ANITA DESAI

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Meena Belliappa Anita Desai: A Study of her Fiction

A WRITERS WORKSHOP PUBLICATION

MEENA BELLIAPPA

Meena Belliappa, after a first Class First in English from Mysore University, did her research dissertation on *Indian Women Writers of English Fiction*. She teaches at the Regional Institute in Bhubaneswar. She has a diploma in Linguistics from the University of Edinburgh, where she studied as a British Council scholar in 1970-71.

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WRITERS WORKSHOP *books are published by P. Lal from 162/92 Lake Gardens, Calcutta 45, India. Telephone : 46-8325.*

Printed by M. Dhandharia at National Print Crafts, 95A, Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta 12, on map-litho paper made in India. Layout by P. Lal. Hand bound by Tulamiah Mohiudeen with Indian handloom sari cloth.

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After a First Class First in English Literature from Mysore University, Meena Belliappa did her research dissertation on "Indian Women Writers of English Fiction." She is a lecturer in English at the Regional Institute in Bhubaneswar. She has a Diploma in Applied Linguistics from the University of Edinburgh, where she studied as a British Council scholar in 1970-71. The Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel, *written by her in collaboration with Rajeev Taranath, is available in the Writers Workshop "Indian Writers in English" series.* Anita Desai : A Study of her Fiction *covers the development of the novelist till* Voices in the City; *it was written before the publication of Anita Desai's novel* Bye-Bye Blackbird, *which deals with the plight of Indians in contemporary racially-conscious Britain. Anita Desai lives in Chandigarh with her children and husband, who is an executive in Burmah-Shell .*

Anita Desai
A Study of her Fiction

An elaborate critical study of a young writer still exploring the possibilities of her medium, seems perhaps a little premature. However, if the exploration is of a kind which compels recognition it may be worthwhile to examine the nature of the promise that her extant writings hold. In Anita Desai's two novels and some of her short stories, there is evidence of a departure from current modes of fictional writing in India, and of an earnest effort to break new grounds. It is this which establishes her as one of the promising writers whose career one would watch with interest and expectation.

1

In an age of social reforms and political upheaval it is natural that the social world in which the individual has his existence, should receive emphasis. Hence we find in much of the Indian fiction till very recently, the tendency to social documentation, the difference lying only in the quality of presentation. An important phase in the growth of fiction in India, as elsewhere, is the gradual shift from the external world to the inner world of the individual. The focus of interest lies in the portrayal of states of mind rather than in the holding up the mirror to society. The fiction tends to be structured vertically. The effort is to capture the atmosphere of the mind, and directly involve the reader in the flow of a particular consciousness. A marked leaning towards such introversion is seen in Anita Desai's writing. An early short-story like *Grandmother* creates its fictional world on the foundation of a subjective reality of existence. It may not be a coincidence that this short story revealing a high imaginative awareness and a matching consciousness

of technique stands at the beginning of the first issue of the *Writers Workshop Miscellany* (August 1960), which, with its attention to the craft of writing, points to a new literary awareness in the India after Independence.

Grandmother shows a remarkable ability to portray life as focused in an isolated soul. With a few skilful strokes is created the picture of the grandmother weighed down by age and infirmity, and propped against a bolster:

> ...the grandmother struggled and panted to crack a nut but it was obdurate and slipped away from the scissors and rolled away onto the floor, out of her reach.
>
> The grandmother chuckled, and in devilish abandon tossed a large cardamom into her toothless mouth. In the delight of reminiscence, her decayed gums fought frantically to crush the sweet scent out of the black seeds.

What, however, holds our attention is the way the passage of her consciousness through a scorching summer's day, shuttling between past and present, life and death, is dramatised through a series of contrasts built up through the story—her forced inaction is set off by her still alert mind interacting with her surroundings; her futile attempt to establish contact with the external world of action is pronounced by the obliviousness of those with whom she would commune; the household bustle around her lends poignance to the memories it awakes since they are the only field of activity left to her; the pride in her past underlines the impotence of the present; and a sense of creeping in of decay and death imaged in the cancer winding its tentacles is matched by inexplicable upsurges of life, may be in an old pleasure waking and twisting within the core of pain, or may be in the keen response to present stimuli—the sweet scent of jasmine, the coolness of iced sour-sweet tamarind sherbet, or of the refreshing shower after a sultry day. The contrast comes off most effectively in the confrontation of the grandmother excluded from active life with the grandchild so much a part of it. Rani brings a glass of iced sherbet to the grandmother, who while feeling neglected is most anxious to seize the opportunity of communication, "of asserting reality".

...She blinked through the membranous glaze across her eyes and saw a small figure in white before her. The grandmother's nose twitched as it perceived the strange, half-sweet, half-sad scent of the white flowers through that of age and heat and rot. Her mouth fell open in a toothless smile. "It is you, *rani*," she said, tenderly. "You have brought your grandmother some sherbet, *rani?*"

And the girl, terrified to think that the spasmodic twitches of the crabbed hand would raise it till it touched her, quickly set down the glass and rushed out of the door.

The grandmother saw the white form slip away, saw the mat curtain fall to in the doorway, but her mind did not register these facts immediately, and she continued to croon endearments to the grandchild.

The young girl's aversion to decrepitude, and fear of the mask of death which lies on the grandmother, pitched against the old lady's frantic effort to establish the longed-for contact with throbbing life that has receded from her, form a telling portrayal of a human situation.

The way the old woman's consciousness draws in impressions from her surroundings and relates them to the past, integrates the past and the present into one inextricable presence. The grandmother is the totality of the experience she has been through. It is her acute responsiveness to what she hears and sees, that brings alive the household of which she forms a part. The dreamy daughter-in-law who has managed to retain the imperturbable "silence of the ocean" even while conforming to the demands of the firm and exacting mother-in-law; the once rascally little son who used to steal money from her box to buy kites, now conscientiously poring over his files; the grandson followed by the gardener's children, grubbing under a hibiscus bush behind the water-tap; the cook rendering accounts of the morning's marketing; the excited card players—these vignettes of a household besides being realistic details of interest in themselves, finally form the terms which concretise the sense of the grandmother's exclusion from the bustle of life in the face of a persistent attraction towards it. The way the voices from beyond her deserted room are received into her wakeful self, forming and reforming patterns of reminiscential valuation, is striking. What is remarkable is this

gradual drawing into the emotional fabric of the story what might seem detachable details of setting. Consider the descriptions (perhaps a trifle self-conscious) of the different stages of the day—the vague dreamy morning (reminiscent of the fog-cat image in Eliot's "Love Song"), the white heat of the afternoon, and the cleansing rain-storm of the evening. The mounting pain of cancer and remembered glory intertwined with the stifling heat of the day, finds relief in the cooling experience of the rain released by the stormy clouds seen gathering through the day. The different strands of the story are gathered into the rain-storm which comes as the culminating experience in terms of which is defined the assertion of life even on the point of death:

> Then lightning pierced a cloud, and the rain-storm broke loose, pelting the garden, the house. The card-players scattered, screaming, hurrying to drag in tables and chairs. The ayah lifted the sleeping boy out of his bed and rushed into the veranda with him. The rain poured down, abundantly, unstintingly, wiping all the dust, all the heat out of the air, washing it clean and sweet, laving the green things in the garden. The cool spray drifted in and pigeons stirred in the eaves, uneasily. The gargoyles choked, spat and began to gush, delightedly. The trees beat their leaves together in breezy applause. There was a sudden spring, an elevation in the atmosphere, as if towards the peak of a snow-laden mountain. The grandmother, forgetting to die, quite easily raised herself into a sitting position and stared out of the window, her mouth wide open.
>
> She had known many monsoons. But, after all, each time it was new.

A vitality which we see persisting in the atrophied shell expresses itself as a receptivity to the perpetual newness of experience. The succinct ending while making vivid the resurgence of life in the woman set drifting deathward in the dark isolation of her room, stretches the particularity of the context into a bigger experience that is *Grandmother*.

A similar ramification of interest which Anita Desai brings to her character-study, makes *Mr. Bose's Private Bliss* something more than a merely well-done portrait. Through a routine day in the Bengali tutor's life is evoked

the ethos of urban existence against which is seen this timid man creeping through the day's trials and tribulations and clinging tenaciously to his secret hopes and happiness:

> When he had swung himself onto the tram, burrowed through the congealed masses, and found, miraculously, a seat for himself, his books and his many pencils, his one wish, expressed in a quivering sigh and an exhausted sagging of his shoulders, was that his journey might never end, but that he might continue to roll on, through the dim, late afternoon light of the late monsoon season, unseeing, unrealising and without destination—that was important: to be without destination. The world was so very unlike the one in the poetry that he loved! To wish himself upon a vast ocean, in a little boat, properly equipped with books, with paper to write on and with hot, sweet tea, was beyond his imagination. To wish himself eternally on a slow, grudging tram that grinds itself on and on through the never-ending lanes and alleys of Calcutta, ah, that was bliss, Mr. Bose's private bliss.

A valuable core of private bliss in the ordinariness of most things is vivified in the configuration of the young tutor drudging through a shabby existence.

Anita Desai's language shows remarkable flexibility in the way she wields it to recreate the certain certainties of his existence; to capture the subtle nuances of his reveries as he moves from house to house, tram to tram; to concretise the varying sensations with which he stands up to his tuitions—a petrified Mr. Bose trying to teach "Paper-Boats" to the wild and unruly Mitter children, or a bashful Mr. Bose blushing through the reading of Tagore's love-poetry to the sly, giggling Banerjee girls. Here's Mr. Bose getting away from the nightmarish little Mitters:

> No man was ever so grateful, so full of rejoicing, of relief, as Mr. Bose when he was on a tram again. With humility, with grace, he gave up his seat to an old woman with two big parcels. He did not in the least mind hanging onto a strap and being squeezed by two very fat men with bad breath. This was nothing, he smiled tautly, nothing, and thought that his wife must have fish to eat at dinner every day and, once in a while, a new sari. She was pregnant too, and he closed his eyes to shut out the grimness of the afternoon, of the pain in his knee, and wonder, in a properly tender mood, what it would be like to have a child. He hoped it would be a girl, a gentle, loving daughter, quiet and studious, who would learn the letters at his knee...

Not that all girls were gentle, or studious...He was immediately petrified at the thought of the two young Banerjee girls...Softly he opened the door, wishing he could make himself quite, quite invisible before he asked them to memorise the lines: '"I am lost to you, wrapped in the fold of your caresses" ', and when they would slyly stop, pretending to have forgotten, he would have to finish it for them: "'Free me from your spells and give me back my manhood to offer you my freed heart".' But he had gone through the door now, he had entered the room, and he was not invisible, for here they were, leaping up as they saw him, arranging the folds of their coral-pink saris, the white flowers in their hair. Slowly they pushed out the tips of those delicious tongues as though they, too, were going over the same lines, and gave forth that little bubble of giggles that always greeted him. Then Mr. Bose could not help, after all, the very faintest, the most secret and yet definitely enjoyable little tickle of pleasure thrilling him into a bashful smile of private bliss. "'This mist of heavy incense stifles my heart",' he murmured. "'Open the doors, make room for the morning light."'

The conclusions of Anita Desai's stories come with an impact. The mode of narration is inseparable from the central interest—even to the point of making the style the content. At least, the manner in which she steeps the reader in the atmosphere of Mr. Bose's private world, by a judicious interaction between the flow of his consciousness and his external situation, creates a new complex which makes for the sustained interest of the portrait of an ordinary individual.

2 The fictional modes that are seen functioning in the two short stories seek a vaster range of operation in her first novel *Cry, the Peacock*. It attempts the delineation of the diseased psyche of a woman on the brink of insanity. The manner of organization of the fictional material brings to the probing an interest more than pathological. It strains towards some definable vision of life.

The nature of the central character is crucial to a fictional technique which places the centre of the novel within a single consciousness. The perceiver whose thoughts and feelings constitute the story is also the instrument for registering the "values" of the objective world. The peculiar

intensity of Maya, the central character, proves a valuable medium for refracting experience. Maya is neurotic. But she is also a sensitive and imaginative girl who asks questions of life and seeks to elicit meaning from experience. Beauty, evil, mortality—these are themes that haunt her mind till the very end. It is her failure to control experience that results in insanity. She cannot accommodate her tumultuous responses to available patterns of living. Nor is she equal to sustaining an individual quest for meaning. While the novelist makes use of different characters (Gautama and his family, Arjuna and the saner half of Maya where the author herself is implicitly present) to place in perspective Maya's aberrant mind, the very aberration is utilised to give to the vision a sharpness not available normally. Maya's sensations are, at times, the results of a discriminative attention pushed to a point of unbearable intensity, as in her participation in the dust-storm. The imagination which conceives experience in terms of images and symbols makes her consciousness a teeming multiplicity of objects and images. The tendency to take in sensations in terms of images is inseparable from the flow of her consciousness, which moves backwards and forwards in its effort to integrate experience. The same story might read differently if the more of perception which projected it were not Maya's.

The concept of a stream of consciousness and the use of imagery to pattern moments of awareness are integral to the structuring of the novel. It is the way images form and re-form in Maya's mind that constitutes the unfolding of her consciousness. As in *Grandmother*, the technique of flash-back as used here is not a device for recapitulation of the past merely to explain certain matters in the present while keeping separate the two entities. Maya's reminiscental excursions draw back the curtains of time, allowing the past to flood into the present and become the present. The albino astrologer is an active presence in her consciousness. His prophecy that either she or her husband would die in the fourth year of her marriage shapes the course

of her life. Her pampered childhood and life with her father are present not merely as reminiscences, but affect her response to the present frustrations of her married life. The father, who doted on her and shut out evil from her fairy world, becomes the point of reference by which Gautama's failure to perform a similar office is judged. Her regression to infantilism is an ineffectual evocation of a life that imposed an order, however inadequate by adult standards. It is finally to the world of childhood (which to Maya stood for a state of grace) that she reverts in her insane condition. We see in the narrative style an effort to integrate the past and the present as a simultaneous presence in a complex of emotions. This is done mainly by confronting the reader with the stimuli that affect Maya's behaviour. The effort is to achieve immediacy by a presentational continuum of sights, sounds and smells.

The evening of the death of Maya's pet dog Toto, gives a fair indication of Anita Desai's manner of developing the theme. The attempt to locate the feeling of restlessness that the day has generated, starts off the forward and backward movement of the mind. In its effort to stir up memory, the consciousness seizes sensations of colour, smell and sound to which it is acutely receptive, pausing on an apparently irrelevant object like the Rangoon creeper entwining the pillars:

...They hung in long bunches, like those of white grapes, now rising upon the uneven breeze, now descending, with a slow, mysterious movement as of nocturnal snakes. They say it attracts snakes—this sweet, intoxicating fragrance. No I am wrong. It is Queen of the Night that attracts snakes. Beauty and evil, evil, beauty. Snakes, summer, scent, flower, white, white, white...In the dark, in the dry, scented April dark, the sky was dimly lit by April stars. Winter was over, summer had not yet arrived. I lay back in my chair and breathed deeply, lay there waiting—for summer? for snakes? for the moon? I did not know.

Yes, I did. It was that something else, that indefinable unease at the back of my mind, the grain of sand that irked, itched, and remained meaningless. Meaningless, and yet its presence was very real, and a

truly physical shadow, like the giant shadows cast by trees, spilt across the leaves and grasses towards me, with horrifying swiftness, till, like the crowding blades of grass, it reached my toes, lapped my feet, tickling and worrying, and I leapt from my chair in terror, overcome by a sensation of snakes coiling and uncoiling their moist lengths about me, of evil descending from an overhanging branch, of an insane death, unprepared for, heralded by deafening drumbeats...

"What is it?" Gautama shouted, jumping too.

"What is it?" What is it?" echoed the servants, dropping the sheets that they were spreading on the beds, and coming at a run.

Life, people, light again.

A haunting perception of whiteness (white flower, white Toto) against a background of overwhelming darkness, a sense of foreboding expressing itself in eerie sensations—moistness of coiling snakes and deafening roar of drumbeats—thrust the memory on its trail of a lost object.

An artistic intensity struggling to realise itself in terms of an objective correlative reveals itself in different ways. The apprehension of an evil presence, for instance, seeking expression through a recurring weirdness of imagery, stumbles upon a vivid image in the twitching of the lizard's tail in the stifling heat of the afternoon preceding the dust-storm:

...Nothing could move. No leaf could stir, no blade of grass. The homely insects, the birds, bees, worms of the garden...had crept away...They might well be dead, of sun-stroke. And yet, in the neck of the lizard spanned above me on the ceiling, its pulse throbbed, and seemed a giant pulse for so small a creature, beating furiously, as though it were holding its breath till its blood boiled. And then in the very height of stillness, its tail switched. One small, brief twitch. But I saw it, and immediately a thousand rats twitched their tails—long, grey, germ-ridden. Just once, before they were still again, stiff.

The eerie sensation of the twitching is imaged by a quick swirl of the stream of consciousness, in a responding motion within Maya, of a thousand rats twitching their tails—"long, grey, germ-ridden". Apart from the recurrent association of rats and lizards with the albino astrologer and his prophecy of death, the image communicates effectively the eerie sensation of an evil presence.

Matching of incongruities sharpens vision even as does an aberrant mind. We see in the alliance of Maya and Gautama the irony of a situation that could have proved beneficial, but turns mutually destructive (in different ways). The very syntax and tone of Maya's passionate outbursts and Gautama's cool replies underline the contrast between a creature of impulse and emotion, and a man of logic and common sense. It is against a background of frustrated married life that the haunting sense of death obsesses her. The fatal distance between Gautama and Maya, arising from a temperamental incompatibility, is basic to the theme of psychic disintegration. It is presented through a series of episodic images. As Maya and Gautama walk in the garden, it is the darkness between the enchanting stars that impinges itself on Maya, brooding on the death of her dog. The message of loneliness spelt by the darkness separating the stars seems an inescapable fact of life. It is then that the unexpected gesture of Gautama comes with a sudden impact, supplying the meaning she seeks in a dark universe:

> But I was not [alone], for Gautama heard, and, not only that, but he raised his hand to wipe a tear away, his hand as cool and dry as the bark of an old and shady tree. He quoted, softly, an Urdu couplet.
>
> *Even if each star in the sky were an heart, what of it?*
> *Give to me one heart that is capable of sorrow.*
>
> Shooting-star, rocket, comet, great fountain of light, light, diamond, brilliant, sapphire light. Darkness, chaos—gone. And I spun around to face him, this visitant to what had seemed a pit of black emptiness, as the night hurtles towards a falling star, clinging to its traces. He had already put his hands behind his back, was already walking away restlessly, already musing upon "A new book Professor Rahman sent me today, one of his publications—a very distinguished anthology of Persian couplets, though it has, perhaps, a trifle too much of the last century, a trifle too little of contemporary work..."

The lucid moment of perception (which reveals compassion as a value that redeems loneliness) only underlines the irony of the situation. The words that come alive to Maya are supplied by a man who is insensible to their import. The kindness of his gestures is merely the expression of an indulgent mood, and consequently far removed from the kind of communion that Maya seeks.

Anita Desai has the skill that can seize upon the episode which dramatises character and situation. Consider this scene:

> ...His detachment was armour enough—forbidding armour, I knew. But at the moment he had little of it, so seriously was he employed in the strenuous task of getting out of his clothes. His clumsiness, his way of attracting one impediment after another, of somehow stumbling through them, reduced him to an impatient child, and I was gently amused. "You *are* bad at doing anything with your hands, Gautama."
>
> "Am I?" he said and stalked off to the bathroom where the luscious water was falling, falling. "Men don't have as much practice as you do. It is a question of time and occupation." I heard him splash in, with vigour, and continue loudly, "Now if you were to find something to do that would take your mind off the suitability of your appearance...." When I could make out any words above the sound of splashing, I replied, and though it was he who luxuriously surrounded himself with the cool water, running, rising, rippling and fluting, his level dehydrated voice assured me that he was far less in contact with it than I who was removed to a distance and merely listened to it, with longing, and listened to him with something of pity, and something of regret for the great passage that always had and still existed between us, like an unpassable desert.

The irony of that single phrase—"his level, dehydrated voice"—lights up the whole scene. The incompatibility of character stands revealed—Gautama who touches without feeling, and Maya who feels even without touching. The level, dehydrated voice, issuing from the midst of "cool water, running, rising, rippling and fluting", forms a vivid image that clinches all that has gone before—Gautama's obliviousness of the dust-storm and the coolness it had imparted to the air, set off by Maya's impassioned participation in it. The projection of the scene through Maya's consciousness gives it a dramatic impact. It is Maya's receptivity that *inscapes* the coolness of water, "running, rising, rippling and fluting", and notes the contrast of the "level, dehydrated voice". The situation made vivid by her imagination is given significance by its immediate emotional relevance to her.

The awareness of a confusing duality of existence is

conveyed through a recurrent colour symbolism. Maya's consciousness hovers round a particular colour which gets translated into different sensations under varying conditions. Red for instance is Maya's colour. Her hunger for the coloured and alive world is seen in her fascination for red manifesting itself in numerous objects—ruby red as blood, red roses, red wine, manadrin oranges, gul-mohur, red melon, scarlet-striped kites, red bangles, etc. The passionate involvement also carries a strain of violence as in—

> Not one, but a thousand drops of blood, a thousand ruby-red hammer-heads showered across my vision, blinding me with a fury that might have boiled up within the head, but now exploded before my eyes..

The emotion of the novel, however, is centred in white. White is present in the "cooling menthol" of moonlight as well as in the dry heat of the sun. The disparity between life and death is sensed in the difference between the fluffy whiteness of Toto alive and its white corpse abandoned to rot in the blazing sun. The cat with hair like tassels of silk; "the airy-faery puffs of silver-streaked whiteness" released from silk cotton pods and sailing through the air "like angelic, soft-feathered birds"; the fragrant white flowers (queen-of-the-night, jasmine, white petunias, white oleanders, white tuberose); white smoke, white cloud, white muslin—all these form image clusters round a sense of fragile charm in creation. A simultaneous sense of the vulnerability of white accompanies the response to its beauty—the "radiant billows" of white silk cotton get soiled by the dust in the streets; the fragrant white flowers attract snakes. Starting with the white corpse of her pet dog, white comes to embody the weirdness of an evil presence—the chaste white moon acquiring the ghastly white of a phantom dancer; the pale, opaque eyes of the astrologer which shrink from "the purifying glare of whiteness" and have the morbid suggestion of a "sluggish white worm"; albino rats, white lizards, saliva of lizards in lines of white; and white bones of the lizard. The most expressive of the weird images of white is the "pulpy tallow" that is the contortionist in the cabaret,

and the "hundred fish-eyes" that slide over it "as slowly as snails that dribbled white slime over white flesh". However, the persistent recurrence of white is not always effective. It can be deliberate as in Maya noting the whiteness of Arjuna's letter as she flings it on Gautama's table:

...I saw the long white envelope shoot out of my cove of dimness into the bell of light, and lie there on the tabletop, gleaming. The horoscope, on yellow parchment, had gleamed thus in the light upon my father's desk, in a very different room. It had borne with it the etiolated touch of the albino, smelt of him.

The stream of consciousness seems a little too systematic.

The contrasting sensations of white as associated with her father and Gautama reflect the nature of her response to the two dominant presences in her emotional life. A lovable, enchanting whiteness is associated with her father, who with his fine silver-white hair and white dress reminds her of silver oak. The silver-white hair is a recurring image and comes alive as a tangible sensation in:

I winced at his [Gautama's] violence, and my father's hair gleamed soft and white as a bird's wing in mist and shadow.

The emotional context gives it a particularity and pointedness. But white is also the colour of drabness, especially in its variant, grey. It is that quality that she is up against in her relationship with Gautama. She is not without response to the ideal of serenity expounded by the *Gita:* but the requisite condition of detachment as exemplified by Gautama's indifference to the live world around, leaves her feeling chill. It is the greyness of his non-passion that oppresses her:

...his thin face, grey and drawn upon the white pillow.

Grey, grey, all was grey for Gautama, who lived so narrowly, so shallowly.

...a grey shadow stalking, stumbling a little clumsily, a little lost in a world so full of very real things.

...a somnambulist's figure in opium-white.

Finally, it is his "crooked grey shadow" that obliterates the significant "white" of Maya's search reflected in the absolute white of a tender, tranquil moon (quite unlike the ghost-white moon which calls up the vision of the albino astrologer).

Maya's image-making tendency lends itself to the development of the theme through a design of symbols. Maya's urge to symbolization, however, goes on at two levels—as pure fantasy and as a mature effort at integrating experience. Life as motion/energy expressing itself in different forms at different levels of existence, is conceived in terms of dance images—the daemonic dance of the Kathakali dancer associated with the albino astrologer and introverted in Maya; the cabaret and the bear dance; the dance of the peacock; the dance of Shiva; and finally, the dust-storm. a variation on the dance-motif. The albino astrologer/demon dancer, as described by Maya, does not satisfy at the realistic level and remains a figure of fantasy. Hence the repetitive invoking of the albino astrologer or the masked figure of the Kathakali ballet, to represent the upsurging sense of fatality in Maya, seems a trifle contrived.

The title-symbol, the cry of the peacock for its mate when rain clouds come, is an instance of the clash between the symbolic and the realistic levels that affect the novel adversely. The "summoning up" of the albino astrologer to recall his description of the peacocks, dancing, fighting, mating and dying, is an unsatisfactory contrivance. Its origin in fantasy and recurrence in self-dramatic references, prevent the cry of the peacock from functioning as a symbol containing the central experience of the novel. There is a suggestion of romanticizing in the arbitrary identification (initially by the astrologer and subsequently py Maya) of Maya's fate with the mortal agony of the beacock's cry for lover with a sure knowledge of death to follow. It is as imprecise as the association of the dance of the peacock with that of Shiva. Maya's experience of love is not of ecstasy that is short-lived, but of ecstasy that is never attained. The scene preceding brings out the

poignance of the missed moment of communion, a recurring strain in the novel. The conversation after the cabaret-evening finds her as close to Gautama as their contrary natures allow. She wants to capture the hint of communion before it vanishes :

> In a sudden, impulsive longing to be with him, be close to him, I leapt up, full of decisions to make haste in undressing, preparing myself, then joining him at last; so that we could go out into the garden, together, where the beds had been made for the night and were cooling in the moonlight. But when I went to rouse him from the couch, with a touch, I saw that he had closed his eyes not with mere tiredness, but in profound, invulnerable sleep, and was very far from any world of mine, however enticing. I hesitated, wishing to summon him to me, yet knowing he could never join me...

The nature of her unfulfilled desire comes vividly to life in her recollection of the young couple she had glimpsed earlier in the evening :

> ...as we had driven home down a dark street, I had seen a dark young woman in a crimson sari, holding a white dog on a leash, walk into a shuttered house, followed by a dark young man in white. At the door, she paused, turned and smiled at him, and he smiled in reply, and went up the steps behind her. The white dog, unsmiling, followed them in, and we swept past and away even before the door shut behind them.

The combination of white and red (with their special significances in the novel) in the smile of response which lights up the whole scene is vivid in its particularity, down to the unsmiling dog that follows. It shows Anita Desai's interest, as a novelist, in the sharpened image, the condensed experience of the detached moment. The fleeting glimpse caught from a running car, heightens the impact, by underlining the nature of flux in which the live moment is caught. Maya's regret at her inability to hold that moment has a dramatic relevance in the context of its recapitulation. Her failure to find response from Gautama makes the exchange of smiles between the young couple a specially evocative image, poignant in the sharpness of contrast it provides.

The cry of the peacock as a symbol does not offer an adequate point of fusion for this emotion available at a realistic plane. Further, whatever validity it has as the expression of a febrile imagination in a half-wakeful state and under the stress of a frustrated desire, is cancelled by the explicatory passages that follow the recalling of the astrologer's prophecy of a fate similar to that of the peacock :

And the rain-clouds emerged again from the horizon that was eternally pregnant with promise at one end, and at its opposite pole, was an eternally hungry and open grave. In the shadows I saw peacocks dancing, the thousand eyes upon their shimmering feathers gazing steadfastly, unwinkingly upon the final truth—Death. I heard their cry and echoed it. I felt their thirst as they gazed at the rain-clouds, their passion as they hunted for their mates. With them, I trembled and panted and paced the burning rocks. Agony, agony, the mortal agony of their cry for lover and for death.

...When I heard one cry in the stillness of night, its hoarse, heart-torn voice pierced my white flesh and plunged its knife to the hilt in my palpitating heart. "Lover, I die." Now that I understood their call, I wept for them, and wept for myself, knowing their words to be mine.

The repetitious summing up of his words, in a point by point identification, by Maya, and the explanatory reminiscence tracing the different stages of her response to the peacock, come as unnatural sequel to the flow of consciousness through the disjointed sentences of the astrologer. The stringing together of the incoherent stream with the reflective-explicatory end-products of consciousness results in a discrepancy of tone.

The fusion of the inner world of fantasy with the world of perceptual experience is more satisfyingly achieved in the presentation of the cabaret and the bear dance. As images they have greater potency, since they succeed in gathering the emotional content of experiences at a realistic level. The weird evening of the cabaret comes alive :

...The drummer—a Goan in a dinner-jacket—beat a warning tattoo upon his drums, and his teeth flashed white in a dark, simian face. One or two of the more excitable onlookers began to clap with the irrespons-

ibility of children, and the prim lady unexpectedly nudged me in the ribs, sharply, with a wicked elbow, and whispered, "Now look, now look," with an eagerness I should not have believed her capable of. Then the cabaret began as a row of girls of even height came prancing out with a smart tattoo of their wild, hard-hitting scarlet heels.

"Ha-ha" cried the Sikh, sitting up and setting his turban at a jaunty angle.

With smiles that had been brilliantly painted onto their sallow faces—the colours of many races, Indian, Chinese, English, Nordic, Polynesian, running together till each was rendered equally flat, equally compromising—and their large, strained mouths stiff beneath the paint, the dancers went through their routine so leadenly that they even stomped the music out into a kind of quick goose-step march that rang of prison parade-grounds and jailors' beats...

Again and again they returned, for another and yet another number, and one dance seemed exactly like the other, except that the costumes grew saucier and saucier. Once they came out wearing little paper sailor hats which they threw into the audience with wild catcalls that tingled down our spines as though they were the howls of preying wolves hunting, in packs, in the darkening jungles. A fat man at table next to ours managed to catch one of the little hats. He clasped it to his bosom and burst into tears of joy...

The popular one, the fair one, had an act to herself then, with a consumptive, red-haired girl to help her. It turned out that she was a contortionist, and she went through a performance as revolting as it was remarkable. This body, that had once lain on grass, on park benches, twined itself round swing ropes and moved through lanes of sunshine and clear rain, and was now her business, her chief merchandise in a market where there was stiff competition, was transformed now into something inhuman—a mass of soft, pulpy tallow that could grow taut, grow rotund, grow angular, could spring out in certain places at a time, lie flat in others, assume postures that shrieked of unnaturalness, toss and twist, fling itself once this way, once that, and all for a hundred fish-eyes that slithered over it, feeling it with quivering antennae, sliding along it as slowly as snails that dribbled white slime over white flesh...

...In the general din of leave-taking, we could hear the fat man at the neighbouring table sobbing, "Beautiful! B-beautiful b-bitch!" as he clutched a very rumpled paper sailor hat to him.

"Oh, we should have brought you here last week," said our companion, as he beckoned to the waiter to refill his glass for he had not had enough yet. "Last week there was a strip-tease!"

"What! What!" screamed his wife, from whom all primness had departed. Even her ant-eating mouth had widened and loosened. She

nudged me again, sharply and crudely, and in her laughter there was an underhand vulgarity that condoned a similar quality in the cabaret girls.

Before the lights dimmed to signal time for closing-down, somebody lit the spotlight over the dance-floor, and slid it slowly over the audience like an ironic sneer, unbearably prolonged, and, in catching and illuminating shadowed eyes, rings that caused thick fingers to bulge, teeth that gleamed animal-like, squirms and gestures betraying pleasurable and covert discomfort, it revealed in its banal glow such a seething mass of pimps and lechers, of touts and prostitutes, masquerading in the garments of those who imagine they can afford an attitude of superiority over the poor and the beasts, that I felt myself trapped at an oneiric ball where the black masks that I had imagined to be made of paper turned out to be of living flesh, and the living flesh was only a mockery, a gathering of crackling paper...

The whole atmosphere suggests the lurid nature of a subhuman existence, where evil manifests itself in tangible terms. Here is energy in a perverted dance form, used for exploitation of human susceptibilities.

The sordidness of the cabaret leads Maya's consciousness back to a show, by a performing bear, she had witnessed as a child. She had been deeply disturbed by the thought that the bears which had been trapped from their Himalayan haunts, by trainers who exploited them for a living, did not get much out of the earnings. Her sleep was shaken by a nightmare in which

...a row of soft, shaggy, frail-footed bears shamble through a dance routine to the dry rattle of the trainer's tambourine. Then, suddenly, behind the bears, an entire row of trainers rise up and begin to dance too, with greater vigour. They kick up their legs, displaying cleft feet, grin hugely and roll up their clothes and rub their bellies and bay at the moon. By a grotesque transformation, the bears are rendered into a lonely, hounded herd of gentle, thoughtful visitors from a forgotten mountain land, and the gibbering, cavorting human beings are seen as monsters from some prehistoric age, gabbling and gesticulating, pointing at their genitals, turning their backs and raising their tails, with stark madness in their faces...

The cabaret re-forms the weird image registered in her consciousness. The emotional disturbance of the child

acquires clarity in the light of an adult experience, which by being referred back to the child's vivid sensation of evil, is more readily defined. The fantasia of the child's subconscious becomes the lurid reality of the cabaret into which merge the trained, the trainers and the onlookers as an inseparable whole.

Almost every image has a dual existence in the book. The fatal drum beats of the Kathakali dancer (the warning tattoo of the Goan drummer in the cabaret and the dry rattle of the bear-trainer's tambourine are variations) have their positive manifestation in the call of liberation sounded by the drum of the dancing Shiva. The measure of spiritual growth is obviously to be sought in the shift of emphasis from the destructive power of the demon dancer to the more meaningful manifestation of supernatural forces in the dance of Shiva. Maya's ruminations over the bronze image of Shiva, as she walks up to the terrace with Gautama, make it appear as if she has emerged, through the cathartic effect of the dust-storm, with a serene command over experience :

> ...The wise, remote face had retreated into the shadows, but its expression spoke as clearly as light to me, and I murmured a suddenly remembered passage to myself, smiling to think that my rag-picking memory had retained this scrap, without knowing from where it had wandered in, and now suddenly bobbed up on this day that had dragged through near annihilation to supreme aliveness. "Calling by the beat of the drum all persons engrossed in worldly affairs, the kind-hearted One who destroys all fear of the meek and gives them reassurance, and points by his hand to his upraised lotus foot as the refuge of salvation and also carries the fire and who dances in the universe, let that Lord of the Dance protect us..." The sonorous Sanskrit syllables rang richly in my mind, and I was triumphantly proud at being able so clearly to remember them.

That Maya has had the experience but missed the meaning, is brought out by the tone of the whole passage. The irrelevance of the concluding sentence contains the irony of the situation. All that is available to Maya from the "sonorous Sanskrit syllables", is the triumphant satis-

faction that her rag-picking memory had retained this piece. The total vision of life, death, and evil that the image of Nataraja embodies, has not become hers. Her perception remains essentially fragmentary. The emotional preponderance of the maniac albino is proved by her insanity after the ghastly end of Gautama. The sense of fatality outbalances every hint of growth. Maya seems to be approaching near enlightenment and tranquillity of being as she contemplates the moon (which reveals itself in a whiteness that is growing to be significant at last), when the upsurge of violence overwhelms her :

> And then we turned again, walking towards the terraced end now, and I saw, behind the line of trees that marked the horizon, the pale, hushed glow of the rising moon. I held him there, while I gazed at it, watching the rim of it climb swiftly above the trees, and then walked towards it in a dream of love. At the parapet edge, I paused, made him pause, and his words were lost to me as I saw the moon's vast, pure surface, touched only faintly with petals of shadow, as though brushed by a luna moth's wings, so that it appeared a great multifoliate rose, waxen white, virginal, chaste and absolute white, casting a light that was holy in its purity, a soft, suffusing glow of its chastity, casting its reflection upon the night with a vast, tender mother love.
>
> And then Gautama made a mistake—his last, decisive one. In talking, gesturing, he moved in front of me, thus coming between me and the worshipped moon, his figure an ugly, crooked grey shadow that transgressed its sorrowing chastity. "Gautama!" I screamed in fury, and thrust out my arms towards him, out at him, into him and past him, saw him fall then, pass through an immensity of air, down to the very bottom.

The inner activity which leads to the accidental killing of Gautama is the staple of interest. The startling discovery that she loves life more than love has a disturbing effect on Maya. We witness the passage of despair into guilt, when through a process of psychic transitions, she chances upon the thought that it might be Gautama, and not she, who was the doomed one. Every instance of Gautama's obliviousness of the pulsing life around him (set off by her own intense participation in it) enhances simultaneously the sense of doom and the feeling of guilt. It is as if her

overwhelming desire to be alive has shifted the death sentence on to Gautama. Maya's thrusting aside of Gautama who obtrudes into her impassioned contemplation of the moon, is intended as a symbolic destruction of a force hostile to the law of her being. But there seems to be a want of subtlety in the way the whole situation is conceived, which hampers the symbolic process. The fact that Gautama has sufficient local life makes the situation morbid, though the unexpected end has an impact in the light of all that has preceded. It is Fate that asserts itself. However, it is to the credit of the novelist that she has shown it operating through character.

The dust-storm comes very near an effective definition of the nature and direction of the inner activity which has long supplanted external action. It gathers into it the recurring images in the novel—specially the dominant motif of dance, representing the dual motions of life, and the colour symbolism of white and red :

...the clouds had edged higher, it was faintly darker, by merely the suggestion of a shade. This gradually fading light painted the vision beyond the window and so, by reflection myself and my shell, in varying tones, darkening—harsh yellow to strident sulphur, strident sulphur to bitter ochre. And then, as the darkess grew, from olive haze to camouflage khaki, from khaki to dull, purulent purple. Hot, harsh colours, like a vulture's impatient screams. Unreal colours, in an unreal obmutescence. A world no longer in control of itself. A force existing in another sphere had taken it over, was altering it into something fierce, strange, lurid, a macabre cartoon with which to frighten those innocent and, more so, infinitely more so, those guilty.

...No, this was a beginning and not an end. Storm, Motion, Speed, Living. I beat upon the window as the dancer, waiting to go on stage, pounds the earth with uncontrollable feet once the hypnotic drumming begins. What agony in ecstasy, what pain in magnificence...

Now I stood in the midst of it, I exulted, and raised my arms to return its impassioned embrace. If the closed windows protected me from its whiplash and scorpion-sting, it still allowed me the sensation of standing waist-deep, feet-first in the centre of the churning broil, of having plunged with grabbing hands and rapacious teeth into the heart of a gigantic melon, ruby-red, juice-jammed and womb-warm from its baking sand-bed. Red, red, ruby-red was the dust—as though I were looking at it through lowered lids. But no, my eyes were open,

wide. I was gazing through scarlet-coloured glasses that were occasionally rose-red, and ranged freely from nicotine-yellow to iodine-brown as well, and from burnt orange to livid pink, like one's most private flesh laid bare. The time of faded flowers, of strangled lives, of parched vision, of hesitation and despair was over. Here was a turmoil, a wild chiaroscuro of oven-hot colours that churned over and over in a heat-swelled bubble around me. It revolved around *me*, about *me*, it was mine, mine, this life was mine.

The conjunction of the "white" heat of the afternoon and the "ruby-red" dust, the "wild chiaroscuro of oven-hot colours", and the heady motion of the storm, suggest a complex of emotions—the apprehension of a terrifying presence ; the intimation of violence ; the feeling of guilt that suffuses the will to live ; and finally the fascination of being alive. The feat of presenting in prose, a state like this, is not without its difficulties. The loaded prose falters occasionally. But it does communicate a sense of intense disturbance.

It is not always that Anita Desai's prose proves equal to a sustained transmuting of impressionism to significant symbolism. Unsifted impressions overflow into the heroine's language. The main concern gets distracted into a verbal virtuosity, which, however, can be interesting in itself :

...he drew me away from my thoughts of anguish which rose, every now and then, like birds that awake from dreams and rise out of their trees amidst great commotion, circle a while, then settle again, on other branches.

The necessary distance between the creator and the created is often not there in Maya's thought current which becomes a rapid flux of fragmentary images rising to the surface under the impact of some external stimulus. Anita Desai betrays her presence in the heroine in the contrived cataloguing of the splendours of life :

Oh, unprivileged, to miss the curved arc of a bird's wing as it forces itself against the weight of air into the clear sky where it can skim the currents with singing ease; the steam rising from a pot of tea, flavoured

with orange; the revelation within the caress of a familiar hand, tender, heart-torn, and the speechlesssness that goes with it; the persistent, sweet odour of a ripe pineapple, freshly sliced, its pale juice and streaked flesh, pungent and sweet, inhaled with a delight that swells to the point of exploding or of soaring away into the sky...

There is a suggestion of deliberate working up in the self-conscious seeking of epithet. The stream of consciousness is neatly listed into different items, in response to Gautama's query about what to Maya constituted the truth of living. The heroine's perceptions of the objective world are rendered into a series of similes which clutter up the sentences. The gathering tension is dissipated into an adjectival irrelevance. The affectation of phrase seems to be, to some extent at least, that of the novice at work. Parts I and III, which are not in the first person, contain evidence of striking similarities in the styles of the heroine and her creator :

Now and then she went out onto the veranda, and looked to see if he were coming up the drive which lay shrivelling, melting and then shrivelling again, like molten lead in a groove cut into the earth.

Then they heard the patter of a child's laughter cascading up and down the scales of some new delight—a brilliant peacock's feather perhaps?

The verbal self-consciousness can turn out a pretty phrase as in the second example.

The weak points of the novel proceed from the difficulty of coordinating, in a controlled design, the valuable myth-making self of Maya with her self-dramatising febrile half. Maya's nature hampers a significant interaction between the external and the internal. The transitions, from the objective to the subjective and back, get short-circuited into self-conscious attitudinising :

Only a dream. An illusion. Maya—my very name means nothing, is nothing but an illusion.

...The dust-winds sweep across the compound, sulphur-yellow, and drag the bougainvillaeas against the baking walls. Their thorns scratch upon the bricks. I hear them screech, sigh and sag. And I who am nothing but an illusion, with them can do nothing but also screech, sigh and then sag.

The response to nature tends to turn into pathetic fallacy. The isolation and introspection which are prerequisite to an assimilation of truth become here an incurable disease. The world as possessed and defined by the central figure turns into one of fantasy. This affects the novel adversely. The use of the stream of consciousness starts as a mode of active apprehension of the present, involving the challenge of action and the possibility of progress. But gradually it becomes more and more a mode of recollection and fantasia, divorced from actual activity. The state of delirious waiting seems to be unnecessarily prolonged. Maya's isolation impoverishes the texture of the interior monologue. The pervasive sense of fatality, besides precluding the possibility of action, results in an unvarying tone of reaction.

The fact that the theme of disintegration relies heavily on fantasy for its development and presentation, is at once the strength and weakness of the novel. Strength, since it is integral to character and situation ; weakness, since it precludes the possibility of a significant growth in terms of human interaction. The major weakness in the relationship of Maya and Gautama is that they hardly inter-animate on a footing of equality. Gautama is curt or condescending, Maya childish or hysterical. This once again is essential to the theme ; but it fixes the relationship into a set pattern. Lengthy philosophic disquisitions and dialogues between the two, take the place of action, adding to the peculiar abstruseness of the novel. The fact of Maya's withdrawal comes in the way of providing sufficient human substance for Maya's consciousness to operate on. The friends, Leila and Pom-Pom, seem nominal presences. The device which arbitrarily introduces them to prove that "Once upon a time it had been a world peopled with friends as solid as shadows now were", seems to be a naivete not quite in keeping with the sophisticated conception of the theme. The Lals and the Sikh couple, Gautama's mother and his sister Nila, have greater structural relevance. The evening with the Lals and Sikh couple at the cabaret, besides being interesting in itself, is functional in indicating the state of

Maya's mind. The visit of Nila and her mother gives the ballast of reality to the theme of withdrawal. Maya's outing with her in-laws makes vivid the contrast between the world of nightmares and the busy, live world outside. The sense of Maya's alienation from the tangible, human world is communicated by a momentary connection with its activities. To Maya it is also a moment of perception. It reveals in a new light the emotional reserve of Gautama's family against which she had been prejudiced earlier. Their positive, bustling life offers a human relevance to the concept of detachment held up by Gautama. It is this contrast which makes substantial Maya's acute sense of the "grey"-ness of Gautama's world :

> They were sane people, sane, sane, and yet so much more human than my own husband.

Maya sees that they could have helped her out of her nightmare world, as even her own father could not, by imparting "some of that marvellous indifference to everything that was not vital, immediate and present." They represent that reality which could have impelled her towards normalcy. It is apt that Gautama's mother and Nila should take charge of her finally. (It is through their eyes that we see Maya in the concluding section of the novel.) Their poise in the face of a disturbing event; and their concern for Maya, who in spite of being the agent of the ghastly deed requires immediate tending, justify Maya's estimate of them in her moment of lucidity. It is ironic that her only available source of sustenance should come too late.

The shortcomings of the novel only show the difficulty of exploring in prose a state of spiritual confusion. *Cry, the Peacock* remains a remarkable attempt to fuse fantasy with perceptual experience. A distinctive feature of the book lies in its interest in imagery to embody moments of peception—an interest that seeks to add an extra dimension to the conventional organization of fictional material. The peculiar intensity of the feminine sensibility is imparted to its making. Images show a gathering potency, which

might be even better availed of by the novelist as she matures. Its claim to attention rests in its indication of possibilities. Its success—limited though it is—in working out the configuration of the inner world helps establish the subjective reality of being as the most crucial part of living. The ardent introspection of Maya marks a valuable introversion in Indian fiction. It points to a line of significant development—exploration not of the "social" man, but the lone individual.

3 The mode of inward-turning considered so far is traceable to a uniquely modern experience of the subjective reality of existence. It has a special relevance to the urban situation where community living has lost its original sanctity. In a group life that is losing its cohesiveness and identity, the inner world of the individual assumes significance as the only available basis of a quest for meaning. The playing down of the "social" implies the alienation of the modern individual who lives in a world apart. Maya's split self with its self-conscious questioning suggests, however remotely, the malaise of the modern man. In *Voices in the City* an attempt is made, perhaps for the first time in Indian fiction, to relate the subjective world of the individual to the spirit of a locale. The effort is to project place not only as milieu, but as a force wielding influence on the emotional being of men. In this it is different from some attempts in Indian fiction at individualising places—for instance, Kanthapura as a typical rural community convulsed by the freedom movement; or Malgudi as a step from the rural to the urban (which, however, is confined to the samll town ethos), affirming traditional values in the face of evil resulting from urban conditions of living. Kanthapura or Malgudi is a way of life, which imperceptibly shapes the attitudes of characters and decides the manner of their interaction. But Calcutta is much more: it is a complex experience disturbing in its import. The characters who come within its range of influence react directly to it, whereas the ethos of Kanthapura or of Malgudi is something perceived only

by their creators. What is new in Anita Desai is the effort to delineate a sensitivity to locale, as it operates within the consciousness of her characters.

We see this urban consciousness taking shape even in short stories written earlier than the novel. *An Examination* and *Mr. Bose's Private Bliss* succeed in capturing the rhythm of Calcutta life. *An Examination*, especially, brings Calcutta alive through a day in Pronab's life—in the morning commotion in a middle class Bengali joint family; the tram-rides where luck decides your location; the bold big girl in the opposite flat; the busy cocoanut vendor with a pleasantry to spare; "the congenial security, the conviviality of the coffee-house" sought by Pronab in gleeful indifference to the forthcoming examination; in the cinema where Pronab and his friends luxuriate in the luscious pathos of Anarkali's farewell song; in the teashops serving tea with big syrupy *rosgollas;* and in Pronab's wistful longings as the tram glides alongside the Maidan ("How I wish I lived here, had a little hut under the trees. It was typical of him, child of Calcutta, knowing no other place on earth than this mazed city of turbulence, to sigh, now and then, for the greenness, the gentleness of the country. And typical of him that he did not, of course, mean it. The street he lived in, the tram-lines, the butchers, the washing hanging over the balconies of the soot-black houses, that was the Calcutta he knew—and the Calcutta that was flesh of his flesh, soul of his soul. He could not have borne to be separated from it.") The play of a subtle humour in the unfolding of a typical day in the life of a student who both fears and forgets the ordeal to be faced, achieves a satisfactory interaction between the milieu and the fluctuations of Pronab's inner being. But *Voices in the City*, attempting something on a more ambitious scale, falls short of the task of integrating the different levels and qualities of awareness, with Calcutta as the central experience. However, the compelling manner of the attempt at formulating an urban consciousness gives Anita Desai an important place among Indian writers.

The stress on the subjective is evident in the plan of the

book. Three young people, sharing a blood kinship and similar destiny—Nirode, Monisha and Amla—intellectual and sophisticated, and unmistakable products of a westernised urban milieu, are brought into the city one by one. Through the impress of the city on these individuals and their associates, and the interplay of their particular emotional disturbances, is evolved a complex of experiences that is Calcutta.

Black is the colour crucial to the theme, even as white was in *Cry, the Peacock*. Emotions revolve round the ambivalence that darkness is. There is a persistent symbolism of the dark in connection with scenes, characters and experiences: "dark warehouses", "dark wintry evening", "sullen, prophetic queues at dark doorways", the anonymous crowd swelling and drifting in one "great black wave", "black squalor of the grimed city" ; "black-browed" Monisha, the depthless black eyes of the street singer, the dark, suave Jit behind guileful dark glasses ; and Nirode's vision seeping into him "like night turning my blood black". The overuse of the dark can be naive. Its stress is uncalled for as in the case of Jit—Monisha describing him after a perfunctory acquaintance as "the dark, sinuous, underground creature called Nair", or in the exaggeration of Dharma's and Nirode's words about Jit being possessed by black spirits and his touch being black. All the same black emerges as the natural colour of Calcutta. The city is projected into our vision either at night or in shadowy half-light or in the haze of the smog that envelops the city of chimney-pots and sooty wind or rain. The physically tangible quantity acquires an emotional significance in terms of the reactions of the different characters who come in contact with it.

It is through Nirode, who voluntarily chooses Calcutta as his destiny, that the "dark" theme gets expounded. Contrasting his failures with the "bright" successes of his brother Arun, Nirode opts for "shadows, silence and stillness". The river scene, as contemplated by Nirode, hints at the duality of "darkness". The "dark deck" on

which kneel a group of three Muslim boatmen in prayer, forms "a minute island of stillness in the profanity of the nocturnal life of a river of commerce" :

> ...Islands, too, were the small fishing boats moored to the bank, some *dark* with sleep, others sheltering a single oil lamp beneath a wicker cowl. On one fish-eyed prow a fisherman in a crimson lungi played upon his reed flute—tenderly, questingly. On the other bank the city continued to proclaim itself with neon and naphtha lights, with the muttering and sudden shrieks of machinery and the low growling of men—but it had nothing to do with the river, with these islands in the river. They belonged to the night, to the design of stars lost somewhere beyond the haze of the city smog, to the beating of Nirode's heart: their only sounds were those of low-toned prayer and the plaintive and exquisite music of the reed flute.
>
> On all sides the city pressed down, yet the river took one, enfolded and slid one away into the *dark, silently*. Nirode liked this sense of having an *unlit channel* flow through his veins, along which he could move in secrecy. [*my italics*]

The soothing dark of the fishing boats is set off by the profane dark of the city smog. The "low-toned prayer and the plaintive and exquisite music of the reed flute" are pitched against the shrieks of machinery and the low growling of men. The single oil lamp which accentuates the soothing dark is once again a contrast to the harsh neon and naphtha lights which proclaim the profanity of the nocturnal life of the city. The river gives Nirode a moment of communion with the dark silence, in a responding motion of an "unlit channel" flowing through his veins. At that moment it is possible for Nirode to retrieve himself as a traveller, accepting "the journeying as meaningful in itself." It is the search for the still dark, and the inability to find it amidst the overpowering oppressiveness of the other darkness that form the dominant motif of the novel.

Nirode's peculiar bond with Calcutta is established at the very outset. He is a dark being, acutely sensitive to the dark motions of the city. His "dark and demoniac dreams" partake of Calcutta, are Calcutta. Monisha is his soul-sister in her responses that sympathise with his. Through her we get a glimpse of another aspect of the "dark"ness of

Calcutta—the tiered balconies of the Bow Bazar house, "shutting out light and enclosing shadows like stagnant well water." This together with the umbrella-stand shaped idol, with "the black umbrellas like the offerings of pilgrims and worshippers", the "black, four-postered bed", the "gigantic black wardrobe", and the thick iron bars of the window, represent the stifling atmosphere of the joint family, whose aims and aspirations are so alien to the individualistic Monisha. "There is no diving underground in so over-populated a burrow" describes the constricting house as well as the city. She revolts against this darkness since it denies access to the other darkness she seeks between the stars :

...I'll have only the darkness. Only the dark spaces between the stars, for they are the only things on earth that can comfort me, rub a balm into my wounds, into my throbbing head, and bring me this coolness, this stillness, this interval of peace...

...I think that what separates me from this family is the fact that not one of them ever sleeps out under the stars at night, They have indoor minds, starless and darkless. Mine is all dark now. The blessing it is.

(It is significant that the dark space between the stars which had saddened Maya in *Cry, the Peacock*, should fascinate Monisha).

Sleep has nightmares. This this, empty darkness, has not so much as a dream. It is one unlit waste, a desert to which my heart truly belongs.

It is Monisha's tragedy that the "few moments of night silence" she so desperately seeks turn into "one unlit waste". She fears the street singer's emotions that "spread through her eyes like dark lakes", since they would "dissolve and disintegrate her into a meaningless shadow". It is the sense of her "traceless, meaningless, uninvolved" condition that drives her to seek a remedy, which she discovers too late as the flame she herself has struck devours her, is not what she had sought :

Heat seared her eyeballs, a great fog enveloped her, not the white one of dreams but black, acrid, thick—with her arms she wrestled with it, she fought it, it was not what she wanted...

The dark of death and dissolution, that both she and Nirode apprehend in the "city of Kali", is embodied in the "mass of black torment" which is all that remains of her face as Nirode glimpses it for the last time.

Though Amla shares the "dark ways of thinking and feeling" of her brother and sister, she is not a creature of the dark as they are. It is the non-esoteric manifestation of the black genius of the city that is available to her—as atmosphere or as "the underlit reality, incomplete life" of high society. Her dark vision in the race-course, of the city birds from the city of death swooping in a dark screen on the dying horse (the symbolic outsider) is an unconvincing attempt to introduce the esoteric element of the city of Kali into her experience. She recognises black as "the true colour of Calcutta". But she cannot grapple with the dark as do Nirode and Monisha, whether they succeed in commanding "the black wisdom" of Calcutta or not. She is essentially a creature of sunshine and colour, as is seen in her attempts to recapture the mountain quality of her childhood in Kalimpong in the pleasanter aspects of Calcutta (she is the only one in the book who thrills to a shower of rain or a sweet winter breeze in the city), or in the "curiously lustrous and isolated world" of the artist Dharma, to which she feels drawn. She realises that

...the luminous island she had visited, where goose feathers shone like white china and each fold of a rolled *pan* leaf was sharp in clarity, was only a portion of a dream-world, real only by reflection. It had not been illumined by the cheerful sun of her childhood but by the supernatural vision of those who live always underground, in the dark...

She could not rid herself of the sense that, however intangible, she belonged to it still, that she existed in the real world of the city only as an observer, that she could never truly inhabit it.

That is the crux of Amla's experience. She can at the most be aware of the presence of darkness, but it is not her

element. She can never enter into it with the exploring zeal of Nirode and Monisha. Monisha's death confirms this realisation :

> She knew she would go through life with her feet primly shod, involving herself with her drawings and safe people like Bose, precisely because Monisha had given her a glimpse of what lay on the other side of this stark, uncompromising margin.

White, which describes Dharma's world as Amla sees it, is also a recurring colour, though subdued in the design and present mainly to emphasize the predominant sense of the dark. White appears in conjunction with dark in the white embroidered caps of the Muslims praying on the dark deck : light, a variation on white, sets off the darkness throughout. Again, we have the "white-stained peace" of the old cemetery opposite Sonny's abode, "dark and uneasy" ; the tomb stones appear "white as sacred bulls in the black mire". As Nirode walks past with Jit, the city slides past them "in alternating cubes of white and black" ; the "beer- and Scotch-fed prosperity" of Jit glitters "darkly amidst the shabby off-white that was the rule in the coffee house" ; Aunt Lila's voice is cut into neat "black-and-white". And there are the Bengalis clad in white or off-white against a sooty background.

White is the vulnerable colour, in contact with black, though it defines with reference to Dharma and David, a quality that Nirode seeks in their company. The white house of Dharma (who is himself dark) protects the rural quiet of the interior from the raucous street outside. The pale Irish waif, David, in his white dress, breathes a message of gentleness and goodwill unlike the aggressive Nirode, though he too takes the traveller's path of non-attachment. Nirode's violent temper contrasts sharply with David's quiet submissiveness, especially during their temporary stay together as fellow-travellers. This perhaps is the only meaningful combination of "white" and "dark" in the book. "In place of this love that suffuses the white face of this mystic waif, we possess a darker, fiercer element—fear",

writes Monisha in her diary. Though Nirode is drawn to this self-effacing love, it is inadequate to answer the mystery of dark Calcutta, if we may so interpret the disappearance of David into Himalayan haunts. It is not the obvious solitude of the mountain that Nirode seeks, but the more meaningful silence drawn from the hard core of suffering and sordidness in the city. Nor can the apparent serenity of Dharma's escapist white world offer a solution, for even that turns out to be a world built on duplicity. That is the last cut of disillusionment, before the more energetic black of Calcutta asserts itself in Monisha's suicide.

CALCUTTA as city of commerce comes off fairly well. The hectic activity of the business world is present at the level of external detail—cranes working overtime at loading and unloading; the brightly lit *kebab* stall in a hubbub of business even at three o'clock in the morning, the vast confectioners stirring great cauldrons of milk while perspiration makes their bare torsos glitter metallically; the vendors calling their wares—earthen jugs shaped like birds, live chickens, shining steel cooking pots to be exchanged for old rags, and cheap toys made of bamboo splinters, feathers and paint; the overcrowded eating-houses; and the New Market crowd paying obeisance to their celestial benefactors, Ganesha and Lakshmi, in sickly white plaster figures painted orange and pink. Sometimes an exaggerated colouring is given by the imposition of the purely personal emotions of the characters. Monisha reflects :

> ...New Market that was once known, more appropriately, as Hogg Market ... Here they the celestial pair dwell, in these houses of cutthroat, eye-for-eye rapacity, of money greed and money ruthlessness, to bless those who fatten upon it, to bless them and not to forgive. There are no ethics in these houses of trade, anymore than there is anything aesthetic in the little plaster idols...

It seems to Amla that

> Mrs. Basu was a queen of unscrupulous commerce, that her clients were sharks and liars, that the round babies she [Amla]

drew got no benefit whatsoever from the gripe water she was advertising, that she was involved in a shady and unconscientious organisation, business and art.

The ethos of a corrupt commercial life is more objectively reflected in the social life of the "hard-drinking, golf-playing bourgeois boxwallah". The nocturnal life of dinners and dances dates back to the tradition initiated by the East India Company. Frequent attempts are made to recall the origin of the city of commerce from a murky past, and to present a sense of continuity in

> ...the city's gory history, of slow mortality, of the swamps that flank it, the corruption that rose from it in hissing odours and seeped first into the business houses, then into the rich houses that were founded upon these businesses, and the rag-and-thatch huts that huddled beneath the high walls, finally invading the tired and listless mind, then laying waste all that was fine and moral.

Nirode, contemplating the tombstones in the cemetery opposite Sonny's house, evokes the past :

> Merchants, generals, vegabonds and adventurers, their brass and gold turned green amidst their clavicles and pelvises, their swords and sabres corroded by rust. Young English roses seized once by glorious ambition and then finally, by dysentery —and so a career of balls and crinolines and harsh voyages ended.

Contrasting the streets she drives through, with those she sees from her house ("where past and present merge to form an unchanging sameness of trade"), Monisha ruminates :

> ...But here history lingers like a long twilight, and the streets and squares belong to another period that will never live again ...Large Victorian houses are screened by royal palms; the shuttered windows and lacy balconies make them look like houses in a once fashionable resort somewhere in Europe, grown very old and deserted long ago to the vicissitudes of soot-black rain and plaster-peeling sun. They suggest strange happenings behind their shutters, in spacious pillared halls—parties, perhaps, not ordinary parties, but parties to which ladies in crinolines are driven up in grand carriages by drivers wearing turbans; ladies who waltz and polka and flutter fans of lace and sandal-

wood; parties of people who lived long ago and died long ago, leaving behind only a few brass gongs and ivory elephants to descendants on grey British farms.

We have the modern version of Monisha's vision, bereft of its romance, in the party thrown by the accounts executives of Amla's advertising firm for their clients—"an annual affair to which the staff looked forward on account of the lavish entertaining for which the Basus were well known." The loud Mr. Basu (that "crater of commerce") acting the genial host, the mutual running down of colleagues, and the evening on the whole, "being noisily shredded into trivialities till they floated as thick and dry confetti—not coloured confetti, but newspaper, brown paper confetti—", concretise "the atmosphere of underlit reality, of incomplete life" which so overpowers Amla, making her feel "pleasure the most rotten sensation of all in this city." Jit's sardonic estimate of a set-up of which he himself is a part adds to irony of the situation :

"...A fine chap, McNab, he can stand his drink. Not very bright, never had much education—just grammar school and the Army—but a hard drinker. Hard drinkers are very much admired in Calcutta, Miss Ray. And those two young boys with him, laughing at his jokes, they are Bunty Dutt and Jimmy Chawla. Their real names are Biren and Jawahar, but the Englishmen in their office find such outlandish names hard to pronounce, so they've been given good, honest British pet names which they have accepted with alacrity. It's considered an informal kind of promotion, this baptism."

Jit is one of those characters in the book who help to define the milieu in which the protagonists of the novel find themselves :

Jim who had been the brilliant prodigy of a Southern university and had come to Bengal to assert himself amongst the renowned artists and *litterateurs* there, only to be lured, with astonishing lubricity, into a large, prosperous and benign British tea firm that so pampered and indulged him that he had to escape, every now and then, to the more bracing climate of the coffee house, notorious gathering-place of the displaced and dangerous literates of Bengal.

It is an interesting portrait of the boxwallah who does not wish to forego his comforts and expensive hobbies, but wants a protégé who can bolster up a sense of idealism he himself is not equal to. The shady life of compromises is completed by the drinking, fliting wife, Sarala (that "voluptuous porpoise of ebony flesh encased in green silk"), who runs away with an English colleague of Jit's.

Two other characters who vivify the decadent living which is Calcutta are Sonny and his father. They represent the wealthy landowners who in their heyday left the estates to sink into an unbelievable state of squalor, while they frequented Calcutta for spurts of dissipation. "Babulpur was there for my wife, and for the occasional visit to reassure the tenants, so to speak," proclaims Sonny's father with a loud guffaw. He becomes a memorable figure treating his son's friends, Nirode and David to a voraciously consumed repast at Firpo's and to reminiscences of the tinsel glories of his past. "Ensconced in the shabby elegance of another generation" (a figure of contrast to Nirode and David in the shabbiness of their beggarly apparel), the derelict zamindar gives a glimpse of a Calcutta of nautch-girls and their lecherous patrons. "Sonny's comes alive as he expatiates, over his whisky and soda (his "life saver" though forbidden by the doctor), the glories of the painted women he had idolised :

> If you hear the name of Jahanara—then bow, then bow low, place your head in the dust, because you will have heard the name of the most beautiful woman in the world, my friend.

And Sonny in his riding boots even ten years after the last of the family horses had been sold, is his pale shadow. Even when dispossessed of his ancestral property, he clings tenaciously to every vestige of a past opulence. Hospitable and friendly, used to a way of living which he cannot reach up to with his meagre income, over optimistic with cheerful plans for the future (even while being deceived by his solicitor with regard to his fishery project), Sonny finally joins Jit's firm. Even among the business crowd he remains a

quaint figure, guarding the ladies' handbags and apologising for not knowing how to dance. Calcutta which probably ruined his father, now absorbs the son.

The rootless, amorphous life lived in restaurants and eating-houses, night-clubs and way-side bars, tea, *paṇ* and aerated drink stalls; the hectic high society life parties and races—all capture the tempo of the city life. The mixed crowd (the South Indian Jit, the Bengali Bose, the Irish David, the displaced zamindar Sonny, and Nirode the self-styled "hermit crab") at the coffee house, that "notorious gathering-place of the displaced and dangerous literates of Bengal", come alive with a true Jhabvalian flavour :

> "More coffee?" he asked, and continued to ask as friends and acquaintances came jauntily in through the swing-doors, searched the humming crowds that were glued, like flies, to the sugar-sprinkled, coffee-stained wood-work, and then dragged their chairs up to Nirode's table—for as long as Nirode talked, it was his table, it did not matter if David paid the bill.

Anita Desai comes very near weaving in the texture of the city life into the fabric of the human psyche, in the scenes of assignation of Jit and Nirode. Notwithstanding a suggestion of exaggerated gestures, their meeting at Scheherazade to discuss the future of Nirode's successful *Voice*, is interesting as a glimpse into the nocturnal life of the city. The usual play of the sardonic which characterises their meetings, dissipates in the desultory atmosphere of the night club into Jit's lachrymose confessions of nostalgia for a past he had left behind in the south to marry a woman out of his community, and of the humiliation of a life of comforts and compromises. He urges Nirode, much to the latter's disgust, to keep *Voice* going just to fulfil by proxy Jit's sense of idealism. The reaction to Nirode's proposal that he take on Voice is weirdly real :

> Jit stood there with his mouth fallen open, his eyes bleared with alcohol and tears, his habitually smooth hair and silk scarf rumpled. The suave westernized gentleman in him had disintegrated into a dark unwholesome heap and Nirode instantly

knew this would never shape into anything at all, for there was no despair on that face, no agony of doubt and will, but merely an uncontrolled vacuum, a blank. He stammered, "B-but how can I?"

The nocturnal scene of Calcutta seems much more than a backdrop when seen against this "dark unwholesome heap".

AS SETTING, Calcutta is authentic enough. "The swarming apathy of Howrah", Chowringhee "with its festoons of blue street-lights", the bizarre presence of a blazing neon sign *Repent and Be Saved—Jesus Calls*, over the steps of a bar; China Town "with its narrow lanes that the pale gas lamps did little to illuminate", "thick with violet shadows and redolent of lard, uncured leather and open urinals, at its most pungent under the 'Commit No Nuisance' signs"; the little suburban train shrilling past, "hoot-toot-tooting a long and melancholy whistle"; and similar details make the Calcutta scene vivid. Vignettes of Calcutta living create the milieu; marshy Calcutta deluged by the monsoon—"the city..which now floated, now sank into the floodwater like a monster ark...motor cars and trams stranded hub-high in water...only a solitary rickshaw—heroically mobile amidst all the waterlogged vehicles—churned and splashed nobly through"; "a gang of clerks armed with umbrellas" attacking the bus and each other, "screaming and struggling as though to be left behind by it meant certain and horrible death in the rain"; the tired and bulging bus grinding through the city carrying "the congealed, swaying mass of damp clothes, greased black hair and the sullen apathy of clerks and shoppers, all pressed together into this airless cube on its mournful journey through the city"; "streets where slaughtered sheep hung beside bright tinsel tassels to adorn oiled black braids, and a syphilitic beggar and his entire syphilitic family came rolling down on barrows, like the survivors of an atomic blast, then paused to let a procession of beautifully laundered Bengalis in white carry their marigold-decked Durga—or Lakshmi, or Saraswati,

or Kali—on their shoulders down to the Ganges, amidst drums and fevered chanting".

In all these descriptions we find those aspects of the city which lend themselves to featuring by an interested tourist. Though they reveal a sensitivity to the ethos of a place, the approach of the outsider is easily identifiable in the scrupulous care for the minutiae of the setting. Never for a moment are we allowed to forget the backdrop. Behind the worried head of Sonny watching his father's alcoholic buoyancy at Firpo's, "a pink sunset flared over the blue, yellow and black traffic mingling chaotically on Chowringhee." Behind Nirode, treating Amla to cheap tea at a riverside café, "the menacing network of a ship's crane loomed cage-like". The landmarks that strike the passing visitor or the temporary resident are all there—Howrah, the Strand, Fort William, Chowringhee, Esplanade, Grand Hotel, Victoria Memorial, Cathedral park, Lakes, the Zoo, Belur Math, the Kali temple, New Market and the rest. Topographical knowledge is indicated in the descriptions of restaurants, eating-places, sweet-meat stores, tea and aerated drink stalls, bars of different kinds—Firpo, Mocambo, Scheherazade, Ta Fa Shun in China Town, Spence's Coffee House, riverside cafés on the Strand, bars frequented by sailors, *kebab* stalls and fly-ridden tea stalls serving black and acrid tea. The novelist's keen eye misses no detail—second hand bookstalls, high-walls of a jail; the "yellow bitch with long, slack teats swinging from her belly", nosing the litter of empty cigarette packets and bottle tops; "light-haired children in stately English prams" being wheeled out of the Cathedral park; the watchmen playing cards under "a mauve gaslight", their dice rattling like "small skulls"; the young man in a *dhoti* at a "marble-topped, spindle-legged table" in Girichand Ray and Grandsons Sweetmeat Store, consuming four earthen pots of sweet curds "before he came out smoothing a moustache with icicles of pink curd trembling upon it"; the young girls with "their soft bread faces and luxuriant hair falling pitch-black to their waists,

who lean over the balconies with tender smiles directed at imaginary lovers beneath, as they drape yards of wet *saris* over the railings to dry". No tangible experience that is likely to fall within the scope of a routine day is left out. The gift of phrase and the turn of thought bring alive particular facets of the city life. But right through we see a heavy reliance on a multiplicity of scenes to denote variety; on details of locale to give the feel of particularity; and on the appeal of the outlandish or the gruesome to suggest shady and sordid goings-on.

The tendency to substitute impressionism for a vital interaction between man and milieu, gives the most conclusive evidence of insufficiently formed material, notwithstanding the novelist's percipient eye. The reactions of Nirode, Monisha and Amla tend to fall into a recurrent pattern of cataloguing of externalities ending in an expression of the speculative and the romantic aroused by their observations:

> ...Calcutta was not merely the bazaars ringed by cinemas, slaughter-houses and *pan* booths, but also the history of those old Georgian houses that lined still, gaslit streets, their sweeping marble staircases and deep pillared verandas, their shuttered windows that seemed to enclose and hide their memories of the balls and crinolines and horsedrawn carriages of a hundred and two hundred years ago. The city was as much atmosphere as odour, as much a haunting ghost of the past as a frenzied passage towards early death. ("*Nirode*")

> ...Trams are burnt, the bonfire given a strong meaty savour by a roasting tram conductor or two, and an old crone who, like me, stands watching, leans over and vomits...
>
> Cheerful, cheerful Calcutta...the busy passage of uncles who work in Writer's Building and come home to discourse, heatedly and verbosely, on Bengal's rampant Communism and the high price of fish; the street outside the house with its jolly madmen, magicians, marriage processions, coconut vendors and pink and green and faded walls bleeding with virulent film posters and bristling with such felicitous signboards as "Needlefight; Tailoring Suiting"; ...An occasional visit to the rooftop where Nikhil and his friends and cousins fly kites and pigeons, and I watch a sunset that is all ashes and roses, poetry and flame.

But it is swamped by smog and the stars that follow it are pale with tuberculosis. ("*Monisha*")

At every turn, on every road, the city thrust its ugly apathy at her like a beggar thrusting his mutilated hand through the window and laughing because he knew she must pay him her conscience money. Everywhere there was the tip-tilted rubbish bin, the nude child playing in an open drain, ...Everywhere the sullen, prophetic queues at dark doorways that bore signboards celebrating Ayurvedic Eye Specialists, Urinary and Venereal Disease Specialists, Lady Gynaecologists and World-Famous Homeopaths. Everywhere traders sat beneath their plaster idols of Ganesha and Lakshmi, fiddling about their nostrils with thoughtful enjoyment....Amla watched, straining her eyes, watched to see what else there was besides this want of care, this want of will. She saw no glimmer, no shade, no sound of love. Did love exist here at all? Was it only a bitter farce of extortion, like the willed mutilation of his hand by the desperate, mocking beggar?...

("*Amla*")

The city is very often tagged on to the emotions of the characters. The extreme subjectivism of impressions often injures the writing:

Bottles of virulent rose and orange soda stared back at him, glassily insulting.

Wedding marquees shivered in stripes of red and white bunting, and blue neon tubing, and within them the *shehnai* wailed of the folly of man in endeavouring to perpetuate his name.

The sensitivity of the characters which could have been better utilised is frittered away in the cataloguing of the city scenes. Monisha is sent on a sightseeing trip, to record among other things, a special "feature" of Calcutta—the refugees at Sealdah:

The rickshaw coolie, the street sweeper, the tanner, the beggar child with his limbs cut off at the joints, the refugee who litters the platforms of Sealdah Station with his excrement and offspring—they share one face, one expression of tiredness, such overwhelming tiredness that even bitterness is merely passive and hopelessness makes the hand extend only feebly, then drop back without disappointment. Two faces—one rapacious, one weary—gaze at me from every direction.

The response is authentic, but somewhat irrelevant in the

sense of not being organically connected with the main plot. It could have been any outsider's reaction.

It is in terms of the reactions of individuals to it that a locale becomes a reality. But unless the life of the place is seen entering intimately into the emotional being, the reaction is in danger of turning into attitudinising. In fact, Nirode very often remains an attitude. He seems to have, as David puts it, "simply stacks of undesirable words" to his credit. His venomous expressions towards practically everybody in the novel seem affected. There is a touch of exoticism even about his life in the "fifteen-rupees-a-month shack, with its cockroaches and its corrugated iron roof baking in the sun." It is true that one cannot imagine an apter background than Calcutta for his stance of revolt against the smothering love of his mother and against bourgeois respectability. The city with all its complexity and sordidness forms the right testing ground for the kind of freedom he seeks from stifling human entanglement. But he himself proves inadequate. His activities seem nominal, since we hardly see him engaged in his enterprises—(as editor, as writer and as book seller), or in his wrestle with destructive experience. They are usually reported or presented as flashbacks. The city as challenge is not fully realised owing to the paucity of the "positive" in Nirode. His nihilistic stance is detrimental to participation. We never see him in direct contact with the raw of Calcutta life, as might be expected of a person who has so ferociously renounced the advantages of his class to know life in all its nakedness. We see him consorting mostly with the "Park Street riff-raff" and "knobby-kneed apes" he so vociferously denounces. It is only in terms of them that Calcutta life acquires particularity as context. The Calcutta of the clerks, coolies, vendors, beggars, dhobies, watchmen, sailors and others, remains more or less an exotic background. It is significant that no close-ups of the "popular" Calcutta are attempted. In such a context the identification of Nirode with Calcutta in the following terms seems unwarranted:

> For one drink, following upon a day of such intensity, had made Nirode transparent, revealed inside him the arterial network that now spread and grow on a plane slightly above that of Calcutta's tumultuous roofscape, but attached to it by countless wires, telegraph poles, chimneys, pigeon-roosts—one vast tangled net of Bengali loquacity, quick Bengali emotion and fluency, his natural anarchism, his unbalance and inconsistencies, his dark and demoniac dreams that grovelled mostly in the grossness of the city, its shapeless, colourless and grim old houses and slums, then heaved up, like the radio aerials and pigeon-roosts that collected the fuzz of smog on the roofs, and now and then rose and fled like a scattering of mother-of-pearl pigeons into a forbidding sky.

It is typical of the novel that the writing should lose momentum in a striving after internal effects within a sentence, when the situation fails.

Even in Monisha's case there is not the particularity that we might reasonably expect. Her diary communicates just that much as is accessible to an outsider, just enough to make plausible her claustrophobia and an oppressive sense of lack of privacy. One cannot help feeling that, to some extent, Nirode's nihilism and choice of isolation, and Monisha's uninvolvement are convenient screens to the inability of the author to let her characters go further than they actually do, since she herself cannot follow them into the inner recesses of nocturnal Calcutta or the cloistered Calcutta of a Bengali middle class joint family.

It is Amla's area of experience that seems to be most under control and least contrived. The symbolic burden sits lightly on her, since the integration between her responses to the city and her emotional relationships is more satisfying. The disillusionment of the youthful wonder and excitement with which she arrives in the city, is made concrete in terms of disappointing personal relationships. She is appalled by the change that the city has wrought in Nirode and Monisha, turning them into strangers. And her own experiences as the modern career girl prove frustrating. She has only her memories of Kalimpong to fall back on. The joy of the first shower of monsoon in the city finds

her recreating that world in colour. The genuine thrill of her response to the rain makes vivid, the private vision of a colourful world she tries to protect from the "foul" touch of the "grey" city:

> She was frowning in an excess of care, hesitation and mother love over this gracile, patter-footed, whisper-voiced little world that seemed to have shot down the central channel of a smooth green plantain leaf, on a stream of rainwater, to land with a splash on her windowsill, when Nirode came in. She was so intent, the rain so lulling, she did not hear him walk up the long veranda, and only when he spoke to her did she sit up into a L of still fright and immediately, by reflex action, span her hands protectively over her private vision.

Her involuntary gesture of defensive secrecy brings out the desire for withdrawal that the city enforces, since openness only means vulnerability. Her recoil from the city is particularised in terms of the perverse turn it has given to Nirode's nihilistic goal and Monisha's ideal of detachment as taught by the *Gita*. The recurrence of this theme of the ideal state of detachment in Anita Desai's works is interesting. It was one of Maya's preoccupations in *Cry, the Peacock*. Her natural eagerness for reciprocation is frustrated by her brother and sister whom the city has estranged from her. Her sense of horror at their lack of compassion is made real in her visit to Nirode's bookshop and in Monisha's visit to her aunt's—Amla wants to clarify the mixed feeling of interest and unease that the meeting with Dharma has created and naturally turns to the two nearest of kin. But Nirode's revolting language directed against love with reference to their mother, horrifies her. And Monisha's apathy is even more disturbing. She comes in response to Amla's invitation to tea, but drags in Jiban and Bun Bun, to avoid exchange of confidences. In little touches like these Anita Desai makes a particular emotional state vivid.

Amla's most shattering experience is her relationship with Dharma, that enigma associated with the city. It is the closest study of a human relationship in the book, and

conceived in terms that only an Anita Desai can imagine. The love between an artist and his model, instead of being given the usual stereotyped treatment, is subtilised into another medium—painting. The whole course of their emotional interaction is traced through the different stages of the revolutionary change in Dharam's technique and concerns. His interest in the intricate designs of the vegetable world seems to change overnight into an interest in the human subconscious shaped by the individual's dreams. Amla's transparency, so rare in the city, stirs him:

> She is the one person who dived under that wily, powerful city of yours, and stumbled upon my lost underworld.

She leads him back to the city which he had loved and rejected. But his interest in Amla is impersonal and self-centred. He cannot respond to her yearning for communion. And the model in thrall, is both fascinated and terrified by the vivisection of herself on the canvas.

The complex of experiences conceived in terms of another medium, reveals the peculiar strength and sophistication of Anita Desai's introvert writing. But the shortcomings are revealed in the tendency to explication due to an inability to find factual equivalents. Dharma comes nearest the depiction of the enigma that is Calcutta, in the self-centredness that goes with a magic that draws Nirode and Amla to him. He is the one permanent inhabitant whose love and rejection of Calcutta could have given substance to the dual personality of the city, which has produced him. But his actual connection with the city is tenous. He lives away from the city and refers to it only in reminiscence. The reasons for his leaving the city are shrouded in mystery, only to be followed by the anticlimax of his confession to Amla, that he had left the city in deference to social prejudices that must take effect subsequent to the elopment of his daughter with his nephew. The revelation which shows the unique Dharama as only a part of the petty-minded bourgeois world, to which he returns eventually, seems a

clumsy attempt at establishing his duplicity and identifying it with that of the city.

A FAILURE to integrate disparate interests results in a clash of varying modes of perception and writing. In pieces like Monisha's references to ink bottles hurled in the West Bengal Assembly and to examination students overturning their desks, the contemporary and the immediate are present as raw material without being transmuted into the stuff of fiction. The numerous references to Bengal and the Bengalis show by their tone the presence of the novelist as commentator. The "smart" phrase of the reportage somehow produces a discrepancy of tone since it does not coalesce with the introvert kind of writing that Anita Desai is interested in. It often seems a distraction from her more serious preoccupation. Social life in the city is available to Anita Desai most at the level of the comedy of manners or with a surface pathos, as of the refugees at Sealdah. Scenes like those in the coffee house or at the Basus', characters like Sonny's father, cross-lights of the Calcutta scene, are effective at an essentially non-esoteric level. The areas of experience that the three main characters command are not adequate for a portrayal, from the inside, of the "dark" of Calcutta. The characters who are to perform the symbolic and philosophic function do not have the necessary equipment. When the novelist fails to create situations that can generate the required emotion, she has frequent recourse to emoting:

> Do you hear me, city of Calcutta? City of Kali, goddess of Death?

The esoteric of Calcutta needs for its definition an intimate knowledge of Bengali life which has given the city its peculiar character as the city of Kali. A remarkable homogeneity of the multitude that forms Calcutta—a homogeneity that is a striking contrast to the more cosmopolitan bent of other metropolitan cities, is bypassed or perfunctorily dealt with in the references to the Bengali who flits across the dark scene in his white or off-white garb:

...fish-hungry Bengal...

...one of those vast, soft, masses-of-rice Bengali women with a bunch of keys at her waist and nothing in her head but a reckoning of the stores in her pantry, and nothing in her heart but a stupid sense of injury and affront...

...fat, well-greased Bengali...

...Rabindranath Tagore. Ah, only the Bengali's wish fulfilment, that was Tagore...

...the typically Bengali combination of intense romanticism and ineffectual discontent...

These may be authentic impressions of the outsider who sees everything only in silhouettes. But the strong suggestion of prejudice and lack of involvement injures the more serious intentions of the writer.

The only character in the book who has access to the inner life of the Bengali, suffers from a serious delimitation. Monisha's reaction to the stolid and unimaginative family into which she is married, has validty within her terms of reference. As a westernised, sophisticated individual with an intellectual bent, she recoils form a way of living which nullifies her inclinations and values. But even the obvious signals of constriction—the iron-barred windows and tiered balconies that close in on the inmates; and the milieu of a joint family which provides no privacy:

Even my own room, which they regarded at first as still bridal, now no longer is so (the tubes are blocked, it is no good), and sisters-in-law lie across the four-poster, discussing my ovaries and theirs. Kalyani *di* throws open my wardrobe in order to inspect my *saris*. "How many?" and sees—my books. To my perplexity, she laughs. She says "I got a hundred and eleven", and I am no longer perplexed: I see that of course she cannot know that there is nothing to laugh at in Kafka or Hopkins or Dostoyevsky or my Russian or French or Sanskrit Dictionaries. But I wish they would leave me alone, sometimes, to read.

It is significant that close-up pictures of Monisha's life within the Bow Bazar house are avoided. With regard to the other Bengali famil—namely, Dharma's—an air of mystery envelops the house. (The silent Gita Devi is striking in her appearance and non-appearance, but that is all.

The silent suffering of Gita Devi, who had been a passive partner in the harshness of her husband to their daughter, is perhaps part of the treatment of the parent-child relationship and of the cult of the Mother—a peculiarity of Bengal. But the remoteness of Dharma's reminiscence and the contrived identification of Amla, who is herself involved in a disturbing parent-child relationship, with the daughter who had been shut out by the parents, make the episode an ineffectual element in the whole scheme.) Nirode and Amla do not have access to the interior of Dharma's household. On the whole the three characters through whose consciousness the Bengali life is projected, remain alienated.

Anita Desai tries to exploit the popular traditions of the city in the use of the street singer in the last section—"Mother"—to build up the image of the city of Kali which is the crux of the nihilistic experience of the book. In Monisha's vision of the dual manifestation of "the uncompromising harshness of the professional hermaphrodite" and "the Eternal Mother, a face ravaged by the most unbearable emotions of woman, darkened and flayed and scarred by them, giving that large mouth a tortured and pitiful downthrust, and the terrible black eyes an eternally unfulled promise of vision, of understanding of boundless love", we have fairly successful blending of the realistic and the symbolistic. The tendency to romanticize is there in lines like:

> On what ground did those emotions rain their fire?... On her worship or the goddess Kali? This woman had slit throats and drained blood into her cupped hands. She had bathed and soaked in the sweat of lust.

But there is in the description of the singer and the spell her song casts on her listeners, just that touch of authenticity which makes the street scene evocative. The ravaged face of the woman partakes of the quality of Kali Mai and of her unrelenting city.

A more intensive attempt is made to bring out the peculiar creative-destructive potential of the city of Kali by exploiting the cult of the Mother through the presence of a

human mother, as character and shaping influence. The aim seems to be to identify the destructive element in human relationships with the destructive forces at work in the black city. The past as Mother and the present as the City appear to be one identical force compelling the individual down a nihilistic path. But the substantiation in human terms is most inadequate. We hear of the mother in her paradisiacal retreat, Kalimpong, the mountain quality of which is a running contrast to the grimy city. It is from her half-Nepalese origin that her children have inherited the outcaste blood which makes them aliens in the city. We are told of the failure of marriage of the parents and of the mother's contempt for the father. We also get in the ruminations of the children a glimpse of their Calcutta life. Amla wonders if her mother threw parties similar to that of the Basus, for father's business friends. Aunt Lila describes her foster sister as "airy and flighty" and accuses her of escaping to her mountain top, "too busy looking after her orchids" to give a thought to what the children are going through. Nirode, most venomously, and Monisha, more subduedly, refer to the possessiveness of the mother. Even Amla who is receptive to the beauty and grace of her mother has reservations about her. However, Nirode's estrangement from his mother, following the death of his father in an automobile accident, his recoiling from her as a creature victimising men, seem excessive emotions of a reactionary adolescent. Neither the letters from the mother nor the innumerable reports of her, substantiate Nirode's vicious attacks and Monisha's cryptic reply to Amla who expresses her desire to be independent: "Of mother? It is easier not to be." What Amla says about her making "a fetish of motherhood" seems a mere idea. The mother's importance in the lives of her children for better or worse is not made convincingly real in the reports and reminscences which take the place of actual enactment. Her sudden emergence as a spiritual symbol from such a background is not dramatically valid. In fact, the last section seems an arbitrary imposition of the esoteric, on material that is essentially non-esoteric.

Anita Desai has the cinematographer's skill in seizing the moment that comes home with a deep impact. The meeting of Nirode and his mother at the airport is one such. Against the background of Monisha's suicide, and the change it has wrought in Nirode who now looks forward to a reunion with the mother he had shunned hitherto, the mother's gesture of rejection is dramatic.

But when she begins to stretch it into neat symbolic patterns, the joints show:

...She no longer needed him, nor other children. She was a woman fulfilled—by the great tragedy of her daughter's suicide—and it was, he saw, what she had always needed to fulfil her: Tragedy. Her life so far had been a dazzling sketch, executed with skilful flourishes, a matter of fine, dashing lines, of hints of vibrant colour—mahogany and gold and fascination. But incomplete, without a background... Now Monisha's death had brought the shades and depth of the most appropriate possible background flooding in—a mass of darkness, abundant with shadows and hints of distant light, which gave this brief sketch of herself a breadth, a philosophic dimension and a lovely, whispering mysteriousness filled with the murmurs of subsiding tragedy: its great weeping, its long preparation, its awesome climax. She was no longer a woman thwarted, but a magnificent portrait, a figure, calm and pale, in a great tragedy.

At least this has the fascination of an isolated portrait. But the further imaginings of Nirode which identify her with Kali, are far-fetched:

Nirode imagined that on that day twilight fell early in order that the city might darken itself and not intrude upon her grief. As they drove through it, he saw lights flower out of the dirt and shadows, as if people lit *divas* in honour of her. She was their goddess, unseen, but instinctively acknowledged by dwellers of huts and tenements along the great streets of Calcutta. He imagined he heard drums throbbing beneath the cacophony of traffic, and the wailing and chanting of hymns dedicated to her exalted presence. Lights swam through the smoke and night like proferred garlands. Loftily, she paid no attention at all.

"She is Kali," cried, "Amla, I know her now. She is Kali, the goddess and the demon are one...

Mother, mother—Kali is the mother of Bengal, she is the mother of us all. Don't you see, Amla, how once she has given birth to us, she must also deal us our deaths?...

...She is not merely good, she is not merely evil—she is good and she is evil... She is reality and illusion, she is the world and she is *maya*... Monisha dead. I am sentenced to death, too, now.. I have heard her approach—death, Kali... I am so *stretched*, so open to this vision, I can feel it seep into me, like night, like night turning my blood black."

Nirode the insistent prophet is as unconvincing as Nirode the cynic. The exposition of the "dark" theme fails at the crucial point of the dual manifestation of "black". It is as much due to the inadequacy of the formulating situation as to a want of subtlety in presentation. Monisha's death which is the pivotal point of the symbolic design is not strong enough to sustain the structure. Her suicide is as much a result of her own morbid nature and emotional insufficiency as the result of her uncongenial surroundings. Hence it weakens as a symbol of an awareness of death. It is essentially a failure in correlating the inner world of the individual with the spiritual forces operating in the universe.

4 Anita Desai's writing clearly indicates the new direction that Indian fiction is taking in the hands of the third generation of urban writers. The evocations of Calcutta show a sensitivity to the spirit of a place, which is a valuable quantity in fictional experience. Some of the descriptions show an imaginative awareness that can grasp the hint of deeper forces at work behind the facade. The attempt to extend vision beyond the present into the past, to gather the line of growth of a place as character, indicates a depth of interest—an interest that aims at integration of human experience—past and present, outer and inner. Finally the symbolic intention of the novel in aiming to get at the basic through the particular, to project a fundamental truth of existence through the image of Calcutta, shows a kind of seriousness that is specially valuable to Indian fiction. Notwithstanding its intractability, the material hints at a gathering density of intellectual and metaphysical

content that is lacking in the more common holding-up-the-mirror-to-society kind of novels.

The new stresses, the new influences, the changing contours of experience—all point at fresh demands made on the resources of the writer. We see a corresponding sophistication in the manner of conceiving and realising the theme. We have travelled a long way from the naive conflicts of the good and the bad, the progressive and the conservative, the individual and the society—depicted in the nineteenth century fiction. If the characters are any indication of the general trend, we see greater sophistication in the characters of these novels. It is a far cry from Toru Dutt's Bianca and Marguerite to Anita Desai's Maya, Monisha, and Amla. It is the turning inwards of Indian fiction that has made possible the change in the mode of development of even similar themes—for instance, of man-woman relationship. A long distance has been traversed from Marguerite's love for Count Dunois or for Louis, to Maya's love for Gautama, or Amla's for Dharma. The focus of interest has shifted from girlish romance to a more complex search for value in human relationship. Even the terms of local development have changed—the incompatibility of Maya and Gautama delineated through imagery and colour symbolism ; and the peculiar involvement of Amla and Dharma highlighted in terms of another medium, painting. These terms of representation seem far removed from the romantic meetings in gardens or on river-sides ; ecstatic outpourings of lovers, sometimes interspersed with quotations—devices frequent enough in the precursors in the field of Indian fiction. It is the increasing complexity and sophistication of the post-Independence heroine that indicates the subtle growth of the novel form towards being a mature mode of evaluation. It is a deliberate growing away from a debased tradition of fiction as romance to a more meaningful wrestle with reality.

Writers Workshop Books

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Paul Jacob : *Sonnets, Alter Sonnets* (Rs 10 each)
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R. H. Lesser : *Inidan Mosaic* (Rs 25)
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R. R. Menon : *Dasavatara & Other Poems* (Rs 12) ; *Seventyseven Poems* (Rs 25)
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Mokashi-Punekar : *The Pretender, An Epistle to David McCutchion* (Rs 10 each), *P. Lal ; An Appreciation* (Rs 12)
Mohinder Monga : *Through the Night Raptly* (Rs 10)
Tapati Mookerji : *The Golden Road to Samarkand* (Rs 10)
R. K. Narayanaswamy : *Unreal Past & Other Poems* (Rs 10)
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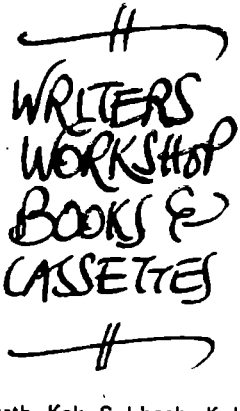

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WRITERS WORKSHOP CALCUTTA INDIA

In 1980 Writers Workshop completes twenty-two years of uninterrupted existence devoted to the cause of Indian Writing in English, in the belief that only imaginative writing of quality by Indians will enable the English language to play a significant role in India's cultural ethos. This belief gives impetus to the important long-term mission of the Workshop, pursued quietly and continuously, without recourse to any political means, to convince the elected representatives of the people of India that English is one of the Indian languages and, as such, deserves to be included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution with the other recognised languages of India. Therefore, its publishing focuses on English creative and transcreative work by Indians, or such work by foreigners as deals with, or is inspired by or has relevance for Indian life and culture. This up-to-date new checklist of its publications from 1958 to 1979 reflects the increasingly supple and varied use of modern English as a creative medium by Indians.

The Workshop believes serious creative writing deserves attractive printing and binding. In its early years it pioneered slim elegantly-produced paper-backed poetry editions, which are now collector's items. It switched to handloom-bound hardbacks when its fiction and belles-lettres titles increased. WW hardbacks are now restricted to limited — often autographed — expensive editions only. In 1970 it introduced a new concept in publishing — flexibacks. These are fastidiously hand-sewn limp-cloth sari-bound gold-embossed flexible editions offering hardback durability and "book-feel" at popular paperback prices. From 1976 all WW books are issued encased in removable clear-vinyl protective dust-jackets. Instead of glossily hiding mediocre mass-produced binding — the common 20th-century practice — the Workshop reveals the beauty of the hand-binder's art by using only a slim title-flap on both hardbacks and flexibacks. All Writers Workshop books have a uniform size — demy 8vo [$8\frac{1}{2}\times5\frac{1}{2}$ in.] — with the exception of Blackbird comics, which are 11×9 in. The Workshop won the 1st Prize in the National Printing & Binding Awards (1970) of the Government of India ; the volume cited on the plaque was William Hull's *Visions of Handy Hopper* (Book 2). Subsequently it won an award for Jai Nimbkar's *The Lotus Leaves and Other Stories*. New Workshop ventures are the Sunbird Literary Cassettes and LPs and the Gurubird textbooks series.

Visitors to the Workshop's Sunday morning sessions have included Mulk Raj Anand, W. Norman Brown, Pearl Buck, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, Paul Engle, Allen Ginsberg, Gunter Grass, Geoffrey Hill, William Hull, Christopher Isherwood, Donald Keene, James Laughlin, C. C. Mehta, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Santha Rama Rau and Karan Singh.

Writers Workshop books are published by P. Lal from 162/92 Lake Gardens, Calcutta 700045 (Phone 46-8325). A full set of WW titles is available for reference for the benefit of Calcutta residents in the Reading Room of the South India Club, 70B Hindustan Park, Calcutta 700029. Prices in this Checklist will apply from January 1979; they are subject to change without any previous notice.

Poetry: Redbirds

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Adamson, J. J. *The Blue Dragon* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1979*
Agarwal, Bina *Monsoon & Other Poems* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1976*
* Agnihotri, V. K. *In India & Other Poems* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1972*
Ahmed-ud-Din, F. *This Handful of Dust* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1974*
Ahmed-ud-din, Feroz *Passage to America* (H Rs 30 F Rs 10) *1979*
Alexander, Meena *The Bird's Bright Ring* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1976*
Alexander, Meena *Without Place* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1978*
* Ali, Agha Shahid *Bone-Sculpture* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1972*
Ali, Agha Shahid *In Memory of Begum Akhtar* (H Rs 20 F Rs) *1979*
* Alkazi, Roshen *Seventeen Poems* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1975*
* Alkazi, Roshen *Seventeen More Poems* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1970*
Allen, Margaret *Sonnets* (for private distribution only) *1975*
* Ansell, Thomas *The Many-Coloured Mantle* (H Rs F Rs 10) *1975*
Ansell, Thomas *A String of Pearls* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1977*
Aziz, Nasima *One More* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1975*
* Balasubrahmanyam, V. *Verses* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1971*
* Balasubrahmanyam, V. *Prose with Verse* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1972*
* Bantleman, Lawrence *Graffiti* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) Preface : P. Lal *1962*
* Bantleman Lawrence *Kanchanjanga* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1967*
* Bantleman, L. *Man's Fall & Woman's Fall-out* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1964*
* Bantleman, Lawrence *New Poems* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1967*
* Baltholomew, Richard *Poems* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1973*
* Bartholomew, R. *Story of Siddhartha's Release* (H Rs 20 F Rs 8) *1972*
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* Bhagavan, M. R. *Poems* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1964*
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Urdu/tr. and annotated by C. M. Naim

Ghalib, Mirza *Lighter Verses* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1972*
Urdu/tr. by C. M. Naim

* Ghalib, Mirza *Love Poems* (H Rs 15 F Rs 10) *1971*
Urdu/tr. by P. Lal

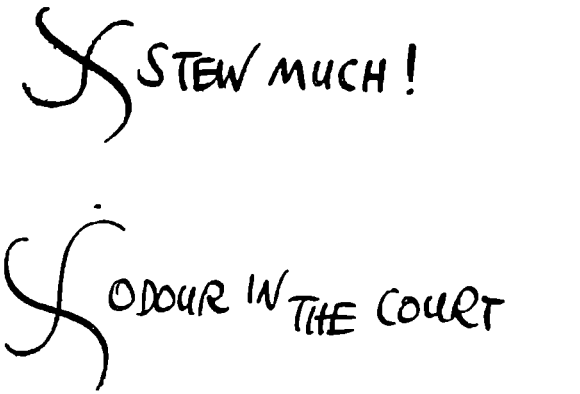
* Govindagraj *Poems* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1968*
Gujarati/tr. by Suniti Namjoshi & Sarojini Namjoshi

Islam, Kabirul *Poems* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1979*
Bengali/tr. by Ketaki Kusharl Dyson

Jap-ji : *Volume 1* (H Rs 15 F Rs 10) *Volume 2* (H Rs 15 F Rs 10)
Panjabi/tr. by P. Lal *1966/1969*

Jotwani, Motilal (ed.) *Modern Sindhi Poetry* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1979*
Sindhi/tr. by Motilal Jotwani

Jacket-flap design by Paritosh Sen for Bengali Poems on Calcutta



Titles of some poems in Sukumar Ray's Nonsense Rhymes

Karandikar, Vinda *Trimurti : Three Major Poems* (H Rs 25 F Rs 10) *1979*
Marathi/tr. by Vinda Karandikar (with A. K. Ramanujan)

Karandikar, Vinda *A Matter of Moods* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1979*
Marathi/tr. by Vinda Karandikar (with A. K. Ramanujan)

* Mahapatra, Sitakant *Quiet Violence* (H Rs 15 F Rs 10) *1970*
Oriya/tr. by Sitakant Mahapatra

* Mahapatra, Sitakant *The Other Silence* (H Rs 15 F Rs 10) *1973*
Oriya/tr. by Sitakant Mahapatra

Mahapatra, Sitakant *The Jester* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) *1979*
Oriya/translated by various hands

Maitreyi Devi *Aditya Marichi*/bilingual edition/*1972*
Bengali/tr. by Shyamasree Devi/for private distribution only

Mirabai *The Devotional Songs of Mirabai* (H Rs 60 F Rs 15) *1973*
Rajasthani/tr. and introduced by Shreeprakash Kurl

Nammalvar *Tiruviruttam : Love Divine* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) 1979
Tamil/tr. and introduced by Prema Nandakumar

Pampatti *Dance, Snake ! Dance !* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1976*
Tamil/tr. and annotated by David Buck

* Ray, Sibnarayan *Autumnal Equinox* (H Rs 30 F Rs 10) *1973*
Bengali/tr. by Sibnarayan Ray and others

Ray, Sukumar *Nonsense Rhymes* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1970*
Bengali/*Abol Tabol*/transcreated by Satyajit Ray

Roy, Ram Mohan *The Complete Songs* (H Rs 40 F Rs 10) *1973*
Bengali/*Brahma-Sangit* tr. and introduced by Nikhiles Guha

* Roy, Tarapada *Where to, Tarapada-babu ?* (H Rs 30 F Rs 10)
Bengali/tr. by Shyamasree Devi & P. Lal

Sen, Samar *The Complete Poems* (H Rs 35 F Rs 20) *1970*
Bengali/tr. and introduced by Pritish Nandy

* *Some Kannada Poems : A Selection* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1974*
Kannada/tr. by A. K. Ramanujan & M. G. Krishnamurthi

Servagna *The Offsprings of Servagna* (H Rs 40 F Rs 15) *1975*
Kannada/tr. by G. S. Sharat Chandra

Singhi, B. M. *Echoes of Eternity* (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) *1978*
(Note by Rabindranath Tagore ; Preface by S. K. Chatterji)
Hindi/tr. by Savita Saigal

Some Post-Independence Bengali Poems (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1961*
Bengali/selected & tr. by Pradeep Banerjee

Staying is Nowhere : A Selection (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1975*
Kondh & Paraja Folk Songs/tr. by Sitakant Mahapatra

* Tagore, Rabindranath *Tagore's Last Poems* (H Rs 12 F Rs 10) *1972*
Bengali/*Shesh-Lekha* tr. by Shyamasree Devi & P. Lal

Tagore, Rabindranath *A Bunch of Tagore Poems* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1966*
Bengali/tr. by Monika Varma

The Empty Distance Carries . . . Tribal Poems (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) *1972*
Munda & Oraon/tr. and introduced by Sitakant Mahapatra

* Tilak, Balagangadhara *The Song of the Cosmos* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1975*
Telugu/tr. and introduced by S. S. Prabhakar

* Varma, Shrikant *Otherwise & Other Poems* (H Rs 40 F Rs 10) *1972*
Hindi/tr. by Vishnu Khare & others

Vimal, G. P. *No Sooner & Other Poems* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1979*
Hindi/transcreated by Rattan Chouhan and others

अभीक्ष्णं मण्डलाभोगः स्तनानामेव शोभते / येषामुपेत्य सोत्कम्पा राजानोऽपि करप्रदाः ॥

हन्तु नाम जगत्सर्वमविवेकि कुवद्भ्रमम् /
प्रायः स्तनतटीभूमिः प्रकामफलदायिनी /

प्राप्तश्रवणयोरक्ष्णोर्न मुक्तं जन्मभारणम् ॥
यस्थाग्रे करं दत्त्वा योज्यते नखलाङ्गलम्

तन्वङ्गीनां स्तनौ दृष्ट्वा शिरं कम्पयते युवा /
नव तन्वि स्तनावेतौ कुर्वाते विग्रहं गुरुम् /

तयोरन्तरसंलग्नां दृष्टिमुत्पाटयन्निव ॥
अन्योन्यमण्डलाक्रान्तौ नक्षत्रसंधी नृपाविव ॥

नपुंसकमिति ज्ञात्वा तं प्रति प्रहितं मनः / रमते तत्र तत्रैव हता धाणिनिना वयम् ॥

Poetry : *Saffronbirds*
TRANSCREATED FROM CLASSICAL INDIAN LANGUAGES

Antoine, Robert (tr.) *Kalidasa's "Dynasty of Raghu"* (HRs60FRs20) *1972*
Sanskrit / A complete sloka-by-sloka version

* Das, Deb Kumar (tr.) *A Discourse on the Self* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1970*
Sanskrit / From Sankaracharya

Das, Deb Kumar (tr.) *On Exploring Reality* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1976*
Sanskrit / The Jabala and Paingala Upanisads

* Das, Deb Kumar (tr.) *The Isa & Kena Upanisads* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1971*
Sanskrit / sloka-by sloka version with commentary

* *Fifteen Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology* (H Rs 20 F Rs10) *1963*
Tamil / tr. by A. K. Ramanujan

Lal, P. (tr.) *Vikrama and Urvasi* (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) *1980*
Sanskrit / transcreation of Kalidasa's play

Lal, P. (tr.) *Sanskrit Love Lyrics* (H Rs 15 F Rs 10) *1966*
Sanskrit / From the *Subhasita-ratna-kosa* / 2nd ed.

Lal, P. (tr.) *The Golden Womb of the Sun* (H Rs 15 F Rs 10) *1965*
Vedic Sanskrit / From the Rg-Veda's 10th Mandala / 2nd ed.

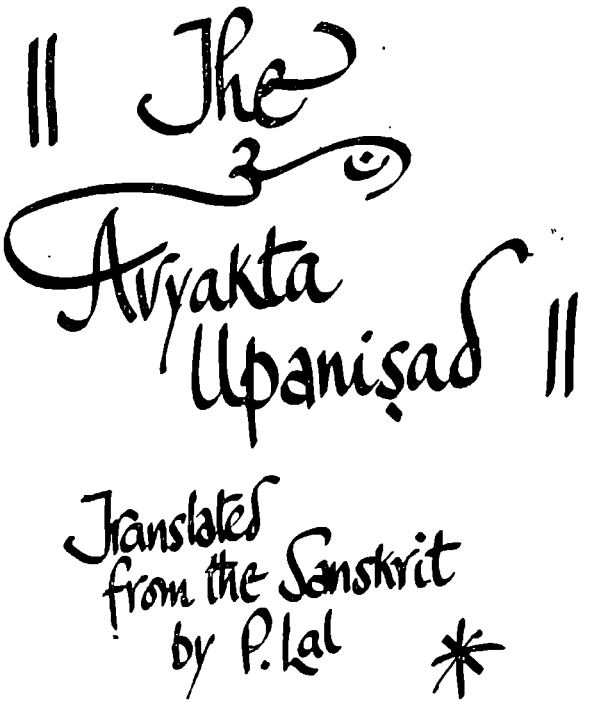
* Lal, P. (tr.) *The Bhagavad Gita* (H Rs 15 F Rs 10) / 4th ed. *1965*
Sanskrit / A new version in modern idiom [LP available, see p. 9]

* Lal, P. (tr.) *The Isa Upanisad* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1968*
Sanskrit / with Text, Interpretation & Commentary / 2nd ed.

Lal, P. (tr.) *Some Sanskrit Poems* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1967*
Sanskrit / From the *Subasita-ratna-kosa*

THE MAHABHARATA OF VYASA

A sloka by sloka transcreation by P. Lal From the Sanskrit of Vyasa
Published monthly / 132 Fascicules ready till October 1979 / Rs 15 each



Title page calligraphy by P. Lal

Lal, P. (tr) *The Avyakta Upanisad* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1969*
Sanskrit / The little-known text carefully Englished

Lal, P. (tr.) *The Mahanarayana Upanisad* (H Rs 35 F Rs 20) *1971*
Sanskrit) The Nehru Fellowship Project

Lal, P. (tr.) *The Brhadaranayaka Upanisad* (H Rs 60 F Rs 20) *1974*
Sanskrit / The Nehru Fellowship Project

Lal, P. (tr.) *The Farce of the Drunk Monk* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1968*
Sanskrit / Mahendravarman's 7th century one-act play / 2nd ed.

Lal, P. (tr.) *The Mahabharata of Vyasa* (each vol.Rs 15) *1968 Continuing*
Sanskrit / 132 monthly vols. published till October *1979*

Lal, P. (tr.) *The Dhammapada* (Rs 30) / 4th ed. *1967*
Pali / Published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux (Distr. by WW)

Lal,P.(tr.) *Great Sanskrit Plays in Modern Translation*(Rs40)/4th ed.*1969*
Sanskrit / Published by New Directions (Distr. by WW)

Mukhopadhyay, S.K. & L.Ray *Way of Enlightenment* (HRs40FRs15) *1979*
Tibetan & Sanskrit / the full text of the *Bodhicharyavatara*

Varma. Monika (tr.) *Jayadeva's Gita Govinda* (H Rs 30 F Rs 20) *1968*
Sanskrit / An interpretative transcreation / 2nd ed.

महाकवि जयदेव *The Gita Govinda*

Fiction : *Greenbirds*
WRITTEN ORIGINALLY IN ENGLISH

Banerjee, Juliette *The Boyfriend & Other Stories* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) *1978*
* Basu, Arindam *Picaro Or Me* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) novel *1972*
Basu, Romen *A Gift of Love* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) novel *1974*
* Basu, Romen *The Tamarind Tree* (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) novel *1975*
Bhattacharya, Manju *Stories* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1979*
* Chatterjee, M. *At the Homeopath's* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) stories *1973*
* Cowasjee, S. *Stories & Sketches* (H Rs 35 F Rs 15) illustr. Mario *1970*
* Daniels, M. *Anything Out of Place is Dirt* (H Rs 25 F Rs 20) novel *1971*
* Daniels, M. *That Damn Romantic Fool* (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) novel *1972*
Deshpande, Shashi *The Legacy* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) stories *1978*
Deshpande, Shashi *The Miracle* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) stories *1978*
Deshpande, S. *It Was the Nightingale* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) stories *1976*
* Doraiswamy, T. K. *Words for the Wind* (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) novel *1973*
* Dubey, Deepak *Stories for Ramu* (H Rs 30 F Rs 10) *1975*
Hejmadi, Padma *Coigns of Vantage* (H Rs 60 F Rs 20) stories *1972*
Jyoti, Jafa *Nurjahan* (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) novel *1978*
* Katrak, K. D. & Usha *Five Little Sermons* (H Rs 25 F Rs 10) stories *1971*
* Khanolkar, N. *Dwasuparna* (2 vols., each H Rs 40 F Rs 15) novel *1975*
Melwani, Murli Das *Stories of a Salesman* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1967*
Melwani, Murli Das *Odds on the Target* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) novel *1979*
Melwani, Murli Das *Night of the Teesta* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) stories *1979*
* Narasimhan, Raji *The Marriage of Bela* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) stories *1978*
Narasimhan, Raji *The Heart of Standing* (H Rs 50 F Rs 15) novel *1979*
Nimbkar, Jai *The Lotus Leaves* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) stories *1971*
Noronha, Leslie de *Stories* (H Rs 30 F Rs 20) *1966*
Noronha, L. de *Mango & Tamarind Tree* (H Rs 40 F Rs 15) novel *1970*
Ratan, Jai *The Angry Goddess* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) stories *1960*
* Ray, Ami *Apocalypso* (H Rs 30 Rs 15) novelette *1975*
Sen, Gautam *Stories* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1979*
Sinha, K. N. *Wait Without Hope* (H Rs 30 Rs 15) novel *1962*
Sio, Kewlian *A Small World* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) stories *1960*
Sio, K. *Dragons* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) illustr. by Srimati Lal/stories *1978*
Sio, Kewlian *What a View* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) novel *1979*
* Smith, Lee *Amedeo Amedei* (H Rs 40 F Rs 10) novelette *1973*
* Suraiya, Jug *The Interview* (H Rs 30 F Rs 20) stories *1971*
* Thomas, Vernon *Suddenly It's Christmas* (H Rs 30 F 15) stories *1976*

WRITERS WORKSHOP Indian Creative Writing in English

Striking Experimental Fiction by Young Writers

Fiction : *Greenbirds*
TRANSCREATED FROM OTHER INDIAN LANGUAGES

* Ashk, Upendranath *Sorrow of the Snows* (H Rs 25 F Rs 15) *1971*
Hindi/transcreated by Jai Ratan/novel

Banerjee, Bibhuti Bhushan *Pather Panchali* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1973*
Bengali/tr. by Monika Varma/Vol. 1 "Trumpet Call"

Banerjee, Bibhuti Bhushan *Pather Panchali* (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) *1973*
Bengali/tr. by Monika Varma/Vol. 2 "Call of the Road"

Banerjee, Bibhuti Bhushan *Pather Panchali* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1973*
Bengali/tr. by Monika Varma/Vol. 3 "Akrur's Call"

* *Contemporary Hindi Short Stories : A Selection* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1962*
Hindi/selected and transcreated by Jai Ratan/2nd Ed.

Devi, Sita & Santa Devi *The Garden Creeper* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) *1979*
Bengali/tr. jointly by the authoresses/stories

Devi, Sita & Santa Devi *Tales of Bengal* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1979*
Bengali/stories tr. by the authoresses

Jain, Sunita *A Woman is Dead* (H Rs 40 F Rs 15) stories *1979*
Hindi/tr. by the authoress/some written originally in English

Kumar, Ram *Stories* (H Rs 25 F Rs 15) *1970*
Hindi/selected and transcreated by Jai Ratan

* Kumar, Sharat *The Storm & Other Stories* (H Rs 25 F Rs 15) *1976*
Hindi/selected and translated by the author

Maitreyi Devi *It Does Not Die* (H Rs 60 F Rs 35) *1976*
Bengali/autobiographical romance tr. by Maitreyi Devi

* *Modern Urdu Stories : An Anthology* (H Rs 30 F Rs 20) *1975*
Urdu/selected and transcreated by A. I. Mirza

Nagarjun *The Holy Man from Jamaniya* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1977*
Hindi/transcreated by Munda, Staneslow & Johnson/novel

Premchand *The Shroud* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1979*
Hindi/transcreated by Jai Ratan/stories

Sahni, Bhisham *The Boss Came to Dinner* (H Rs 50 F Rs 15) *1972*
Hindi/stories selected & transcreated mostly by Jai Ratan

Sahni, Bhisham *Tamas (Darkness)* (H Rs 80 F Rs 40) novel *1979*
Hindi/transcreated by Jai Ratan/novel

* Vaid, Krishna Baldev *Silence & Other Stories* (H Rs 50 F Rs 15) *1972*
Hindi/translated mostly by Krishna Baldev Vaid

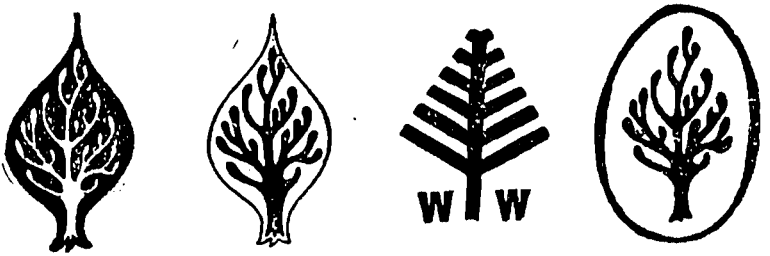
Vaid, Krishna Baldev *Bimal in Bog* Vol. 1 (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) *1972*
Hindi transcreated by Krishna Baldev Vaid/novel

Vaid, Krishna Baldev *Bimal in Bog* Vol. 2 (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) *1972*
Hindi/transcreated by Krishna Baldev Vaid/novel

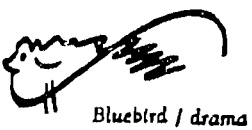
* Varma, Nirmal *The Hill Station* (H Rs 50 F Rs 10) *1973*
Hindi/transcreated mostly by Jai Ratan/stories

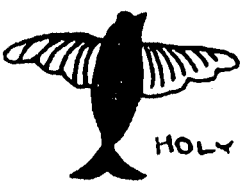
Varma, Shrikant *A Winter Evening* (H Rs 50 F Rs 10) *1973*
Hindi/transcreated by Jai Ratan/stories

Vimal, G. P. *Here and There & Other Stories* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1978*
Hindi/transcreated by various hands



The Workshop Logo 1958/62/67/77
The Workshop Bookbirds 1965/70/77





Sketch
David McCutchion

McCutchion's tongue-in-cheek take-off on the WW Birdbook Logo — from a letter in *The Epistles of David-Kaka to Plalm'n* (see "Reference", p. 23)

The Sunbird Logo
Cassettes and LPs

[see pages 25-28 for full details]

Drama : *Bluebirds*
WRITTEN ORIGINALLY IN ENGLISH

* Aziz, Nasima *No Metaphor, Remember* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) *1976*
Bantleman, Lawrence *Beyond Life* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) *1979*
* Bantleman, Lawrence *The Award* (H Rs 25 F Rs 10) *1972*
Currimbhoy, Asif *The Hungry Ones* (H Rs 40 F Rs 15) *1979*
Currimbhoy, Asif *Inquilab* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) *1971*
Currimbhoy, Asif *Goa* (H Rs 20 F Rs 15) *1972*
Currimbhoy, Asif *The Refugee* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1971*
Currimbhoy, Asif *An Experiment with Truth* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) *1972*
Currimbhoy, Asif *The Miracle Seed* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1973*
Currimbhoy, Asif *"Om Mane Padme Hum !"* (H Rs 40 F Rs 15) *1972*
Currimbhoy, Asif *The Dissident M. L. A.* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1974*
Currimbhoy, Asif *This Alien . . . Native Land* (H Rs 40 F Rs 10) *1974*
Currimbhoy, Asif *The Mandarin Strobe* (H Rs 50 F Rs 15) *1979*
Currimbhoy, Asif *Turkman Gate* (H Rs 40 F Rs 15) *1979*
Desani, G. V. *Hali* (H Rs 20 F Rs 8) *1967*
* Devi, Shree *The Purple-Braided People* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1970*
Ezekiel, Nissim *Three Plays* (H Rs 15 F Rs 10) *1969*
* Hiro, Dilip *To Anchor a Cloud* (H Rs 60 F Rs 15) *1972*
Hiro, Dilip *Two One-Act Plays* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) *1978*
* Kanvin, Roger *Krishnalight* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) / multi-media play *1976*
* Malwani, Murli Das *Deep Roots* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1970*
Mukhopadhyay, Durgadas *Jayadeva* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) *1979*
Brooks, F. *The Sweet White Witch* / based on Hilda Lewis' novel *The Witch & the Priest* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) *1979*
Brooks, F. *Brandy For Boz : Charles Dickens* (H Rs 60 F Rs 25) *1979*
Brooks, F. *Down Under in Sydney* (H Rs 50 F Rs 25) play based on D. H. Lawrence's novel *Kangaroo* / *1979*
Brooks, F. *The Dark Dark Lady* (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) play based on D. H. Lawrence's novel *A Plumed Serpent* / *1979*

APPLY APPLY NO REPLY and *A CLEAN BREAK*

Jacket-flap calligraphy

* Nagarwalla, Arati *The Bait* (H Rs 15 F Rs 10) *1969*
Nandy, Pritish *Rites for a Plebeian Statue* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1969*
Raman, S. *Karna* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) verse play / *1979*
Scholberg, Henry *Lakshmibai & the Captain* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1979*
Scholberg, Henry *Calcutta 1851* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1976*
Scholberg, Henry *Saroja* (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) *1978*
* Vasudev, P. S. *The Sunflower* (H Rs 50 F Rs 10) *1971*
* Vasudev, P. S. *Lord Ravan of Lanka* (H Rs 60 F Rs *20*) *1974*

Screenplays : *Silverbirds*

FILMSCRIPTS & SCENARIOS

Cowasjee, Saros The *Last of the Maharajas* (H Rs 60 F Rs 25) *1979*
(based on Mulk Raj Anand's *Private Life of an Indian Prince)*
Ray, Satyajit *The Chess Players* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1980*
(based on Premchand's *Shatranj Ke Khilari*)
Sharma, Mukul *Incorporeal Personal Agency* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) *1979*
(based on Agatha Christie's story *The Last Séance)*

Forthcoming Books

FOR PUBLICATION IN LATE 1979 & 1980

Dasgupta, Mary Ann *The Best of "Modern Review" 1* (H Rs 60 F Rs 25)
Devi, Shyamasree *The Best of "Modern Review" 2* (H Rs 60 F Rs 25)
Devi, Sita *Reminiscences of Tagore* (tr. S. Devi) (H Rs 60 F Rs 25)
Lal, P. (ed.) *The Best of "Quest" 2* (H Rs 60 F Rs 25)
Lal, P. (ed.) *The Best of "Indian Review"* (H Rs 60 F Rs 25)
Lall, Samuel (ed.) *The Best of "Hindusthan Review"* (H Rs 60 F Rs 25)
Lal, P. *Views and Reviews* (H Rs 40 F Rs 15) book reviews
Lal, P. (ed.) *Reciter's Indo-English Prose & Poetry* (H Rs 60 F R 25)
McCutchion, David *Posthumous Essays* (H Rs 50 F Rs 20)
Melwani, Mona *Virginia Green & the Band Boys* (HRs40FRs20) stories
Morrison, R. H. (tr.) *Ancient Chinese Odes* (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) *Feb. 1979*
Nag, Kalidas *The Discovery of Asia* (in 5 volumes)
Vol. 1 : *New Asia* (H Rs 50 F Rs 30)
Vol. 2 : *Middle East* (H Rs 50 F Rs 30)
Vol. 3 : *Pacific World* (H Rs 50 F Rs 30)
Vol. 4 : *Art & Archaeology Abroad* (H Rs 50 F Rs 30)
Vol. 5 : *South-East Asia* (H Rs 50 F Rs 30)
Nag, Kalidas *Tolstoy and Gandhi* (H Rs 40 F Rs 24)
Ratan, Jai (ed.) *The Best of "Quest"* (H Rs 60 F Rs 25) anthology
Stilz, Gerhard (ed.) *Early Anglo-Indian Stories* (H Rs 80 F Rs 40)
Suraiya, Jug *A Muster of Peacocks* (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) stories

Drama

TRANSCREATED FROM OTHER INDIAN LANGUAGES

Bharatendu *Satya Harischandra* (H Rs 60 F Rs 20) *1980*
Hindi / tr. & introduced by Madan Gopal

Bhattacarya, Jagdisvara *The Ocean of Laughter* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1976*
Sanskrit / 14th c. one-act farce tr. by R. Munda & D. N. Nelson

* Joshi, Shiv Kumar *He Never Slept So Long* (H Rs 50 F Rs 10) *1972*
Gujarati / transcreated by Shiv Kumar Joshi

Mahendravarman *The Farce of the Drunk Monk* (H Rs 10 F Rs 10) *1968*
Sanskrit / 7th c. one-act farce transcreated by P. Lal / 2nd ed.

Sehgal, Lalit *The Verdict* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1970*
Hindi / transcreated by Suresh Kohli

Symons, Arthur *The Toy Cart* (H Rs 60 F Rs 20) *1979*
Sanskrit / Adapted from Sudraka's play

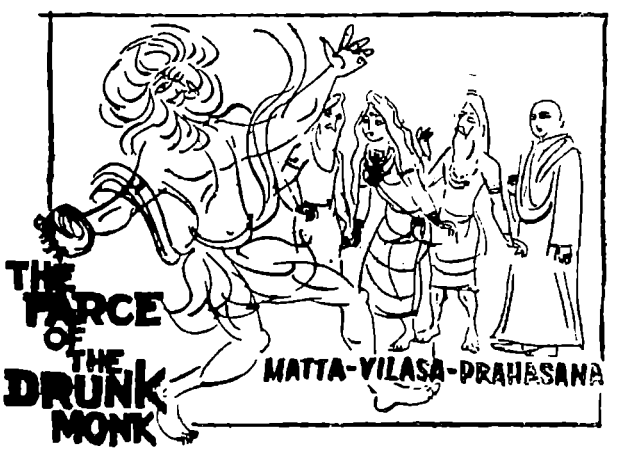
Tagore, Rabindranath *The Court Dancer* (H Rs20 F Rs 10)/2nd ed.*1961*
Bengali / *Natir Puja* tr. by Shyamasree Devi

Tagore, Rabindranath *Shyama*
Bengali / Included in P. K. Saha's *Blue Magic* (see "Poetry")

Thakur, Asaita *Vanio & Zanda Zulan* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1971*
Gujarati / transcreated and introduced by Farley Richmond

TRANSCREATED FROM RUSSIAN

Aitmatov, Chingiz *The Ascent of Fujiyama* (H Rs 60 F Rs 26) *1979*
Russian / transcreated by Kalpana Sahni

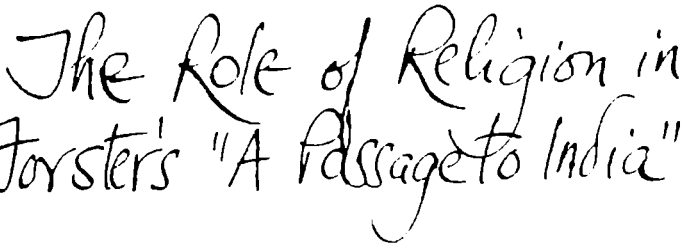


A SEVENTH-CENTURY ONE-ACT SANSKRIT PLAY
BY KING MAHENDRAVARMAN

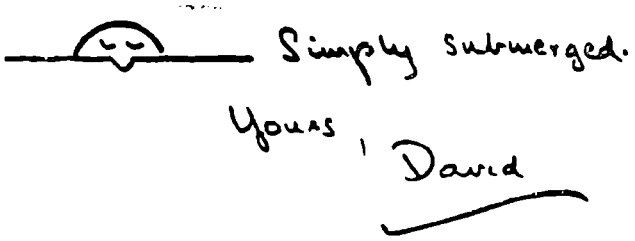
A Writers Workshop Publication

Literary Criticism : *Greybirds* ON INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

Belliappa, Meena *The Fiction of Anita Desai* (H Rs 15 F Rs 10) *1971*
Belliappa, M. *English Fiction by Indian Women* (H Rs 60 F Rs 40) *1979*
Belliappa, M. & R. Teranath *The Poetry of N. Ezekiel* (HRs12FRs10) *1966*
Chatterjee, D. *Forster's* A Passage to India (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1979*
Chaudhuri, Sukanta *Bantleman's "Kanchanjanga"* (H Rs15 F Rs 10) *1969*
Cowasjee, S. *Author to Critic: Letters of M.R.Anand* (HRs60FRs20) *1973*
Harrex, S. C. *The Fire & the Offering :*
The English-Language Novel of India 1935-1970
Vol. 1 : Anand, Singh, Rajan, & others (H Rs 60 F Rs 40) *1977*
Vol. 2 : Narayan, Raja Rao, G. V. Desani (H Rs 60 F Rs 40) *1978*
Hemenway, Stephen *The Novel of India*
Vol. 1 : The Anglo-Indian Novel (H Rs 60 F Rs 30) *1975*
Vol. 2 : The Indo-Anglian Novel (H Rs 60 F Rs 30) *1975*
Holmstrom, Lakshmi *The Fiction of R.K.Narayan* (H Rs 60 F Rs 30) *1973*
Indian Writing in English : A WW Symposium (H Rs 15 F Rs 10) *1960*
Kohli, D. *Virgin Whiteness: Kamala Das's Poetry* (H Rs 20 F Rs 8) *1968*
Lal, P. *The Alien Insiders : Indian Writing in English* (HRs50 FRs20) *1979*
Melwani, M. *Essays on Indian Writing in English* (H Rs 25 F Rs 20) *1971*
Mokashi-Punekar, S. *The Indo-Anglian Creed* (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) *1972*
Mokashi-Punekar, S. *P. Lal : An Appreciation* (H Rs 15 F Rs 10) *1968*
Mokashi-Punekar, S. *Miscellaneous Critical Essays* (HRs 40 FRs20) *1979*
"My English Journey" by S.K.Ghosh: Appreciations (H Rs10 F Rs6) *1960*
Parameswaran, Uma *A. Madhaviah & R. Aiyar* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) *1979*
Saha, S. C. *Modern Indo-Anglian Love Poetry* (H Rs 15 F Rs10) *1971*
Saha, S. C. *Insights : Eight Indo-Anglian Poems* (H Rs 40 F Rs 10) *1972*
Sharma, A. R. *Interviews with Indo-Anglian Poets* (HRs50 FRs20) *1979*
Varma, Monika *Facing Four: Indo-Anglian Poetesses* (HRs20FRs10) *1973*
Williams, Haydn Moore *Studies in Modern Indian Fiction in English*
Vol. 1 : Origins, Anand, Narayan (H Rs 50 F Rs 30)
Vol. 2 : Rao, Singh, Desani & others (H Rs 50 F Rs 30)
Williams, H. M. *The Fiction of Ruth Jhabvala* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1973*
Niven, Alastair *Truth Within Fiction : A Study of Raja Rao's "The Serpent & the Rope"* (H Rs 50 F Rs 15) *1979*



Jacket-flap calligraphy for Debjani Chattorjee's critical study



McCutchion spoofs the assiduity of WW endeavours in Epistles of David-Kaka

Literary Criticism : *Greybirds* OF OTHER INDIAN LITERATURES

Antoine, Robert *Bharata & Aristotle* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) */1979*
Antoine, R. *Rama and the Bards* (H Rs 40 F Rs 15)/on *Ramayana 1975*
Bhattacharya, Pradip *The Mahabharata (The Adi Parva) An Interpretation & Commentary on the P. Lal Transcreation* (H Rs 80 F Rs 40) *1979*
Lal, P. *An Annotated Mahabharata Bibliography* (H Rs 30 F Rs 20) *1967*
Lal, P. *The Concept of an Indian Literature* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) *1968*
Lévi, Sylvain *The Theatre of India* (tr. from French by Narayan Mukherji) Vol. 1 (H Rs 80 F Rs 40) Vol. 2 (H Rs 80 F Rs 40) *1978*
Maitreyi Devi *Tagore : The Man Behind His Work* (H Rs 20 F Rs10) *1978*
Nordgulen, George *Modern Indian Philosophy* (H Rs 80 F Rs 40) *1979*
Zimmer, Heinrich *Maya* (tr. from German by Frank Lombasa) Vol. 1 (H Rs 80 F Rs 40) Vol. 2 (H Rs 80 F Rs 40) *1980*
Water My Roots : Essays by & on Bishnu Dey (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *197?*

Sketch by Nicholas Bentley

HOMAGE FROM INDIA Edited by P. Lal

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Reference Works : *Greybirds*

ALSO BELLES-LETTERS & PROSE ANTHOLOGIES

Allen, M. *Family Memories of Four Sisters* (private distribution) *1976*
Cook, J. W. *Chaucer's Canterbury Art* (H Rs 60 F Rs 30) criticism *1976*
Ghose, Sisir Kumar *Metaesthetics : essays* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1966*
Ghosh, Sadhan Kumar *My English Journey* (H Rs 40 F Rs 10/travel *1961*
Ghosh, Sadhan Kumar *Tragedy : an Essay* (H Rs 15 F Rs 10) *1960*
Hull, William *Voices in Visions* (H Rs 60 F Rs 20) *1979*/Complete Index and Guide to *Visions of Handy Hopper* (see under "Poetry")
* Kulshrestha, C. *The Saul Bellow Estate* (H Rs 40 F Rs 15)/criticism *1976*
Kulshrestha, C. *Stances : Studies in Fiction* (H Rs 60 F Rs 20) *1979*
Kundu, Gautam *Pimples & Dimples : Film in India* (H Rs 40 FRs 20)*1979*
Kundu, Gautam *Inner Climate of Darkness : Saul Bellow's Dangling Men* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1979*
Lal, P. (ed.) *T. S. Eliot : Homage from India* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1965*
* Lal, P. *The Lemon Tree of Modern Sex : essays* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1974*
Lal, P. *Miscellaneous Literary Essays* (H Rs 40 F Rs 15) *1979*
Lal, P. (ed.) *David McCutchion : Shraddhanjali* (H Rs 60 F Rs 20) *1972*
Lal, P. (ed.) *The First WW Story Anthology* (H Rs 25 F Rs 20) *1967*
Lal, P. (ed) *The First WW Literary Reader* (H Rs 60 F Rs 20) *1972*
Lal, P. (ed.) *The Second WW Literary Reader* (H Rs 60 F Rs 20) *1973*
Lal, P. *Transcreation : two essays* (H Rs 20 F Rs 10) *1972*
Lal, P. *America, England, Japan* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) travel *1979*
Lal, P. (ed.) *The WW Short Story Treasury* (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) *1979*
Lal, P. *Personalities* (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) meetings with writers/*1979*
P. Lal *Essaettes* (H Rs 30 F Rs 15) *1979*
* Leitgeber, B. *East & West in Man's Quest* (H Rs 60 F Rs 20) *1978*
Lesser, R. H. *Indian Mosaic* Vol. 1 (H Rs 40 F Rs 10)/ essays *1972*
Lesser, R. H. *Indian Mosaic* Vol. 2 (H Rs 40 F Rs 15) essays *1979*
* Malhotra, Ashok *Sartre's Existentialism* (H Rs 45 F Rs 25) *1978*
McCutchion, David *Temples of Bankura District* (H Rs 40 F Rs 15) *1967*
McCutchion, D. *Durrell's Alexandria Quartet* (H Rs 10 F Rs 8) *1960*
McCutchion, D. *Epistles of David-Kaka to Plalm'n* (H Rs 40 FRs20) *1972*
Menon, B. P. *World Orders* (H Rs 20 F Rs 18) serious comics/*1978*
Mukherjee, Sushil *More Frankly Speaking* (H Rs 40 F Rs 15)essays/*1979*
* Parthasarathy, R. & Healy J. *Poetry From Leeds* (H Rs 10 F Rs 10) *1965*
Ray, D. & Judy Ray (eds.) *New Asian Writing* (H Rs 60 F Rs 20) *1979*
"Scrutator" *In Defence of Good English* (H Rs 15 F Rs 10)/exposé *1962*
Sen, Sunil Kanti *Fifteen Literary Essays* (H Rs 40 F Rs 20) *1978*
Shastri, P. N. & P. Lal *The WW Handbook of Assamese Literature* Volume 1 (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) *1974* Vol. 2 (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) *1979*
Shastri, P. N. & P. Lal *The WW Handbook of Gujarati Literature* Volume 1 (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) *1974* Vol. 2 (H Rs 50 F Rs 20) *1979*

Hindi & Bengali Versions : *Indibirds*

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In 1979 & 1980 WW will issue the first 12 titles (flexibacks only) in its new series of Indian-language versions of Indian literature in English & creative writing in other languages, foreign and Indian. To maintain control on literary quality, the first titles will be in Hindi & Bengali, languages most familiar to Writers Workshop editors.

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पी. लाल : धर्मनर एवं मौन-रस [P. Lal : *The Man of Dharma*] Rs 15

हैन्री शोल्वर्ग : लड़का-राजा [Henry Scholberg : *The Boy King*] Rs 20

अनिर्वाण : इश उपनिषद्—विशिष्ट व्याख्या [Anirvan : *Isa Upanisad*] Rs 10

बंकिमचन्द् चट्टोपाध्याय : श्रीकृष्ण [Bankim Chatterji: *Sri Krishna*] Rs 30

(Tr. by P. N. Shastri, the first 3 from English, others from Bengali)

স্যামুয়েল্ বেকেট্ : ঈশ্বরবাবু আসছেন [S. Becket : *Waiting for Godot*] Rs 15

জঁ্য জেনে : ওপরের প্রহরা [J. Genet : *Haute Surveillance*] Rs 15

সুভাষ ঘোষাল : ঘরে তেপান্তর [*30 Indo-Anglian Poems*] Rs 15/bilingual

আসীফ্ করিম্ভয় : ক্ষুধার্ত কয়েকজন [Currimbhoy : *The Hungry Ones*] Rs 10

শান্তা দেবী : রামানন্দ ও অর্দ্ধশতাব্দীর বাংলা [*Ramananda Chatterjee*] Rs 50

হেন্রী শোল্বার্গ : বালক-রাজা [Henry Scholberg : *The Boy King*] Rs 15

পুরুষোত্তম লাল : মানবধর্ম ও নীরবতা [P. Lal : *The Man of Dharma*] Rs 10

(Becket tr. by Pradeep Banerjee, Genet by Narayan Mukherji, Currimbhoy & Scholberg by Dipak Chakravorty, P. Lal by Shyamasree Devi. Santa Devi's biography was orlginally written & published in Bengali]

Indo-English Educational Texts : *Gurubirds*

ANNOTATED SCHOOL & COLLEGE EDITIONS

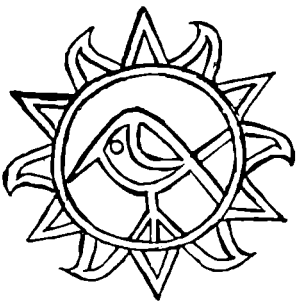
Dasgupta, Mary Ann (ed.) *The Indian Student's Primer of English Comprehension* (for classes 5-6) [H Rs 40 F Rs 15] *1980*

Dasgupta, Mary Ann (ed.) *The Indian Student's Handbook of English Comprehension* (for classes 7-8) [H Rs 40 F Rs 15] *1980*

Dasgupta, Mary Ann (ed.) *The Indian Student's Guide to English Comprehension & Composition* (classes 1-10) [H Rs 40 F Rs 15) *1980*

Dasgupta, Mary Ann (ed.) *The Student's Reader of Indo-English Literature* (for Plus 2 & B. A. Pass) [H Rs 40 Rs 15) *1980*

Lal, P. (ed) *An English Anthology for Indian Colleges* (for B. A. Pass & Hons.)/illustrated by Srimati Lal / (H 40 Rs F Rs 15) *1979*



The Sunbird Logo

Writers Workshop
Sunbird LP Records
& Literary Cassettes

A full description & a checklist of the Literary Cassettes & LPs issued by Writers Workshop in 1976-79 are given on pages 25-28.

Correction:

Page 24 third Gurubird title :

For "classes 1-10" "classes 9-10"

The Voice of the Sunbird

WRITERS WORKSHOP LITERARY CASSETTES

Early in 1976 P. Lal read his complete transcreation of the *Bhagavad Gita* on two long-playing stereo records (total running time : 100 minutes) ; the album was produced by Urmila Devi Kanoria at considerable expense in the Dum Dum studios of the Gramophone Company of India. That pioneer venture arose from a conviction that a sufficient body of quality English creative writing by Indians was at last available to justify the issue of LPs and cassettes of authors reading their own and others' work. The only problem was of finding a studio in Calcutta equipped with modern electronic apparatus sophisticated enough for the uncompromising fineness domanded. The first fifteen cassettes were read by P. Lal and recorded in the Audio-Visual Departments of Berea College, Kentucky, and Albion College, Michigan, during February-May 1977. Now, first-rate professional recording facilities have been offered to Writers Workshop by Chitra-Bani, the social communications centre in central Calcutta sponsored by the Jesuit fathers and directed by Rev. Gaston Roberge, S. J. Here, in a sound-proof air-conditioned studio, Electret Sony microphones capture the speaker's voice on four track Scotch spool tape on a Swiss-make Revox recording machine ; after editing, transfer is made on a high-quality cassette capable of attaining clean, lucid highs with minimal hiss. The results have a startlingly life-like fidelity, clarity, purity, richness, and excellent "ambience". For the first time in India, sensitive interpretations of their own work by poets and fiction-writers are popularly available, on impeccable stereophonic recording with a Dolby "B" noise-reduction system, bringing an entirely new dimension to listening pleasure and literary appreciation. Writers Workshop has made every effort to make fastidious use of contemporary sound technology in order to reproduce faithfully the magic of the creative human voice. No distracting gimmickry — such as "interpretative" musical background, faddish sound effects, or over-dramatised declamatory reading — is allowed to interfere with the modulations of the speaker's delivery. Initially, the Workshop will restrict its recordings to poetry and prose which have appeared in book form under its different Birdbook logos. Each cassette comes in a distinctive and characteristic handloom-cloth-covered, gold-embossed Writers Workshop slipcase. The Workshop will, in course of time, make available to serious scholars of Indian Writing in English a library of superbly recorded material on cassette, in the hope that intelligent study of such material will modify the disproportionately heavy stress laid by teachers on print culture and so enable a healthier critical climate to flourish in the expanding Academe of Indo-Anglia.

Correction—The HB price for 10 Poems & 2 nP (p. 5) and Declarations and Gita Govinda (p. 8) is Rs 20 (not Rs 10 as printed)

Sunbird Cassette Price-List

Ali, Agha Shahid reading his own poems / Rs 75
Antoine, Robert reading his Kālidāsa "Dynasty of Raghu" tr. / Rs 75
Banerjee, Bibhuti Bhusan / his novel *Pather Panchali* transcreated, condensed & read by Monika Varma / 3 Cassettes / Rs 225
Bantleman, Lawrence / his poems read by P. Lal / Rs 75
Basu, Anjana reading her own poems / Rs 75
Chatterjee, Margaret reading her own poems / Rs 75
Cowasjee, Saros reading his own stories / Rs 75
Das, Deb Kumar reading his own poems and stories / Rs 75
Das, Deb Kumar / his poems and stories read by P. Lal / Rs 75
Dasgupta, Mary Ann reading her own poems / Rs 75
Dasgupta, Somesh reading his own poems / Rs 75
De, Ira reading her own poems / Rs 75
Derozio, Henry his poems read by Ananda Lal / Rs 75
Devi, Shree reading her own poems / Rs 75
Dutta, Toru / her poems read by Priyadarshini Lal / Rs 75
Dyson, Ketaki Kushari reading her own poems / Rs 75
Frederick, Brooks / his poems read by P. Lal / Rs 75
Guptara, Prabhu reading his own poems / Rs 75
Hull, William reading his own poems / Rs 75
Hull, William reading his epic "Visions of Handy Hopper" Books 1-9 2 cassettes each / boxed set of 18 cassettes Rs 1500
Kannan, Lakshmi reading her own poems / Rs 75
Khare, Randhir reading his own poems / Rs 75
Lal, P. reading his complete "Mahabharata" transcreation (see p. 28)
Lal, P. reading his "Complete Poems" / 2 cassettes / Rs 150
Lal, P. reading his "Juvenilia" from his "Collected Poems" / Rs 75
Lal, P. reading his long poem "Calcutta" / Rs 75
Lal, P. reading his "The Man of Dharma & the Rasa of Silence" Rs 75
Lal, P. reading his "Bhagavad Gita" transcreation / 2 LP set / Rs 100
Lal, P. reading his "Gita" (with Sanskrit slokas) / 2 Cassettes / Rs 150
Lal, P reading his "Dhammapada" transcreation / 2 Cassettes / Rs 150
Lal, P. reading his Rig-Veda transcreation / Rs 75
Lal, P. reading from his "Brhadaranyaka" transcreation / Rs 75
Lal, P. reading his complete "Mahanarayana Upanisad" tr. / Rs 150
Lal, P. reading his Avvakta, Isa, Mandukya Upanisad tr. / Rs 75
Lal, P. reading his Mahabharata, Savitri-Satyavan transcreation / Rs 75
Lal, P. reading his Mahabharata: Nala-Damayanti tr./3 Cassettes/Rs225
Lal, P reading Yudhisthira-Yaksa, Karna-Kunti transcreations / Rs 75
Lal, P reading his versions of the Jap-ji hymns / Rs 75 (with Panjabi)
Lal, P. reading poems in English by Indian Men / Rs 75
Lal, P. reading poems in English by Indian Women / Rs 75
Lal, P. reading a selection of poems on Calcutta / Rs 75
Lall, Samuel B. reading his own poems / Rs 75
Lesser, R.H. reading from his prose and poetry / Rs 75
Majumdar, Rupendra Guha reading his own poems / Rs 75
Mookerji, Tapati reading her own poems / Rs 75

Naidu, Sarojini / her complete poems read by P. Lal /3 Cassettes/Rs 225
Ratan, Jal reading his own stories / Rs 75
Ray, David reading his own poems / Rs 75
Ray, Lila reading her own poems / Rs 75
Ray, Shreela reading her own poems / Rs 75
Roy, Tarapada reading his Bengali poems & P. Lal their English transcreations by Shyamasree Devi & P. Lal / Rs 75
Sastry, K. Srinivasa reading his own poems / Rs 75
Sharma, Mukul reading his poems (with Aparna Sharma) / Rs 75
Sio, Kewlian reading his own poems (& P. Lal his stories) / Rs 75
Suraiya, Jug reading his own stories / Rs 75
Tagore, Rabindranath / his Shesh-Lekha poems read by P. Lal & S. Devi in their own transcreations / Rs 75
Vaid, Krishna Baldev reading from his own fiction / Rs 75
Varma, Monika reading her own poems / Rs 75
Verma, Raj reading his own poems / Rs 75
Williams, Haydn Moore reading his own poems / Rs 75

VYASA'S ORAL EPIC ON STEREOPHONIC CASSETTES

A major long-term Writers Workshop plan was to make the epic of Vyasa, the *Mahabharata*, available on Sunbird cassettes. In November 1977 P. Lal completed nine years' work on his sloka-by-sloka transcreation of the *Mahabharata* with the publication of Volume 108 (one hard-bound fascicule has appeared each month since November 1968). Volume 109 begins the Bhisma-Parva. As an oral epic, the *Mahabharata* is ideally suited to reading, chant, and recitation. The first five Parvas (WW Volumes 1-108), containing about 32,000 slokas, are now available in English transcreation on 70 cassettes — Adi (9,000 slokas), Sabha (3,000), Vana (18,000), Virata (3,000) Udyoga (8,000). They are read by P. Lal. Slokas significant for poetic beauty or memorable meaning are read in Sanskrit, followed by their English versions. For the first time in English, the encyclopaedic epic sweep of Indian culture comes sharply alive in all its narrative speed, dramatic intensity, soaring imagination, philosophical speculation, pragmatic advice, and moral inspiration : Artha, Dharma, Kama, and Moksa are presented as originally conceived by the Mahakavi, via the sympathetic interpreting medium of the story-teller's voice. A total of 200 cassettes, each of 90-minutes' duration, will cover the entire 100,000 slokas of Vyasa's magnificent tale. The price for the first 70 cassettes (beautifully boxed in handloom) is Rs. 6000, postage and handling extra. Advance orders are accepted for *Mahabharata* Cassette No. 71 onwards (beginning with the Bhisma-Parva) ; subscription : Rs 1000 for 12 cassettes, postage extra.

The Mahābhārata

TRANSCREATED BY P. LAL

P. Lal's sloka-by-sloka transcreation of the *Mahabharata* was begun in November 1968. It appears in hardbound monthly fascicules averaging 64 pages each. One hundred and thirty two volumes have been published till November 1979, and work is progressing exactly on schedule. The project is expected to be completed by November 1990. The price in India is Rs 180 for 12 volumes. A limited number of complete sets is available. A signed and numbered specially priced collector's edition of 100 copies is also available. For *Mahabharata* Sunbird cassettes see page 28.

The Miscellany Edited by P. Lal

The Miscellany is a bimonthly literary book magazine. Subscription [Rs 30] is for six issues, post free. It is not a house journal though it gives prominence to Workshop writers. Ninety six issues have appeared till 1979, and the policy has been to encourage creative writing in English in India. As a rule *The Miscellany* gives preference to experimental work by young and unpublished writers, its two chief criteria for selection being "high imaginative awareness and mature technique." Literary contributions will be returned only if sufficient postage is enclosed. *The Miscellany* does not carry advertising. Back numbers are available; also full sets, leather or cloth bound. Price-list sent on request.

THE BIRDBOOK LOGO

Saffronbird	*transcreation*
Blackbird	*serious comics*
Greenbird	*fiction*
Babybird	*children's books*
Bluebird	*drama*
Indibird	*regional languages*
Greybird	*criticism*
Gurubird	*educational texts*
Redbird	*poetry*
Sunbird	*cassettes & LPs*
Silverbird	*screenplays*

WRITERS WORKSHOP

Hand-set in Univers typeface & printed on an Indian-make hand-operated machine by P.K. Aditya at the Lake Gardens Press, Calcutta 45, on map-litho paper made in India. Layout & lettering by P. Lal. Hand-bound by Julamiah Mohiuddeen with cotton handloom sari cloth woven in India.

Creative Writings

Writers Workshop Indian Creative Writing in English

Writers Workshop was founded in 1958. It consists of a group of writers who agree in principle that English has proved its ability, as a language, to play a creative role in Indian literature, through original writing and transcreation. Its task is that of defining and substantiating that role by discussion and diffusion of creative writing and transcreation from India and other countries. It publishes only such work by foreigners as deals with, or is inspired by, or has relevance for Indian life and culture.

Discussions are held on Sunday morning at 162/92 Lake Gardens, Calcutta 700045, India, and diffusion done through a series of books issued under the different Birdbook logos of Writers Workshop. A complete descriptive checklist of more than 600 publications can be had on request, along with a list of Sunbird Literary Cassettes.

The Workshop is non-profit and non-political: it consists of writers sympathetic to the ideals and principles embodied in creative writing; is concerned with practice not theorising, fruitful criticism not iconoclasm.


Sunbird





The Writers Workshop Logo


Gurubird

The Workshop publishes a bimonthly journal, THE MISCELLANY, devoted to creative writing. It is not a house journal though it introduces work by writers in advance of its WW book publication. As a rule, THE MISCELLANY gives preference to experimental work by young and unpublished writers, its two chief criteria for selection being high imaginative awareness and mature technique. Established writers appear in its pages if their contributions meet those standards. The Workshop does not accept advertising in THE MISCELLANY.

Membership of Writers Workshop requires the support of two members and approval by majority on Committee. Members are authors with published work to their credit. Associate membership requires agreement with the aims & objects of WW, active interest in creative writing, and a willingness to lend practical assistance to Workshop activities. Subscription to THE MISCELLANY automatically confers associate membership. Please write to the Secretary, P Lal, at the Writers Workshop address : 162/92 Lake Gardens, Calcutta 700045; Telephone 46-8325. Subscriptions and literary contributions should be sent to the same address.

Writers Workshop Bookbird Bookclub

HIGHBROW BOOKS
AT LOWBROW PRICES

To celebrate 20 years of WW activity, a book club scheme (available only in India) was started in January 1979 to enable serious readers to acquire a library of Indian Writing in English at dramatically low prices. The enrolment fee to the Bookbird Bookclub is Rs 6; a member is entitled to a 60% discount on all WW titles marked with an asterisk (*) in this checklist, on condition that twenty separate titles are ordered at one time. There is no limit to the number of copies of each title ordered. Registered postage and packing are extra.

62/92 Lake Gardens Calcutta 700045