assam is the largest state in the region, her ranking is only second lowest in the entire region, preceded only by Arunachal Pradesh. The factors behind such poor performance, inspite of rich natural resources and highest concentration of business and economic activities in the state could perhaps be the low level of literacy and extremely poor health condition in the state. Lower per capita income, which is mainly due to very high density of population in the state, has further pulled down the HDI of the state.

Meghalaya too performs very poorly with only 0.393 as its HDI, and occupies the fourth rank among a total of six states in the region. The above table makes it further clear that all the states when taken individually, or the region as a whole with the exclusion of Mizoram, will go down and be categorized as low human development nations by the UNDP standard. This is a matter of grave concern for policy

makers both at the centre as well as the respective states. Sluggish economic development, coupled with low level of human development, can be ignored and overlooked at great peril to the society and the nations. In fact, reality reveals that there has been a total oversight of the importance of human development for sustaining long term economic development in the state. It may be a matter of grave discontent, that the extent of deprivation in the entire region is 1.4 times more than that of India as a whole. It ranges from 1.6 times for Arunachal Pradesh to 1.06 times for Mizoram. It may be noted here that even Mizoram, with one of the best record on literacy and satisfactory performance in the health sector in the whole country, continues to lag behind the rest of the country in terms of HDI, which may be due to low level of economic development. This signifies that the HDI is a true representative of both the economic, as well as the social sector of a nation or region.

Deprivation with respect to the level of living may harbour the dangerous potentiality of giving rise to a sense of marginalization. When a major section of the population is pushed to the brink of survival and excluded from the core of benefits of the development process of the country, it results in the emergence of a sense of deprivation, frustration and alienation. The principles of equity are violated, and human rights do not receive their due respect. Society is fragmented, particularly when the gap in the quality of life among different income level widens. Consequently, many people suffer from insecurity and poverty, which has serious repercussions for long-term objectives of growth and equity. Such marginalization has dangerous potentiality since it can polarize societies and social integration, which sustains economic development. This may seriously undermine much of the growth and development that has already taken place. Such instances are only too common in the growth experience of the various states of the region in recent decades.

Though superficially viewed, such experiences may apparently seem to be insignificant and may thus fail to attract the attention of planners and policy makers. However, if allowed to persist, they may also have international ramifications, with the support of the marginalised groups giving rise to civil turmoil. All these features discourage and make these places unsuitable for any form of investment, which will thereby push the region to the further brink of the periphery (Sengupta, 2003). International experiences of marginalisation have evolved on the above lines and the experience of the states of north east India is no exception. There is a growing sense of dissent and consequent uprising in various forms in almost all the

states of the region. This is because poverty, the basic cause of all social unrest, has not been addressed at all, leaving all expectation of equity to the 'trickle down theory'. Pareto optimality of the neo-classical school, which is silent about distributional justice, is certain to worsen the situation, since distributional justice is the cause of all such problem. Efficiency is the only goal of Pareto optimality, since an increase in the utility of everyone, in the event of a change, without a reduction in the utility of any other member of the society implies an efficient state. If efficiency is the only criteria of success of the state of public policy, then state intervention is unnecessary, since competitive equilibrium is Pareto optimal and hence unimprovable. This principle, however, will fail to bear the requisite results in a society characterized by such a low level of human development. For instance, provision of public goods, which is a pivotal instrument for economic equity in developing countries, would mean lowering growth, since a typical case of public good is that, even a person who is excluded from its payment is free to enjoy it and hence the idea goes against market efficiency. The principle may, therefore, spell disaster from the point of deprivation of the poor. Apart from this, the principle can work efficiently only in the presence of highly developed markets, a feature which is still to materialise fully in the north east economy. Therefore, left to the efficiency and rationality rule, inequalities in the North East would only be aggravated.

#### IV

##### *Human Development and Economic Development in the North East*

As discussed earlier, a very important contribution of the HDI estimation is to reveal the effectiveness of the 'trickle down theory'. The index reveals to what extent the social sector has benefited from the achievement of economic growth or whether growth remains as the only end in itself for the policy makers. Such relations are possible from the comparisons of HDI and GDP per capita rankings, which are used extensively by all Human Developments Reports. GDP per capita, though not totally satisfactory, nevertheless can represent the economic dimension of people's lives. Coupled with this, more importantly, it focuses attention to the extent to which countries or states have succeeded in translating economic well-being of their respective nations into human well-being. Experience of nations throughout the world reveals that nations with different levels of economic growth have achieved the same level of human development or those nations with



different levels of economic growth have attained different degrees of human development. The nature of such deviations in human development index ranking and GDP ranking is determined by the effectiveness of policies and their implementation. Experience of several countries of the world reveals that it is possible to achieve a fairly satisfactory level of human development even with a modest rate of GDP growth. It is often not financial constraints, but lack of foresight and political will that appear to be the root cause of the problem.

It is with this objective of examining the existence of disparity between the two, that we have ranked the HDI and real GDP per capita of the states of north east India. Higher ranking of HDI would imply that the state has performed better with respect to its human development in comparison to its economic growth. A negative value, on the other hand, indicates just the reverse. Such an exercise has been carried out in Table No. 2 below. It is interesting to note that three states out of six record similar ranking for both HDI and NSDP, whereas in three others considerable disparity is observed. Assam and Meghalaya, which occupy lower ranks in terms of HDI, also record similar ranks in terms of NSDP ranking. Identical ranking reveals that human development is commensurate with levels of economic growth which is, of course, rare. This has occurred in our study due to a limited number of states in our case. Identical ranking, however, is surely not a justification for the low level of human development. Satisfactory level of human development is possible even with limited record of economic growth, provided political will and commitment exists. Kerala, as has often been mentioned, is a unique case. In fact, a low level of human development implying low literacy and health status, which were highlighted earlier with respect to both the states, could also be crucial factors leading to economic growth. Just as a low level of economic growth results in a low level of human development, similarly a low level of human development can also be responsible for a low level of economic growth. It may thus be conceded that in both these states, there is a definite lack of conscious effort to raise indicators of social development through public policy action and, therefore, much needs to be done in this respect by those who are at the helm of decision making.

Table No. 2  
Ranking of HDI and NSDP per capita

	<i>States</i>	<i>NSDP (in Rs. Crores)</i>	<i>Ranking of NSDP</i>	<i>Ranking of HDI</i>	<i>NSDP per capita rank mines HDI rank</i>
1	Assam	15555	5	5	0
2	Meghalaya	1999	4	4	0
3	Tripura	2367	6	3	3
4	Nagaland	1684	2	2	0
5	Mizoram	-	3	1	2
6	Arunachal Pradesh	980	1	6	-5

*Source:* Handbook on Statistics on Indian Economy

In case of Nagaland, fairly satisfactory ranking marks both the variables, which once again witness identical ranking. However, this does not suggest in any way that the state has an excellent record in economic and social sector, as also prosperity. Though the state may appear to be performing well in comparison to other poor performing states of the regions, but from the national point of view the performance of the state is extremely poor. This, therefore, calls for concerted public action on both economic and social front in an attempt to reach an all India figure. For the state to be self-sustaining in the long-run, the flow from the central fund to a large extent has kept the state buoyant, which may not be sustainable permanently.

A word of caution is essential at this juncture. Though the per capita real NSDP is generally used as a proxy for economic prosperity, it may not always be a true representative of economic capability of the place. In absolute terms, economic growth judged by its NSDP is the lowest in Arunachal Pradesh among all the states of the region, yet due to the low density of population in the state perhaps due to lack of economic opportunities, per capita NSDP appears to be the highest in the whole region. This is indeed unrealistic, and may even be misleading for policy makers, if they are to be guided strictly by such statistics. Therefore, researchers and policy-makers working in north-east India have to be extremely careful while drawing conclusions from such statistics. Analysis of ground reality is of crucial importance. Conclusions which may be drawn for the rest of the country, with similar data, may not hold good in case of north-east India. For exactly similar reasons, Tripura which performs relatively better in terms of

absolute level of economic well-being, appears to be performing poorly when viewed in terms of per capita NSDP. This is mainly due to higher density of population in the state.

Taking all these conditions into account, Table No. 2 reveals that per capita NSDP in Arunachal Pradesh far exceeds the HDI ranking, disparity between the two being the highest in this state in the whole region. This reveals the miserable condition of human development in the state, which is much less than warranted by even the limited extent of economic development that has been achieved in the state. A lot would have to be done with respect to this state in terms of improving human development. Such problems need an indepth examination. It needs to be investigated whether the problem is due to unequal distribution of income, erroneous development priorities or lack of public policy attention to the social sector. Along with political will, advantage can also be taken of low population, which keeps the per capita NSDP at a higher level, because the experience of the Indian economy reveals that high density of population may lead to appalling deterioration the level of living, as is evident in the case of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. If efforts at the state level are inadequate, the centre may adopt special schemes to that effect. This may be done not merely by allocating more financial resources, since increasing allocation is often not the only solution to such problems. Efforts should be made at the grassroots level to involve the people themselves in raising the level of awareness. Civic consciousness, leading to the formation of voluntary organisations and NGOs, which is an important factor contributing to human development, is not evident in Arunachal Pradesh as is the case in Nagaland and to some extent in Tripura and Mizoram. Here comes the role of Putman's model, which examines in detail the relationship between the performance of the state institutions and the existence of civic bodies in the community. Better relationship between the two leads to an improved delivery system in the social sector.

Tripura and Mizoram are the two states which emerge as interesting instances where ranking of HDI exceeds the ranking of per capita NSDP, implying that both these states have performed better in the social sector, which exceeds the level of the economic growth. This is on rather expected lines, since Mizoram has the best record with respect to both literacy and health, followed closely by Tripura. The differences in ranking reveal that the quality of life has very little connection with per capita income. Different development strategies are highlighted in these comparisons. Some states give more importance to the provision of basic social services to their people as a matter of policy, irrespective

of their level of economic capability. Consequently, achievements with respect to education and health are fairly high. This is true for the state of Tripura.

It also needs to be mentioned here that better HDI ranking can only be sustained by continuous effort at economic growth. In its absence, the HDI ranking may surely take a reverse direction. It only reiterates the fact that both economic and social sector development have to be pursued simultaneously, and neglecting one sector would only be at the peril of another. It is true that Mizoram has marched ahead with respect to its achievements in human development, but such records may not be maintained for long, particularly among the lower income group of the society, if efforts at economic development are not sped up.

## V

### *Human Development Index at the District Level*

We shall next examine the spatial dimension of HDI across various districts of the states of the north-eastern region, in an attempt at a better and indepth understanding of the fact as to whether HDI for the states as a whole gives a true picture of the entire state or whether the benefits of progress in the social sector are concentrated only in a few areas. Experiences with most places reveal that benefits are mostly concentrated in and around those areas which are the centres of economic activities and get thinner and weaker as one moves to distant places even within the same state. This indicates that benefits are not distributed evenly throughout the country/region/state. Such important issues which are often overlooked at macro level studies may become serious deterrent for the formulation of public policy at the micro level. In fact, in the analysis of the spatial dimension of HDI, it has often been observed—with a few exceptions—that if some of the best performing districts in a state are excluded, the state HDI record would take a sharp downward turn. This goes to reveal the unequal distribution of the benefits of growth. It is in this connection that we shall attempt to make a diagnostic analysis of the spatial aspect of HDI across the districts of the states of North East India.

Estimation of districtwise HDI, in an attempt at providing insight into the inter-district regional disparities has perhaps been undertaken for the first time for the north-eastern region.

Table 3 reveals the wide regional disparities that exist among the districts of the region in different states as well as among districts within the same state. It is not only the composite index of India, but even the

composite index of the north-eastern region of India, which conceals the wide disparity existing in the region. This is mainly due to the extremely heterogeneous nature of the north eastern economy which calls for an examination of the performance of the individual states at a disaggregate level. In the above table, it is revealed that on one extreme we have the case of Aizwal district in the whole region, which if taken as an independent nation, would occupy about the 129<sup>th</sup> rank among the nations in the world. On the other extreme, we have the case of Tirap district, which if considered as an independent nation, would occupy about the 170<sup>th</sup> rank among the lowest ranking nations of the world. Therefore, full equality among various geographic regions of the north eastern states is still a distant dream.

Taking the district wise disparity in HDI within the individual states, it is revealed that the state of Assam has the widest disparity, perhaps due to its large size. Only the districts of Kamrup and Jorhat have an HDI better than the state average. Better economic opportunities in Kamrup district, which contains the state capital, might have raised the per capita income of the district. Therefore, inspite of performing poorly in the social sector like health and education, the HDI here is higher than the state's average. Jorhat, on the other hand, performs better than the state's average, mainly due to superior performance in the social sector, though its performance in the economic sector leaves a lot to be desired. Both the districts perform marginally better than the region's average, though the variation with the all-India figure is significant. The poor performance and disparity of Barpeta district with the states' average is the widest, which is followed by Karimganj and Cachar district. Poor performance of both the social sector and economic sector is clearly responsible for the wide disparity between Barpeta district and the states performance. In contrast, lower health status (though relatively satisfactory performance in education), may possibly explain the wide variation of Karimganj and Cachar districts of the state. The disparity of North Cachar Hills is mainly due to inadequate economic opportunities, lower level of economic activity and thereby lower level of per capita income. It, therefore, transpires that four out of sixteen districts lag behind the state's HDI as well as the HDI of North East India. The HDI of only two districts is marginally better than the state average and the average of the entire regions. However, what is of concern is the wide divergence of HDI with respect to all the districts of the state in comparison to the all-India HDI which, in all the cases, falls behind the Indian average. The disparity, as expected, is the highest with respect to Barpeta district and lowest with respect to Jorhat district. Coming back to the spatial dimension of HDI, it is evident

Table 3  
District-wise HDI of the States of North East India

<i>State/districts</i>	<i>HDI</i>	<i>Variation from the state's HDI</i>	<i>Variation from the HDI of N.E. India</i>	<i>Variation from HDI of India</i>
1. Assam	00.389			
Cachar	00.372	+ 0.017	+0. 059	0.218
Karimganj	00.370	+ 0.019	+0. 061	0.220
Kamrup	00.432	- 0.043	-0. 001	0.158
Jorhat	00.434	- 0.045	-0. 003	0.156
Barpeta	00.344	+ 0.045	+ 0.087	0.246
N.C. Hills	00.382	+ 0.007	0.049	0.208
2. Meghalaya	00.393	-	-	-
E. Khasi Hills	00.396	- 0.003	0.035	0.194
W. Garo Hills	00.387	- 0.006	0.044	0.203
3. Tripura	00.401	-	-	-
W. Tripura	00.412	-0.011	0.019	0.178
N. Tripura	00.391	0.010	0.040	0.199
4. Nagaland	00.491			
Kohima	00.498	-0.007	-0.067	0.092
Wokha	00.479	0.012	-0.048	0.111
5. Mizoram	00.556	-	-	-
Aizwal	00.562	-0.006	-0.131	0.028
Chintuipui	00.532	+0.024	-0.101	0.058
6. Arunachal Pradesh	00.358	-	-	-
Itanagar	00.360	-0.002	0.071	0.230
Tirap	00.356	+0.002	0.075	0.234
North East				
India	00.431	-	-	-
All India	00.590	-	-	-

that HDI is the highest in the core district of the states which is Kamrup, and diminishes as one moves to the peripheral districts. This once again focusses attention to the fact that concerted efforts have to be directed at public action at the micro level and only uniform policy and uniform efforts directed at all districts may not be appropriate. Such an idea is more relevant for the remote and far-flung areas of the region. In the absence of immediate attention, it will only be the core regions which in the future may appropriate the maximum benefits from the policy measures of the state on human development. This may further result in widening the divergence between the core and peripheral districts of the state.

It is pertinent to note here that for all the other states, like Meghalaya, Tripura, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh the HDI of the districts which has the state capital is higher than the HDI of the respective states. A clear pattern of declining level of HDI is discerned, as one moves to the peripheral districts of all the states. All these issues have tremendous policy implications. It is not only limited economic opportunities, but also lower level of achievement in the social sector in such districts which is responsible for lower HDI. Mizoram and Nagaland are the only states where the HDI of all the districts is higher than that of the HDI of north east India. The highest variation is with respect to Aizwal district of Mizoram followed by Chintuipui district of the same state. However, with respect to the disparity with the rest of India's HDI all these districts fall far behind. It therefore needs to be noted that inspite of one of the highest literacy rates, HDI in Mizoram is quite behind the HDI of most other states in India, as well as the national average. Therefore, though Mizoram's achievement in the economic sector is not remarkable, yet her achievement in the social sector is indeed extremely impressive. However, Mizoram ranks rather on the lower side in HDI ranking due to wide disparity between economic and social sector development. Sustaining of these achievements in the social sector therefore, calls for an urgent action on the economic front.

Tripura's experience is more mixed. It has significant performance in the social sector, which may be more due to political commitment, but displays an equally significant lack of concern on the economic front. The political economy of Tripura, which is in sharp contrast to all the other states of the region, may be an explanatory factor.

One, therefore, needs to examine why there is such an inter-state as well as inter district divergence in the performance of the social sector in the North Eastern states. This is much more significant than the divergence of the rest of the regions in the country. Different behavioural patterns can be explained by different factors ranging from historical background to socio-economic and political issues, all of which need to be tackled at different levels and different degrees, depending upon the nature of the problems concerned. Such internal diversity within the north eastern states is not a deterrent factor, but may offer a scope of learning from each other's failures and achievements. It clearly transpires from the above analysis that merely raising the HDI of a nation or a state is not sufficient, as certain areas in the state may be lagging far behind. In an attempt at raising the HDI of the state, the same districts which already enjoy a high or satisfactory

level of HDI may be given greater attention, resulting in further widening the gap between the backward and advanced districts.

## VI

### *Conclusion*

It is, therefore, evident from the above analysis that just as the states of north east India have a lot to learn the better performing states of India in terms of performance of HDI, similarly one should not rule out the necessity and importance of the other states of India learning from the north eastern states in terms of performance in the social sector. A lower level of gender gap in all the indicators of the social sector, be it in education or health, is a significant record which the other states of India can emulate from the states of this region. In a similar manner, higher life expectancy and impressive performance in literacy along with high enrolment rate and low drop out rate of some of the districts of north east India are experiences which may serve as motivating factors for the rest of India. Diversity of experience of the north-eastern states of India, may therefore serve as a strength not only for the future of the region, but also for the country as a whole. Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya have to re-structure their policy framework in a manner which enables them to transform the benefits of the social sector to economic growth. On the other hand, Assam has to learn not only from her neighbouring states, but also from the rest of the country, that inadequate emphasis on social sector can not only retard economic development, but if allowed to linger on, may result in socio-economic as well as numerous other types of conflict.

As far as the north east region of India is concerned, it may undoubtedly be expressed strongly that there has been absolute negligence of the social sector, both in terms of research work as well as in terms of policy formulations. Promotion of equity and distributional aspect has never attracted the attention of the politicians and policy makers. As Sen (Drenze & Sen 1996), focusing attention on the Indian economy, opines, it is equally applicable to the north-eastern economy that there has not been 'too much' but 'too little' involvement of the government in the social sector, which seems to be true for the north-eastern region, though the country as a whole is gradually trying to recover from that blunder. Experience reveals that the privileges were often exploited for the sectional benefit of those with economic, political or bureaucratic power or those with the opportunity to influence people with such power. Though it is possible to achieve economic growth without significant achievement in the social sector, as is evident in



some countries of the world, or even in the state of Punjab in India, yet such achievements will neither be long-term nor 'participatory' for which north-east India given an opportunity, has a tremendous scope. 'Participatory' growth, as Sen rightly points out, is not only conducive to the growth of the social sector, but can also make economic growth sustainable. Each individual state of the north-east has to explore the factors separately for every district, and find out where their problem lies. Accordingly, they have to evolve their own appropriate strategy not only for economic growth, but also for the development of the social sector. It is these efforts which will help them to climb the ladder of HDI and improve the quality of life of the masses.

#### NOTES

1. Chakraborty, A. (2002), 'Issues in Social Indicators, Composite Indices and Inequality', *Economic and Political Weekly*, No. 37
2. Chenery, (1983), 'Interaction between Theory and Observation in Development', *World Development*.
3. Dube (1988), *Modernization and Development: The Search for Alternative Paradigms*, Vistar Publication, New Delhi.
4. Haq, Mahbul (1996), *Reflections on Human Development*, Oxford University Press.
5. Todara and Smith, F. (2003), *Economic Development*, Pearson Education.
6. Kundu, A. Pradhan and Subramaniam (2002), 'Dichotomy or Continuum' Analysis of Impact of Mayer, P. (2001), 'Human Development and Civic Community in India', 'Making Democracy Perform', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 'Urban Centres on Their Periphery'[, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37.
7. Myrdal (1984), *Pioneer in Development*, Oxford University Press, New York.
8. Naqvi, S.N.H. (2002), *Development Economics – Nature and Significance*: New Delhi, Sage Publications.
9. Sengupta, K. (2003), *Development Man and Development*, Vol., Chandigarh.
10. World Bank (1991), 'World Development Report (WDR) 1991, (The Challenge of Development)', Oxford University Press, New York.
11. NCAER: *Human Development Report*.
12. Planning Commission (2001), National Human Development Report Putman R. (1993), *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traders in Modern Italy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New York.
13. UNDP (1990-1995), *Human Development Reports*, Oxford University Press, New York.

# Slavery in Colonial Bihar during the Nineteenth Century

Mukesh Kumar

From the very beginning slavery has been practiced in virtually all parts of the world. It was a universal element in the social and economic structure of all ancient civilizations—in those of Greece, Rome, The Middle East, China, Japan, the Malayan Archipelago and India. Slavery is an ancient institution whose origin is impossible to date.

With the advance of time and crystallisation of social institutions, slavery became more and more institutionalised, and its legally recognized forms and practices increased. It is no accident that the name for the opponents of the Aryan invaders of India, '*dasas*', is later used in classical Sanskrit for slaves or bondsmen. They constituted the lowest strata of the society. A slave is a person whose moral power to claim anything as due to him is not recognized. Despite the static use of the unfree labour in the Mauryan period, the law was notably mild in its prescription for the treatment of slaves, and Megasthenes failed to notice slaves in Indian society. Agrarian and domestic slavery continued throughout the ancient period.<sup>1</sup> With the arrival of the Muslim invaders, slavery in war obtained a fresh and strengthened lease of life. Slavery during the medieval period acquired connotations and a magnitude which was bound to affect the ruled. The new rulers were a product of a very different historical experience—one in which slavery played a major and unconventional role. This period saw a tremendous growth in the incidence of domestic slavery.<sup>2</sup>

When the English first came to India in pursuit of trade and commerce, they found slavery established in the land as a commonly accepted social institution duly sanctioned by the laws of the land. This evil was an inherited one, well adjusted in the Hindu and the Muslim states to which the English company had succeeded. The company largely followed the policy of non-interference in the Indian affairs and concentrated mainly on its trading activities as well as on

ways to establish British hegemony in the region.<sup>3</sup> The rise of the East India company as a predominant political force in the country did not lead to any change in the position of slaves; rather, it encouraged the practice.

The period between 1756 and 1765 was one characterized by chaos, conflict and confrontation which saw four enthronements of Nawabs in Bengal with several shocking military campaigns. Such frequent change of the head of the province after a half century of raids by the Marathas seriously weakened the administration. The receipt of Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa by the Company in 1765 and the separation of power from responsibility further aggravated the situation. The life of a common person had become very difficult under the exorbitantly higher demand in land revenue and its rigorous collection along with the systematic destruction of Indian industries. The situation became even more precarious during the famines of 1769-71 and 1785 because no relief measure was undertaken by the British officials. The Company's administrative policies further reduced the poverty stricken peasants and the landless labourers to slavery. In practice, the Permanent Settlement placed the ryots at the mercy of the zamindars who encroached upon the rights of the ryots to the waste or pasture lands attached to every village in the absence of any definite demarcation of revenue-paying and waste lands. The Permanent Settlement rendered the acceptance of *pattas* obligatory on the part of the cultivators as per the terms specified by the *zamindars* who were authorized under the Regulation IV of 1794 to issue their own rate of rent to be collected from the cultivators. To enable the landlords, farmers and even dependent *talukdars* and farmers to realize the arrears of their demand, the Regulation XVII of 1793 vested them with the powers of restraint and sale of the personal property of the cultivation. The Company had also tightened its grip on the zamindars, who were threatened by the loss of their estate in case of failing to observe the *sunset law*. To reduce the expense on agriculture the zamindars preferred their lands to be cultivated by the slaves, who would cost less in comparison to the free tillers. In the absence of any rights except those found in *pattas*, the resident cultivators found themselves utterly helpless and were cornered in the society as a frustrated and forlorn group.<sup>4</sup> They had to give up their own agriculture under severe socio-economic pressure and faced a situation which has always been considered a state of great distress for an Indian, as is evident from a local proverb:

*Chhore kheti howe faqir  
Sada rahe oh bepir*

(A man who gives up cultivation becomes a pauper and remains forever without a spiritual guide)

In a Minute of 21 September 1815, Governor-General Moira himself admitted the inequities of the system. The rights of the ryots were annihilated by the *pattas* being forced on them for payment in money by the *zamindars* who fixed no limits on their demand. (Loans advanced to labourers by landlords invoked the supply and demand theory to account for the debt-slavery).<sup>5</sup>

Lord Hastings also confessed in a Minute in 1819 that due to the Company's pledge the oppression of the lower classes was confirmed throughout the region and the Company's officials were unable to relieve the sufferers.<sup>6</sup>

The famines, its aftermath of continuing agricultural stress and the economic hardship pressed upon the people by the revenue demands led great numbers of starving people to sell themselves into slavery, as the only way to preserve their lives and support their families.

In Bihar slavery existed on a wide scale. The slave force was mainly derived from the internal traffic which was generally maintained in three ways:

- a. Under pressure of need, i.e., in the time of famines and other hardship parents sold their children, husbands, wives or the adults themselves entered voluntarily into slavery. The sale of children by their parents or relations as a result of poverty, and the inability to maintain them in times of famine or of other general calamities, was the most prolific source of slavery and the origin of almost the entire slave-population. In the year 1833, owing to the disastrous inundation experienced in the southern parts of Bengal, hundreds of half-starved, helpless wretches thronged the suburbs and streets of Calcutta and the adjoining districts, offering themselves and their children for sale for a few measures of rice only.<sup>7</sup>
- b. As a result of violence, i.e., by the kidnapping of men, women and children, which was the second most prolific source of slavery in Bihar. The practice of kidnapping children from their parents in the interiors of the region and selling them as slaves in Calcutta was widely prevalent and is corroborated by the Minutes issued by the Governor-in-Council of Bengal to the Hon'ble Court of Directors dated 18 October 1774 and from R.K. Dick, Judge at Dacca to H.H. Turnbull.<sup>8</sup> Young girls and female children were kidnapped or forced by enticing their parents into selling themselves as prostitutes in big cities.<sup>9</sup> On 24 August 1839, the *Calcutta Christian Advocate* reported that "the practice of enticing away young native

widows, and of kidnapping and purchasing young destitute native children for the vilest bazaar purposes, is daily carried on to a considerable extent in Calcutta.”<sup>10</sup>

- c. By natural growth: (i) the children of slaves were normally themselves of servile status, and (ii) women marrying or cohabiting with slaves became slave. Another source of slavery in Bihar was slavery by birth. Slaves were the personal property of their masters, and as such the offsprings of the slaves were always the slaves of their masters or their successors. During the first two decades of the Company’s rule, as has been seen, many people were sold into slavery due to famine and other natural disasters. Their offsprings were also regarded as the slaves of their masters.

Sometimes, punitive measures also contributed in the growth of the slave population during the Company’s rule. In 1772, the Governor of Bengal was faced with the challenge to establish law and order in the region where, due to forceful realisation of revenue by the Company after the famine, a large number of people were forced to become plunderers for their own survival.<sup>11</sup> The Company did not do anything to relieve them of the revenue demand or to pacify them. It decided to execute the dacoits and enslave their family members”...they are all, therefore, alike criminals; wretches who have placed themselves in a state of declared war with Government, and are, therefore, wholly excluded from every benefit of its laws.”<sup>12</sup> The Company formally sanctioned the institution of slavery as a penal measure “...every such criminal on conviction shall be carried to the village to which he belongs, and be executed to excite same as an terror and example to others...that the family of the criminal shall become the slaves of the state, and be disposed of for the general benefit and convenience of the people”.<sup>13</sup>

In the early years the Company was more concerned towards consolidate her position in India than to think about Indian social stratification, and so it did not pay any heed towards such social evils as slavery. The Conservative government in England had also suggested that the Company govern India only according to the Indian traditions. James Cumming, who had served the judicial and revenue department at the Board of Control, London, warned the Company to leave matters of social reforms, including slavery, to the Indian people who were at all events good enough to judge themselves in India.<sup>14</sup>

The English in India, in general, considered the existing state of slavery very mild in nature and advocated for its continuance. They were of the opinion that its abolition would be a great evil, the

consequences of which were beyond comprehension,<sup>15</sup> because after the abolition the government would have to make provision for maintaining the starving poor in times of scarcity, and also to compensate the slave-owners who would lose a valuable category of private property.<sup>16</sup> H.T. Colebrooke also supported the form of slavery prevalent in India and did not find it fit for the Company to abolish slavery or prevent enslavement or prohibit the sale of slaves within British India.<sup>17</sup>

However, J. Richardson, the Judge and Magistrate of Bundelkhand was one of the most outspoken critics of Indian slavery. He said that slavery was against the law of nature and thus it was one of the greatest evils present in the society. He firmly believed that with the abolition of slavery the population would increase faster and its use in production would work as a powerful preventive of famines.<sup>18</sup> He protested against slavery and submitted his Draft Regulation on the Abolition of Slavery to the Judges of Sadar Dewani and Nizamat Adalat in 1809.<sup>19</sup> But his Draft was put aside for quite some time and it was only in 1816 that the Draft was submitted to the Governor General.<sup>20</sup> Richardson was so disappointed with the treatment meted out to his efforts to end an evil that he made a very bold statement that the spirit of the British rule in India was to follow the usage of the country and the customs of the people, for the profit of the rulers and not for the benefit of the ruled.<sup>21</sup>

When W. Leycester, the Second Judge of the Bareilly court of Circuit, proposed the complete abolition of the East Indian Slavery,<sup>22</sup> the court of Nizamat Adalat rejected this move on account of the better condition of the slaves in India in comparison to the same in other countries.<sup>23</sup>

These measures reflect the real nature of the Company's understanding of slavery. It was very careful in its dealing with this issue and conformed to the paternalistic ideas of Munro, Malcom and Elphinston. It had no hope of sudden and miraculous changes in the progress of human society and the division of society into the rulers and ruled was for them, a natural order. For the paternalists, politics was experimental in nature, necessarily near-sighted, and essentially limited in its achievement. Hence they were not to be pursued dogmatically along a path of violent change.<sup>24</sup>

The British largely followed the policy of non-interference, leading to apathy towards the vast population of the slaves. Barring some differences in the Hindu and Muslim religious interpretation of slavery, both these laws were almost parallel in terms of the content and form. In theory and practice we find that:

- i. A slave's right to emancipation was virtually non-existent.
- ii. Liberation from servitude was absolutely impossible under the legal system which was clearly biased favour of the slave-owners.
- iii. Slave women suffered as a class and where they were not directly under the control of the master, by sheer virtue of their conjugal ties with a slave, were subjected to being treated as a possession of the slave-owner.<sup>25</sup>

The children born of slave women were also the property of the master. Drawing the interpretation based on the authorities of Shurhi, Heday and others, W.H. Macnaghten had remarked in his book on the Principles and Precedents of Muslim law that, "*the embryo follows the mother both in slavery and emancipation.*"<sup>26</sup> Hindu Law also supported this theme.

Slavery existed everywhere and exhibited the owner's absolute and unconditional control over the slaves who were present in a great number. As per the Law Commission in 1839, in the districts of Bihar the total number of slaves in domestic works, agricultural activities and in both was 79,888.<sup>27</sup> But this record provides only the figure of the able-bodied men-slaves engaged in agriculture and domestic services. The number of female slaves was not given nor was there any comprehensive record of child-slaves, including the girls who were sold to prostitutes in various *bazaars*.

John Richardson, the District Judge and Magistrate of Bundelkhand had noted in 1808 that "In Bihar there are districts under the company's dominion wherein to my knowledge the greatest part of the cultivators and labourers are slaves."<sup>28</sup> But this made little difference to the Company's overall understanding of this inhuman practice. According to a rough estimate by H. Russel presented before the Law Commission in 1839, in Bihar, Patna, Shahabad, Ramghar and Tirhut Districts, almost five per cent of the population were slaves.<sup>29</sup> Another witness, Pandit Vaidya Nath Mishra informed the Law Commission that in Tirhut and the adjoining district one to two sixteenth of the population were slaves.<sup>30</sup> In order to maintain the old Laws and institutions, the laws of slavery which suited the peculiar nature of the British rule in India were legalized, perpetuated and administered.

But there were other voices also in the environment. Claudius Buchanan, a spokesman of the missionary concept of the evolution of history in terms of progress in Christianity, was horrified with the Indian religious practices and social institutions based on inequality and especially with the tolerance with which the British Government in India viewed the existence of slavery.<sup>31</sup> At times, in the early years, the

Company tried to control the level of slavery by issuing a regulation forbidding the stealing of children or/and their sale as slaves which involved legal procedures for the immoral trade without the execution of a deed.<sup>32</sup> However, there was no question of emancipation which would have inflicted great financial loss upon the proprietors.<sup>33</sup> Patna Council advised that the rights of the masters over their slaves should not extend beyond the first generation<sup>34</sup> while MacPherson, the Governor-General in 1785 directed the officials to be very vigilant to prevent the sale of the children as slaves.<sup>35</sup> The Supreme Court in Calcutta also highlighted this evil with a clear note disapproving of the trade of children.<sup>36</sup> In 1789, Lord Cornwallis prohibited the export of natives of British India as slaves,<sup>37</sup> but could not challenge the proprietary rights of the masters. Nevertheless, the attack on this inhuman practice came from the rank of the Company's officials and the Liberals from England. A British officer Baber charged the colonial rule of perpetuating the evil with the addition of the export of slaves from India.<sup>38</sup> But it was James Mill and his followers who began an agitation against certain defective institutions and social practices to transform India according to the Utilitarian notions. Mill was one of the first coherent spokesmen of the liberal movement in England and had presented a solid historical argument for the liberal and the utilitarian policies to be applied to India.<sup>39</sup> Charles Metcalfe, the British Resident at Delhi prohibited the sale and purchase of slaves in the territory of Delhi in 1812.<sup>40</sup> He did so even when the British Government had advised him to go slow and asked him to rescind the steps already taken in this regard.<sup>41</sup> It was a great step towards checking the slave trade in the north but it had little impact on the state of slavery in Bihar. This enactment primarily dealt with one aspect of the problem, i.e., the slave-trade and so it had hardly touched the core of the institution of slavery. In Bihar, life was very tough due to heavy economic pressure on agriculture in the absence of any substantial industrial sector. No concrete legislative step was ever taken by the Government to ameliorate the conditions of the slaves even during famines. The British Government turned towards the problem in 1830 when the Select Committee of the House of Lords heard the evidence of Baber, Campbell and Warden, the British officials who had served in India.<sup>42</sup> This paved the way for the issue to be discussed effectively at the time of the Charter Act of 1833 which provided for the preparation of drafts of laws and regulations to mitigate the state of slavery.<sup>43</sup> Next, a dispatch from the Hon'ble Court of Directors, dated December 10, 1834 gave instructions regarding the manner in which the intentions of the Legislative, as expressed in the Charter Act, should be carried into



effect in order to enact a strict law to safeguard the interests of the slaves.<sup>44</sup> On June 15, 1835 the Indian Law Commission was formed with Macaulay as its head. Though the Commission was to prepare a criminal code for all parts of the British Indian Empire and for all classes of subjects irrespective of caste and creed, it entered upon a study of slavery administration in India as early as August 1835. The Commission prepared the Criminal Code of 1837 and then the Anti-Slavery Report of 1841.

The Law Commission moved with a certain pace and setting aside the interference of the Government of India in the matter of inquiry into the state of slavery, it drew up in 1839, the draft act for which the Court of Directors had persistently asked the Commission and the Government of India to act fast.<sup>45</sup> The commission came out with the following recommendations "No act falling under the definition of an offence should be exempted from punishment because it was committed by a master against his slave."<sup>46</sup> But some of the members of the commission and the Governor-General's Council questioned the merit of the draft act which would leave the master helpless and encourage the slaves to be recklessly lazy. Thus, an attempt should be made to examine the laws of slavery as well as to protect the rights of the masters.<sup>47</sup> However, the draft act touched only the periphery of the question of slavery, i.e. putting the slaves on an equal footing with a free person only in the matter of judging the criminality of an act. It did not provide for the release of the slaves from the clutches of their masters.<sup>48</sup>

The draft act was also discussed by the Governments of Bombay and Madras who found it unsatisfactory and for quite some time the work of the Law Commission came to a standstill. This made the Court of Directors anxious and they reminded the Government of India in July 1840 that the "Parliament and the public are becoming impatient at the delay." The Governor-General then asked the Law Commission to expedite the matter and the Anti-Slavery Report was made ready in 1841. Investigating the various aspects of slavery, the Report consisted of thirty three recommendations of which the first ten referred to free persons in relation to slavery, next seventeen directly to the slaves, and then four to bonded labour.<sup>49</sup>

In the recommendations concerning the contract labour we find measures to mitigate the state of slavery. Framed as measures to check slavery and its gradual extinction, these recommendations however, perpetuated the system of control over both the labour and person by legally sanctioning contracts for life or for a number of years. Also, people were allowed to apprentice or sell their children, but the

impersonators were liable to be penalised. The recommendations relating to the slaves just provide for the general guidelines to be adopted to check the abuse. At the same time these allow the Hindus and Muslims to own slaves who should be cared and treated according to the law, and if things permitted, they may be emancipated by paying the slave-price. But there was hardly any definite frame to analyse and decide that the slaves were treated properly and to make arrangement for their emancipation. Toeing the same line the next four recommendations for the bonded labour only provide for the general considerations to regularize debt bondage.<sup>50</sup>

These recommendations attracted comments from various quarters, the most important of them were by Lord Auckland, the Governor-General, W.W. Bird and H.T. Prinsep, members of the Council. Lord Auckland was in favour of passing an act which would put an end to the dissimilar treatment between a free man and a slave.<sup>51</sup> Bird was of the opinion that a law should be passed to the effect of refusing to recognize slavery as a status in any form. He also suggested that no compensation should be paid to the owner.<sup>52</sup> H.T. Prinsep, another member of the Council, expressed surprise that no proposition had been suggested to make changes in the law of property and of inheritance. He considered the law severe because all that belonged to the slave was his master's property.<sup>53</sup>

A draft act based on the anti-slavery report of 1841 was drawn up but due to the conflicting views of the members of the Governor-General's Council, all papers relating to the draft act were sent to the Home Authorities. On January 24 1843, a Draft Act was published in the Government Gazette and on February 11, 1843, Lord Ellenborough, the Governor-General of India, gave his assent to the proposed act.

After the publication of the Draft Act, the zamindars protested against it and expressed their fear that the proposed act would adversely affect the socio-economic structure and jeopardize the existing social system in India being sanctioned by the laws of the land. But their petitions were not entertained and on April 7, 1843, Act V was passed by the President of the Council of India with the assent of the Governor-General of India.

Regarding the enactment of the law we must remember that there could be no sovereign whose orders are generally obeyed unless there are certain general customs actually prevailing,<sup>54</sup> and here although the English denounced slave-trade, they did not move an inch regarding the institution of slavery which they found and recognized as an important, widely accepted custom which was quite profitable for them. Again the sharpest issue on the question of legal methods or the nature of the legal system is to view:

- (a) The law as a natural phenomenon or
- (b) The law as an eternal ideal to which external human conduct ought to conform.<sup>55</sup>

The law tells us not what empirically exists but what is categorically imperative to the society.<sup>56</sup> But this basic principle for enacting any law was not taken into account in the face of the larger British imperialist interest.

As a system a law is developed through logical and technical methods of interpretation and analysis, whereby recurrent and relevant elements are recognised in the cases before the body, and the decision is made to fit as far as possible the reasonable expectations of those who have considered the law and the given case.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, where inequality or privilege exists, natural law demands its abolition because equality is meaningless under unequal conditions.<sup>58</sup> Under the Company's rule there was no question of equality. The Company wanted to control and regulate the labour force and enacted the law accordingly. Bihar, one of the worst hit areas during the period, fell an easy prey to the vicious regulations of the Company.

The immediate effect of this Act was the end of the slave trade. It did not show that it wished to abolish slavery altogether rather it aimed at the general improvement in the condition of slaves. It only covered the issues related to the slaves and did not touch the condition of contract and bonded labour which was necessarily in demand in the other parts of the empire. A humanitarian stroke was, of course, not behind this Act. It was the result of the economic and political exigency that attracted the attention of the home authority and the system of ownership of slaves was cautiously done away with in order to facilitate the free mobility of labour needed to save the British sugar colonies in far off places such as the Caribbean and the Pacific regions, and to support the tea plantation in Assam. This had already started with the passing of the Government of India Acts and Codes of Colonies Act of 1837. Calcutta was the one place for the recruitment of emigrants under the indenture system. This was a period of great hardship in Bihar and it was but natural that we find the early indentured labourers to be from Bihar itself. At first the hill coolies, the tribes of Chhotanagpur division were sent on the sea voyage to the West Indies and to the Pacific areas. But due to the high mortality rate, the recruiters turned towards the plains and people from all parts of Bihar were encouraged, allured and coerced to migrate as indentured labourers under severe living conditions.<sup>59</sup>

Under this contract labour system or indentureship, the needy,

indigent and hapless were treated as the slaves in the plantations under the old slave masters who, after abolition of slavery, had lost the labour force to work on the sugar plantations in the Caribbean. The English by the Act V, 1843 declared slave trade an illegal act but they themselves started this inhuman activity under a legal framework and made various rules and regulations to shield it.<sup>60</sup>

In this way they replaced the native zamindars of India; the only difference lay in maintaining the slaves at a distant place. On Indian soil the Act V provided no safeguards to the slaves and their condition was as deplorable as before. Besides, the Workmen's Breach of Contract (13 of 1859) Act was enacted to enforce and ensure performance of labour in lieu of an advance which brought them in virtual bondage under the threat of imprisonment.<sup>61</sup> Another Act, the Civil Procedure Code was also passed in 1859 whose section 200 provided for the execution of a decree by attachment of property, or by imprisonment of the person against whom the decree was made. This provision was used by the landlords and the money-lenders to hold labourers in bondage.<sup>62</sup>

The Workmen's Breach Contract stopped possible labour movement out of frustration due to partial or irregular payment of wages, harsh and inhuman treatment, i.e., the conditions of virtual slavery. The number of slaves went on increasing. It is corroborated by the fact that in Bihar the population of the slaves was more than six lakhs in 1862.<sup>63</sup> In 1863 an Act was passed to allow the planters to arrest runaway coolies, i.e., the contract labour (indentured labour), which further tightened the grip over the labourers. The colonial Government then in 1865, fixed the wages of the labourers as Rs. 5/-, Rs. 4/- and Rs. 3/- respectively, for men, women and children for nine hours of work per day. However, payment was not brought under the legal seal and no provision was made to ensure payment on proper basis.<sup>64</sup> A great famine visited India during 1876-78, but the Government organised a grand Royal Durbar at Calcutta in January 1877 in the honour of Queen Victoria. The Government took full advantage of the pathetic condition of the people and in 1882 by a regulation allowed uncontrolled recruitment without any licence to meet the persistent labour demand of the European planters.<sup>65</sup>

Slavery during the colonial period thus turned into contract labour, bonded labour and debt-slavery which was obviously the outcome of the distinct feature of the workings of the East India Company to serve her capitalist needs. Though the English prided themselves on their liberal opinion, they were mostly hostile to the reforms. They thought, "Slavery in India is different from slavery elsewhere." Buchanan

emphasized the relative harmlessness of slavery in India (Bihar) and concluded that it was an integral part of the Indian society. Their political instincts were traditional and conservative in nature, and they distrusted the chilly dogmatics of the reforming spirit.<sup>66</sup> The whole gamut of economic changes growing out of colonialism—new land settlement, commercialisation of agriculture, de-industrialisation and lop-sided dependent industrial advancement led to the development of a huge sector of agricultural proletariat.

#### NOTES

1. Chanana, D.R. (1960), *Slavery in Ancient India*, Delhi: People's Publishing House.
2. Kidwai, Salim (1985), 'Sultans, Eunuchs and Domestic: New Forms of Bondage in Medieval India', in Patanaik, Utsa and Dingwaney, Manjari, (eds), *Chains of Servitude: Bondage & Slavery in India*, Madras: Sangam Books.
3. Bearce, George D. (1961), *British Attitudes Towards India (1784-1858)*, London: Oxford University Press.
4. Mishra, B.B. (1959), *The Central Administration of the East India Company*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Parliamentary Papers (hereafter as PP), (1832), Vol. VIII, pp. 743-63.
7. Extracts of Notes and Observations on Slavery, as existing in Bengal, Bihar and Benaras and the Cede and Conquered Provinces by M.G. Myres, Principal, Sudder Ammin, Appendix II to the Indian Law Commission Report, 1814, Para, 3, p. 101.
8. Register to the Nizamut Adalat at Fort William dated March 12, 1813. (P.P. 1828, Judicial, pp. 3-56; 243-44)
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 246-48.
10. *Calcutta Christian Advocate*, August 24, 1839.
11. Hunter, W.W. (1897), *The Annals of Rural Bengal*, London, pp. 95-96.
12. Proceedings of the Committee of Circuit at Kashimbazar, dated June 28, 1772, Vol. I to III, pp. 22-23.
13. PP 1828, Vol. 24, pp. 3-4.
14. Bearce, George D. (1961), *British Attitudes towards India (1784-1858)*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 31-32.
15. Banaji, D.R. (1933), *Slavery in British India*, Bombay, pp. 15-16.
16. Appendix VI NO. 5, Report from Law Commissioners relative to Slavery in the East Indies (R.I.L.C.) Parliamentary Papers Vol. 28, 1841, D. Scott to the Chief Secretary, Oct. 10, 1830.
17. Colebrooke's Paper on Slavery, O.C. No. 13, December 29, 1826, Judicial Department, Bengal Records Department.
18. J. Richardson, Judge and Magistrate of Boundelkhand to the Judges of the Sudar Dewany and Nizamut Adalat, dated March 23, 1808; Bengal Criminal and Judicial Proceedings, (B.C.J.C.) No. 47 of March 18, 1816, Judicial Criminal Proceedings, Bengal Record Department.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. Report from W. Leycester, the Second Judge of the Bareilly Court of Circuit, dated

- September 9, 1815, extract para 95, Bengal Judicial Consultations, Febraury 14, 1817; PP. 1828, Judicial, p. 342.
23. PP 1828, Judicial, p. 346.
24. Stokes, E (1959), *The English Utilitarians and India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 16-23.
25. Dingwaney, Manjari, 'Unredeemed Promises: The Law and Servitude', in Patnaik, Utsa and Dingwaney, M. (eds.) (1985), *Chains of Servitude*, Madras: Sangam Books, pp. 283-347.
26. Macnaghten (1825), *Principles and Precedents of Muslim Laws*, Calcutta, p. 324-325; Macnaghten, (1828), *Principles and Precedents of Hindu Law*, Calcutta.
27. 'Notes on Slavery' by H. Torrens, Acting Registrar of Sadar Dewany and Nizamat Adalat, 1839, Appendix 1. Report of the Law Commission and Evidence on Slavery in the East Indies (R.L.C) Vol. I. pp. 33-34.

Districts only in domestic	Slaves engaged only in works	Slaves engaged in agriculture agricultural activities	Slaves engaged men-slaves as well as in domestic works	Total no. of
Bihar & Patna	5,055	32,820	18,495	56,370
Bhagalpur	574	4,434	2,560	7,568
Purnea	790	3,650	1,700	6,140
Shahabad	720	5,335	3,765	9,810
Total	7,139	46,239	26,520	79,888

28. J. Richardson *op. cit.*
29. The depositions of H. Russul, Vakil of Sadar Dewany and Nizamat Adalat, 1839, Appendix. I. R.L.C. Vol. II. p. 9.
30. The deposition of Vaidya Nath Mishra, Pandit of the Sadar Dewany Adalat, 1839, Appendix I. R.L.C. Vol. II. P. 7.
31. Bearce, George D. *op.cit.*, pp. 80-81.
32. Bengal Revenue Consultations (B.R.C). L.S. No. 213 dated 17 May, 1774.
33. Provincial Council of Revenue at Dacca to Hastings, June 20, 1774, Bengal Revenue Consultations Legislative Report No. 442, dated August 16, 1774.
34. *Ibid.*
35. R.L.C. Vol.I., p.309.
36. PP 1828, Vol. 24, pp. 9-10.
37. *Calcutta Gazette*, Extraordinary, Monday July 27, 1789.
38. Baber's Report of 1832, On the affairs of the East India Company Appendix K-549. I-Public, British P.P. Vol. VI, 1831-32.
39. Bearce, George D. *op.cit.*, pp. 65-78.
40. Metcalfe to Bengal Govt. September 4, 1812, Bengal Criminal Judicial Consultations (B.C.J.C.), December 19, 1812.
41. Bengal Government to Metcalfe, November 13, 1812, B.C.J.C. December 19, 1812. Enclosure- In reply to the Letter of Metcalfe, October 24, 1812.
42. British PP Appendix K. 1832 pp. 549-580.
43. Banaji, D.R. *op.cit.*, p. 334.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Communication from the Officiating Secretary to the Government of India dated December 18, 1838, in the Report of the Indian Law Commission, February 1, 1839, G.O.I.

- Legislative Proceedings, February, 1839, Imperial Records Department. Report of the Law Commission, 1839-41.
46. From the Hon'ble the Court of Directors to the Governor-General of India in Council, dated August 29, 1838, Home Department, Legislative Despatch form Court, 1837-38, para 5, No. 14 of 1838. Imperial Records, Department.
47. Minute by A. Amos dated April 1, 1839, Legislative Proceedings, April 1 to May 27, 1839, Imperial Records Department.
48. Minute by W.W. Bird and by Lord Auckland, *Ibid.*
49. Indian Law Commission Report, 1839-41.
50. Banaji, D.R. (1933), *op.cit.*
51. Minute by Lord Auckland dated May 6, 1841, Legislative Proceedings, August 2 to September 20, 1841. Imperial Records Department.
52. Minute by W.W. Bird dated June 18, 1841, Consultation No. 11, Law Proceedings, August 2 to September 20, 1841. Imperial Records Department.
53. Minute by H.T. Prinsep, dated July 31, 1841, Consultation No. 12, Law Proceedings, *Ibid.*
54. Cohen, Morris Raphael (1961), *Reason and Law*, New York: Collier Books, p. 76.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-101.
59. Tinker, Hugh, (1974), a *New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas (1830-1920)*, London: Oxford University Press, Kondapi, c. (1951), *Indian Overseas (1838-1949)*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, Saha, P., (1970), *Emigration of Indian Labour (1838-1900)* Delhi: PP, 1970 etc.
60. Tinker, Hugh(1974); *A New System of Slavery, Ibid.*
61. Dinghwaney, M., *Unredeemed Promises: The Law and Servitude, op.cit.*, p. 312.
62. *Ibid.*
63. Montgomery Martin in his book, *India- Its Recent progress and Present State*, has presented the following figure of slaves in the districts of Bihar in 1862:
- |                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| Bihar and Patna | 1,31,280 |
| Bhagalpur       | 40,861   |
| Purnea          | 24,560   |
| Shahabad        | 21,340   |
| Tirhut          | 2,12,210 |
| Saran           | 1,80,509 |
| Total           | 6,10,760 |
- Banaji, D.R. (1933), *op.cit.*, p. 199.
64. Dingwaney, Manjari (1985), *Unredeemed Promises: The Law and Servitude*, in Patnaik, Utsa and Dingwaney, Manjari, eds., *Chains of Servitude, op.cit.* pp. 314-324.
65. Vidyasagar, R (1985), *Debt Bondage in South Arcot District: A Case Study of Agricultural Labourers and Handloom Weavers*, in Patnaik, Utsa and Dingwaney, Manjari, eds., *Chains of Servitude, Op.cit.* p. 116.
66. Stokes, Eric (1959), *The English Utilitarians and India. op.cit.* p. 14.

# ‘Modern’ Theatre in India: Middle Class Quest for Respectability

Lata Singh

Theatre was an important site of representation of dominant political forces and counter-hegemonic struggle during the colonial period. It was linked up with the broader question of class, gender, nationalism and colonialism. This paper is an attempt to understand the emergence and character of one of the streams of ‘modern’ theatre, that is, middle class elite theatre of the colonial period in India. Culture can be seen as a very important aspect of the constitution or formation of a class. This has been highlighted in works like E. P. Thompson’s *The Making of the Working Class*. Thompson emphasizes class as not merely an economic criteria but a historical phenomenon; not a thing but a set of forms in human relationships. A view of class in objective and economic terms provides the basis or the general parameter, within which classes individuate themselves in social and political terms. It offers a set of structural and economic givens, but cannot provide any real insight into how classes exist as concrete sociological existences or actualities or even as particular political entities, nor into the relationship between cultural practices. To understand class, Thompson argues, it is essential to see it “as a social and cultural formation, arising from processes which can only be studied as they work themselves out over a considerable historical period. Thus, rather than the solely economic nature of class, one need to establish and emphasize the social and the mediatory nature of class. Social relations of classes have to be organized socially and practicalized, mediated culturally. Cultural activities play an important role in the development of social subjectivity or a common sense of classes. Such activities organize and express the existing social relations.”<sup>1</sup>

Class formation is also simultaneously linked to the hegemonizing process, and in building the social hegemony, cultural production (both in the process of production and through the final product) plays an



important role. Culture, according to Gramsci, is one of the key sites where struggle for hegemony takes place. In fact, hegemony produces a situation in which the interests of one powerful section of the society are 'universalized' as the interests of the society as a whole. The dominant elite have expressed their power by giving legitimacy and exposure to their cultural forms and practices—by projecting their 'fields of value'.<sup>2</sup> The importance of cultural activities lies in creating practices and ideas which organize some semblance of internal coherence of a class, though not complete homogeneity, as well as mediate the relation between classes either for the purpose of domination or resistance. This internal and external organization of social relations, in terms of norms and forms of those social classes, are two signal moments of class struggle.

This paper establishes the linkage of nineteenth century theatre, middle class formation and class consciousness in India. It assesses the role played by theatre in the development of social subjectivity or common sense in classes in terms of how these activities organize and express the existing social relations and the forms of class struggle. Theatre practices of the middle class in the nineteenth century were part and parcel of their assumption of hegemony in the production of culture and politics. The political content of theatre was part of the development of a hegemonic status for the middle classes that allows them to represent first the province and then the nation as a whole. The process was impossible without assuming a moral and ideologically directive role for all other classes, that is, society as a whole.

### *Theatre as a Middle Class Social Pageant*

The elite 'modern' theatre's origin in—and socialization within—capitalism mirrors the formation of the new classes in India. It had its base among the new middle classes. The middle class, being organic to the colonial capital and its state, was breaking away from the older social modes, and whose self-definition encompassed both disjunction and continuity. In the initial phase at the time of origin, the middle class was only conscious of their own exclusive, particularly social and cultural needs. The 'modern' theatre developed out of the awareness and cultural need of the new class; a class disruptive of an older social order and in need of comprehensively binding social and cultural practices and ideologies. They experienced the need for new cultural forms, different ways of expressing and organizing pleasures and leisure.<sup>3</sup>

The new middle class was being influenced by the Western theatre.

It was trying to copy their forms of theatre although these performances in the initial stage were private. They were held at wealthy landlords' and businessmen's private houses. The general public was denied admission. There was no sale of tickets. The directors, producers and actors were non-professionals. All these theatres were a part of the life-style of the richest of the new rich in society. These wealthy gentlemen, who were often titled Rajas as a mark of social and financial distinctions, were able to pay for the lavish cost of production of the theatres and competed with each other in this. They were also able to involve and patronize the less wealthy, but highly educated genteel intellectual elite and professionals. Quite often the playwright himself did not belong to the world of the rich. Theatre at this time was what could be called a 'high'-society activity, reinforced by the contribution of a modest middle-class new intellectual elite.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, at this stage when organized politics had not developed, theatre was more of a social event. From literature, social and literary histories, one gets a description which does not reflect them as performing arts but rather as social events. New social ambience and interactions were the essence of these private, home-based performances. To quote Rabindranath Tagore, the child of one of the wealthiest and most westernized-liberal families of Bengal, whose home was one of the earliest sites of Bengali theatre:

I used to lean over the bannisters of this building and stare at the house next to us. You could see the dance hall next door flooded with light. The big compound was crowded with huge horse-drawn carriages. Our older brothers and cousins could be seen greeting the guests at the front door and escorting them in. Rose water was sprinkled from silver containers, and each guest was given a small bouquet.... While in the reception room, under chandeliers and lamps, music and dancing continued, and the grown-up males pulled on the long and coiled hookah pipes, the women were hidden behind bamboo blinds, in a dim light with their own containers of betel leaves and areca nuts. Women from other families also came as guests and gathered there (to watch the show). But they also discussed in whispers their household affairs.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, it is in this fallout effect of the theatre as a social pageant that we see the emerging class consciousness of a section of the new ruling classes, much more so than even any play's content could reveal to us. The significance of these private shows for the new rich who hosted and acted in them can be seen in terms of the cohesion, assertion and fullness of social life. The theatre's capacity of social networking or of organizing social relations is very significant. Each one of these private performances brought together important sections of the local elite, and on occasion, the English ruling elite. Theatre at home, and theatre

in general, was beginning to be seen as a natural extension of the life style of the gentry of the new urban environment. This new form was an essential aspect of civilized (westernized upper class) life. Hence at its inception, when the life of the middle class were socially speaking at an embryonic stage, these private theatricals were heralded as the sign of new times.<sup>6</sup> In fact, well into the phase of commercial theatre, there were probably no major intellectuals in Bengal who had not come in contact with theatre. The lesser members of the society contented themselves with folk plays and other forms of entertainment, while 'modern' theatre regaled the wealthy and the intelligentsia.<sup>7</sup>

'Modern' theatre was evoked as a respectable cultural domain. In fact, there had always been anti-theatrical prejudice amongst the dominant sections of society although this prejudice quickened in the colonial period. Various colonial government reports assign theatre an active presence. However, their interpretation presents the performance not simply as a performance, a political act, or plain entertainment but also as an 'uncivilized' activity. Government records often refer to songs, tales, histories, in fact everything connected with Asiatic amusements and literature, as more or less 'licentious'. Those attending the performance were presented not as mere spectators but rather as persons of 'loose morality' and 'low class'. Such voices on the one hand reveal what Guha calls 'the voice of committed colonialism' preparing its grounds for a civilizing mission. Yet, on the other hand, they also enumerate elements of a colonial awareness and anxiety that articulates the power of natives and their cultural practices. Theatre was seen as a potentially subversive cultural medium of expression. The *Asiatic Journal* concludes that 'there can be little hope of any striking improvement in the Asiatic character, until the importance of the influence extended by Christian countries shall be fully recognized'.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, the subtext of such attacks is one that reflects anxiety on the part of the authorities and they assert their own cultural and moral superiority in order to justify their presence.

Simultaneously, to create a greater appreciation for Anglo-European culture among upper-class natives, colonial authorities encouraged the proliferation of European theatrical activity through the establishment of native theatres patterned after their European counterparts. European tradition was appreciated as a civilized, sophisticated and cultivated activity that would lead to the moral improvement of Indian society. Popular folk drama was given low status. Such systematic reorganization of theatre resulted in generating hierarchies that relegated indigeneous theatre forms to a 'low' status, as opposed to the 'high'

and privileged status accorded to European 'high' drama, notably Shakespeare.<sup>9</sup>

Hierarchical stratification was further reinforced by indigenous social reform organizations. The reformist discourse, resulting from the colonial experience, had resulted in producing strong contempt for indigenous theatre. It had pushed indigenous and folk theatre to the margins of respectability. In Bengal, the Brahmo Samaj epitomized the trend toward Puritanism. Meredith Borthwick notes, "It uncompromisingly condemned gambling, going to prostitutes, smoking, drinking, and the theatre".<sup>10</sup> In the North Indian region, the Arya Samaj similarly abolished performances by dancing girls, introduced a purified form of the Holi festival, and condemned local theatrical forms.<sup>11</sup> Literary readers like Bharatendu Harishchandra of Banaras declared most kinds of popular theatre 'depraved' and lacking in theatricality. Like other figures of the Indian renaissance, he championed a refined form of drama limited largely to drawing rooms and school auditorium, whose purpose would be to assist in the moral regeneration of the nation.<sup>12</sup> Sumanta Banerjee's research on the popular culture of nineteenth-century Calcutta indicates that the *bhadralok* (English-educated professional elite) increasingly associated popular forms with the 'licentious and voluptuous tastes' of the 'vulgar' populace, from whom they took pains to differentiate themselves. Thus the denunciation of popular culture was simultaneous with the formation of a new *bhadralok* culture.

Hence the rhetoric of 'obscenity' and 'morality' used by colonial discourse, bourgeois nationalists and social reformers had imparted a dubious reputation to theatre. It is against this middle class prejudice that it was differentiating itself from 'indigenous forms' and trying to give theatre a 'respectable' image. *Naba Prabandha*, a newspaper, in 1868 published a long article dwelling on the necessity of a healthy theatre to counteract the evils of vulgar entertainment provided by contemporary Panchalis, Tarjas and Half Akharas.<sup>13</sup> In Bengal, Amarendranath invited the highest gentry of judges, magistrates and lawyers to the Classic Theatre to improve the credibility of the stage. In August 1901, in an acknowledgement letter to the Chief Justice of the Allahabad 'High' Court Mr. Stanley, he wrote:

The native stage, though yet in its infancy, exerts an educative influence over native society unsurpassed by any other educational institution of this country. To encourage the stage is to encourage healthy education and to develop the fine feelings of the human heart. Your lordship by your kindness and generosity towards me – the manager actor of this theatre, has raised the native stage in the estimation of the public.<sup>14</sup>

In Maharashtra, Vishnudas Bhave had sought to perform in front of the intelligentsia.<sup>15</sup> When Vishnudas Bhave had presented the first theatre performance of a Marathi play at the court of the Raja of Sangli, the *Bombay Times* claimed “Bhave’s plays are of native origin – from the early classic dramas of Hindoostan. They are void of everything approaching licentiousness and indecorum and are images of the moralities in which the Christian Church in older times used to rejoice”.<sup>16</sup> The two decades following the 1860s saw several English and Sanskrit plays being translated into Marathi. Maharashtra Natak Mandali was able to secure the good wishes of the intellectuals and social workers of all important centres in Maharashtra. The quarters of the Mandali became the meeting-point of poets. Mandali had made it a practice to invite learned persons to speak before the actors every Sunday.<sup>17</sup> Thus the importance of a body of sound and classical dramas to regulate the national taste was increasingly being highlighted. This is further highlighted by one advertisement of Krishanji Prabhakar Khadilkar’s play, *Kanchangadchi Mohana*, premiered by the Shahungarwasi Mandali (in 1901):

Well-to-do householder (*Sukhavastu gruhastha*): Which play should I see today, that will not make me regret the money spent and the sleep lost?

Student: Which play should I see today, that, rather than make me regret the study-time lost, will teach me about history and morality (*niti*)?

Woman: Which play should I see today, that, rather than making me sad by showing erotic scenes, will imprint upon my mind the noble ideas of fidelity and bravery?

Tattler (*chugalkhor*): People dislike me; in fact, even I feel that of late my habit of tattling has gone out of control. Is there any play that will show me the terrible consequences of tattling and help me get rid of this dangerous habit?

Servant: More than half my life has gone by in serving others. In this period, I have not thought about my country even once. How will I know what is patriotism? It is unlikely that I will ever experience it myself. Perhaps a play will show me a true patriot; but which play can this be?

There is only one answer to all these questions: see *Kanchangadchi Mohana*.<sup>18</sup>

In fact, never in the history of colonial India until the influence of communism/socialism began to be felt from the mid-1930s, does one find another such period, when the elite of the middle class consciously

reach out towards the responsibility of shaping a new set of cultural practices and ideologies.

Modern theatre in the formative period consisted of reworking the English theatre form—both in the structure of the play and its presentational devices—in order to specifically suit new social and aesthetic needs. It adopted from the British physical representational devices and forms, the dramatic structure and the specific genres prevalent in British theatre. India joined in the celebration of English theatre. Colonial theatre writing was greatly influenced by Shakespeare. Simultaneously, one also sees the struggle for identity amongst the emerging middle class. Internalization of British bourgeois representational forms is accompanied with a strong emphasis on a new national identity as well the middle class's own need for a creative subjectivity and a historical continuity moved them to produce their own theatre in their own language. The emerging middle class was also trying to draw its legitimacy from the past. They were trying to highlight the greatness of ancient Indian theatre. It was being stressed how the 'romantic' spirit had reached a pinnacle of art not alone in Shakespeare and in Calderon but in the East too. This view of ancient India was partially a creation of European Romanticism. The German translation of Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* was published in 1791. This play was described by Goethe as "an inspiration to poets, a thirst for natural colour, for unspoiled emotion, for the exotic, the supernatural, the gracefully wild". Rousseauism and Romanticism led him to believe that there always was and is an 'Indian' theatre. This theatre was supposed to be the classical theatre. This resulted in a search for an authentic 'Indian' theatre. It also postulated a notion of theatre which is civilization specific. It was being stressed that there is the (and not an) Indian theatre which is timeless. The 'heaven and earth' of theatre was comprehended in terms of 'Shakuntala', i.e., Sanskrit, Indian theatre. The early writers were struggling with classical heritage, Michael Madhusudan Dutt wrote a play on Sharmistha in Bangla in 1856 while Kirloskar narrated the story of Subhadra (again from the *Mahabharata*) in Marathi less than a quarter century later.<sup>19</sup>

In the initial phase, theatre was indirectly political in Bengal; the three major playwrights of this period were Ramnarayan Tarkaratna, Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Dinabandhu Mitra. All of them wrote plays which were either social criticism through farces and satires or sometimes epic-scope melodramas with *puranic* themes. It is the former, the social strain, which dominated the scene. Ramnarayan Tarkaratna mainly earned his reputation by writing about the evils of polygamy in the *kulin* sect of the Brahmins. Certain aspects of the new class-

consciousness, marked by confusion, derangement, opportunism and greed, unleashed by this new non-productive colonialist economy with its fast elaborating ruling and legitimizing apparatus, are well portrayed by Girish Chandra Ghosh's *Bellik Bazar* (The Rogues Gallery). This farce is telling about the general state of class formation in Bengal since it involves characters from the petty-bourgeois and professional setting, as well as menial workers. It is set in the death registration office of the Calcutta Corporation, since births and deaths have to be registered according to the new system. This practice had never existed in India before, as was the case with many other British regulations. But it became mandatory and was deeply tied up with the colonial property laws, the medical profession and the legal profession.

Thus, theatre resonated with social criticism, in the shape of satires and farces. The themes of women's role in the family and the society at large, and general tenor of the English educated, anglicized gentry's life kept the playwright busy. One important area of criticism centred on the excessive and sudden use of alcohol, and promiscuous sexuality involving prostitutes. It seems that previously the society was never a drinking society, nor a society where sex outside of marriage was practiced or condoned. In the well-ordered communities and extended families in the countryside, social sexual deviations such as keeping a mistress, fell within the list of a landlord's or a nawab's or noblemans' vices. The liberal ethics of the British settlers and their colonial excesses exerted a destructive influence in terms of consumption of alcohol. A disregard for kinship, caste hierarchy and family and lax sexual morality are also the characteristics of the new rich *Baboo*, along with a self-hating, attitude towards all things indigenous and an adoration of all things foreign, meaning English. In a farce written by Madhusudan Dutt called *Ekeyi Ki Bale Sabhyata?* (Is this Called Civilization?), we have a first hand critical account of this new rich young gentleman or *Baboo* of the educated sort. Madhusudan, no stranger to the excessive libertarianism of the time, however, noticed that without some critical self-respect, the young Bengal stood in danger of drowning in the quicksand of imitation. The plight of these men, he felt, lay in a complete dispossession of their cultural/social heritage and their inability to actually become English, or be accepted as equals by them.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Theatre as a Site of Middle Class Nationalist Hegemony*

Gradually 'modern' theatre underwent a fundamental change in both socio-economic and political terms. It moved from private to public, and was opened to the general public with the sale of tickets. In Calcutta,

the first public theatre was staged in 1872 at the National Theatre. It was produced by white-collar workers rather than the richest families and intellectual dignitaries of the city. The public presentation allowed for the participation of a much broader cross-section of the middle class and removed theatre from the grasp of a smaller fraction of the new ruling classes. The bourgeois underpinnings of this political theatre are revealed by the fact that the device for this greater democratization of theatre should be entrepreneurialism, a mode which had become naturalized enough among certain sections to consider theatre as a commodity. So, in all the areas of content, dramatic presentation and social organization—the new play and its production remained a prototypical political-cultural venture of the middle class.

The law of the market began to operate. As the supply of plays went up, the prices came down. In Maharashtra, companies began to vary ticket prices from town to town, with Bombay naturally registering the highest rates. All these companies were commercial enterprises. The proprietors of the troupes controlled all the artistic aspects—selecting the theme of the play, finalizing the dialogues, training the actors, writing songs, composing the music, finalizing costumes and handling all the other numerous production details. Bhave was one such sole proprietor of a troupe. Other members were paid on percentage terms. There were men to look after administrative affairs and production details. Annasaheb Kirloskar, who gave Maharashtra its full-fledged *sangeet natak*, appointed a full-time secretary in 1884 to look after the administrative affairs of the company. Partnership was introduced and partners were paid on percentage terms. Others received fixed monthly salaries. Allocations towards the Good Conduct Fund and Reserve Fund were specified. There was also a suggestion to start a provident fund for actors to fall back on in their old age. In Maharashtra the trend towards commercialism perhaps reached its highest point when, around 1922, Govindrao Tembe attempted to float his Shivraj Company as a limited concern with share capital. Official recognition of the theatre's earning capacity followed soon after, in 1923, with the imposition of entertainment tax. Commercialism brought with it the star system. Stars demanded and received salary. Actors, playwrights and music composers were paid.<sup>21</sup>

There was an increasing entrance of business people in the entertainment industry, indicating that it was not only entertainment, but an enterprise where capital was invested with a profit motive. This conjured up an idea of business and recreation. In the December of 1880, Pratap Chand Johuree, a Marwari jeweler bought off the National Theatre from its Bengali owner, when it was on the verge of closing



down. Being a wealthy jewell merchant, he was driven to invest in theatre, realizing its great potential for profits. He understood that like any other business venture, theatre too must be given a proper infrastructure to develop as a trade. The first thing he did was to appoint a manager who was well versed in the nuances of this dramatic form. So he persuaded Girish Ghosh, who was still an amateur but had already left an impression on the theatre going audiences, to leave his present assignment as a book-keeper in a mercantile family and join his company. The new theatre owners now hired professionals for their theatre companies against a monthly wage. Theatre acquired the traits of a full time profession. The hired professionals were now engaged as full timers as opposed to their previous part time engagements and everything concerned with the theatre was now organized under a single roof.<sup>22</sup>

Soon after ticketed performances began, strategies began to be evolved to get more and more people into the auditorium. Posters were put up, hand-bills were distributed in town-squares, and 'proofs' (synopsis of plays) were distributed to people who bought tickets of higher denominations. Advertisements were inserted in newspapers. Free passes were sent to individuals and organizations of importance. There was now a growing interdependence between theatre and the publishing industry. Major playwrights would announce their forthcoming plays in their published versions. Hoping to boost his sales, in 1877, a certain bookseller advertised tickets for a play at three-fourths the rate if they were bought from his shop a day before the performance.<sup>23</sup>

In fact, theatre in this phase became more and more political. By 1865, India became a part of the British empire. European political modalities had begun to be transplanted and transcreated in Bengal. As the political scene began to unfold, theatre and politics began to be linked more closely. The everyday life of the middle classes became less of a concern than the British occupation of India. In fact, a political entity called 'India', so far embryonic in the political discourse of the new classes, had emerged, signaling the beginning of a nationalist movement. The middle classes which had spent the previous century in setting up their social base and space, were getting restive to assume power. Theatre moved from its social criticism and self-reflection about the Hindu Bengali upper class society to criticizing the British rule in terms of India as a whole. The new theatre, in fact, busied itself with shaping the symbolic apparatus of the emerging nationalist movement. Recounting and reinterpreting history areas setting up myths and metaphors which would embody the political aspirations of new

nationalism, formed the cultural politics of the day. The existing social relations and the direction of their dynamics took a directly political cultural form and became dramatic fictions of power.

Theatre, in particular, became a major site for politics. This can be illustrated by giving one example from the play *Nil Darpan* written by Dinabandhu Mitra. This play expressed both the current middle class and popular dissatisfaction with a particular aspect of colonial rule in India, namely the plantation economy. *Nil Darpan* is the story of the plight of a Bengali landlord's family and its well-to-do ryots (tenants) at the hands of the indigo planters. It does involve some poor peasants but never really brings them to centre stage. In many areas there was a tenuous alliance between better-off peasants and landlords against the planters.<sup>24</sup> The main thrust of the opposition was not towards colonial rule as such, but its abuses towards planters who are carry-overs of the old East India Company, rather than towards the new administration of the colonial state. This play is essentially at the service of the local ruling classes of Bengal. There was emphasis on the image of class harmony between poor peasants and landlords, or of bridging of fractional rifts between the landlord and well-to-do tenants. It appeals to a feudal social vision of a just, though hierarchical society where envy is absent, but status and hierarchy exist with protection. It establishes the hegemonic or representational status of the middle classes, which show themselves to each other in the light of benevolent, well-supported, legitimate representatives of Bengal and the lower classes. It also presents a powerful utopia of a paradise lost, waiting to be regained; of class harmony, and also shows direction of their nationalist struggle. It gave them an ideology which combined property, hierarchy, and patriarchy with a notion of appropriate justice for all at each level, befitting their proper role and station in life.

'Patriotic' plays continued to be written after *Nil Darpan*. The National Theatre Group enacted a play called *Bharat Mata Bilap* (The Lament of Mother India). 'Mother India' a humiliated, unchained mother of the masses of colonized people, became a central symbol for the nationalist. Many plays attacked discriminatory colonial policies. These included Upendra Nath Das's *Surendra-Binodini* (1875), *Gaekwar Darpan* (The Mirror of Baroda, 1875), *Gajananda Prahasan* (Gajananda and the Prince, 1875) and Dakshina Charan Chattopadhyay's *Chakar Durpan* (The Tea Planter's Mirror, 1875). Running through all these plays was a nationalistic impulse that constituted attacks on the British government in one form or another. *Chakar Darpan* attacked the cruel and licentious behaviour of British planters toward the natives on the tea plantations in Assam. Upendra

Nath Das's *Surendra-Binodini* showed a European magistrate sexually assaulting his maid, who jumps out of the window to save her honour. *Gaekwar Darpan* represented the farcical trial of Malhar Rao and Gaekwar of Baroda, who was forced to abdicate his throne in 1875 on trumped up charges of attempting to poison Colonel Phayre, a British resident of Baroda. And *Gajananda Prahasan* attacked the visit of the Prince of Wales to the house of an esteemed Bengali gentleman, and his visit to the *zenana*.<sup>25</sup>

While the political content of the plays was the reason for the growing panic among the rulers, the performative aspects of such cultural production further aggravated existing tensions. The colonial administration watched the development from social self-critical plays, which were attempts to construct a new bourgeois social consciousness, to this level of overt attacks on the British presence. The colonial state passed the Dramatic Performance Act of 1876 in response to political theatre. The Censorship Act of 1876 empowered local government authorities to 'prohibit dramatic performances which were seditious or obscene, or otherwise prejudicial to the public interests'.<sup>26</sup>

As the Dramatic Performance Act made it very difficult to write anti-colonial plays directly, the technique of retelling history or Puranic legends and myths—evoking allusions and analogies—remained a very important contribution for political theatre. The genre would also have popular appeal at a time when revivalist Hinduism recuperated mythological characters such as Krishna, Abhimanyu, Yudhishtir, Prahlad, and others as the ideal men and national builders. In Maharashtra, the evocation of a lost Hindu and Maratha glory found increasing support in the Ganpati Ustav.<sup>27</sup>

The shift to mythological or history plays, especially the former, has been seen as a sheer retreat into Hindu revivalism. However, to address it like this is to overlook the political character of such plays and to define politics in a very narrow paradigm. Playwrights were looking for such dramas which would elude censorship and at the same time disseminate nationalist ideas. Because of its religiously affiliated characteristics, which made it less susceptible to strict censorship measures, mythological drama seemed quite appropriate for these purposes. Since authorities perceived interference with religious customs as a way of alienating natives, the Censorship Act did not apply to plays associated with religious rituals or ceremonies. To escape censorship, moreover, playwrights could camouflage political plays in the garb of stories from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. And through analytical representations of mythological stories that commented on contemporaneous socio-political events, they could continue to

challenge authoritarian structures and state apparatuses. Given the dangers attached to political dramas at a time when imperialist expansion required the suppression of all politically subversive material, playwrights also found in mythological drama, a means to wrest the theatre from repression and make it a 'free' space to speak out and express themselves.<sup>28</sup>

The techniques of retelling history or *puranic* legends and myths, evoking allusions and analogies, remained a channel of political theatre. In Maharashtra, for example, Khadilkar's *Kichakavadh* presented a story about the Pandavas taken from the *Mahabharata*, to attack the colonial government. According to Solomon, the molestation of Draupadi at the hands of Kichak, who is eventually killed by Bhim, one of Draupadi's five Pandava husbands, became a metaphor for the policies of the Raj. Kichak represented Lord Curzon, Draupadi represented India, Yudhishtir, the eldest of the Pandava brothers, represented the moderate nationalists, Bhim represented an extremist nationalist. Through such stories playwrights contrasted the aggressive and hateful acts of the enemy (who, by implications, were the rulers) with the resistance offered by those who sought to rescue the nation from colonial evils.<sup>29</sup> Thus this facet of religiosity had a nationalist import.

Another consequence of mythological drama was that it helped reinstate the reputation of theatre. As discussed earlier, the rhetoric of 'obscenity' and 'morality' used by colonial as well as bourgeois nationalists and social reformers had imparted a dubious reputation to theatre, including political plays. This also affected attendance by the 'respectable' gentry, resulting in a loss of patronage and support. The sanctimonious character of religious and mythological drama challenged the perception of Indian drama as 'immoral' and 'obscene' and accomplished at the same time its intended political purpose.<sup>30</sup>

Besides, mythological plays there were also some historical plays. Girish Ghosh staged some historical plays like 'Sirajuddaula' and 'Mir Qasim' to express the nationalist project most directly and politically. Such plays seek to recount the history of Bengal's defeat at the hands of the British in order to inspire a united rebellion by the Hindu and Muslims of Bengal. By iconically posing Bengal's past as glorious and the present as degraded, this theatre made visible the social relations of domination around which the new colonial administration was constructed. It gave a new sense of time and transition to the nationalist struggle. It outlined the mission of nationalism by marking out the stages of past glory and future desire. It showed different incarnations of India's history: 'What mother was, what she has become, and what

she will be.’ However, the historical plays of Girish Ghosh were no different from his mythological plays in spirit and form. Historical characters were icons endowed with a grace and valour reminiscent of the heroes of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. In the historical plays, the remoteness of the events and the needs for nascent nationalism were excuses enough for treating the heroes, tragic or triumphant, as embodiments of valour and heroic virtues.<sup>31</sup>

However, for all its well-intentioned efforts, the kind of nationalism propagated by mythological drama remained a deeply problematic enterprise. One component of the developing features of this aggressively Hindu orientation was an emerging tendency to negate the significance and importance of the rule of the Muslim dynasties. The quest for a nascent Hindu patriotic tradition got inevitably fastened on to the Rajput and Maratha resistance, and naturally against the Muslim dynasties. Representations of the Musalman on stage was shaped much by his absence, as it was by the proliferation of the *Puranic* themes and *Bhakti* plays, and clearly extended with disconcerting ease into perceptions of a Musalman in real life. Girish Ghosh deified the heroic deed of his historical character in narratives that celebrated the remoteness and grandeur of the past. Instead of questioning Indian history, Ghosh chose to idealize. Ghosh’s ideal nation would probably be one embodying unity and political oneness under a ‘Hindu’ *rashtra*, as declared in the play *Chhatrapati Shivaji*. Strong influences of the Shivaji festivals and the worship of Ma Bhawani, were the bases of his nationalism.<sup>32</sup>

Besides, the plots and stories of most plays reinforce the superiority of the Hindu race. Plays like *Vir Abhimanyu* declared the supremacy of the Aryans in ancient times. The assertion of an Aryan identity also propagated ideas about Hindu supremacy over other religious groups, at a time when divisions within Indian elites along religious, regional and caste lines were on the rise. Aimed at challenging colonial structure, such Hinduistic revivals consequently fostered the simultaneous growth of a Hindu nationalism. Anti-colonial drama is also part of the story of consolidation of an elite nationalism.

Thus, the above description brings out that even though the religiosity had a nationalist import but such nationalist import was imbued with hierarchy, patriarchy and Brahmanism, which tried to hitch the higher class’s wagon on to the masses—but in actuality had no ‘bread and butter’ programme for the masses. Thus modern theatre was implicated in the larger process of the formation of the middle-class its links with the market, its self-perception and prescription for women.

*Representation of Women: Reinforcement of Patriarchal Ideology*

Modern theatre was a site for contesting challenges to its hegemonic claim and redefinition of the female was a crucial feature of the hegemony that brought the middle classes into power. If the struggle to represent ideal female behaviour accompanied the struggle of an emergent middle class, then change in the representation of women would be expected to accompany more extensive historical changes.<sup>33</sup> The representation of women as public entertainers and the locus of male desire no longer served the interests of the English-educated elite, which put in her place the Indian equivalent of the Victorian domestic angel, the *sugrihini* or good housewife.<sup>34</sup>

As the middle class consolidated its position, it exerted increasing pressure on its womenfolk to conform to British standards of ideal womanly conduct. A new kind of segregation was imposed on women, whose identity was now to be defined in opposition to women from lower economic strata. The middle class emphasised the need to eradicate what it was trained to believe were the pernicious influences of certain prevailing literary and cultural forms on women, particularly on women belonging to their own homes. These forms emerged primarily from the lower economic social groups and represented a popular culture that ran parallel to what could be called the 'official culture' propagated by the middle class. The urban audience for such forms had earlier contained large numbers of 'high'-caste women who shared cultural usages, dialects, and idioms with women of lower socio-economic groups. In Bengal, Meredith Borthwick writes how a principal pastime of secluded women was attending *jatra* performances and other theatrical events. In fact, the popular culture had a wide female audience, ranging from the lower caste and lower class self-employed women of the market places, to the wives and daughters of the middle class in the sheltered *andarmahal* or *zenana*. The middle class considered women's popular songs with their robust sense of humour and frank sensuality, as a threat to the new ideal of domestic order and heavily restricted elite women's association with female performers.<sup>35</sup> Female performers were getting stigmatized in educated discourse as 'prostitute'. They came under attack in the well-known Anti-Nautch campaign that culminated in 1947 in the outlying of temple dancing and the prohibition on dedicating women as devadasis in South India.<sup>36</sup> In fact, *nautanki* and many other forms like *lavani/tamasha* owes their absence from the annals of literary history to their association with a prohibited category of womanhood. The North Indian imagination unflinchingly links *nautanki* with the alluring gestures of the dancer-actress.<sup>37</sup>

'Respectable' women, because of the stigma connected to acting and the relegation of singing, dancing and other performance arts to a marginalised courtesan class, were at an extreme social disadvantage with respect to the stage and were not only unwilling to become actresses but were ill-equipped for its rigours and lacking in skills. The emergent elite theatre marked its distinction from the folk via a process of desexualisation, so that only men could perform on the stage. The middle class discourse of private and public domain shaped this. In commercial theatres, the paying public consumed the images on stage. The consumption had to be of male actors, because women from the middle class were 'respectable', and exhibiting them in front of a paying public would have undermined the very basis on which the search for respectability was being carried out. In fact, by asserting that female impersonators could perform better than women, it led to the displacement of agency from the represented figure of women, and perpetuated the patriarchal control of not only the material female body but its visual manifestations as well.

However, this respectable cultural project had its inherent tensions and anxiety. Female impersonation caused anxiety as the issue of masculinity and effeminacy was also coming to the forefront in political discourse. Govind Tembe, a very well-known personality in the world of theatre mentioned that young men in our society were beginning to imitate popular actors enacting female roles. He maintained, that at a time when the nation required strong men, this tendency to look effeminate was to be discouraged. Besides, it was the period when more realism was coming in techniques of production which required a different norm of representation. Female impersonation, from being quite acceptable when it was practiced by the gentry in the period of amateur-theatricals, was only gradually found to be 'unreal' and incompatible with the ticketed staging of 'theatre' and the expectations of a larger and more heterogeneous viewing public.

There was a debate in the early twentieth century in Maharashtra in theatre platforms, journals, conferences and newspapers whether women should join the theatre. However, these debates were conducted and participated in primarily by urban middle class men. The direction of the debate, both by those who favoured women's entry and those who resisted, was ingrained with patriarchal ideology. Those who opposed women coming on stage felt that if women and men came together in the 'vulnerable' field of theatre, morals would be adversely affected. However, those who thought women necessary for the 'art of theatre' but who did not want *kulin* women to lose their morality, gave reluctant

consent to the 'prostitutes' but with conditions that they should be '*neeteeman*', that is, fit into the moral standard of the society, or else these 'prostitutes' would spoil the morality of the men in theatre companies. Those who were not very happy with the choice of 'prostitutes' suggested that widows could take up acting, with necessary training in theatre craft. Some tried to put forth the view that the danger of any degradation of moral values was not so acute any more because women joining theatre would be educated, cultured and *kulin*, unlike the women of the earlier period. However, the needs of the modern stage were greater than the members of the *kulin* women available. Therefore a very clever move of expanding the definition of *kulin* to include more women was made after an elaborate, intricate analysis of the concept of *kulin*. According to the traditional concept, *kulin* is linked with 'higher' birth whereas the modified version included women who were not necessarily *kulin* by birth, but by their moral behaviour. It had two expectations, one of being loyal to one man and secondly of having an aspiration of giving birth to a new *kulin khandan*.

Careful scrutiny of the debate highlights that the patriarchy initially justified the exclusion of women from mainstream theatre but later, to retain commercial viability within the changing society, the same system justified the inclusion of women but within narrow and restricted confines. It is clear that at this stage the supporters of women's entry into theatre did not visualise women as independent and responsible persons but as women who fit in the mould of the moral values put across by reformer men, with women only in supportive roles. Natural feminine qualities of women were romanticised to pave their entry into theatre. Besides, the debate only centred around the possibility of women as actresses, to replace male actors enacting female roles. Women as playwrights, company owners and music composers were not considered. There is no mention of women's creativity or of their own inclinations.<sup>38</sup>

Since respectable women could not be taken, so women from 'loose' backgrounds were assimilated. Thus the project of a respectable domain could be fulfilled with 'loose' women. These actresses were not part of a middle class cultural enterprise but became instrumental in making theatre possible. The Bengal theatre which first took in women actresses from prostitute quarters also employed an intensive advertising campaign to make theatre a form of family entertainment. It did so by secluding special spaces for respectable women viewers and by focusing on domestic dramas. For the first time then, the two poles could be contained within the same space and a large drama unfolded beyond



the stage as the respectable female gaze was turned on to its 'erotic' other. Also for the first time, prostitutes played wife and prostitutes, as well as the dangerous middle term—'fallen' wife.

However, around the performing woman an obsessive discourse of nationhood, regional-national or jatiya identity, sexuality and public morality evolved. There was a strong reaction amongst the *bhadra samaj* when such 'loose' women were taken. It was being said that such a 'loose' class and loose morals of the actresses would corrupt the youth of Bengal. Her visible acting self provided a common locus to Brahma and other social reform movements attacking conspicuous consumption, excessive drinking and womanizing. Christian missionary enterprise and purity movements railed and rallied against all of the above 'vices' as well as stage-sanctioned 'prostitution'. However, the real problem was that public theatre was apparently erasing the boundaries of the *bhadra* and the *abhadra*. The kind of prescriptive that was being defined for women was defied by actresses as they virtually, by definition, lived and worked beyond the boundaries of the propriety.

The middle class modernity project could be fulfilled with such 'loose' women but despite their significant contribution they were considered outside the pale of society. The whole nationalist discourse has negated or erased their creative aspect. Many actresses came from families of traditional singers and dancers and were extremely creative and talented. They brought before the public gaze the complexities of some of the most 'literary' heroines of contemporary novels. They created characters who not only appealed to the public imagination but often exceeded the dramatist, the novelist and the director's conception of his own character. In fact, the position of the professional actresses itself was a creation of the new educated middle class culture, supplying a need produced by the requirements of the new public theatre modeled on European lives. To train these actresses became a remarkable educative project in itself, producing women schooled in the language and sensibilities of modernist literati. However, in the popular imagination, their acting prowess was seen as the continuum to the deception or *chhalana* and artfulness 'natural' to women of their persuasions. No matter how consummate the artists who were pre-eminent, favourites and modest – the woman actress could never supersede the fact that she lived a public life and consented to be hired for amusement by all who could command the price. For an actress and more if she was also a prostitute – all evidence of respectability was ruled out.

Continuous debates centred around the actress's 'immoral' presence

despite public theatre being a space where all issues of modernity, gender roles, caste, education and class were threshed bare. Inherent within the theatre world lay not merely an acknowledgement of the sexual difference between men and women but a 'sub-world' attributed to the sexuality of the prostitute actress. The peculiar configuration of class and gender made actresses a minority within a sub-group, both in terms of their background as well as the world of the stage. In the nation's narrative they were outside the pale of society; and therefore beyond the pale of social reform movements which were targeted primarily at middle class woman. Thus stage actresses were read as 'fallen' women and tell outside the nineteenth century projects being constructed for women.

The core of the nationalist ideology fashioned a conservative identity for women defined according to the patriarchal tenets of Hinduism. Theatrical demands for freedom from colonial rule did not necessarily translate into freedom from patriarchal expectations. Rather, the demands for freedom dramatized social positions that reinforced and reified the roles of women as good mothers and wives. Through theatre, the middle-class taught its women how they should behave, how they should walk, talk, gesticulate, dress up, and so on. Gender depiction in the play reinforced patriarchal ideology – all that is weak is feminine, all that is strong is masculine; female sexuality is dangerous because it weakens men, makes them effeminate, leads them astray and interferes with their work; female sexuality moreover, is like a volcano, forever on the verge of bursting; the virtuous woman not only keeps her own sexuality in check but she also polices others; the virtuous woman never speaks in self-interest, she always speaks in the interest of a larger cause – community and nation; the family is accorded primacy over all else; the reproductive role of women is privileged over any other social or political role they can possibly play and so on. Such identities for women boosted the self-image of Hindus and helped instill nationalist pride.

\*\*\*\*

To conclude, this article brings out how the beginning of elite 'modern' theatre is linked up with the formation of middle class and its quest for respectability. The middle class projected 'modern' theatre as 'high' culture relegating indigenous theatre forms to a 'low' status. The 'high' culture theatre internalized British bourgeois representational forms but was accompanied by a strong emphasis on a new national identity. Theatre was an important site of the nationalist hegemony of the middle

class, a site of its representation. The middle class constructed the nation in its own image. It saw itself as the sole representative of the nation, as its only legitimate voice, and the theatre emerged as an important site for contesting any challenge to its hegemonic claim. Anti-colonial dramas of the middle class were part of the story of consolidation of an elite nationalism, imbued with social and brahmanical hierarchy and patriarchy. The question of 'respectability' of the middle class assumed its sharpest form when the issues concerned women. Representation of women as public entertainers and the locus of male desire would threaten the middle class respectability project. Female performers were stigmatized as 'prostitutes'. Despite the significant artistic contribution of female performers in fulfilling the middle class respectable cultural project, all evidences of respectability for such 'loose' women was ruled out in middle class discourse. Actresses' lives were indicative of the contradictions of a new world of middle class cultural production. Thus modern theatre was implicated in the larger process of the formation of the middle class, its representation, its self-perception, and its prescriptions for its women.

#### NOTES

1. Thompson, E.P. (1968), *The Making of the English Working Class*, Penguin.
2. Crehan, Kate (2002) *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology*, Pluto Press, pp. 98-123.
3. Bannerji, Himani (1998), *The Mirror of Class-Essays on Bengali Theatre*, Papyrus, Calcutta, pp. 159-160.
4. Chatterjee, Minoti (2004), *Theatre Beyond the Threshold: Colonialism, Nationalism and the Bengali Stage, 1905-194*, Indialog, pp. 93-140.
5. Bannerji, Himani, *Mirror of Class*, pp. 163-164.
6. Chatterjee, Minoti, *Theatre Beyond the Threshold*, pp. 93-140; Bannerji, Himani, *Mirror of Class*, pp. 164-167.
7. *Ibid.*; Chatterjee, Minoti, *Theatre Beyond Threshold*, pp.100-141.
8. Bhatia, Nandi (2004), *Acts of Authority/Acts of Resistance-Theatre and Politics in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, p. 6, Oxford.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-17.
10. Borthwick, Meredith (1984), *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1849-1905*, Princeton University Press, p. 117.
11. Kenneth W. Jones (1976), *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in Nineteenth Century Punjab*, University of California Press, Berkeley, pp. 95, 99.
12. Hansen, Kathryn (1989), "The Birth of Hindi Drama in Banaras", in Freitag, Sandria B., (ed.), *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance and Environment, 1800-1980*, University of California Press, p. 86.
13. Chatterjee, Minoti, *Theatre Beyond Threshold*, p. 59.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
15. Deshpande, Sudhanva (2003), "Excluding the Petty and Grotesque: Depicting Women in Early Twentieth Century Marathi Theatre" in Ramaswamy, Vijaya, *Researching Indian Women*, p. 359, Manohar, Delhi.

16. Rege, Sharmila, 16 Sharmila Rege, "Conceptualising Popular Culture, 'Lavani' and 'Powda' in Maharashtra", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 16, 2002, p. 1043.
17. Deshpande, Sudhanva, "Excluding the Petty and Grotesque", p. 356.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Deshpande, G.P. (2000), *Modern Indian Drama: an Anthology*, Sahitya Academy, Delhi, pp. IX-X.
20. Bannerji, Himani, *Mirror of Class*, pp. 171-176; Chatterjee, Minoti, *Theatre Beyond Threshold*, pp. 93-141.
21. Deshpande, Sudhanva, "Excluding the Petty and Grotesque", pp. 356-358.
22. Mitra, Sunetra, "'Their World Turned Upside Down': The Human Factor Reconsidered Bengali Theatre and Commercialisation" in *Proceedings of Indian History Congress: 63 Session, 2002*, pp. 1024 -1025.
23. Deshpande, Sudhanva, "Excluding the Petit and Grotesque", p. 358.
24. Guha, Ranajit (1982), "Neel Darpan: The Image of a Peasant Revolt in a Liberal Mirror" in Hardiman, David, (ed.), *Peasant Resistance in India, 1858-1914*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, Bannerji, Himani, *Mirror of Class*, pp. 180-186
25. Bhatia, Nandi, *Acts of Authority*, p. 20.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-48.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.
31. Chatterjee, Minoti, *Theatre Beyond Threshold*, pp. 141-151.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid( eds.) (1989), *Recasting Women, Essays in Colonial History*, Kali for Women, New Delhi.
34. Meredith Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal*, pp. 194-197.
35. Sumanta Banerjee, "Marginalization of Women's Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Bengal", in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, (eds.), *Recasting Women*.
36. Amrit Srinivasan (1985), "Reform and Revival: The Devadasi and Her Dance", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Nov 2.
37. Kathryn Hansen (1992), *Grounds for Play, The Nautanki Theatre of North India*, Manohar, New Delhi, p. 256.
38. Neera Adarkar, (1991), " In Search of Women in History of Marathi Theatre, 1843 to 1933" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 26.

# Adolescence in Ruskin Bond's *The Room on the Roof*

Ravi Jauhari

Ruskin Bond's major novels are about the adolescent. The first novel *The Room of the Roof* is a novel by an adolescent about the adolescent. In order to better analyse his novel, it is pertinent to understand the nature and mind of the adolescent in the light of the findings of modern psychologists. The term "adolescent" has a specific meaning in psychology. It should not be confused with the word "teenager", although the periods of adolescence and teenage are almost the same. Teenage is the period between thirteen and nineteen. When a boy or girl enters the age of thirteen he or she is called a teenager and continues to be called so till the age of nineteen. The period of adolescence covers the years from thirteen to twenty and according to some psychologists up to twenty-one. However the following chart made by Luella Cole and Irma Nelson Hall is accepted by leading psychologists.<sup>1</sup>

Pre adolescence or late childhood	11-12 years (girls) 13-14 years (boys)
Early adolescence	12-14 years (girls) 15-16 years (boys)
Middle adolescence	15-17 years (girls) 17-18 years (boys)
Late adolescence	18-20 years (girls) 19-20 years (boys)

Since adolescence is primarily the stage of development, psychologists have specified the following areas:

## *1. Physical development*

It consists of growth of tissue, muscle, bone and skeleton in totality. Besides there is growth in strength and various skills and physical development.

## *2. Intellectual development*

With the enlargement of the brain there is mental growth. The adolescents begin to show their intellectual abilities and intellectual-cultural interests.

## *3. Emotional development*

Emotion is a response to some kind of stimulus. It is an experience that affects an individual's vital processes, stimulating him to greater activity than is normal. Emotional growth of an adolescent leads him to act with greater drive. His self emerges and he begins to assert his independence and thus there is the development of a personality.

## *4. Social development*

The seeds of social development are sown in the family and the primary school. But at a later stage, extracurricular activities lead the adolescent to have contact with people of all age groups. It is at this stage that boys and girls develop friendship and choose their future career.

## *5. Moral development*

Children do not take religion seriously nor are they sufficiently conscious of the feelings of others. In adolescence, young boys and girls begin to think about religion seriously, the do's and don'ts of society and ethical principles. They accept community influences, sometimes without question and sometimes with a grain of salt.

It is at this stage that adolescents think about their goals in life. According to Cole and Hall the main goals of adolescents are:

- (a) Control of emotion by reason
- (b) Social adjustment
- (c) Independent adulthood
- (d) Financial independence
- (e) Choosing a career

While pursuing his/her goals, the adolescent faces a number of problems. It is the responsibility of society to help the adolescent achieve his/her goals and be a responsible citizen of his/her country.

We shall study Bond's novel in the light of the findings of eminent psychologists and examine how far he has been able to depict the emotional, moral and social development of his main characters.

If we look at the characters of Ruskin Bond, all the important characters such as Rusty, Somi, Ranbir, Kishan, and Suri are in their

early adolescence. Bond has chosen the young boys as the main characters in the novel. The reason is obvious. A boy of seventeen could not but write about him and his comrades. The novel is autobiographical, hence true and sincere. While writing it Bond had no need to read a book on adolescent psychology. All that he wrote is largely a part of his own experience. Some of the characters have the same name they had in actual life. Rusty is Ruskin and Somi is Somi. Some critics may comment that it is not fiction; it is a life history. But we have to remember that it is a novel by a seventeen year old boy, still an apprentice.

Coming to the novel, Bond has put so much in it that we are surprised by its wealth. Let us look at the characters. They are Rusty, Ranbir, Somi, Kishen and his mother. Bond writes in his memoirs:

After Miss Kellner died there weren't many old people to talk to (not for some time anyway), because I suddenly acquired a number of young friends. There was Ranbir and his super sister Raj; there was Bhim, already making little business deals; and there were other families in the *mohalla*, such as the Lals (who became the Kapoors in *The Room on the Roof*) and the Sikh boys Haripal, Dipi, Somi and Chotu....<sup>2</sup>

The room is an actual room. Bond gives a detailed description in his journals of the room and how he lived there. He says, 'I feel like a monarch.' (p. 583)

The novel is autobiographical, not a biography. Rusty is Ruskin to a large extent but not his complete self. The imagined world of *The Room on the Roof* is built on the world of Ruskin, the adolescent and therefore we should analyse it as a novel, not a life-story. Ruskin Bond has mixed facts and fiction, as his main aim is to present the emotional life of the adolescent.<sup>3</sup>

It is the story of Rusty, a parentless Anglo-Indian boy in his teenage. His guardian, Mr. John Harrison, is a strict Victorian guardian. Typically imperialist in nature and having the pride of the white race superiority over the Indians, he does not want Rusty to mix with them. But Rusty, an adolescent that he is, wants to widen his horizon. An adolescent can never remain confined to the precincts of a bungalow; he must go beyond it and encounter the world outside. This also happens with Rusty. He goes out and meets the Indian people. Being still innocent, not coloured by the white man's prejudices, he makes other adolescents his friends. Though the first encounter is unpleasant (Somi on his bicycle collides with him while eschewing Maharani the ferocious cow) but soon develops into friendship and he is invited to take *chaat* in the bazaar. He takes it and returns home late. Later on he becomes a regular visitor.

The festival of Holi comes. Rusty's friend Ranbir invites him to play Holi when he is relishing *chaat* in the shop.

'Rusty was enjoying the *chaat*. He ate *gol-guppa* after *gol-guppa*, until his throat was almost aflame and his stomach burning itself out. He was not very concerned about Holi. He was content with the present, content to enjoy the new-found pleasures of the *chaat* shop, and said: "well, I'll see .....if my guardian doesn't come back tomorrow, I'll play Holi with you, all right?"' (p. 561)

Rusty goes to play holi with his friends. Had he known the UP style of holi, he would not have gone. The treatment he receives there is almost like ragging in a college in a civilized way. He is thoroughly soaked with coloured water and his whole body is smeared with different colours.

Gently, they rubbed dust on the boy's cheeks, and embraced him; they were like many flaming demons that Rusty could not distinguish between this gentle greeting coming so soon after the stormy bicycle pump attack, bewildered Rusty even more.

Ranbir said: Now you are one of us, come; and Rusty went with him and the others. (p. 568)

This experience of unlimited joy of playing holi changes the whole course of Rusty's life. He feels for the first time, the pleasure of independence. Up till now he had been shackled by the discipline of his guardian, Mr. Harrison.

'He was exhausted now, but he was happy. He wanted this to go for ever, this day of feverish emotion, this life in another world. ...He did not want to go home.' (p. 569)

This mingling of Rusty with the Indian boys can be interpreted in many ways. We all agree with Meena Khurana's interpretation.

'Set in 1950, *The Room on the Roof* is a coming of age novel that explores the typically adolescent concern of identity formation, alienation, rebellion against adult restrictions, personal autonomy, emerging sexuality, choosing a career and financial independence.'<sup>4</sup>

Khurana is right in saying that Rusty is in search of an identity. In support of her argument she quotes the famous psychologists Judith R. Harris and Robert M. Lie Bert:

'Adolescence is the transitional period from the dependency of childhood to the independence and responsibility of being an adult. At this point in their lives, young people struggle with two fundamental problems: to redefine their relationship with parents and other adults and to establish themselves as individuals.'<sup>5</sup>

But Harris and Lie Bert are American psychologists and their observation may not be true in the Indian context. Why does the author



choose Holi? The answer is that Holi is a festival when all barriers are broken—caste, religion, region and class. People mix freely. They all become alike when smeared with colour. There are neither white people nor black people. They are all coloured. Right from the beginning of his life Ruskin Bond loved India—her mountains, rivers, forests and the sunny climate.

Harrison's racist attitude was a great barrier for the growing boy. There are two worlds: the Civil Lines and the bazaar, the first is inhabited by the former rulers and the second by the native Indians. The bazaar is a prohibited place for the Anglo-Indians. Rusty is warned by his guardian of the consequences of mixing with the Indians, especially the people in the bazaar. But adolescents always want to break barriers. They have keen curiosity to see the unknown, experience things that are novel. Rusty, in his teens, is free from racial prejudices. He does not know why he should remain cut off from the people who inhabit the same land he himself is a part of. Holi is a festival when people forget their caste and class. Colour is thrown on everybody. Everybody is equal on this day. Rusty's playing Holi is symbolical. It breaks the racial barrier. Now he is an Indian.

This mixing with the people of the bazaar leads him to love India and Indian people. Somi, Ranbir, Kishen, Chotu, Harpal and other youngsters carve a permanent niche in his mind and heart. This Holi festival releases him from the bondage of Mr. Harrison. Rusty finds his own self. On his return he finds his guardian terribly angry. He is badly beaten for his escapade.

'Rusty stared fascinated at the deep yellow nicotine stains on the fingers of his guardian's hand. Then the wrist moved suddenly and the cane cut across the boy's face like a knife, stabbing and burning into his cheek.

Rusty cried and cowered against the wall; Rusty's guardian could feel the blood trickling across his mouth. He looked around desperately for a means of escape, but the man was in front of him, over him, and the wall was behind him.' (p. 571)

Not satisfied with inflicting physical pain, he begins to insult him by means of words. The boy listens to him silently in the beginning but soon bursts into anger. He pulls Harrison's legs. Harrison falls down. Then he strikes him in the face with a vase. The target is missed but the water and flower cover his face and he is hit. Not content with this, Rusty holds his collar and slaps his face on both sides. Harrison is injured badly.

This incident, which follows the Holi festival, is a sequel of the former. Rusty mixes with the Indian people and with their help can

break away from the dying Anglo-Indian society and live independently. The beating of Harrison gives him the confidence that he can act independently.

‘Mad with the pain in his own face, Rusty hit the man again and again, wildly and awkwardly, but with the giddy thrill of knowing he could do it; he was a child no longer, he was nearly seventeen, he was a man. He could inflict pain, that was a wonderful discovery; there was a power in his body—a devil or a god—and he gained confidence in his power; and he was a man!’ (p. 572)

Thus Rusty’s departure from Harrison’s house can be interpreted on two levels; the leaving of the emaciated Anglo- Indian society for the healthier Indian society and the departure from the stage of helplessness of a small boy to the stage of strong and energetic manhood.

Rusty’s new world is free from the oppression of the colonial world; it is a world of freedom, of untrammelled joy and trustful camaraderie. This is where adolescents can develop their faculties in the desired way. The people he meets are all simple and sympathetic. Rusty, as said earlier, is partly Bond himself. It was the love of Dehradun’s people that brought him back from England and he decided to live in India for ever and write about the people here. The sunny atmosphere gives vigour and energy to Rusty. He revives his true spirit.

Leaving his guardian’s house, Rusty moves in the street of the bazaar for a shelter. He sees a house with light. He goes upstairs where he is received well. The woman in the room considers him to be a customer. Her amorous advances trouble him and he leaves the place and sleeps in the open uncomfortably. Next day, it is Somi who takes him home. There he meets his family. After bath and meal, he discusses the future plans. Somi has a mother and two sisters. Though a Sikh by religion, he considers Rusty to be a member of his family and no one looks at him as a stranger. The plan is chalked out. Rusty will teach Kishen, the son of Mr. Kapoor, a well-off person in the area. Rusty is diffident about his ability as a teacher of English.

‘Rusty felt very sceptical about the proposal; he was not sure he could teach English or anything else to the wilful son of a rich man. But he was not in a position to pick and choose. Somi mounted his bicycle and rode off to see Mr. Kapoor to secure for Rusty the post of Professor of English. When he returned, he seemed pleased with himself, and Rusty’s heart sank with the knowledge that he had to go.’ (p. 582)

Rusty goes to Kapoor’s house. Mr. Kapoor, in his own words, “..... was a nice Big Man himself, and every one knew this; but he had

fallen from the heights; and until he gave up the bottle, was not likely to reach them again. Everyone felt sorry for his wife, including herself.”(p. 583)

He is introduced to Meena, Kapoor's wife and his pupil's mother, Rusty describes her: 'Meena, Kapoor's wife ..... was a capable person, still young, charming hostess; and in her red sari and white silk jacket, her hair plaited and scented with Jasmine, she looked beautiful.' (p. 584)

The first meeting is rather dry, mechanical and business like. Meena Kapoor introduces her son Kishen, tells him the terms and conditions of tuition and shows the room on the roof where he was to live. The room is not at all attractive. The author describes it: 'It was a small room, but this did not matter much as there was very little in it: only a string bed, a table, a shelf and a few nails in the wall. In comparison to Rusty's room in his guardian's house, it wasn't even a room: it was four walls, a door and a window.' (p. 596) But the room makes Rusty happy. When Meena says that she will change the room if he did not like it, he replies: 'But I like it. This is the room I want to live in. And do you know why, Meena? Because it isn't a real room, that's why!' (p. 596)

The room, though very ordinary, is Rusty's citadel. The first reason for liking it is Meena Kapoor. An adolescent, he, has fallen in love with her. It is very difficult for us to explain why he falls in love with an elderly lady. As a rule, he should have been in love with a girl of his own age or slightly elder. It is equally enigmatic that Meena responds to his love. Strange are the ways of love. But the second reason for his liking the room is that he has got freedom from his guardian. The room is his own and like Shelley, he survey's everything with the pride of a monarch. The room is a symbol of the adolescent's ideal world—good company of friends and love of a beautiful woman. Its symbolic meaning is revealed slowly and convincingly.

Rusty begins a new life in Kapoor's house; it is a life of fun and frolic and, later on of growing up. His task is to teach Kishen, who is full of mischief and who does not consider Rusty to be his teacher or, at least, does not have the image that most children have in their mind of a teacher. For him, Rusty is a friend.

Although Rusty is still a boy in the eyes of Somi, Kishen, Chotu and Haripal, he, in fact, has grown up physically and mentally. This growth of an adolescent can be easily seen in the relationship between Meena and Rusty. Married in her early teens, Meena's husband was twenty years older than her. In other words, when she was thirteen, her husband was thirty three, the age of her uncle, if not her father. The

future events mingled with her husband's indifference and indolence, induce her to lean towards the young English boy of sixteen or seventeen. An adolescent is hungry for everything—food, company, love, sex, adventure, play and reading. Meena's beauty attracts him strongly.

Mr. Kapoor decides to have a picnic. The summer season was approaching. The litchis were almost ready to eat and the mangoes had ripened. Kishen liked mangoes very much. In the afternoons, the rays of the sun stole through the branches and leaves of the big Banyan trees and made a pattern of light and shade on the ground and Kapoor's house walls. The birds knew and so they twittered and chirped in the morning and a lot of noise in the evening when they came home to the tree. In this lusty season, the picnic was arranged.

During the picnic, Rusty and Meena walked into the thicket. Rusty expressed his love to Meena by holding her hand tightly and kissing her as well. It was a clumsy and awkward kiss but fiercely passionate and Meena responded, tightening the embrace, returning the fervour of the kiss. They stood together in the shadows. Rusty intoxicated with beauty and sweetness, Meena with freedom and the comfort of being loved.

This puppy love does not continue for a long time. Meena is killed in a car accident. Kapoor gets an appointment at Delhi. He takes his old car. Meena accompanies him and leaves Kishen in Rusty's custody. But she never reaches Delhi. She is killed in the car accident. Meena's premature death in the car accident is a turning point in the life of Rusty and Kishen. It creates a wide chasm between the lovely past and the ugly present. The stern reality of Meena Kapoor's death changes Rusty in a moment; he becomes an adult at once, a guardian to advise Kishan, a child. The situation is aggravated by the indifferent attitude of Kishen's father; he shirks his responsibility. The first three pages of chapter sixteen aptly describe the mental condition of the adolescent and the child. Kishen wanders here and there the whole day and Rusty waits anxiously for him till the evening sets in and stars begin to shine in the sky. He sees the silhouette of Kishen and asks him where he was. Kishen tells him the truth. Rusty is more grieved.

Kishen slept. He was exhausted—he had been walking all evening, crying his heart out. Rusty laid awake his eyes wide open, brimming with tears. He did not know if the tears were for himself or for Meena or for Kishen, but they were for some one.

Next morning a tonga comes to take Kishen to his aunt as instructed by his father. As Rusty himself is without support, he cannot retain him. The tonga takes Kishen away. The separation is the cutting of the

bond between Rusty and Kishen. For adults, it is the routine of the world but for the nascent and sensitive mind of the adolescent it is the parting of the body into two. Even the presence of Kishen's aunt fails to give him any kind of solace that Kishen is now in protective hands.

Rusty decides to leave Dehradun to go to Delhi and then to London. On his way to Delhi, he stops at Hardwar to meet Kishen. He meets Mr. Kapoor who is a changed man and has married again. Through Mr. Kapoor, he comes to know that Kishen has run away and become a thief. He takes great pains to find Kishen and in the process, loses his clothes while taking bath in the Ganga. He persuades Kishen to leave this profession and takes him back to Dehradun.

The mention of Dehradun indicates that Kishen wants to leave Hardwar and give up the profession of stealing and robbing. Further, it also indicates that he wants to be in the company of Rusty. Rusty asks him what they will do at Dehra.

'Oh, we will find someone for you to give English lessons. Not one, but many. And I will start a *chaat* shop.' (p. 656)

Hearing these words of Kishen, Rusty forgets everything- England, fame and riches and asks, 'When do we go?' Kishen's reply is quicker. He says that they will leave Hardwar the next day.

The story of the novel practically ends here. The next chapter narrates their journey in the boat that takes them to the other side of the river.

The novel as we see it is simple in narration and very much oral in technique. The development of the story is in chronological order. There is little flashback and most of the characters excepting Meena Kapoor and Kishen are typecast; They remain the same throughout whether Mr. Harrison or Somi or Ranbir or Suri or Mr. Kapoor.

But behind this simplicity of plot and narration there is the complex world of the adolescent, symbolized by *The Room on the Roof*. The period of adolescence as discussed earlier is the most crucial in man's life. Ruskin Bond writes in *Scenes from a Writer's Life*:

..... these [years] are not years of great achievement, they are the formative years, and the most emotional, impressionable, vulnerable years. There are struggles, setbacks, failures, but hope and optimism have not been blighted, and the cynicism of middle age is yet far distant.<sup>6</sup>

The plot of the novel is concerned with Rusty and his friends, all between ten and sixteen. They are carefree adolescents, free from the restraints of the adult world and are on the verge of the world of experience. Rusty is a complex character. Born in India of a middle class Britisher, he loses his parents during early childhood. He is under

the guardianship of Mr. Harrison who has inherited all the colonial ideas. The author makes a contrast between Civil Lines, inhabited by the whites and the bazaar owned by the common people. The adolescent Rusty does not know the reason why he is prohibited by his guardian from going to the bazaar. For Harrison, it is not proper for a British to mix with the common Indian people. But for Rusty, the world of the Civil Lines is a kind of jail where Harrison is the jailor and he must obtain freedom from him and this he does by going to the bazaar and eating *samosa* and *golguppa* at the *chaat* shop with Harpal, Somi and Ranbir. Unable to bear the tyranny of Harrison, he leaves his house and goes to Somi for shelter and enters a new free world. This new world is symbolized by the room on the roof, an ordinary place, not comfortable, but built by Meena Kapoor, and renovated by Somi, Chotu and Kishen, a world where he is independent of his guardian's sickening influence and where he can dream of his future of becoming a writer of eminence.

His friends encourage him, without knowing the hard path of a successful writer. But this happy room cannot remain happy if its people leave it. It happens. Ranbir and Suri go away from Dehra. Meena Kapoor dies, Somi and Chotu go to Amritsar for a long period and Kishen is sent to his aunt. The room is inhabited by lonely Rusty. He decides to go to London.

But when he meets Kishen again and Kishen asks him to return to Dehradun, he forgets his previous decision of going to England. Once his people are with him, he goes back to his world of freedom—the room. Towards the end of the novel, when Rusty and Kishen have crossed the river and entered the forest, Rusty remembers the forest of the day of the picnic, when he had kissed Meena and held her hand and felt the magic of the forest and the magic of Meena. He unconsciously says, 'One day we must live in the jungle', (p. 660) to which Kishen replies with a happy laugh, 'One day. But now we walk back. We walk back to the room on the roof! It is our room, we have to go back.' (p. 660)

This is the world of the adolescent, a world of untrammelled freedom when they dream of the future and make preparations for adult life.

#### NOTES

1. Luella Cole and Irma Helen Hall (1966), *Psychology of Adolescence*, New York: Holt Dinechart & Winston Inc.
2. Ruskin Bond (1997), *Scenes from a Writer's Life*, Delhi: Penguin Books, p. 4

3. Ruskin Bond (1987), *Collected Fiction, The Room on the Roof*, New York: Penguin Books, p. 583
4. Meena G. Khurana (1975), "The Search for an Identity: Journey as Metaphor" in *The Room on The Roof in The Creative Contours of Ruskin Bond*, P.K. Singh (ed.), Delhi: Pencraft Publications. p.72.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
6. Ruskin Bond (1997), *Scenes from a Writer's Life*, Delhi: Penguin Books, p. 90.

Free Talk, Taboos and Concealed Fears:  
Existential crisis portrayed  
by Virginia Woolf in Rachel Vinrace

Gopa Bhattacharyya

The problem of 'difficulty' encountered while reading Virginia Woolf's novels arises from the alluringly simple quotidian life of placid existence that she presents in her novels. The angel in the house governed by the taboos of the well-meant patriarch may not venture beyond, because temptation comes easily, revealing the demoniac underside of the protector-patriarch. Languishing from desires that have no name, she casts the women in her books, not a shade more fair than they are, no aphrodisiac glamour, no romantic gaiety, no witty quips, only the Mrs. Brown always occupying just a corner of the world's space, hovering liked an audible murmur in the man's world of high talk and aggressive self-assertion. Virginia Woolf's quarrel with Mr Bennet, who has forever ignored Mrs. Brown, takes on a special appeal because she has been always battered by society and by the gentleman who represents the society at large. Mrs. Brown may not speak but the burden of utterance rests on Virginia Woolf the author. Virginia Woolf's life, now too well documented, is also the story of Mrs. Brown who would lay huddled in her patriarchal home. If the waoman writer was to find a voice and the Victorian mother had to be sidelined, it was even more important that the father be cast out. But liberation for Mrs. Brown is not easy; it cannot come in a day, it may not come for generations together. That is why her harpings on helpless mothers has an undertone of bitterness-they have mismanaged things beyond repair. That is why Mrs. Brown, with all her grit to withstand the glowering gentleman may not leave her corner. Portraying variously this Mrs. Brown, Virginia Woolf, in her novels tries to map out in an exquisitely sensitive way the memories, thoughts and desires that flicker throughout their lives, trying to present that elusive and fluid thought which constitutes the major portion of women's existence. The characterisation of Mrs. Brown in Woolf's later novels like Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay in *To The Light House* have their own justification for keeping to their little corner, although



there are traces of emptiness and unhappiness that sometimes tend to crush them and their constant attempts to keep delicately afloat on the undulating surface of life. Brooding deeply is always disastrous. So Septimus Smith dies and so does Rhoda in her later novel *The Waves*. Significantly, the central character in her first novel, Miss Rachel Vinrace also dies. The young Mrs. Brown (read Rachel Vinrace), under the tutelage of her well-meaning but constricting aunts and an exemplary patriarch, still unmarried, still a virgin, skimming her way through an uncharted life, purposeless and without any clear destination, finds it difficult to accept the double standards of the patriarchal society. Scholarly works on Virginia Woolf have seldom dealt with her first novel *The Voyage Out*. The character of Miss Rachel Vinrace is, however, a strong comment on the condition of young girls in the Victorian set up and the apathy of society towards the female sex.

Virginia Woolf's statement on life that can be gathered from her novels has an overpowering sense of sadness, temporality of things and death. The rhythmic pattern of waves reinforces, among many other things, the trepidation of life that constitutes human existence where every individual either fares badly or favourably according to his/ her sensitiveness to perception. Like the six petals of the red carnation that Bernard holds forth in summing up the individual strands of life, what emerges is not "stories" or a "neat design of life" but "what is startling, what is unexpected, what we cannot account for, what turns symmetry to nonsense". (1992:187) Thus Percival's death, like Rachel's, in *The Voyage Out* seems terribly unreasonable. What matters in life is the "Fight" which, for women in patriarchal society, becomes a more intensified struggle and while the likes of Katharine and Clarissa continue the struggle, a hypersensitive soul like Rhoda commits suicide and the helpless and guileless Rachel succumbs to death. The myth of a continued state of innocence that is upheld by patriarchy, restricting growth and maturity in young girls, is a deleterious situation marked by unreality. As Rachel Vinrace grows in maturity, she comes to realize more deeply women's circumscription and their place within patriarchal society.

*The Voyage Out*, has baffled critics, especially the illness and death of Rachel. Rachel's death has been described as "abrupt". As Hermione Lee says,

It does not seem convincing to treat the illness as the "outcome" of Rachel's emotional experiences as a flight from sex or from the unsatisfactoriness of love. It is not the fault of her attitude to life that she falls ill. At the level of plot and character development, the death is arbitrary.

At the more abstract level below the plot, the death feels conclusive, as being the furthest point of the voyage. Yet it has a baffling and paradoxical effect. Rachel's death allows her to achieve an ultimately remote perspective on the world. But that absolute impersonality, mysteriously and momentarily, creates a sense of unification. (Lee 1973:51)

Much of the language here is abstract. The terms "At the level of plot and character development, the death is arbitrary" are contradictory to Virginia Woolf's ideas of writing novels.<sup>2</sup> Explanations like "At the more abstract level below the plot..." and "Rachel's death allows her to achieve an ultimately remote perspective on the world" are vague and express merely Lee's uneasiness in accepting Rachel's death, while at the same time trying to find a hazy justification for Virginia Woolf's treatment of her heroine. Although one can detect a definite story-line in *The Voyage Out*, the life of the heroine is not arbitrarily manoeuvred to end abruptly in her death, but rather her death gives a sense of the inconclusiveness of life. Rachel dies but life goes on very much as usual and after the gloom and darkness at Ambroses Villa, St. John Hirst welcomes the familiar sight of the English tourists at the hotel reposing in little groups after their dinner. Expressions like "ultimately remote perspective on the world" make one wonder whether Rachel is to muse on life after her death, or is Lee suggesting that Rachel's voyage beyond life is a privileged vantage from which she can reflect on life—from another perspective that opens only after death. In which case Rachel's death is not death, but a voyage to another life! Virginia Woolf does not profess to philosophize on death, or situate Rachel on a different plane of privileged existence, or make the literal and metaphorical 'Voyage' a metaphysical one. Rachel's death causally follows from her upbringing.

It is nowhere overtly stated by the author, but as the novel progresses it becomes clear that Rachel's puerility and her withdrawn nature do not enable her to cope with some of the functions of adult life. The fact that Rachel, at the age of twenty four, is still a novice is predominantly made clear by the omniscient narrator's description of her mental state, by Rachel's innocent admissions and by her aunt Helen's reflections about the niece whom she willingly takes under her tutelage.

Rachel's induction into the society takes place firstly on board the "Euphrosyne" and later on among the English tourists at Santa Marina. Till then, she has been brought up in something short of a nunnery.

Rachel is introduced in the first chapter of *The Voyage Out* waiting in her father's ship to receive the Ambroses, and trying to do justice to her role as her "father's daughter". But Rachel actually shrinks from her role imposed by her father and tries hard to maintain a veneer of

cordiality to veil her actual discomfort. Rachel's uneasiness at the prospect of meeting strangers is the result of the unnatural circumstances of her upbringing. Helen Ambrose is quick to notice this diffidence in Rachel's behaviour:

Her face was weak rather than decided, saved from insipidity by the large enquiring eyes. Moreover, a hesitation in speaking, or rather a tendency to use the wrong words, made her seem more than normally incompetent for her years. (20)

By giving a brief sketch of Rachel's past what the omniscient narrator tries to highlight is the vast space of nothingness that has dulled the faculties of Rachel. Rachel, however, is just one among "the majority of well-to-do girls in the last part of the nineteenth century" who have been given an education that has encouraged a torpid condition of mind and body. As a result, Rachel lived in a blissful state of ignorance possessing a kind of child-like credulity in all matters of practical life, being denied even the most elementary knowledge of modern life. She was brought up by her aunts with "excessive care" firstly for her health, secondly and more importantly to guard her morals, and thirdly, because intimacy with friends would lead her to be inquisitive of the "censorship which was exercised first by her aunts, later by her father". (34) Richmond, for its air and its parks, thus suited Rachel's aunts and her father as the right place to bring up Rachel ideally. The only girl Rachel was well acquainted to or more correctly, permitted to know, was a religious zealot. Living a tightly fenced-in life, however did not generate in Rachel's mind any genuine attachment for her aunts, and she was never moved by their verbose show of affection. Not having been able to establish any degree of intimacy with her aunts, Rachel considered genuine communication among human beings impossible. Her preference for solitude was thus early based on her own understanding of the world. "To feel anything strongly was to create an abyss between oneself and others who feel strongly perhaps but differently".(36) Thus forced by circumstances and later grown into custom, she cherished loneliness. This habitual seclusion wrought upon her mind a peculiar sense of detachment. She regarded the people around her as symbols "featureless but dignified ... often as people upon the stage are beautiful." (36) This aloofness, or rather, a habit of keeping herself apart from all that went around her was her way of surviving in the world which she felt had no need of her. Reality was not something to which she was a part; it was "something superficially strange" and a mere spectacle to be seen from a distance. Maimed in thoughts as well as in words, "she accepted her lot very complacently, blazing into

indignation perhaps once a fortnight” and then subsiding again and content to pass her days in “a dreamy confusion”. (37) Rachel’s indolence, her disinterestedness in almost everything except music, the lack of any serious pursuit or tenacious thinking of any personal point of view, showed the unnaturalness of the way in which upper middle class girls were brought up. Asleep Rachel had the look of a “victim dropped from the claws bird of prey” and to Helen viewing her thus, “the sight gave rise to reflections”.(37) In short, the circumstances of her upbringing had done much damage to Rachel’s personality, making her a hapless victim of the Victorian patriarchal society whose pillars were people like Willoughby Vinrace and Richard Dalloway.

Rachel makes Helen understand, as much as she made Mrs. Dalloway understand how innocent she was in matters relating to the attraction of the opposite sexes. Very innocently and thoughtfully, as if it were some philosophy that lay unsorted before her, she asks Mrs. Dalloway: “why do people marry” (60) She determines not to marry even before she knows what marriage is and what drives people to seek partners and marry. Helen, who had at the first introduction thought her to be an “unlicked girl” (23), feels aghast at the extent of Rachel’s ignorance. Helen inwardly deplores the conditions under which Rachel has been brought up and she has to restrain herself from shooting forth a tirade against Willoughby Vinrace “who brought up his daughter so that at the age of twenty four she scarcely knew that men desired women and was terrified by a kiss.” (80-81). The very character of Rachel, the circumstances in which she grew up, and her inadequacy in dealing with the mature experiences of a grown up girl, is Virginia Woolf’s silent comment on the deplorable state of induced ignorance that was encouraged among the young girls in the nineteenth century.

The description of Richard Dalloway placed side by side with Virginia Woolf’s image of the Führer in *Three Guineas* shows the despotism of the male line that Virginia Woolf as a thinker and writer detested so much. Rachel is immensely carried away by the sophisticated matter-of-fact attitude of Richard Dalloway whose presence and talk seen like the gateway to a nobler and richer life than she had ever imagined. Wrapped in all her credulity, Rachel readily believes everything that Richard Dalloway says. What to Richard Dalloway is actually an ambitious career, “To be a leader of men. It’s a fine career. My God-what a career” (50) is presented to Rachel in the semblance of an immense sacrifice and she sympathizes with him and to her eyes he has the look of a “battered martyr”. (65) While the more sagacious Helen rounds him off as “Pompous and sentimental.”, (80)

Rachel, unable to reconcile the profundity of his person whom she reverences with the kisses that terrify her, is veritably a product of the system that brings up their daughters and wives protectively and ignorantly and prides in showing them off as their possession. Willoughby Vinrace dreams of making Rachel a perfect hostess to promote his political ambitions. Clarissa Dalloway is Richard Dalloway's ideal of a wife who never contradicts her husband but prefers to flatter his vanity. People like Richard Dalloway are Virginia Woolf's example of the patriarch who staunchly advocate ideas about women functioning as a coolant to the aggressive man. Thus, Richard Dalloway explains to Rachel:

It is impossible for human beings, constituted as they are, both to fight and to have ideals. If I have preserved mine, as I am thankful to say that in great measure I have, it is due to the fact that I have been able to come home, to my wife in the evening and to find that she has spent her day in calling music, playing with the children, domestic duties—what you will. She gives me the courage to go on. (65)

Placed besides Virginia Woolf's unscathing words in *Three Guineas*, Richard Dalloway becomes the representative image of the political man that she so strongly denigrates who, for their own benefit, have set limits to the desires and ambitions of women.

There we have in embryo the creature, Dictator as we call him when he is Italian or German, who believes that he has the right given by God, Nature, sex or race is immaterial, to dictate to other human beings how they shall live; what they shall do. Let us quote again: "Homes are the real places of the women...." Place beside it another quotation: "There are two worlds in the life of the nation, the world of men and the world of women. Nature has done well to entrust the man with the care of his family, and the nation. The women's world is her family, her husband, her children, and her home." One is written in English, the other in German. But where is the difference? Are they not both saying the same thing? Are they not both the voices of Dictators, whether they speak English or German, and are we not all agreed that the Dictator when we meet him abroad is a very dangerous as well as a very ugly animal? And he is here among us, raising his ugly head, spitting his poison, small still, curled up like a caterpillar on a leaf, but in the heart of England. (Woolf 1938: 165-166)

A Woman's entry into this man's world is vehemently discouraged and Rachel who has been brought up to abide by these standards and judgements, finds nothing to protest against or contradict when Richard Dalloway pronounces "no woman has what I may call the political instinct." (67)

It does not occur to Rachel that there is something glaringly

commonplace about people like Richard Dalloway who align the greatness of the nation with the greatness of the English men and who expect it to be chimed in tune by women like Clarissa Dalloway. Any deviation from this, like the poor suffragist, ought to be crushed, feel Richard Dalloway and Willoughby Vinrace, and Richard Dalloway opines that he would rather die than see male rights bestowed legally on the women too. The mystique of male superiority is perpetuated by the men themselves. That is why the spectacle of the Englishmen with their crosier serving the nation fills Richard Dalloway with pride and he loves to envision himself somewhere in this long procession of illustrious nation-builders. The women are to be patronized for the men's own benefit, and Rachel's modesty tempts him to kiss her. Dumbfounded by this cataclysmic end to an acquaintanceship which she had looked forward to cherishing, Rachel cannot even harbour hard feelings for this elderly man who has taken advantage of her innocence; and the reason for this is that she has not been taught to reason anything strongly or protest against such an act of cowardice which has been an outrage to her person. Instead of condemning Richard Dalloway, Rachel is besieged with an unknown terror which chills her sexually and leads her to dream an odious dream of lust, sex and bestiality.

Helen, here is Virginia Woolf's mouthpiece, voicing her criticism of the Victorian society that has reduced women to the status of a mindless being. Helen's letter to Bernard, describing Rachel is a telling example of this English hypocrisy:

If they (women) were properly educated I don't see why they shouldn't be much the same as men—as satisfactory I mean; though, of course, very different. The question is, how should one educate them! The present method seems to me abominable. This girl, though twenty-four, had never heard that men desired women, and, until I explained it, did not know how children were born. Her ignorance upon other matters as important was complete. It seems to me not merely foolish but criminal to bring people up like that. Let alone the suffering to them, it explains why people are what they are Keeping them ignorant, of course, defeats its own object, and when they begin to understand, they take it all much too seriously. (96-97)

The last line is a significant pointer towards the way Rachel will react to the experiences that she will gather on her way towards growth and maturity. The first of the many experiences that put to test, Rachel's vulnerability are the kisses that she receives from Richard Dalloway which upset her so much that she cannot treat them lightly or eliminate them from her mind. This undue importance given to a freak experience

shows her puerility, because thinking again and again cannot transmute the chilling experience into something ordinary and quotidian. Perhaps the more she thinks, the more she repulses such an experience and the more deep-seated becomes her need to withdraw herself from men. In this context, Rachel's earlier exclamation "...men are brutes! I hate men!" (82) assumes another dimension. Her ability to distance herself even while enjoying the company of Hewet "to be able to cut herself adrift from him [Hewet] and to pass away to unknown places where she had no need of him" (302) is a tactic she falls back upon to fortify herself against too much male intimacy. Rachel, brought up in total seclusion, finds communication with human beings frightful and unnerving. Rachel is formal with her father and aunts, she has been molested by Richard Dalloway, she feels incensed in the company of St. John Hirst, feels disturbed at the thought of a physical intimacy that marriage entails with Hewet, and feels safe and protected in the company of Helen. Helen who willingly takes Rachel under her charge encourages Rachel to expand herself and "be a person on your own account." (84) While her father, solicitous about her morals, had not introduced her to anything beyond Cowper's Letters, Helen introduces her to authors like Ibsen and Meredith and at other times urges her to talk. In what sounds almost like the Bloomsbury ideal of free discussion, Helen proposes for Rachel, free talk uninhibited by differences of sex, or age to educate her. "Talk was the medicine she [Helen] trusted to, talk about everything, talk that was free, unguarded, and as candid as a habit of talking to men made natural in her own case." (124) Helen's method proves to be greatly beneficial for Rachel in the sense that she outgrows her diffidence, shyness and ignorance and seems to be more confident in her bearing.

Rachel, for whom Santa Marina is the first outdoor experience of the world, is jolted by every incident that lays claim on her privacy. She does not yet have any clear cut understanding of her own needs. She finds it difficult to admit the schism between day-dreams and real life. That is why her problems pursue her within her unconscious thoughts and her dreams terrify her as real. In the dream that follows the kiss from Richard Dalloway, the terror persists even after the nightmare is over,

she felt herself pursued... All night long barbarian men harassed the ship, they came scuffling down the passage and stopped to snuffle at her door. She could not sleep again.(77)

Her immediate response to any situation producing anxiety about her self is to alienate herself from the present. Annoyed with St. John Hirst

at the dance, she immediately reacts by weaving a dream like situation around her, imagining herself to be a

Persian princess far from civilization, riding her horse, far from all this from the strife and men and women. (155)

Such mental manoeuvres are Rachel's way of escaping from facing real situations, her way of fortifying her vulnerability. They are, says Mitchell A. Leaska, "figuratively her instrument of self-preservation". Thus she can transform herself into a Persian princess, or she can swim away like a mermaid, she can lock herself in the hospitable arms of Helen, always adopting subterfuges to ward off the imminent threat of sexual intimacy with Hewet.

Rachel's illness and finally death are certainly not self-willed, although Mitchell A. Leaska interprets it so. According to Leaska,

Her [Rachel's] only recourse then, on a level far below awareness, is to protect herself; and protection in Rachel's sequestered world is synonymous with withdrawal.

But her withdrawal is extreme: for the mysterious principle of psychic alchemy dictates how the fires will burn in the crucible of her fevered mind before the transformation is complete. Thus her death is consciously unresisted, unconsciously sought; it is a self-willed death. For just as one escapes a life too threatening to tolerate through periods of unconsciousness or insanity, so too can one withdraw from life, assured of greater permanence, through death. (Leaska 1977:28)

If death could be self-willed, if death were so easy a phenomenon and occurred according to an individual's own desire, death could have been a pleasant option for most people assailed by their miseries. Rachel does not commit suicide like Rhoda in *The Waves*. She is not endowed with mystical powers, that by mere contemplation she can bring about her death. One even doubts whether death for her was a better option for that "permanence" which she could not achieve by living. Rachel's sickness, culminating in her death, is caused by her extreme naivety in matters and experiences related to adult life. Like Rhoda, Rachel is extremely sensitive about her body, but while Rhoda feels that she has been destined to carry the "weight of centuries" (Woolf 1992:79) which she cannot dislodge, Rachel's consciousness as the consciousness of a single individual isolated within herself and confused about her own demands of femininity. Rachel's inability to outgrow what Elizabeth Abel would label as the pre-oedipal stage, brings complications into her life. Hewet, whom she loves and Helen whom she unconsciously considers her possession, both become an indispensable part of her life. She fears sexuality which marriage to Hewet must entail, and she fears



losing Helen who has “mothered” her through the stages of her mental development, but basically it is the intimacy of physical relationship with men that she abhors. Her feelings are ambivalent; she likes Helen’s company but desists being ruled by her, Hewet’s friendship excites her but leaves her sexually cold, and although subconsciously she longs to be physically close to Helen outwardly she has distanced herself from her. Like Rhoda who admits that she feared embraces, the taboo on sexuality practiced for a stretch of twenty four years hangs like a dark curtain in Rachel’s mind confusing love with lust and its concomitant ugliness and filth. Her love for Hewet and the desire for his company does not instill full faith in him. The Sabrina part of Rachel’s character, inviolable and chaste, desists every attempt, even imaginary attempt at sexual union. Hewet’s reading of Comus makes her mind begin to enact the fear of virginity being violated and the terror of being pursued and desired by gross animalistic instincts common to men. Rachel, completely displacing the Sabrina of the book, ultimately precipitates her illness from which she does not recover. The omniscient narrator says.

All sights were something of an effort, but the sight of Terence was the greatest effort, because he forced her to join mind and body in the desire to remember something it troubled her when people tried to disturb her loneliness; she wished to be alone. (347)

Unable to translate the chaotic order of her mind into the discourse of a rational man, she urgently feels the need to protect herself from being “isolated alone with her body”. (330) The images that keep recurring and troubling her mind are a woman in the “cavern” playing cards and having “very cold hands”. Some time later it becomes a “tunnel under the river” and again “a tunnel under the Thames” (331) with deformed women playing cards. Gilbert and Gubar explain that Freud regarded the cave to symbolize “a female space, a womb shaped enclosure, a house of earth, secret and often sacred” (Gilbert 1979: 93). But the enclosure can also be defined as a prison within which a virgin like Rachel feels herself immured, because the images that occur in her dream are an expression of horror and ugliness and she wishes, but is unable to escape from those entrapped female figures of the cavern. The recurring images of cavern and tunnel in Rachel’s case thus carry no suggestions of home, but only a refuge as “immanence with no hope of transcendence, nature seduced and betrayed by culture, enclosure without any possibility of escape”. (Gilbert 1979: 94) Like Sabrina of Comus, Rachel seeks refuge in the subterranean regions and “while all her tormentors thought that she was dead, she was not

dead, but curled at the bottom of the sea" (341). "Her own body", the "sensations" that her body felt and the idea that her body must be protected, become the chief concern throughout the course of her illness.

Rachel's attempts to liberate her mind from the oppressive rules of the past are futile, because in mentally fighting away the ghosts in the form of taboos, she exhausts herself and becomes a victim of neurosis.

Although Helen's influence upon Rachel has been to a certain extent positive, it has also engendered unknowingly, a habit of dependence on her, so that although Rachel becomes engaged to Hewet and there is a distancing in her relationship with Helen, it is only superficially so. Helen in the first place had taken an interest in Rachel to dispel her loneliness because her husband led a sequestered life among his books. During the river expedition, Rachel's closeness to Hewet disturbs Helen and inwardly she was a prey to an uneasy mood not readily to be ascribed to any one cause. She did not like to feel herself the victim of unclassified emotions. (277)

Helen's uneasiness actually crops up for having lost her hold over Rachel. The description of a brief hallucination that Rachel undergoes during the river trip is a sharp evidence of Helen's growing jealousy of Rachel's independence. In the unpublished versions of this episode, the descriptions make the fact more obvious. Helen follows Rachel and Hewet and unable to contain her jealousy forcefully stops Rachel, and in the physical struggle that follows rendered by Virginia Woolf in the language of hallucinatory vision, Rachel succumbs before the greater strength of Helen. The language is full of erotic suggestions: "happiness swelling and breaking in one vast wave." (284) Rachel desires a platonic relationship with Hewet. She loves him immensely, feels upset by his long absences, experiences excitement in his presence, but the foreboding sense of the inevitable, if their marriage is to be consummated, chills her body. For her physical need of solace she wants Helen, as much as for companionship she seeks Hewet with the result that with the passage of time, this confusion in her mind gets aggravated. The invocation of Sabrina in *Comus* destroys her power to give a rational shape to the problems welling up in her mind, and in a way precipitates the oncoming illness. If Helen, instead of asserting her importance and dominance over Rachel, had assisted her to understand her feelings for Hewet with its accompanying commitments—the role that Mrs. Hilbery plays in Katharine's life, Rachel might have been saved. Like a normal human being she wants to be loved, but wants to hold herself inviolable, transferring her fidelity both towards Hewet and Helen, which finally tends her towards neurosis.

She does not consciously desire death, but an oblivion, that can put her out of reach of men's lust, and her deteriorating physical and mental condition causes her death.

Coupled with her conservative upbringing is the classical text of *Comus* read to her by a man whose sexuality she must not disapprove, and to her imagination already clouded with doubts, misapprehensions and vacillations, Rachel unconsciously identifies herself with the heroine of the text who is pursued by male lust, and thereafter she enacts and becomes Sabrina.

Rachel has to contend with her mental wranglings alone, and in silence. Silence, incommunicability, the ineffaceable preoccupation with chastity and purity burden her throughout her illness. She has to defy alone, the premises imbued in her from her cradle which consequently take their toll on her mental balance and make her paranoid. Rhoda, a deeply contemplative soul, communicates her anguishes repeatedly to herself, whereas Rachel is never shown to be a self-introspective being. While the exterior world appears to Rhoda in the terrifying image of leaping tigers, Rachel always withholds herself from confronting the dichotomous truth of reality which is peopled with elements like pleasure-pain, good-bad, freedom-interdependence, spirituality-physicality, love-lust and the divine-sordid. Rachel does not even own to herself her own vulnerability. Rhoda, extremely sensitive about her body, knows her vulnerability. She feels "pierced", "exposed", "whipped", "ridiculed" and "terrorized" by the spectre of daily existence, always invoking nature to aid her in hiding herself. "What face can I summon to lay cool upon this heat?" (Woolf 1992: 79) might have been uttered by Rachel too, but neither the face of Helen nor Hewet, nor the nurse can provide her with a strategy that can help her to cope with the demands of a social life. Thus burdened with the insuperable and undefined problematics of life, Rachel gradually sinks towards death.

What would have approximated to "and lived happily ever after" kind of marital life for Hewet and Rachel is rudely devastated by Rachel's death. One wonders whether Rachel's death might have been averted if she were in England instead of Santa Marina. But the truth is that in England, at Richmond, Rachel's voyage towards maturity would never have taken place. Just like Clarissa Dalloway's sister Sylvia who met her death at her father's hands, Rachel's life would have been completely suffocated by her father. Like Justin Parry who was never good towards Clarissa's suitors, Rachel's father would have absolutely disallowed her induction into men's society. Unlike Katharine, whose mother steers her away from her father's wrath, (Woolf 2002: 481-

482) Rachel would either have been silenced like Sylvia by an over possessive father; or silenced to play the role of a Tory hostess, Willoughby Vinrace would have only prolonged her death. Rather than being silenced in life like Mrs. Ramsay and Clarissa Dalloway, Rachel's confrontations with her experiences silence her in death.

## REFERENCES

- Abel, Elizabeth (1989), *Virginia Woolf and the Fiction of Psychoanalysis*, Chicago: The Chicago University press.
- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar (1979), *The Madwoman in the Attic*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Leaska, Mitchell A. (1977), *The Novels of Virginia Woolf: From Beginning to End*, London: Widenfield and Nicolsen.
- Lee, Hermione (1973), *The Novels of Virginia Woolf*, London: Methuen and Co. Ltd.
- Woolf, Virginia (1938), *Three Guineas*, London: The Hogarth Press.
- Woolf, Virginia (1948), *The Voyage Out*, USA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Woolf, Virginia, "Mr. Bennet and Mrs Brown", *The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays* (1981), London : The Hogarth Press.
- Woolf, Virginia (1992) *The Waves*, London: Penguin Book.
- Woolf, Virginia (2002) *Night and Day*, London: Vintage.

## NOTES

1. All references to Mrs. Brown are made from Virginia Woolf's famous essay "Mr. Bennet and Mrs Brown" published in *The Captain's Death Bed and other Essays* (1981), London: The Hogarth Press.
2. Woolf, Virginia. "Modern Fiction", *The Virginia Woolf Reader* (1984), Ed. Mitchell A. Leaska. USA: A Harvest / HBJ Book.
3. Virginia Woolf's first novel *The Voyage Out* was published in 1915. However all the references made to this novel here are taken from the 1948 edition published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, USA. Since references to this novel are frequently made in the text, only the page number is cited within parenthesis in the text itself.

# Education and Empowerment of Women: Some Critical Issues

Bhawana Jharta

This article focuses on the role of education in the empowerment of women. After a brief note on the conceptualization of women empowerment, some critical issues involved in empowering women socially, economically and politically as a consequence of their attaining education have been highlighted. Subsequently, an attempt has also been made to analyse the status of women's education in India and the hindrances faced by them on the path of education. Lastly, as a part of concluding remarks, some suggestions have been put forth to improve the educational status of women in order to empower them.

## *The Concept of Women Empowerment*

There have been many shifts in policy approaches in the last about fifty years from the concept of 'welfare' to 'development' and now to 'empowerment'. The term 'empowerment' has become very popular and fashionable now-a-days not only in social sciences but in the contemporary political vocabulary. With the onset of globalization, 'empowerment' is now being increasingly applied to the economically poor nations and the weaker and subaltern sections of the society. During the past two decades, the notion of 'empowerment', especially of women, poor and marginalized groups like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Minorities, etc., has significantly affected the paradigm of development. Empowerment is about radical social transformation. It is used for ensuring social transformation and economic development of the society. It is both a means to an end and an end in itself.

The term 'empowerment' is used for giving power to certain underprivileged and marginalized sections of the society like the poor, women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, etc. It can be interpreted as empowering the weaker sections of the society to take independent,

collective and voluntary action in order to enhance their living standard and social status. Empowerment can be defined as the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives, control relating to both resources and ideology (Mukerjee, 2003). Empowerment is also conceived as a process whereby people acquire more influence over the factors that shape their lives. It tends to be applied to disadvantaged groups of people, and is usually linked to vision of more equal living conditions in the society (Dale, 2000).

Empowerment is a process which strengthens the competence of people in general and the oppressed sections in particular. The strengthening of capacities is the main objective of the development process, and it can be achieved through empowerment of the alienated sections to enable them to help themselves and to manage their own affairs in society. The betterment of these sections can be expected only by their acquiring competence and creating adequate capacities to enable them to participate actively in the socio-economic and political affairs of the state. The underprivileged groups like women, dalits, tribals, peasants and labourers have been engaged in the struggle for power and these groups can be empowered by ensuring their participation in the development process (Malik, 2005).

Indeed, the meaning of empowerment is comprehensive but when we talk about 'empowerment of women' we are specific to the power given to women in different spheres of their lives like social, economic and political. Empowerment of women as a concept was introduced at the International Women's Conference at Nairobi in 1985. It was defined there as a redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women. An important means of women's empowerment is economic independence through information, knowledge and necessary skills. If a woman is economically a versatile parasite, she can never claim an equal status with men. Women's awareness about development is basic to achieving this economic empowerment. Empowerment of women, which is based on equality between the sexes, is a long drawn, conscious and continuous process—comprising enhancement of skills, capacity building, gaining self-confidence and meaningful participation in the decision-making process (Srivastva, 2005).

It is in the interest of the entire community to empower women. Jawaharlal Nehru once rightly said, 'To awaken the people, it is the woman, who must be awakened, once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves.' In its simplest form, empowerment of women means reorganization of power in favour of women. It is the manifestation of redistribution of power that challenges

patriarchal ideology and the male dominance. It is a transformation of the structures or institutions that reinforces and perpetuates gender discrimination. Women empowerment means empowering women socially, economically and politically so that they can break away from male domination and claim equality with them (Avasthi and Srivastva, 2001).

Empowerment of women is construed as providing them with a sufficient degree of control, to give them the decision-making power, and enable them to raise the level of consciousness of their class and enhance their gender status and rightful entitlements. This can be done by securing greater success to, and command over resources, access to knowledge as well as ideological shifts that bring about changes in how women perceive themselves and how they are perceived in relation to the community. These, in turn, can be felt in terms of disposal of family incomes, community priorities and decision-making, overcoming the fear of employers, police officials, male authority, etc., and other manifestations like sharing of household chores by both men and women, perceptions regarding daughters, age of marriage, and greater assertiveness in terms of dealing with violence at home or in asserting right of access to public places like temples, village wells, meetings, etc. (Narasimhan, 1999).

To gain access to societal resources such as education, employment, political power and household resources like income, property, health, nutrition and decision-making are considered important pathways for 'empowerment of women'. Within the scope of these issues, education at all levels has been observed to be an important instrument for the upliftment and empowerment of women.

### *Education and Empowerment of Women*

Education is regarded as a process of empowerment through the imparting of knowledge, skills and values to individuals. Commensurate with the worldwide emerging demand for empowering women, education of women has become very important and pertinent. Indeed, women's education is an antecedent to women's empowerment, which is the recent buzzword around the globe. The movements for improving women's status all over the world have always emphasized education as the most significant instrument for changing women's subjugated position in the society. The different social exploitation of and humiliation of women over several hundreds of years has devastated the women race with powerlessness, voicelessness and ill treatments. The only remedy to overcome this malpractice is to make them literate by

providing them education at any cost through both formal and informal ways, so as to achieve a balanced socio-economic development of the society. No society can progress and develop unless and until the women are brought to the forefront of the society through proper education, training and social as well as economic rehabilitation. Ignoring women's education leads to gender inequality, which in turn severely affects the socio-economic and political growth process of a nation and ushers in social stratification causing serious damage and destruction to women and jeopardizing their empowerment (Sarkar, 2005).

Women's education in itself is an important indicator of their empowerment. It is a milestone for women's empowerment because it enables them to respond to challenges, to confront their traditional roles and to change their lives. Education has an impact on all aspects of women's life. The improvements in women's education helps in raising their socio-economic and political status in the society.

#### *Education and Social Empowerment of Women*

Women's education is the most powerful instrument for their social empowerment. Greater literacy and educational achievements of women can increase their strength to resist oppression, to protest against gender-based inequality, and to get a fairer deal in society. It is the only way to make their lives happier and healthier and to ameliorate the miseries in their lives. Education makes them aware of their rights and privileges in society, and is regarded as one of the means that enables women to assert their rights and achieve emancipation. It also contributes towards raising their consciousness and self-confidence. Education helps women to foster a value system which is conducive in raising their status in the society.

There is no denying the fact that education reduces inequalities between the sexes and uplifts the subjugated position of women in society. It helps in releasing them from the clutches of tradition and broadens their horizon of information and awareness about the outside world. It enables them to think rationally so that their actions are not governed by any stereotypical norms. Education breaks the chains of role-stereotype as it helps in changing social norms, values and standards, thus enabling women to come out of their secluded position and participate in the activities of the wider world. Education contributes in large measures not only to the elimination of the idea that women are inferior but also to the elimination of the inferiority of their actual status. It enables women to develop fully their individual, intellectual and moral qualities.



The educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within the family and across generations. It is rightly said that 'if you educate a man, you educate an individual but if you educate a woman, you educate the whole family'. If left in ignorance, women will hamper the progress that needs to be made in hygiene, dietary habits, nutrition, child care, health, general well-being, environmental protection and so on. Women's education also has a positive effect on the education of children, especially of girl children. The more educated the mother, the easier it will be for her children to get higher education.

Educated women have more control over demographic conditions. The findings of various demographic studies reveal that higher levels of women's education are strongly associated with their higher age at marriage, lower fertility, lower infant and mother mortality rates, more use of family planning methods, and higher women's life expectancy. Educated women are more likely to marry late, to postpone the first pregnancy, to keep more gap between births and to have fewer children in total (UNICEF, 1994). On the other hand, illiterate women often tend to have more children than they wish, thereby exerting mounting pressures on themselves, their families and above all the society. Further, women's education enables a better use of family planning methods and that results in a fall in birth rate. While this relationship is not always constant, the results of the study carried out by the Demographic Health Survey (DHS) in 1990 in 28 countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Arab States noted that the tendency for smaller families increased with the educational level of women. Family Planning methods are more widely used in countries like Botswana, Kenya and Zimbabwe, where about 70 per cent women have some level of education. This may be due to the fact that educated women generally have more awareness of family planning methods and are more likely to discuss and decide with their partners regarding the number of children they should have and when. They have higher potentialities to save and protect their children with special emphasis on the girl children who are the usual victims of social evils like gender bias, ill treatments, sheer manipulation, etc., beyond their limits of tolerance (Sarkar, 2005).

Education also plays a crucial role in child care and survival especially in relation to infant mortality rate (IMR). Mothers who have not received any education are more likely to lose children under five years of age than mothers with some education. Researches have shown that in India, the IMR of babies whose mothers have received primary education is half that of the children whose mothers are illiterate. As women's level of education rises, the number of malnourished children

declines. Further, pre-natal care and medical treatment at child birth increases with the mothers' level of education (Demographic Health Survey, 1990).

The general fertility rate (GFR) and total fertility rate (TFR) of women in India has been declining over the years. The GFR which was 140.9 in 1981 has declined to 103.2 in 1999. Similarly, the TFR which was 4.5 children in 1981, has come down to 3.2 in 1999 and to 2.9 in 2005. The sex ratio has also increased from 927 in 1991 to 933 in 2001. The infant mortality rate has come down from 80 in 1991 to 66 in 2001 and to 58 in 2005. The female infant mortality rate has also decreased from 80 in 1991 to 68 in 2001. The maternal mortality rate has come down from 437 in 1992-93 to 301 in 2001-03. The female mean age at effective marriage as per 1999 estimate is 19.6 years. The life expectancy at birth (2001-2006) in case of female is 66.91 years which is higher than that of the males of 63.87 years. These demographic statistics are indicative of the fact that with the spread of education among women, their health conditions and status has also improved to a great extent in India (*Family Welfare Programme, Year Book, 2002-03* and *Economic Survey, 2006-07*).

Besides this, education also helps women fight against various types of prejudices, social evils and oppressive practices in the society. Educated women try to propagates against social evils like female-foeticide and infanticide, child-marriage, prohibition of widow-remarriage, dowry and purdah system, etc., which hinder the progress of the society in general and women in particular. Education also makes women courageous, to enable them to fight against the atrocities committed against them and try to avail of their civil and legal rights.

As part of an individual's personal development, education is a right to which women should have access. Acquiring it enables women to increase their self-confidence, improve their self-esteem, become aware of their civil rights, improve their income-earning capabilities and play an active role in both family and community decision-making process. Education also plays an important role in self-empowerment of women, a process in which women gain control over their own lives by knowing and claiming their rights at all levels of the society, i.e., at the 'international', 'national' and 'household' levels. Self-empowerment means that women gain autonomy, are able to set their own agendas, and are fully involved in socio-economic and political decision-making processes (Agrawal and Aggarwal, 1996).

*Education and Economic Empowerment of Women*

Women will never become equal with men and they will not be able to get their rights and opportunities unless they are economically emancipated. For the economic empowerment of women, education plays a vital role. Today, a woman is an embodiment of the harmonious combination of teacher, wife, mother, home-maker, co-bread winner and administrator. No wonder the saying goes that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Whenever, the education of women was neglected, they lost their economic independence and consequently their status. There can be no upliftment of women without the spread of women's education. Education is highly conclusive towards achieving economic independence and self-sufficiency of women. It is the key to ensure women's equal participation in every sphere of the development process. It creates choices and opportunities, leading to their empowerment. It is perhaps the single most important means for women to improve their endowments, build capabilities, overcome socio-cultural barriers, and to live a decent life while raising their earnings through an improved base of knowledge, skills and abilities. Women's education, especially in its professional and skilled form, is considered crucial not only for its emancipatory value but for the development of the society as a whole.

Women's participation in the labour force in the formal sector is directly linked to their educational levels. The increase in educational level leads to increase in women's participation in the labour force. The female work participation rate in India has increased from 22.3 per cent in 1991 to 25.6 per cent in 2001. This may be due to the increase in their literacy rate which has also increased from 39.29 per cent in 1991 to 54.16 per cent in 2001. Many studies have shown a close relationship between the level of education and productivity increase in the modern sector of the economy. Education increases the productivity of a woman, as educated women are more likely to work in wage employment and earn higher wages. A Woman's increased access to income opportunities is beneficial to herself, to the children, family and community at large. Education also increases women's productivity through self-employment in the informal sector. The trend towards an increase in the number of self-employed women, or of those who work on a contract basis, opens up several possibilities, particularly for those women who are their families' only means of economic support. Even in the agricultural sector, the increased productivity is linked to the educational level of rural women.

In the contemporary society of today, the social roles of women and men are changing. The gradual increase in the number of female heads of households, due to the rising number of men leaving home in

search of better job opportunities, gives women the responsibility of supporting the family, including taking over agricultural production in rural areas, or by entering the informal or formal labour force. Education is seen as a tool that will help women to carry out such tasks better (Agrawal and Aggarwal, 1996).

A working woman develops independence, assertiveness and self-assurance which are generally rare among a non-working woman. She holds herself in higher esteem than an equally gifted non-working woman. It also affects the power structure in the family. When the wife works, she presumably increases her ability to sanction or control because of the financial contribution she makes to the family. Hence, the male prerogative of decision-making in the family is gradually giving way to increased participation of women (Rao, 2000).

### *Education and Political Empowerment of Women*

Although most of the modern democratic constitutions of the world, including India have established the equality of men and women in matters of political rights, yet in actual practice women's participation in active politics is not very encouraging. The general experience in most of the countries of the world is that not many of them come to the forefront. They largely remain inactive and indifferent towards politics due to various socio-cultural, economic and political constraints. To be 'uneducated' and to be a 'woman' in itself is an important cause of less political participation of women and when these are united their effect is doubled.

Education is most significantly related to the political empowerment of women. It has a direct and positive relationship with political participation of women. Illiteracy hinders them from taking part in active politics. Uneducated and less educated women are generally passive citizens. Their political activities are mainly confined to voting only. Many active women participants in the political arena are better educated than their men counterparts.

Pierce, et al. (1990) point out that education is associated with higher levels of political activity and feelings of political efficacy. Nie and Verba (1975) are also of the view that more educated individuals are more likely to be interested in politics, more likely to have a sense of political efficacy, and more likely to have the necessary monetary and other resources that allow them to be active politically.

McGlen (1980) is of the view that gender differences in political participation depend on the level of education. The most likely explanation for the least educated citizens is a cultural one (sex-role

differences), while for more educated citizens, the cultural constraints explanation does not seem to be operative. Polsby, et al. (1963) point out that as a woman raises her educational level, she diminishes the political differentials between the sexes. Thus, the enhancement of women's education is accepted as the most promising agent of change in women's access to political power.

As such, education is considered a very significant factor in bringing about a favourable change in the political status of women. Educated women are said to be more aware about women's rights and duties in the political mainstream of the nation. Education helps women to understand the complexities of democratic politics and guides them to make the proper use of their voting and other political rights. As educated women have greater capacity to use the mass media, therefore they are likely to be more aware of politics and have right knowledge of political matters which help them evaluate electoral choices and use the suffrage rightly.

Education greatly broadens the political vision and perception of women. It provides them with secular orientations in their voting considerations. Educated women are more likely to give importance to the achievement-oriented factors such as party affiliation and individual merits of the candidate while casting their votes whereas they tend to give less importance to ascriptive-oriented factors like region, caste, religion and sex of the candidate.

Education is positively related to active political participation of women. Better educated women take more part in different modes of political participation like campaigning activities, contesting elections and unconventional political activities such as strikes, protests, political demonstrations, etc., and more of them also have political party membership and affiliation. Further, educated women possess higher political knowledge and awareness and discuss politics more frequently than the uneducated ones. Highly educated women feel politically more efficacious as compared to the less educated or the uneducated ones. They do not find 'being a woman' a serious handicap in solving their problems or in taking an active part in politics. They feel that they can affect the decision-making process at all levels. Education makes women conscious about their political rights; raises their self-confidence in dealing with political problems and offering solutions; makes them familiar with the formal structure of political systems, widens the horizons of their political information and awareness to facilitate their understanding of political developments; and it also enables them to discuss broad questions pertaining to social and political aspects (Jharta, 1996).

With the spread of education among women, a change has taken place in their attitudes and perception of their role. They feel that their role in society is not confined to only bearing and rearing children or to family responsibilities. Now, they no longer accept politics as the exclusive sphere of men. They feel that women should participate in politics equally with men. However, there are women who still consider the home as their primary sphere and give politics secondary importance. Most women do not want to adopt politics as a career. At the same time, they do not seem to be satisfied with the present representation of women in panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) and municipalities and especially in the state legislative assemblies and parliament, and want more representation of women in various decision-making bodies (Ibid).

Women constitute about half of the Indian population and over the years their participation by way of voting has increased and is not too low in comparison to men. However, their participation and representation in law-making and law-implementing bodies is not very satisfactory. This is evident from the fact that women's representation in the parliament and state legislative assemblies has not gone beyond 8 and 10 per cent, respectively. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments have provided 33 per cent reservation for women in PRIs and municipalities. It is hoped that in the future, with the spread of education among women and enhancement in their educational status, their participation in politics and representation in decision making bodies will increase.

Thus, in order to reduce the gap between male and female political participation, the education level of women needs to be enhanced. The lower the level of women's education, the greater will be the difference between male and female participation in politics. In order to increase women's participation in politics and to empower them politically, they should be imparted proper education, especially political education in order to make them conscious about their political rights. This will enable them to raise their self-confidence in taking part in politics and make them realize that in dealing with various political problems, they are in no way less competent than men.

#### *Status of Women Education in India*

During the past two decades approximately, India has witnessed a positive transformation in women's empowerment. Although India still has to go a long way in attaining gender equality and gender justice, yet no one can deny this fact that its efforts towards redressing gender

inequality are more pronounced than in many other countries of the world. As education has a significant bearing on every sphere of human activity, the extent of success in promoting education and reducing gender differences should be taken as an indicator of women empowerment. In fact, Indian society has a history of denying opportunities for women to seek knowledge. This systematic denial of women's access to education has kept women in a state of perpetual ignorance and prevented them from seeking or utilizing opportunities for empowerment. For women in India, the past has been a gloomy period of ignorance and illiteracy, the present is an era of facing challenges and seeking equal opportunities, and in the future it is hoped that they will enter into the highest echelons of higher education (Janaki, 2006).

In pre-British India, women were not given education except for a few exceptions because education was linked to socio-religious institutions, reinforcing the patriarchal social order. During the British period, education became a tool of colonial power which permitted only a small section of society to have access to education. The Britishers did not consider it necessary to educate the women, perhaps because women clerks or officers were not required for administrative purposes. The nineteenth century social reformers raised their voice for women's emancipation. They saw the education of women as an instrument to improve their efficiency to perform their traditional roles. With the dawn of the twentieth century, some progress was observed in the field of women's education. Although the formal education of women made a beginning during the British period, the pace of educational development of women picked up momentum only after independence. Concerted efforts were made only after independence to advance the education of girls and women.

Since independence, our leaders, planners and policy makers have realized the importance of women's education as a tool for bringing about social equality and transformation. Education of women has been given top priority in order to remove women's illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access to and retention in the educational institutions, especially in the institutions of elementary education. The Government of India has appointed various Committees and Commissions besides the education policies and programmes to facilitate and promote education among women. Provisions are made in the Constitution of India (Article 45, and 86th Constitutional Amendment Act) for free and compulsory universal elementary education for all children (both boys and girls) until they complete the age of fourteen years. In our various Five Year Plans also, top priority has been given to women's

education by the government so as to enhance their educational status.

The *Radhakrishnan Commission Report* (1950) and *Kothari Commission Report* (1966) have emphasized that opportunities should be given to women to obtain education, and the education of women is of even greater importance than that of men. The *National Policy on Education* (NPE), 1986, viewed education as a premier instrument for promoting equality of status and opportunity between men and women. It regarded education as an agent of basic change in the status of women. It stated that the national education system would play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It would foster the development of new values, through redesigned curricula, textbooks, the training and orientation of teachers, decision-makers and administrators and the active involvement of educational institutions. It also stated that women's studies would be promoted as a part of various courses and educational institutions would be encouraged to take up active programmes to further women's development.

The Programme of Action of National Policy on Education, 1992 entitled its first chapter as 'Education for Women's Equality'. It is a vital component of the overall strategy of securing equity and social justice in education. According to it, education can be an effective tool for women's empowerment. Further, on the recommendations of *National Perspective Plan for Women* (1988-2000 AD), a National Policy for the empowerment of women has been announced on March 20, 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about advancement, development and empowerment of women through a process of change in societal attitudes towards women, elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and active participation of women in all spheres of life, which will empower women both socially and economically.

The Government of India has also started various schemes and programmes to promote and accelerate women's education in India both at the central and state levels. To encourage elementary education among girls, several incentive schemes have been adopted by the government. These are: Mahila Samakhya, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid-Day Meal Scheme, District Primary Education Programme, National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary level, etc. Besides these, the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), under the aegis of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, has also introduced various other schemes for extending and enlarging the scope of education among the women and girl children, such as condensed courses for Education and Vocational Training, Distance Education Programme for Women etc. In addition,



under a centrally sponsored scheme, efforts have been made to arrest the school dropout rates and to improve enrolment and retention rates as far as possible with special emphasis on the girl students belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, Minorities and other socially disadvantaged groups, who are the usual victims, through providing hostel facilities and other incentives like scholarships, educational aids and other related support (Sarkar, 2005).

Apart from these schemes and programmes, education is made free for all girls upto the higher secondary stage in most of the states and union territories and many states have even made girl's education free upto the University level. Conscious efforts are being made to improve the content and make the process of education free from gender bias and sex stereotyping, and make the curriculum at all levels of education gender sensitive and gender friendly. Further, efforts are also being made by the government to encourage the participation of girls in vocational and technical programmes. A new scheme 'Technology for Women' has been introduced in the universities during 1998-99 for providing financial assistance for the introduction of undergraduate courses in Engineering and Technology. The Women's Studies programme in the universities and colleges is a major plan activity of the University Grants Commission (UGC) since 1987. Following the policy imperatives delineated in the National Policy of Education, 1986, the Women's Studies Centres were started in the Universities and over the years many universities and colleges have constituted Women's Studies Centres/Cells which have helped gear the higher education system to plan a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women (Srivastava, 2005).

The comprehensive education policies and various incentive schemes and programmes undertaken by the Government of India have indeed given a fillip to women's education. In the post-independence era, women literacy rate in India has shown a substantial increase. As per 2001 census, women literacy has gone up from just 8.86 per cent in 1951 to 54.16 in 2001. During the decade 1991-2001, the country witnessed a relatively faster growth in female literacy (14.87 per cent) than male literacy (11.72 per cent). The gender gap in literacy has also been reduced from 24.84 per cent in 1991 to 21.69 per cent in 2001. The enrolment of girls at all stages of education has improved appreciably over the years in the country. The girl's enrolment vis-a-vis total enrolment at elementary level (I-VIII) has increased from 17.7 per cent in 1950-51 to 73.6 per cent in 2001-02 (*Economic Survey*, 2003-04). Women's enrolment to the total enrolment in higher education has registered almost a fourfold increase during the period

1950-51 (10.03 per cent) to 2002-03 (40.05 per cent) (*UGC Annual Report*, 2002-03). A substantial increase in the enrolment of girls in educational institutions at all levels indicates improvement in girl's education which is very significant for their empowerment.

However, even after sixty years of independence, about half of the women population is illiterate in India and a large gender gap in literacy still persists. The gap between male and female literacy has increased from 18.30 per cent in 1951 to 21.70 per cent in 2001, which, in an ideal situation, should have been reduced. There is also a wide variation from one state to another regarding the access of women's education in India. States like Kerala (87.7 per cent), Mizoram (86.7 per cent) and Union Territories like Lakshadweep (80.5 per cent) have a better female literacy rate in comparison to states like Bihar (33.1 per cent), Jharkhand (38.9 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (42.2 Per cent) and Rajasthan (43.9 per cent) which have low female literacy rate. There is also a wide rural-urban differentiation in female literacy. The female literacy in urban areas is 72.99 per cent whereas it is only 46.58 per cent in rural areas and thus in rural-urban female literacy, there is a gap of 26.41 per cent. The gap between male and female literacy in rural areas is 24.60 per cent whereas in urban areas, it is only 13.43 per cent. Thus, special attention is needed to reduce this gender gap in literacy in rural and urban areas (*Census of India*, 2001).

Despite the increase in enrolment, we find that the female enrolment in educational institutions is low as compared to males and the drop-out rate of girls is much higher than that of the boys at different levels of education which is a major problem in India. According to an estimate, only about 32 per cent of girls entering the primary stage reach the end of schooling. High drop-out rates among girls is embedded in the various socio-cultural and economic factors.

In higher education too, women lag far behind men. A large difference between male and female enrolment is found. In 2002-03, women's enrolment per hundred men in higher education was 67. A faculty-wise distribution of girls' enrollment in higher education in 2002-03 reveals that about 88 per cent of the total enrolment of girls was in arts, science and commerce faculties while the remaining 12 per cent was in the professional courses like engineering/technology, medicine, education, agriculture, veterinary-science, law, etc. (*UGC Annual Report*, 2002-03)

Thus, despite the incorporation of a number of progressive policies, programmes and the concerted efforts of the Centre and state governments to improve the educational status of women, the achievement in this regard is not very satisfactory. Women education

in India is constrained by various socio-cultural, economic and political factors and the socio-economic conditions of the people, their attitudes, norms, values and value-orientations. Indeed, the entire gamut of socio-economic system influences the education of women. The prevailing cultural norms of gender behaviour and the perceived domestic and reproductive roles of women tend to adversely affect the education of girls.

The cultural prejudices, government apathy, lack of political and community will, poverty, illiteracy, the negative family and societal attitudes towards the education of girls, cost of education, early marriage, poor health and nutrition are some of the factors which deprive women of their right to education. The other factors which hinder women's access to education include the need for girls to work in order to help in augmenting the family income; the requirement for older girls to stay at home to take up domestic responsibilities and take care of siblings when mothers are away at work; lack of adequate facilities like school buildings, separate schools for girls, women teachers and women's hostels; non-availability of educational institutions in the area; considerable distance of educational institutions from the home; lack of adequate transport facilities; irrelevance of the content and curriculum of education and so on.

Many parents also believe that it is not worthwhile to invest in girls' education. Instead, they prefer to invest time and money to educate their sons, who will provide support to them in their old age. The parents of middle and lower classes think it wise to save money for their daughter's dowry rather than for their education. Most of them consider it an unnecessary expense as the girl has to go to some other family. Furthermore the education system has become so expensive that poor parents cannot afford it. In a family, the boy gets the first chance to get educated as he may become an earning member of the family. In this way, women have to face many problems and obstacles in order to get education.

### *Concluding Remarks*

India is poised to become a super power and a developed country of the world by 2020. This can become a reality only when the women of this nation become an empowered lot. It is imperative, therefore, to design strategic policies and programmes for promoting women's education which is a prerequisite for women's equality and empowerment and for their well being. Women's education is necessary in order to improve their status in society, to increase awareness of

their rights and their self-confidence, to enhance their aspirations, to question gender stereotypes and relations of inequality that limit their individual development, and lastly, to support everything that can help improve the quality of their lives, including participation in and equal access to the process of socio-economic development.

In view of the various socio-cultural and economic handicaps that have operated against the education of women, there is an urgent need to adopt a set of objectives specific to women's education. Some of the objectives to be achieved with regard to women's education are: elimination of illiteracy, universalization of elementary and secondary education, minimization of the drop-out rate in the case of girl students, reduction in gender gap, state-wise and urban-rural wise variations in female literacy, substantial vocationalization and diversification of secondary education to enhance economic opportunities for women, improvement in the quality of education in terms of the values it promotes and inculcates, the provision of access to professional and job-oriented courses for women, and providing non-formal and part-time courses to women to enable them to acquire knowledge and skills for their socio-cultural and economic empowerment. All graduate courses should include components for education for self-reliance, assertiveness, personal and social development, productive capacity and political understanding. Mere quantitative expansion of education among girls, without concern for the quality and type of courses offered will not lead to the achievement of the goal of empowerment or raise the status of women.

Adult, non-formal and formal education programmes for women would be helpful in reducing the gender gap in literacy. The Governments, NGOs, Self Help Groups, etc., should work on various gender issues so as to enhance the status of women and empower them, and these organizations need to be associated with an effective effort to initiate an attitudinal change in the parents of girl children in order to let their girls continue with their studies upto the higher levels. Girls should also be encouraged to continue upto higher levels of education and join vocational/technical and professional courses, so as to ensure employment opportunities for themselves. Women should be given vocational training so that they do not remain in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs.

Besides these steps, efforts should also be made to remove the inherent prejudices working against the education of women. The prejudices and biases against the education of girl children and women are so deep-rooted and complex that it is difficult for any government to overcome them unless the people work hand in hand. We need to

sensitise the people about the benefits of women education and try to change the prevailing social stereo-types, which are adverse to the development of women. The goals of universalizing women's education can be achieved by a combination of policy alternatives and interventions at the family, community, society, state and national levels.

The issue of women's empowerment is to be looked at a holistic perspective. The programmes for women's equality and empowerment, through acceleration of educational advancement, should be carried out with greater vigour and sincerity and should be matched by strong administrative and financial support. As this problem is largely confined to economically, socially and educationally backward communities and regions of the country, development of necessary infrastructure for learning, and undertaking economic measures to alleviate the incidence of poverty, would be conducive to promotion of literacy and education among women. Without a strong policy intervention to simultaneously attack poverty and illiteracy there cannot be much improvement in the socio-economic status of women. The nation must, therefore, develop an integrated package of a literacy and socio-economic development programme for women (Rao, 2000).

Gender sensitization is required at all levels. There is a need to promote societal awareness for gender issues, especially among planners, policy-makers, public representatives and the people at large. Women themselves should also fight for their own rights. They should not confine themselves to the four walls of their houses but should come out of their home bound commitments and traditional role assignments. Further, there has to be an attitudinal change in the mind set of the people towards women. Thus, in nutshell, it may be said that in order to ensure women's equality and empowerment, there has to be an integrated approach and women need to be involved actively in the process of socio-economic development. No action of the government and other agencies would be successful to empower women unless and until changes are brought about in the socio-cultural, economic and political milieu. Concerted efforts on our part are required to be made to evolve effective women oriented educational policies and programmes for their overall development and empowerment.

#### REFERENCES

- Agrawal, S.P. and Aggarwal, J.C. (1996), *Second Historical Survey of Women's Education in India, 1988-1994*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
- Avasthi, Abha and Srivastava, A.K. (ed.) (2001), *Modernity, Feminism*

- and Women Empowerment*, Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications.
- Dale, Reider (2000), *Organizations and Development: Strategies, Structures and Process*, London: Sage Publications.
- Demographic Health Survey (DHS) (1990), in Agrawal, S.P. and Aggarwal, J.C. (1996), *Second Historical Survey of Women's Education in India, 1988-1994*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
- Family Welfare Programme, Year Book* (2002-03), Shimla: Directorate of Health and Family Welfare, Himachal Pradesh.
- Government of India (1950), *University Education Commission, 1948-49, Report Part-I (Radhakrishnan Commission)*, New Delhi: GOI.
- Government of India (1966), *Report of the Education Commission (1964-66): Education and National Development (Kothari Commission Report)*, New Delhi: GOI.
- Government of India (1986), *National Policy on Education 1986*, New Delhi: GOI.
- Government of India (1992), *The New Education Policy 1992 (Programme of Action)*, New Delhi: Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- Government of India (2001), *National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001*, New Delhi: GOI.
- Government of India, *Census of India (2001), Primary Census Abstract, Series-I, India, Total Population, Table A-5*, New Delhi : Registrar General and Census Commissioner, GOI.
- Government of India, *Economic Survey (2003-04 and 2006-07)*, New Delhi: Ministry of Finance, Economic Division, GOI.
- Janaki, D. (2006), "Empowerment of Women through Education: 150 years of University Education in India", *University News*, Vol. 44, No. 48, Nov. 27- Dec., 03.
- Jharta, Bhawana (1996), *Women and Politics in India*, New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications.
- Malik, S.S. (2005), "Women Empowerment and Panchayati Raj", in Chahar, S.S., *Governance at Grassroots Level in India* (ed.), New Delhi : Knishka Publishers.
- McGlen, Nancy E. (1980), "The Impact of Parenthood on Political Participation", *The Western Political Quarterly*, vol. 33, No. 3.
- Mukerjee, Asha and Bhattacharya, Kurakum, (eds.) (2003), *Conditioning and Empowerment of Women*, New Delhi: Cyan Publishing House.
- Narasimhan, Sakuntala (1999), *Empowering Women*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

- Nie, Norman H. and Verba, Sidney (1975), "Political Participation" in Greenstein, Fred I. and Polsby, Nelson W. (ed.), *Handbook of Political Science: Non-governmental Politics*, Vol. IV, Massachusetts: Addison Wesley Publishing Co.
- Pierce, John C., et al. (1990), "Support for Citizen Participation: A Comparison of American and Japanese Citizens, Activists and Elites", *The Western Political Quarterly*, vol. 43, No. 1.
- Polsby, Nelson W., Dentler, Robert A. and Smith, Paul A. (1963), *Politics and Social Life*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Rao, R.K. (2000), *Women and Education*, Delhi: Kalpaz Publications.
- Sarkar, C.R. (2005), "Women Literacy and India", *University News*, Vol. 43, No. 29, July 18-24.
- Srivastava, Nalini (2005), "Empowerment of Women Through Higher Education", *University News*, vol. 43, No. 47, November 21-27.
- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (1994), *The State of the World's Children*, 1994, New York.

# The North Indian *Hijra* Identity: Sexual and Gender Stratification

Kaustav Chakraborty

## *Introduction*

The *hijra* community had been a world of the ‘other’ to me till I met Kajol-di, a eunuch-leader (*guru maa*) from New Jalpaiguri (NJP) Station, who had approached our NGO for assistance under the out reach program for the marginalized people. Initially it was a very uncomfortable moment for all of us. But later on, that moment of intimacy seemed to be almost an epiphany for me, for it is not just the face that I gained a good friend, but my exposure to a world—that is exotic, since it has been made visibly invisible through isolation, apparently vulgar due to the different erotic norms, but a unique community with distinct socio-historic (rather mythical) and religious tradition with a rich demonstration of folk culture, apparently dangerous through its show of power/abuse, inwardly extremely insecure and miserable due to an acute crisis of being ‘otherised’, neglected and despised, and apparently a world of the gender blender and therefore initially confusing as well. There is a saying that familiarity breeds contempt, but it has been proved thoroughly wrong by my *hijra* friends residing round the NJP station. Rather, they have motivated this non-academic person—for them the sole representative of the constructed *bhadroloke*—to apply for a research project (I am thankful to the UGC for their approval) and at least start making them visible among the ‘normal’ circuit of the academicians/intelligentsia and thereby get them rid of the Mr India like existence through their absence. I am, therefore, grateful to all these *challa-walis* (i.e., a term to denote the railway beggars and distinguish them from *paan-walis*, the singing and dancing *hijras* and *khijrinda-walis*, the extensive sex-workers) for motivating me to penetrate through this alienated world and enable me, with the help of their all-encompassing interviews, to overcome all my misconceptions and also provide me with ample possibilities of socio-political, historio-mythical as well as academic interest.



Before coming to into the real question, I feel a compulsion to outline some elementary conceptions that are desirable for proper apprehension. There has been a politically motivated effort on the part of the NGOs like the NAAZ foundation or *Hum-safar* Trust to propagate the ideology of ‘choice’ and ‘preference’ which is also one of the main tenets of Judith Butler. Shanti, the *hijra* volunteer who works in the North Bengal area (the umbrella term used to denote the six districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Coochbihar, North and South Dinajpur and Malda of West Bengal) said:

I think there should be a right of free choice, though most of the *hijras* would not agree with me. Even a few years before, I too would argue that I was born like this, and it is not my fault. But I have changed and now I say, this is who I choose to be. The argument that we are ‘born that way’ makes us weak. (Interview)

This can apparently be a good means of gearing them up. But Ator-di, one of Kajol-di’s *chelas*, would shout at the ruinous consequence of this propaganda:

When I say we were born this way, automatically I would get sympathy. But if I say I choose to be this way, people can ask, “Today you choose to be this, tomorrow what will come next?” Are we pretenders?! (Interview)

Apart from Ator-di’s apprehensions of being yet again treated as fake, the reports of the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy too have asserted that the theory of ‘voluntary preference’ is flawed:

There is a broad consensus among medical researchers that transgenders are rooted in complex biological factors that are fixed at birth. This research confirms what transgendered people know and experience on a much more personal basis: being transgendered is not a choice nor a ‘lifestyle’, but a difficult, uninvited challenge. (1995 Conference)

The *hijras*, however, do not want themselves to be bracketed alongwith the transgenders/transsexuals of the western construct. According to Shanti:

The *hijras* are really different from transgenders or transsexual persons. There are differences of class, of language, of the kinds of discrimination and harassment. For me, when I think of a transgender or transsexual person, what comes to my mind is people who have greater access to information and support, have a very different class privilege and have hardly any link with our culture or community living. For *hijras* that is not the case—unlike many transsexuals who get expensive surgery and can pass of as men or women, lots of *hijras* are very easily recognizable as *hijras*. (Interview)

This discomfort of the *hijras* is the main source of the impetus that has made me curious to probe into their world only to discover that their identity is indeed very different from the stereotypical sex/gender categories, and is founded on a new binary of sexuality.

### *Identity in Question*

The term ‘sexuality’ commonly refers to sexual behaviour (what people do) and sexual desire (what people want to do and what they fantasize about doing) as differentiable from either the term ‘sexual’ that refers to genital or sex (anatomical and productive differences) that men and women are born with or develop, or the term ‘gender’ that refers to the cultural meanings, social/psychological roles and personality traits associated with sex differences. Our law has insisted that there are two normal sexes: male and female—and two corresponding genders: masculine and feminine. It is limiting/narrowing down the complexities of identities if one tries to view *hijras* solely within the framework of sex/gender binaries—as the quintessential ‘third sex’ or ‘neither men nor women’ (Serena Nanda), for the *hijras* seem to dismantle ‘categories’ of sex/gender as viewed by the society and create a new category of binary division of their own.

In Hindu mythology and early *Vedic/Puranic* literature, we can see the pan-Indian acceptance of the third sex (Vanita & Kidwai). Now it appears to me, perhaps I am sure that the translation by the westerners, e.g., Richard Burton’s infamous translation of *Kama Sutra* (Zwilling & Sweet) or of those belonging to the western tradition, has been a bit misleading. The actual term in Hindu scriptures is *tritiya prakriti*, i.e., third femininity/nature, the other two being *purush* (men/masculine nature) and *prakriti* (women/feminine nature) as differentiated on the basis of *linga* (sex/gender). We also have *kliba*—the term that originally evolved as a synonymous term for the *napunkshakas* (impotents) but slowly, with the influence of Buddhist thought, extended in meaning and in Sanskrit/Pali idioms, the term *kliba* now ranges in meaning from eunuch/*hijra* (a translation that, as Doniger observes, possibly dates only from the Turko-Persian influence of the ninth century) to someone who is sterile (*napunkshaka*), castrated (*khoja*), hermaphrodite, androgynous, etc., However, all these categories were drawn on the basis of the ability of procreation. The Jains, however, rejected both these Brahmanical and Buddhist formulations for differentiating the masculine and feminine markers. The credit that we give to the western socio-philosophers and feminists for the segregation of ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ had been demarcated long before in the Jain system of thought

(See *Dravyasamgraha* in Jagdishchandra Jain's *Life in Ancient India as Depicted in the Jain Canon and Commentaries*). In the Jain philosophy there has been distinction made between *dravyalinga* (i.e., biological sex organ/gender) and *bhavalinga* (i.e., psychological gender). The logic behind this was such that if we discriminate on the basis of procreation ability then a woman ceases to be a woman after menopause. The Jain commentators also connoted the term *napunkshaka* from not-male to not-man (i.e. not normal human being) but in the process have paved way for the possibility of homosexuals and bisexuals as well. Moreover, the Jain division of *purush-napunkshaka* and *pandaka* (i.e., *stri-napunkshaka*) is based neither on sex nor gender but on sexual practice—whether they are receptive partners in sexual intercourse (then they are feminine) or they are versatile, that is both penetrative and receptive (that gain makes them masculine). This exactly resembles with the *kothi* and the *parikh* (i.e., the bottomers and the toppers) categorization in the homosexual/bisexual relationship. The identity categorization made by the *hijras*, about which I have learnt during my field works, is slightly different from this model. However, Jain texts did not examine these eunuchs—the ‘third’ among the sex/gender hierarchies—in their canonical texts.

### *The Glorified Tradition*

The *hijras* feel content to describe themselves—in the words of the spokesman of the All India *hijra* Kalyan Sabha [Welfare Organization], an organization that purports to make the voices of the *hijras* heard in a democratic polity as “descended from Hinduism from olden times, right from the *Ramayana*.” As Rama prepared to go into exile with Sita and Lakshmana at the behest of his father, he was followed to the banks of the river at the edge of the forest by his adoring subjects. According to the *hijras*, he turned to his people and while imploring them to wipe away their tears added the following words: “Men and women, please go back and perform your duties.” When Rama returned to Ayodhya fourteen years later after his victory over Ravana, he found a cluster of people still gathered at the same spot, and was told that, since they were neither men nor women, they had felt themselves exempt from Rama's injunction. For this act of exemplary devotion they received the sanction of Rama to consecrate others with the blessing of marriage

and fertility. Now also we find the *hijras*, touching our forehead in a manner of blessing us after they are given their share.

Among the numerous Hindu creation myths, there is one in the *Linga-purana*, in which Shiva is asked by Brahma and Vishnu to create the world. Thereupon Shiva retreats into the water: but as he remains plunged in it for a thousand years, Brahma is induced by Vishnu to create all the gods and other beings. When Shiva finally emerges from the water, and is prepared to commence with creation, it dawns on him that the universe no longer has any vacuum. Consequently, Shiva breaks off his phallus and tosses it aside with the remark that he has not much further use for his generative organ; yet as the phallus falls and breaks into pieces, it extends fertility over the entire earth. Thus, even as Shiva himself becomes a sexual renunciate and loses the power to procreate, his phallus becomes emblematic of “universal fertility,” and it is to this circumstance that one can trace the cult of lingam [phallus] worship. The *hijras*, in their own life, provide a mirror image of this scenario: while themselves impotent, they confer the blessings of fertility on others. One of the other popular representations of Shiva is as Ardhanarisvara, or “the Lord who is half woman”. In numerous miniature paintings and sculptures, one half of his body has a female breast, long hair, and anklets. Even the Buddhist *tantrikas* have their androgynous icon of Aryavoliteswara, a form of Bodhisattva, whose left side consists of his wife, Tara. Shaivite *tantrikas* of Nepal also have dictums like *Shivah shaktiyatmakam jagat*, i.e. the world is the ‘Shakti’(stree) that lies within ‘Shiva’ or *Shakti vinah Shivah Shavah*, i.e., ‘Shiva’ without ‘Shakti’ is a corpse—the manifestation of which has been made through the *ardhanariswara* image. It is this representation of Shiva that, not coincidentally, is evoked in the figure of Arjuna, who appears in the guise of a eunuch in the fourth book of the *Mahabharata*, the “Virataparvan”.

To Virata, Arjuna appears as “a great man wearing the adornments of a woman”: he is not, however, merely a transvestite: the text speaks of him as belonging to the *tritiyam prakrtim* (See Vaman Shivram Apte, *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*). To the Kauravas, who fail to penetrate his disguise, “he has something of a man, something of a woman” in his manners, again an unmistakable allusion to the *ardhanariswara* form of Shiva. He offers dancing and music lessons to Uttara, the king’s daughter: in this aspect of his disguise, too, he bears a proximity to Nataraja, the

dancing form of Shiva that carries with it the two-fold overtones of auspiciousness, the triumph of knowledge over ignorance, but also cosmic destruction and dissolution. When Virata eventually offers him his daughter's hand in marriage, Arjuna refuses with the words, "I dwelt in the seraglio always seeing your daughter, secretly and in the open, and she trusted me like a father". But if Arjuna is the primordial eunuch, who has shared an asexual and parental intimacy with Uttara, he must preside (as do *hijras*) over a marriage and the birth of a male child. This is accomplished when Arjuna arranges for the marriage of his son Abhimanyu to Uttara and prepares her, in a manner of speaking, for the birth of her son, Pariksit, on whom alone will fall the burden of continuing the dynasty of the Kurus. At the conclusion of the great Bharata war, Pariksit, remains the sole surviving member of the Kuru family, a testimony to the folly of humankind and to the inevitable hubris that leads human beings to reproduce themselves. This is the hubris from which *hijras*, however unwittingly, are spared.

This androgynous representation in the Hindu tradition and its association with the god, incarnate or the most powerful and adored/ desired male has obvious positive implications. In the *Mahabharata* it is none other than Arjuna, the most macho among the lot who has to perform as *Brihannala*. This implication is that the acceptance of the feminine within oneself does not necessarily make one emasculated/ powerless. Again, Shiva's transfiguration from a male-god to *ardhanariswara* with the loss of his penis (the phallic symbol of male-domination) is not limiting, rather expanding the identity spectrum, i.e., from dev (god) he becomes Mahadev (i.e., the god of all the gods). The identity equation that emerges is as follows:

Male – linga = androgyny (an acceptance by the masculine of the innate femininity)  $\equiv$  Superman/god

This androgynous model of identity can be an effective indigenous tool for Indian feminist criticism which Indian feminist critics, know, I am sure, but have hardly applied as a theoretical basis of any critical analysis, which again can result from their failure to associate themselves with the Indian thought of reception or might be again due to the internalization of the othering as far as the 'third' is concerned.

The fact that androgyny has been viewed as perfectly normal from the Hindu and Buddhist religious stance can be reinforced through these following arguments/citations:

1. In *tantra*, which according to Abhinavagupta is fundamentally

about the anesthetization of erotic pleasure, we have the necessities of gender mixity. In Tantrick '*kundalini-jagaran*', which is a must for attainment of *siddhi*, the goddess Kundalini (the icon of the feminine strength within) has to be raised inside the inner yogic body (which is often done with the assistance of the *sadhan-sangini*). In *Anuttarayoga*, the highest yoga tantra, deities are shown as sexually merged.

2. Secondly, the counter-culture of naturalizing androgyny lies in the very description of the mystical experience of the yogi, who, in the state of ecstasy experiences a reconciliation of all opposites: self and other, male and female and so on. It is an inner psychic 'androgynization' which the *Hevajra Tantra* describes as a state of "two in one"—a term which can equally be applied to the medieval Indian mystic Shree Chaitanya.
3. Finally, not only the case of Chaitanya, but the fact that even a male devotee can have a female *ishttha* and vice-versa, reveals how a male *sadhaka* may visualize the female goddess as oneself (as in the case of Shree Ramakrishna Paramahansa). This itself shows the religious sanction of the choice of androgyny as 'self'—for *siddhi* is nothing but knowing oneself, *atmanam vidhvi*, i.e., "know thyself"—in the Indian Hindu tradition.

Right from this traditional association of the 'third' with religion there surfaces another fact that is of no less significance—the fact that even while some *hijras* engage in sexual relations with men and take recourse to prostitution, they insist on being considered akin to sexual ascetics or religious ascetics because of their association with Shiva—the god represented in the Hindu tradition chiefly as a yogi, venerated for the *tapas* or power yielded by his practices of asceticism. The inheritance of this pollution complex (in the sense that if a *hijra* tries to gratify her sensual desires then she gets de-sanctified) has negative implications too. On one hand it has created a new hierarchical order of the *Badhai* (the pure ascetic and, therefore, superior or real) and the *Kandra* (*hijras* engaged in prostitution, or keep lovers/husbands, and in the process, becomes unreal and downfallen); and on the other hand, as most of the *kandras* have informed, the *badhais* also partake in sexual activities but in a hidden mode which makes them much more vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases—since they apparently project themselves to be asexual, they get themselves excluded from all sorts of campaigning and sensitizing programmes related to AIDS and STDs.

*The Politics of Glamorized Representation*

The association of *hijras* with gods and the subsequent deification is a strategy which is highly political. The idea of the “auspicious” that our tradition transmits however, seems to be a mere construct of remote past if we take into account the amount of hatred that the *hijras* need to face all the time in their every day life. However, as a mode of escape from the ‘thorns of life’, *hijras* themselves often seem to be the harbingers of the auspicious. At what are traditionally held to be the two most auspicious moments in an adult person’s life, namely, marriage and the birth of a male child, *hijras* are conventionally allowed to come into their own as persons possessed of the power of conferring blessings and, complementarily, inflicting curses. It is said that a bride’s face must not be open to the gaze of *hijras*, since the curse of infertility might fall on her. On the other hand, when *hijras* confer blessings on the child, this ensures that the child will have healthy progeny. The presence of *hijras* is auspicious, and yet terrifying; and while themselves incapable of carrying or seeding children, they appear to have some mysterious inevitable power over the reproductive process. That the *hijras* consider an “auspicious” beginning as critical to their account of their originary place in Indian society itself suggests how much they are politically made to believe that they are being compensated for their inability to become biological parents—which all of them intensely desire only to realize the futility of such craving—by thrusting upon them an image of archetypal motherhood, i.e., even though they are not giving birth to babies but they are universal mothers because each and every newborn male child is the outcome of their blessing and they are almost their *manas-santan*.

The real politics lies not in this camouflage but in something else. The main reason behind deifying the *hijras* and thereby trying to convince them to live an asexual ascetic life like that of Mahadev, lies in what we refer to as ‘semen anxiety’. The sexual partners of these *hijras*, who associate themselves as feminine and thereby desire for a masculine, would obviously be males who, in turn would ‘misuse’ the semen, which is again traditionally assigned to be utilized only for the purpose of procreation. Hence this glorified image of the *hijras* in the traditional Hindu discourse, like that the almost elevation of the women only to exploit them, is a strategy developed to prohibit the *hijras* from participating in sexual activities with males which again is the prerequisite for avoiding ‘semen loss’—for in the whole of South Asia the loss of semen is equated with a loss of masculine strength and life force/vitality.

*Stereotyping the Male: The Counter Discourse through the Formation of a New Model of Identity-Stratification*

In a North Indian *hijra* community—on the basis of the microcosmic view of the macrocosm that I have perceived during my field work in the North Bengal area—there are only 1% people with the genitals of hermaphrodites, 3% are women who fail to menstruate and rest of the 96% are male transgenders in the sense that they are the people who think that they are psychologically female but possess a bizarre/stunted/obscure/deformed male organ, i.e., without testicles or a pierced scrotum or with a partially developed male genital. Since they are essentially female, they are *prakriti*, but due to some biological traits of *purusha*, they are *tritiya*. But there is a vital difference between the western transsexuals/transgenders in the sense that though there is a concept that the *bhabreshi* ought to get rid of the genital in order to become a *nirvani* (which is again a prerequisite in order to be reborn as a woman), the *hijras* rather prefer to retain their male genital unless they are forced to do so by the Guru, and it is mostly the straight male whom they catch and get castrated forcibly in order to render them as *hijras*. Hence, unlike the western transsexual/transgender, the *hijras* do not reveal any revulsion regarding their parts.

The *hijras* are required to play the role of a versatile, i.e., both active (topper) and passive (bottomer) during anal sex. In their adolescence days they generally take nirodh (anti-pregnancy pills) in order to inject female hormones in their body and thereby develop female features like enlarged breasts. However, soon they realize that their incompetence regarding erection and ejaculation resulting from the female hormones, reduces the number of customers who want them to perform the active role during anal sex. Oral sex is not very popular amongst them (unlike the gay couples) because it is not the oral but anal sex that helps them to perform their desired role of a woman. The interesting part is that in most of the cases the *hijras* do not have a orgasm while acting as the passive penetrated one which they desire most to perform. They have an orgasm either during foreplay or while playing the penetrator with their clients. However, the *hijras* never keep/love/desire someone as their ‘man’/‘husband’ who would desire the *hijras* to act as the penetrator or would touch their misshapen male genitals during intercourse. The *hijras*, despite the fact that they do not have orgasms, have told me that they get immense satisfaction from their ‘men’/husbands whom they keep till they confine themselves to playing the sole role of the masculine penetrator, leaving the *hijras* as the purely passive penetrated. One of the *hijras* informed me how after



staying together for four years, she went out of the relationship with her lover/husband because he had offered himself to be penetrated by the *hijra* beloved. The very act of getting oneself penetrated, casts the male as not-male in the eyes of the *hijras*. Now the imperative issues that arise are :

1. Firstly, is sexual pleasure mostly psychological rather than physiological since the touch of the male-organ of the penetrator with the prostate gland of the *hijra*, the penetrated, can hardly provide any sensual pleasure to the passive *hijra*?
2. Secondly, the very act of equating the passive penetrated as 'not-male' (*na-mard*) and accepting the penetrator alone as the real 'male' shows how these *hijras* have internalized the traditional stereotypical sexual roles for male and female; and accordingly the very act of being penetrated (which is quite physically painful due to the absence of a lubricant like that of the vaginal fluid) gives them the satisfaction that they are acting the part of the Indian female with a lover/husband, who like a full/real male, plays the exclusive penetrator.
3. Thirdly, this again gives rise to the unique *hijra* category of identity stratification of male and not-male (which I tend to call a third category), that is neither based on sex nor on gender but on sexuality, i.e., whether one is the exclusive penetrator or not.
4. Fourthly, the *hijra* discourse of typecasting anyone who cherishes to be penetrated through, violating the stereotype image of traditional Indian males as not-male, ultimately results in establishing that most of the male are thereby not-male (see the research work done by NAZ foundation on the clients of these *hijras* and MSM, that has shown how most of them seek versatile service from these sex-workers)—a strategy that can be a subconsciously constructed weapon to politically encounter the social stigma that has always been attached to the *hijras* for appearing but not actually being male. The logic is:

A male is one who as per Indian convention exclusively performs the role of being an active penetrator.

No man is one (as per his subjective experience) who as per Indian convention exclusively performs the active penetrator

Therefore, No man is male

This *hijra* logic of identity formulation is indeed a very effective counter-discourse to attack the discourse of social stigma and abnormality for not being thoroughly male, that has been attached with

these *hijras* for ages. According to this model of identity, one can argue that if to violate the constructed predetermined prescriptions of malehood makes some one degraded as womanish/abnormal then most of the males (with homosexual/bisexual preferences or even the heterosexual straight males who prefer to play the passive/penetrated during intercourse) are also womanish/abnormal and, thereby, not-male. This vision of perception again can be a very powerful weapon of the critics of gender studies, particularly the feminists, for after the age-old compulsion of “becoming” woman due to the anxiety of being stigmatized otherwise, this binary opposition of male and not-male can also counter-reveal and consequently disgrace many of the males as not-male due to their failure of “becoming” a type-Indian man who is only supposed to be exclusively, an active penetrator.

### *Conclusion*

Speaking of the denaturalization of sex, which is an outcome of the postmodernist approach to sex, William Simon proposes that:

The sexual is socially constructed, and the origins of sexual desire can only be found in social life, and its variable presence in the lives of specific individuals is predominantly dependent upon their experience in social life. (*Postmodern Sexualities*)

This can be practically demonstrated and confirmed through the *hijras*' preference of not participating in oral sex, which would have been much more convenient and rewarding, but rather in passive penetrative sexuality, because this and nothing else enables them to penetrate into the social domain of the Indian woman/feminine.

Finally, this third model of male/ not-male identity stratification can be utilized in exposing how the patriarchy becomes the victim of its own stereotyping compartmentalization of normal and abnormal on the basis of sex/gender performances. In Bengali, there are abuses and detrimental terms which signify sexual deeds forbidden for a real/perfect masculine male. Hence, on one hand the patriarchal society has accepted the possibility of such anal penetration but simultaneously it has made it prohibitive for any Indian man if he wants to remain acknowledged as a true male. But from the real life experiences of the *hijras*—that highlight how most clients violate the norm—most Indian men can easily, and scandalously get typeset as not-male. Hence, the *hijra* standpoint of perception originated from real life experiences which are significant enough to reveal how the patriarchal categorization of sex role is a stereotype not only vicious for the unprivileged sexual

orientations but also self-destructive for this predetermined construct which enshackles an Indian male to stick to his patriarchal assigned role, the smallest violation of which can easily cast him off as not-male.

#### REFERENCES

- Kumar, Pushpendra. *Introduction to Tantras and their Philosophy*. Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, 1998.
- Lal, Vinay "Not This, Not That: The *hijras* of India and the Cultural Politics of Sexuality", *Out Front: Lesbians, Gays, and the Struggle for Workplace Rights* (Winter, 1999), pp. 119-140.
- Vanita, Ruth and Kidwai, Saleem. *Same-Sex Love in India*, Macmillan: India, 2000.
- Zwilling, Leonard and Sweet, Michael J. "'Like a City Ablaze': The Third Sex and the Creation of Sexuality in Jain Religious Literature", *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Jan., 1996), pp. 359-384.

## CONTRIBUTORS



## CONTRIBUTORS

BHAWANA JHARTA, Reader in Political Science, H.P. University,  
Centre for Evening Studies, Shimla

GOPA BHATTACHARYA, Allahabad University

KEYA SENGUPTA, Professor, Department of Economics, Assam  
University, Silchar, Assam

LATA SINGH, Reader, Department of History, Maitreyi College,  
Delhi University, Delhi

MUKESH KUMAR, P.G. Department of History, Gaya College, Gaya

RAVI JAUHARI, Reader in English, DSN College, Unnao – 209 801

LATA SINGH, Reader, Department of History, Maitreyi College,  
Delhi University, Delhi

KAUSTAV CHAKRABORTY, is Assistant Professor in English,  
Southfield College, Darjeeling (West Bengal).