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T H E M I D N I G H T T R A G E D Y

O.P. Gupta

I was not so much horrified by
the wprld's worst industrial Catastrophe
which occured that midnight
Killing thousands in twinkling of an eye
and rendering other tens of thousands
blind or orphans or destitutes,
as by the disgusting debate
among the politicians, pleaders and technicians
Over the quantam of Compensation
and the number of beneficiaries
after the disaster.

Years ago a volcanic inferno
had wiped out Pompeii and Herculaneum
and the fabulous Atlantis
was engulfed by the ocean.
But they were natural calamities
over which mankind had no control.

Here the victims ran helter skelter
groping for shelter
and gasping for breath
as if chased by some nocturnal griffin
Their frantic cries though rent the skies
were drowned by the plague of Pesticides.

Was it a sabotage?
an accident?
a technical flaw?
or some devilish design
to lift the lid off Pndora's box
and out flew the dragons of Death?
And Hope
Lying in coma in casualty ward.

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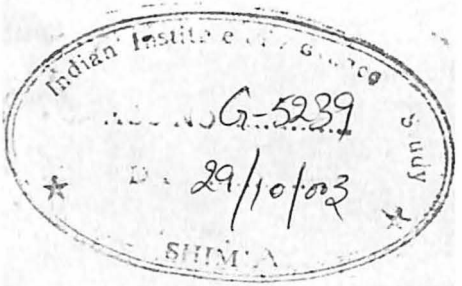

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A PASSAGE TO INDIA
ASTUDY OF E.M. FORSTER, SOMERSET MAUGHAM And HERMAN HESSE

Dr. K. Chellappan

Forster's **A Passage to India** is the prototype of all fictitious journeys into the immensity of India - as the title indicates, it is a process, an endless journey, and only one of the many passages that lead to India. It has been generally agreed that the India E.M. Forster's novel delineates is both muddled and mysterious - and the text also supports the view that India is both a mystery and a muddle. But this very equivocal nature makes it a most comprehensive image of the paradox of India as perceived by the Western mind and also a strange synthesis of the mythical and the historical, of the hill and the cave, of the mosque and the temple and the river Ganges that flows from Vishnu's foot through Siva's hair, the river of life and death the water that irrigates the plains as well as estroys - is perhaps the most perfect image of India, in so far as it symbolises he relentless and ageless flow of the spirit of life, which includes so much of dung and death. The strange irregular rhythm of the Ganges is that of life itself. And rightly Moore exclaims, what a wonderful river and what a terrible river!' and the river is the image of India itself.

And significantly the city of Chandrapore which is the micro-image of modern (British) India is introduced in relation to the Marabar caves, - and

they are twenty miles off - and the Ganges scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it desposits so freely. Chandrapore like the modern India is different things to different perspectives. It is a city or a forest? How is the civil station related to it? "It has nothing hideous in it, and only the view is beautiful; it shares nothing with the city except the everarching sky". And immediately the sky is burdened with vegetation and the river, and the flat earth except for the interruption of a group of fists and fingers which are the Marabar hills containing the extraordinary caves. The very structure of the first chapter showing a horizontal and vertical extension starting and ending with the Marabar caves shows that life in India is orga ic and contrived, orderly and disorderly, static and dynamic and it suggests a series of circles evolving from and revolving into each other. The overarching sky provides the basic image of the circular structures always suggesting something beyond - and that is India.

If the mosque represents the sensuous and the human comradeship, as well as the rational level in the Indian history and sensibility, the caves represent the abstract and primordial as well as a sense of negation and illusion and the serpents and the shadows in the caves also suggest an illusory reality. The different images of India also appear to be illusions, but they also point to a reality beyond themselves. The temple is a fusion of both and only in that section, there is a movement towards some sort of reconciliation. Then only an awareness of an order in the very disorder, of a reality in the very illusion is suggested. " Perhaps life is a mystery, not a muddle; they could not tell. Perhaps the hundred India s which fuss and squabble so tiresomely are one, and the universe they mirror is one ." (A passage to India p. 229) But, even this unity is dissolved in the light of the day and the novel

ends with so many echoes and negatives; " They did not want it; they said, in their hundred voices; 'Not, yet, and they said, "No, not there". (A P I p.282)

All this would lead us to believe that Forster almost equates India with Brahman, which can also be defined only negatively. But inspite of the flux, there is a sense of solidity and of the spirit of life, 'the indestructible life of man' as signified by the houses of temples, the fortress at Asigarh. This as well the sense of space that pervades the novel gives a solidity to the vast chaos and the novel becomes a correlative to the author's perception of India as a spiritual presence transcending time and space.

The image of the journey is central to the novel dealing with a stillness which is the characteristic of the inner self as well as India. And rightly the Westerner is associated with the road - and the passage; and in this sense we compare the use of road in this novel with the use of the same image in Achebe (Arrow of God) and a few other Common-Wealth writers. Ultimately, the road and the passage are also equivocal images as all means of communication are; the very means of unification leads to division and it looks as though all spatial categories are both unifying and divisive, and the real journey presupposes 'a still love still turning'- the journey in terms of the spirit which is no journey at all.

In Maugham's **The Razor's Edge**, India is not so much an image of Brahman, as the destination of the human soul seeking its fulfilment and identity, because only in India Larry's quest for happiness and peace are fulfilled " I went to India because I wanted rest", says Larry," What India offered him was more than rest; peace and peace with himself, because he attained a clarity.

"...I'd suddenly become aware of an intense

conviction that India has something to give me that I had to have. It seemed to me that a chance was offered to me and must take it there and then or it would never be offered me again." (The Razor's Edge. p.262)

and the experience of illumination at the forest retreat in the hills of Travancore itself is described as follows;

> " I felt as though I were suddenly released from my body and as pure spirit partook of a loveliness I had never conceived. I had a sense that a knowledge more than human possessed me, so that everything that had been confused was clear and everything that had perplexed me was explained. I was so happy that it was pain and I struggled to release myself from it, for I felt that if it lasted a moment longer I should die; and yet it was such rapture that I was ready to die rather than forego it. How can I tell you what I felt? No words can tell the ecstasy of my bliss." (TRE. p. 276)

If Forster's vision of India was as much political and social as it was mystical, Maugham's is entirely spiritual, and more concrete, if less profound, because there is no conflict, but only the confluence of the two cultures. He was also fascinated by the Upanishidic view of life- "I found something wonderfully satisfying in the notion that you can attain Reality by knowledge. In later ages the sages of India ... but they never denied that the noblest way, though the hardest is the way of knowledge." (TRE p. 270)

What he needed and found was God as the Guru. From him he also knew that even the world is a manifestation of the Absolute and the flow of its perfection. Larry says, " He taught that God cannot help creating and that the world is the manifestation of his nature." (TRE p.277). This interpretation of Maya as well as evil resembles

that of Godbole in **A Passage to India** - whereas Godbole says, " But in my own humble opinion, they are both of them aspects of my Lord. He is present in the one, absent in the other, and the difference between presence and absence is great, as great as my feeble mind can grasp. Yet absence implies presence, absence is not non-existence" (P I p. 175). Kosti says that evil is the direct manifestation of the divine as good is. Maugham accepts the world and evil, but as a means to salvation, which is not a liberation from life, but the tyranny of the world. He accepts the suffering in terms of one's past deeds, but still he does not run away from responsibility or shirk the agony of birth and existence. In this sense he tries to see even the Indian view as life - affirming, even after he finds that the goal of all striving is simplicity and the stasis of the soul. That is why the protagonist chooses the life of the mendicant at the end. The world is **impermanent,** but not **unreal and your worldly life or Maya** can also lead you to see your true identity in simplicity. In a sense to Larry also India is a Brahman - or Brahman as Guru and the dicovery of India for him as a discovery of his true identity. This is different from the experience of Mrs. Moore and Adela. Though all of them turn to India and return to their home, there is a difference. Mrs. Moore and Adela experience India more negatively particularly Adela. The words of the missionary with whom Adela walked out to the Lesseps statue would provide this; "Observe, I don't say to what do you turn, but to what do you return. Every life ought to contain both a turn and return." (PI p.231)

Herman Hesse's **Siddhartha** is another journey to the spiritual home of the seekers of India as well as the journey of the soul in its interior path towards its central peace. This has more affinity with **The Razor's Edge** than **A Passage to India,** and also looks forward to Huxley's **Island.** Its concern

was with the awakening of the atman, but not away from but within the self, in the innermost, in the eternal which each person carried with him. "One must find the source within one's own Self, one must possess it. Everything else was seeking - a detour, error" (Sidd p.8) and he identified it with truth. In the words of the Chandogya Upanishad, "In truth, the name of Brahman is Satyam. Indeed, he who knows it enters the heavenly world each day." (Sidd p.8) In the beginning he travelled along the path of self-denial through pain, but 'although the path took him away from self, in the end, they always led to it.' (Sidd p.17) And he knew that one should not escape the self or the pain of life. Later he did not himself even the pleasure of the body - because one should not rid himself of the self. The real enlightenment comes not through seeking, but by acceptance and humility and love. Even Kamala becomes an instrument in this process of self-discovery, and he had to sin in order to live again. Ultimately he listens to the secret of the river. "But today he only saw one of the river's secrets, one that gripped his soul. He saw that the water continually flowed and flowed and yet it was always there; it was always the same and yet every moment it was new." (Sidd p.104) And this led to the perception of the unity of his life and all life. " I reviewed my life and it was also a river, and Siddhartha the boy, Siddhartha the mature man and Siddhartha the old man, were only seperated by shadows, not through reality. Siddhartha's previous lives were also not in the past, and his death and his return to Brahman are not in the future. Nothing was, nothing will be, everything has reality and presence." (Sidd p. 110) The river symbolises process as a manifestation of permanence. The great wisdom he acquired was the need to dispel time, but that does not mean that he was against becoming . He and the ferrymaker listened silently to the water, which to them was not just water,

but the voice of life, the voice of Being, of perpetual Becoming." (Sidd p. 111) When that wisdom comes, even the pale face of Kamala and his own become young again and " he felt more acutely the indestructibleness of every life, the eternity of every moment." (Sidd p. 1) In the final phase he felt as if even ordinary people were his brothers. "Their vanities, desires and trivialities no longer seemed absurd to him; they had become understandable, lovable and even worthy of respect..... He saw life, vitality, the indestructible and Brahman in all their desires and needs." (Sidd p 132) He also saw the continuity between his father and his son,and then he affirms;

> "The sinner is not on the way to a Buddha-like state he is not evolving, although our thinking cannot conceive things otherwise. No, the potential Buddha already exists in the sinner; his future is already there. The potential hidden in Buddha must be recognized in him, in you, in everybody. The world, Govinda, is not imperfect or slowly evolving along a long path to perfection. No, it is perfect at every moment; every sin already carries grace within it, all small children are potential old men, all sucking have death within them all dying pople - eternal life." (Sidd p 145)

And this means acceptance of everything as in us all. This stone is stone,it is also animal, God and Buddha. I do not respect and love it because it was one thing and will become something else, but because it has already long been everything and always is everything." (Sidd p. 146) And this consciousness leads Govinda also to illumination; "He no longer saw the face of his friend Siddhartha. And no longer knowing whether time existed, whether this display had lasted a second or a hundred years, whether there was a Siddhartha, or a Gotama, a Self and others, wounded deeply enchanted and exalted, Govinda stood yet a while

bending over Siddartha's peaceful face which he had just kissed, which had just been the stage of all present and future form." (Sidd p 153)

And this perception of the unity of life and oneness of Brahman is the answer which India has to offer to the maladies of the modern world. Herman Hesse's **'The Journey to the East'** though a pilgrimage across an imaginary land can be also seen as a passage to India and its philosophy of unity of life and the unity of the soul with Brahman. It takes up the problem of the transpersonal Community in the form of the league of Eastern Wayfares and speaks of the simultaneity of time and space though the image of journey.

"We moved not only through space but also through time... For our goal was not only the East, or rather the East was not only a country and something geographical, but it was the home and youth of the soul, it was everything and now where, it was the union of all times."(The Journey to the East p.50-1)

To conclude, all the three novels (besides **'The Journey to The East** and Aldous Huxley's **Island**) have used the Journey image (Journey to India and Journey within India) to symbolise the soul's recognition of its true identity, which is a recognition of oneness with the universe and all life in different ways. As characteristic of the Western mind, the emphasis is on the Indian perception of the sanctity of life, and to them Time and Space are illusions, and the goal of all Journey is to return home - to the soul's stasis and the peace of India. The final wisdom is to recognise the truth of life as Brahman - but seen in one's own soul. And India somehow provides the image of Self and the soul to these writers, and that is why in all these cases the discovery of the soul is also the discovery of India. 'Thou art that', and 'that' is India.

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THE PRESS

Touching the four corners of the world
And clutching at every slipping grain of sand
It rolls on on wheels of gold
With a white clean face on the news-stand

Darkness fills its interior rooms and corridors
Fabricating assorted truths with ifs and ors
Lubricating by lust
Lust pure and for power
It rolls on merrily
Through black death and white murder
Through coups and wars
Through slums and stars
To catch the morning sun
That will turn the night's darkness
Into columns of melting gold:

Leaving truth to writhe and turn
Between the lines made to order.

-Vishwas Kanadey

MARGARET CHATTERJEE AND THE INDIAN IDENTITY

Dr. O.P. Mathur

In one of her early poems, Margaret Chatterjee, after comparing the spring of her native land with that of the land of her adoptation, concludes:

> Snow-shawled frost - tasselled lies my winter heart,
> No froth of flower adeck my naked boughs
> And yet far stronger than the thrust of love
> And surer than the spring's insistent root
> Know here the plenitude of summer days.
>
> (**The Spring and the Spectacles**, p.16)[1]

The imagery of "naked boughs", though with an artificial covering of shawl and tassel, is effectively contrasted to the natural warmth and plenitude of summer. We get a glimpse of the poet acquiring a new identity, based on the thrust of love and the warmth of allegiance for a life "here" which has overpowered her both by its breadth and depth.

Never having the contemptuous and patronising attitude of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Margaret Chatterjee always regarded the Insians as one of the sufferers of the world - along with those of Belsen and Buchenwald. (**The Spring and the Spectacles**, p.5) The three poems on the seasons of rain, winter and spring view them as universal phenomena, but the poet's growing identification with the "here" (India) as opposed to "there" (the West) culminates in her final acceptance of India as her country:

The Winter showers
Are tears that fall
Along an aging face,
Furrowed my face, my land
My India.

(**Towards the Sun**, p.23)

In "To Pablo Neruda", included in her latest book of verse, she speaks almost as the voice of this continent:

Across thousand of miles
Continent salutes continent
As we take the last dust
Of your feet.

(**The Sound of Wings**, p.29)

Some of her short stories also mirror through fictitious characters the author's gradual acquisition of an Indian identity. Katherine of "Pahari Story" merges herself in the life of India. She has started a dispensary to give preliminary treatment to the people and has learnt so much about Indian life that one of the sellers says, " We can't teach the Miss Sahib anything. Can we? She knows everything " (**At the Homeopath's** ,p.16) The natural culmination of all this is her decision not to return to her country but to stay on in India. Fanny of "**Encounter**" bridges the continents and enters into " a mythical country of the mind which was neither England nor India but in which both were dear" (**At the Homeopath's**, p. 68) She is so much impressed with the vitality of the Indian tutor Hori's life and mind that she decides to call her next child, if it is a boy, after him, 'Harry'. In the content of the poet's own deepening commitment to India and her people, all these emotional and spiritual involvements of the heroines of her stories acquire added significance.

Margaret Chatterjee's poems on typically Indian subjects are about four times as many as those on the Western. Among the Indian subjects she has written about are the natural scene and environment, Indian life, both rural and urban, and Indian myth and philosophy. Nowhere does her treatment of Indian themes have a false ring or betray a Westerner's patronising attitude. Her poetry epitomises the multi-dimensional experience of being Indian - the inheritance of a glorious culture and civilization, the sufferings of the present and the glimpses of aspirations and hopes for the future. The Indian scene is portrayed by her with love and compassion. She rightly says that she writes poems in English against the context of Indian nature and seasons. The Indo-Aryan image of the sun, deified into a god, as a power to be worshipped (**The Spring and the Spectacle**, p.10), is a pervasive image in her poetry. The relative docility and impotence of the sun in the cold Western countries is mentioned by her with something of an outsider's objectivity:

> The sun is hidden in the wintry sky,
> And that which is the source of every living thing,
> Substance of days hoped for - waits unknown.
>
> (**The Spring and the Spectacle**, p.16).

Contrasted to this, there is the typically tropical imagery:

> For here there is no shadow-time
> Between light and dark -
> Aflame the sky the urgent sun
> Shouts blossom from the top of every tree
> And every leaf stands stiff with eager sap.
>
> (**The Spring and the Spectacle**, p.16)

Her poetry celebrates the bright sun and the

clear blue tropical skies, both in themselves and as symbols of the bright and vast possibilities for man.

For how could we say
That in the smallness of our hearts
We could love the patch of sky.
That startled with its blueness
From the confines of our cells,
But that the whole open sky,
Firmament of all possibilities,
Lit up by the moving sun,
Blinded us?

(**The Spring and the Spectacle**, p.8)

In **Towards the Sun**, the title of which is highly suggestive not only of the poet's irresistible attraction for the sun but also of the limitless possibilities of man and his occasional Icarus-like tragic fall, we find the recurrent sun-imagery. For example:

Sun breaking
Split
As fresh lemon does
The milky sky,
Blue whey
Held
In a jacaranda bowl
And the cruddled clouds
Still floating...

(**Towards the Sun**, p. 12).

In the same poem the sun becomes a lover:

The sun uncovers
His head,
The sky beckons,
so do I
- Both.

(Towards the Sun, p.12)

The poet gradually realizes the power of the tropical sun which in the following lines, is portrayed as an enemy;

> The sun has scourged me
> To the point of death,
> Consumed my eyes
> And filled my ears with fire.
> My feet encounter rocks and thorns,
> My mouth is parched,
> Too dry my eyes for tears.
>
> **(Towards the Sun**, pp.21-22)

Even when the sun is not direcly mentioned, its presence suffuses the atmosphere of Chatterjee's poetry, as its light pervades the universe. In its amplitude, the brightness of its colours, the warmth of its environment and its sweet fragrances, Chatterjee's poetry is essentially a poetry of the tropics.

There is another important characteristic of Indian natural scene which has indelibly impressed Margaret Chatterjee's theme and imagery - the rains. The clouds described in "**Ballad of the Earth and the Rain**" are typically Indian - as big as "giant's hands" and with their "thick wet curls ablow in the wind."(**The Spring and the Spectacles**, p. 14) The Indian rain seems to have permeated into her imagery, like the rain-drops - " mazed with August rain "(**The Spring and the Spectacles**, p.17). The lyric sung on a piano reminds her of the soft fall of rain-drops:

> Now fall the notes
> Down-petalling-
> The sound of gardens
> In the rain, or sun-bright
> As bells upon a summer day-

Winging to distance.

(**The Spring and the Spectacle**, p. 18)

The presence of the beloved is like "drenching rain" (**Towards the Sun**, p. 11). In another poem the experience of living is made significant and meaningful by the experience of nature, among which is mentioned :

the scent
of soil after rain,
Sky's cavalcade of cloud.

(**Towards the Sun**,.p.27)

Margaret Chatterjee seems to be specially fond of Indian birds and animals. Many of the birds of India have been celebrated in her poetry and have gone into making of her imagery - the "squadrons of parrots / streaking the skies".(**The Sandalwood Tree**, p. 38), the "tailor-bird on the kikar tree", "pigeons who rival architects", the "crow who knows how to survive", "the white-winged albatross who is fearless", the skylark whose courage and joy "leave their mark upon the sky" (**The Sound of Wings**, p. 56). Birds become for Chatterjee symbols of the conquest of time and space:

I sing of creatures whose world is rimless,
Whose feet curl over branches
In a very temporary way,
Who have no tentacles or roots,
To whom trees belong.

(**The Sound of Wings**, p. 56)

Birds "know no frontiers" and migrate "hoarding time in their bodies" (**The Sound of Wings**, p. 56). The title of her latest published book of poetry, **The Sound of Wings**,and probable title of the coming one,**The Rimless World**, are significant because they

try to catch the evanescent sensuous and the deep philosophical meaning of the lives of birds. Like the birds, the animals also are sometimes treated on a symbolic plane. The tortoise becomes a symbol of the riddle of whether the world is moving or static (**The Sandalwood Tree**, p. 22) The caparisoned elephant "swinging his bell like an acolyte's censer", galumphing his way triumphantly through a jungle or traffic and " a plethora of peevish Protestant dogs", is described in terms which suggest the magnificence of the "Orange-robed Sadhus on his back" as contrasted to the simplicity of the cows sitting in the sun (**The Sandalwood Tree**, p.25). The poetry of Margaret Chatterjee has the aroma of the nature and countryside of India in its manifold aspects.

Margaret Chatterjee has also portrayed the rural and urban life of India with remarkable sympathy and realism. She has a deep compassion for the poor and desire to understand their feeling and way of life.[2] The Indian landscape is peopled with "hungry eyes and hands" (**Towards the Sun**, p. 25) for whose sufferings her heart wells up in sympathy:

> Can you forgive me
> For being alive,
> For breathing air,
> For ecstasy,
> For suffering,
> For having friends to love?
>
> (**Towards the Sun**, p. 27)

The Indian children, the chikki-man, the violin-seller, the craftsman of the Raj who "carved in stone the sky" (**The Sandalwood Tree**, p.16), the clerk, the old man wrinkling the time of the day, the new bride stiff in purple violet, the mochi, the dhobin, the ruddi-wallah, the charpoy-wallah, the napit (barber), the bhisti, the chaiwallah, the village boy - they all provide human dimensions to

a poetry so fine and subtle in its sensibility.

Chatterjee has put her human beings in a social framework the cultural parameter of which is provided partly by the traditional Hindu, especially Bengali, life, but their economic context is that of the commonalty of sufferers spread all over the world. Here is a typical home of an Indian clerk:

> With many calendars
> And the hard bed
> And the medicine bottles
> On the dressing table
> And he reached for his sandals
> Under the alna.
>
> (**The Sound of Wings**, p. 35)

"**Summer in the Hills**" describes an Indian house in a hill station. The poem "**Shoes**" subtly integrates the feeling of an Indian wife for her sick husband with the "tenantless shoes":

> I see your empty shoes
> Wrinkled, stretched,
> Stretched to the shape
> Of feet I touch.
>
> (**The Sandalwood Tree**, p. 30)

Two of the important 'Samskaras' in a Hindu's life, marriage and cremation, are described so touchingly:

> When you blessed me
> With a handful of
> Dhruba grass
> Many years ago,
> I bent my head
> In a salute.
> **(Grass)**[3]

The cremation, the final consummation of life, is also described in "**Agni**" in terms of love-making.

> Here is my last lover,
> The most persistent
> Of them all.
> Here is the last leap
> Of flame to flame,
> Complete, reciprocal.

(**The Sandalwood Tree**, p. 41)

A Hindu can welcome the flames like a lover for he has no fear of death.

In some of her poems Margaret Chatterjee tries to represent the strength and difficulties of Indian life by means of symbols derived from the Indian landscape - the "gnarled neem" fighting against the greatest odds, the peepul murmuring ancient syllables and luckily protected by holiness, and the " tree down the road" slashed "branch / with a blunt axe" ("**City Trees**")[4]. Her poetry is a liberation to the struggling mess of Indian humanity symbolized Whitmanlike by grass:

> But Insian grass has to
> Struggle to exist.
> My half-glass of water, undrunk,
> Must not be wasted,
> I shan't pour it on the tulsi plant
> Which gets libation in plenty,
> But on a patch of grass nearby,
> I mean it to live.
> A point will have been made.[5]

The Indian people and their ways of life are reflected not only in the poetry but also in the short stories of Margaret Chatterjee, the realism of which substantiates her statement that they were "try-outs for themes for novels"[6]. She says, " If I write a novel, it would be about Calcutta

showing extraordinary characters seen in a Dickensenian way."[7]Her short stories hold out the promise of future novelist.

Margaret Chatterjee views the common Indian people as belonging to the rank of the "patient eyed, heroic ones" who are of "many colours" and live in "divers countries" but are "one as man himself" (**The Spring and the Spectacle**, p. 9.) The people of Bengal, victims of a man-made famine, belong to the universal brotherhood of suffering:

> We who have known destruction
> And who were destroyed...
> We are a large company.
> We are from Coventry and the East End,
> Stalingrad, Colonge, Warsaw, and Caen,
> Paris, Berlin, and Hiroshima,
> We know the terror by night -
> The destruction at noonday.

(**The Spring and the Spectacle**, p.5)

But their present sufferings and sears are but a phase, "neither the beginning nor the end / But the middle of the story" (**The Spring and the Spectacle**, p.27)

> For whom anniversaries are but moments
> In a long memory -
> Pattering a destiny still to come.

(**The Spring and the Spectacle**, p. 10)

Such a long and synoptic view of time is a part of the Indian philosophical outlook. Margaret Chatterjee is a scholar of Indian philosophy and her writings naturally abound in reference to Indian myth, philosophy and wisdom which form a vast intellectual and spiritual background of her poetry. She has learnt not a little from the work of Bhartrihari, Vidypati,Chandidas, Bharat Chanda,

Jivananda Das, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, and Tagore with regard to theme imagery and style. In addition, there is the rich fount of Indian myth and Vedic and Budhist philosophy at which she has drunk, as is evident from her poems like **"Variation on a theme from the Mundaka Upnishad", "Karma", To a Carvaka Philosopher", Gloss on Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV, 4"** and **"Gloss on Bhagvatgita VI,21",** in addition to those where Indian thought comes in casually.

More than all this, Margaret Chatterjee's essentially Indian identity is reavealed through her imagery. She says " There is I belive, an unconscious distilling process at work in a writer's reflections on life. It finds natural expression in the image."[8] In addition to the imagery of the sun and the rain, two of the unforgettable realities of Indian life, already discussed above, there are numerous other images which show how deeply Indian has sunk into her being. The Indian trees are made symbols of various categories of Indians:

The one-leged tal
Standing in vacant lots
Is silent witness
To dark deeds done;
Where the bamboo bends
But does not break,
Where trees blighted by war,
Mango and jack-fruit,
Yet survive
With hope of fruit
Next year.

(**The Sandalwood Tree**, p. 10)

And of course much is to be learnt from the sandalwood tree

Which only when most bruised
Can fragrant be.

(**The Sandalwood Tree**, p. 11)

How clearly is Indian natural environment interwoven with human life can be seen from the following:

I know when it is autumn
From the rhythm of the drums
I know when it is winter
From the coldness of your cheeks.
Spring powders red the trees
And oil melts in the shade.
I know when it is summer
For the pavement burns my feet,
And now I know the rains have come
From the salt taste of your skin.

(**Towards the Sun**, p.10)

There is also the typical Indian image of a tendril twining around a tree, so popualr in Indian love poetry:

I twine my limbs
About your trunk
Nor easily yourself
Can extricate.
My tendrils hold
Your every part.

(**Towards the Sun**, p.17)

Scattered over Chatterjee's work are images from Indian life and environment - feet brown with dust (**Towards the Sun**, p.26), touching of the feet of the dead (**The sound of Wings**, p.73), putting the water on one's head (**Towards the Sun**, p. 26), arms tight - packed in sleeves like "cocoanut in its shell "(**The Sandalwood Tree**, p. 12), the Chikki

man's white gram brown-sugared "like white teeth in brown children's faces" (**The Sandalwood Tree**, p.14), the cricket on the neem tree "Titillating **teental** tempo.... Ustad that he is / Playing his shehnai" (**The Sandalwood Tree**, p. 27), putting one's head on somebody's feet (**The Sandalwood Tree**, p. 26), sucking each moment "like a mango-stone "(**The Sandalwood Tree**, p. 32) taking the dust of one's feet (**The Sound of Wings**, p. 29), a bird flying from one deodar tree to another (**The Sound of Wings**, p.48), the night "black / As dhaba tea" (**The Sound of Wings**,p. 52), and the lover longing " like Arjun" for the familiar form of the beloved (**The Sound of Wings**, p.66). The use of such imagery seems to have become a natural and involuntary process for Margaret Chatterjee and is an unmistakable pointer to her Indian identity. She has rightly said, "I am completely assimilated in India and am annoyed if I am considered a foreigner".9. To take an image from nature, we can say that here is a case of vegetation propagation in which a cutting of a plant acquires new roots in a different place. Born and brouhgt up in the West, she is now Indian to her bones. But, as in everybody's case, there are limitations of her Indian experience. She is apparently unaware of many of the orthodox traditional aspects of Indian social life, as indeed many Indians also are. She has absorbed only that India which she has experienced - nature, philosophy, literature, and the common men who suffer exploitation and yet cherish a vision of the future. These aspects bring the Indian nearer to the universal man. Margaret Chatterjee's Indian identity is thus fused with her universal identity. Her poetry is an appropriate illustration of V.K. Gokak's shrewd comment on the Indian character of Indian English Poetry:

> Indo-Anglian poetry, like the rest of modern Indian poetry, is Indian first and everything else afterwards. It has voiced the aspirations, the joys, the sorrows of the

Indian people. It has been sensitive to the change in the national climate and striven increasingly to express the soul of India, the personality which distinguishes her from other nations. At the same time, its constant endeavour is to delineate the essential humanity and universality which make the word her kith and kin.

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SYMBOLS OF PRIMITIVISM IN HERMAN MELVILLE

Dr. Miss Tara Choudhary

The cult of primitivism sprang in literature as a result of a genuine human need. Atavism or the artist's awareness of the failure of existing symbols of religion made him go back to the past, to a state of mind where no symbols for God existed, and create fresh symbols that explained the meaning of his life in the context of his new perception of nature of God.

Atavism or the awareness of the failure of existing symbols of religion is a phenomenon mostly common to Protestant countries. Protestanism minimised sacrament. (Catholicism has seven sacraments, Protestantism has only two.) This was done to reduce the meditation of the Church in the form of sacrament and to open 'a direct total and personal approach to God.' What actually happened was, along with the sacrament, the symbols of corporateness also vanished, and without symbols of corporateness, to feel unity with the fellow beings became impossible. (Sacrament is an archetype appearing in universal religious custom which expresses the concept that through corporateness individual is made one with his fellow beings in communion with God.) Man was thus left alone in the face of his God. His ralationship with God was also, however, not much of a solace. The impoverishment of symbolism had reduced it to an unbearably refined I - you reletionship - I, standing for individual and you

standing for God. Tillich says, this I - you relationship overvalued individual and made personality synonymous with God. As a result God ceased to be a transcending centre, i.e. God apart from God identified with human perfections, and man was felt totally alone centre in himself. Jung says decadence of protastentism enabled man to rediscover Gods as psychic factors. A primitivist is an artist who does not succumb to any neurosis in the face of such a situation. What he does is, to compensate for the loss of old symbolism, he creates fresh symbols for God and for existential meaning.

In Melville, Ishmael is the symbol for the primitivist. He is present in almost every major work of Melville. Tom in **Typee**,Paul in **Omoo**, Taji in **Mardi**, Sailor - heroes in **Redburn & White-Jacket**, Pierre, Israel Pottor, and the narrators **Moby-Dick**, **Confidence-Man** and **Billy Budd** are all different forms of Ishmael. What Ishmael meant exactly to Melville is made clear in the story ' Two Temples'. In the story, the narrator caught up in the bell-tower of the deserted Church comes across a painting and comments, "A puscyitish painting of Madonna & Child, adoring a lower window, seemed showing to me the sole tenants of this white wilderness - the true Hagar and her Ishmael." The white wilderness is the state of cultural failure, of symbols without meaning and Ishmael becomes Chirst, the Redeemer; for he alone has the power to create symbols. In **White-Jacket** Melville says the same thing differently - ' Our own hearts are prayer-rooms, and the chaplains who can help us most are ourselves.

The possibility of freeing himself from dead symbols first occured to Melville when he visited the Typee valley in the South Sea Islands, (also referred to as Polynesia or Marquisas). He found that religion there was also in a state of decay,

a wood-rot malady was spreading among the gods and the Polynesian was happy with his state of affairs. For Melville, The Polynesian came to symbolise freedom from dogma and the happiness that attends this freedom. In Polynesia, Melville also noticed the activity of paddle-carving. Freed from old symbols of religion, the Polynesian created fresh symbols for God and existential meaning, and transferred them to the paddle. Melville himself was a potential maker of symbols, and it was in his symbol making capacity that he identified himself with the savage. In Moby-Dick, Melville has spoken about what whaleman or the white-sailor savages that worked liked ' Polyesian Savages' and 'Greek savages' and old Dutch-savages' meaning that a savage was a symbolist.

In what way are the symbols of primitivism different from the traditional symbols that a primitivist rejects?

Traditional symbols are symplex, where as a primitivist's symbols are multiplex. A multiplex symbol contains different levels of meaning, contradictory sets of values which get fused in the process of symbol-making. Again, a primitivist's symbols carry the whole weight of existential meaning. In this they differ from the symbols of a nonprimitivist artist who may feel secure in his allegiance to religious symbols outside the province of his art, and whose symbols therefore may not necessarily carry the whole weight, of existential meaning. A primitivist's symbols differ from the traditional religious symbols in that they restore the element of corporateness lost in the Protestant tradition. Another thing to remember, a primitivist's symbols do not belong to the collective unconscious. They are the artist's individual, unique symbols.

There are six major symbols of primitivism in Melville. They are the - Handsome Youth as a

friend, the Polynesian Sage, Whiteness, Shadow & Primitive Eros, the Cross, and the Whale.

The symbol of puer aeternus or the handsome youth as a friend is the most beautiful and moving symbol in Melville. It is Melville's distinct contribution to the field of literature. It combines two elements - the element of Polynesian friendship, and the element of Christian Communion in Eucharist. The prototype of Polynesian friendship is Marnoo, a polynesian youth in Typee, and it is represented by Toby, Jack Chase, Billy Budd, Bulkington, Long Ghost, Rolfe and Mortmain belonging to the civilized world. All these are remarkably handsome in appearance. Marnoo has matchless symmetry of form, beautifully formed unclad limbs, elegant figure and rich curling brown hair twined about his temples and neck in the little close curling mass of jetty locks that clustered about his temples and threw a dark shade into his large black eyes. Jack Chase is a true-blue, tall and well-knit with a clear open eye, a fine broad brow and abounding nut brown beard. And Billy is universally acknowledge as the handsome Sailor. Bulkington, Long Ghost, Mortmain and Rolfe are also handsome. This remarkable physical beauty of these characters is a reflection of their innocence, of frankness and generosity of the heart. Ishmael Melville meets these characters and finds in their friendship a means of release of self into selflessness. It is through friendship, Melville feels oneness in communion. It is Melville's substitute for Christian sacrament of Eunchrarist. What Melville was opposed to was the Christian insistence on suffering and atonement. He felt that the clergies had perverted the origianl meaning of Chirist. He could not believe that Christ taught people how to die in the sense of guilt and suffering. What Christ taught, according to Melville, was how to live in innocence, goodness and supreme happiness. For Melville, the original meaning of Christ was represented by the symbol of

the handsome youth as a friend. And that is why, even before Gaugin in 1891, he had said in **Clarel** that Tahiti (a part of Polynesia) is the only fit place on the earth for the advent of Christ.

The Second primitivistic symbol in Melville is that of the Polynesian Sage or the holy man. It combines the universal archetype of the wise man and the element of Polynesian wisdom. It is represented by Queequeg, and it supplants the Christian Sacrament of the office of the minister. Melville's holy man differs from his Christian counterpart in that he does not preach, he is free of holy orders, and he worships God in his own fashion. In his one purely sacramental act of delivering Tashtago from the whale-head, he officiates as a wise man and not as a minister. What Melville had in mind, while writing that scene, was the sacrament of baptism, of initiation into the knowledge of God. What Queequeg does is he saves Tashtago from an oily death in the inscrutable mysteries of God through pagan indifference to those mysteries. The wisdom Queequeg teaches is the wisdom of acceptance of the mystery of God and death.

Whiteness is the third of Melville's symbols of primitivism and is a sign of the all-encompassing God. The symbol is made of the archetype associations of whiteness and its noble and sacred associations. Whiteness, is sacred to Persians, Romans, Americans, Indians and Christians. For them, it suggests purity and love. But whiteness as an archetype also suggests violence and dread. Melville's reflections upon the painted nature and the description of the flowering vine of the Piazz full of cankerous worms feeding upon the bloosoms convey the feeling of revulsion that whiteness often creates Whiteness, therefore is a colour to which no one can assign any particular meaning. In Melville, it is the colour of the whale, an emblem of inscrutable God - God of endless contradictions,

God who is simultaneously love and hate, beauty and terror and all the paradoxes, contrasts and disparities of the universe.

For shadows and primitive eros, there is no one fixed symbol in Melville, though all the symbols associated with these together suggest only one thing, and that is the aboriginalness of God. Significantly enough, these symbols are also not multiplex symbols, for Melville has nothing to match them from the civilized world. Fedallah, the spirit spout and the stone alters in the Typee Valley are all mysterious, suggestive of depth and antiquity, and reflect the aborginalness of God. Symbols related to primitive eros are the lizard, and Tiki or phallus. They suggest healthy sex interest and pagan vitality.

Though the symbols of cross in Melville needs independent treatment, it, infact belongs to the group of symbols connected with primitive eros. The Cross in Christianity is a symbol of death and suffering. To a primitive man, it once suggested the Tree of life. And even before that it was associated with phallus. It then represented the procreative power of nature and eternally renovating life. In the symbol of cross, Melville thus reaches the base of all religious history.

The last symbol to be discussed is the Whale - the iconographic emblem of the God discussed in the theology of whiteness, of primal mind and the cross. It is made of the archetype of the Dragon Whale and American Whalemen's (including Melville's own) memories of actual whales. It is the first and the most striking non-anthropomorphous symbol for God in the history of the Christian world. Anthropomorphic God, Melville believed, was a creation of human brain (Jehovah was born in a Pyramid, he said) and the traditional meaning of God was also an imposed meaning in his view. In

Moby-Dick, the whale, he therefore created a God-symbole that agreed with his own feeling for God.

Now one may question the necessity of creating symbols at all. The answer is that for Melville, the primitivist, art was a better means of affirmation than existential course and therefore, it was in art that he sought a compensation for the lost symbols of religion.

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M I R A G E

Dr. K.J. John

In the snail-pace world of dream.
She and I breath in unison,
My outside world dies within,
And she knows all of me.

She turns, as if to go,
Half-bird, half-animal.
The turbulent wind dies on the hillock;
Love's all. That is all I know.

A doe drinks beside the stream,
A doe and its new-born;
But when I follow often them,
The snowy grass changes to thorns and stone.

NARAYAN'S THE FINANCIAL EXPERT

Dr. G.P. Baghmar

"Yet another paper on Narayan!" may be the academic world's first reaction to the paper. Since Narayan has engaged critical attention so long and so thoroughly, it is rather difficult to justify another paper, and any attempt is likely to be derided. Notwithstanding the ever growing Narayan scholarship, we need study him from various perspectives and points of references. The purpose of this paper is limited. It examines a few aspects of **The Financial Expert** touching upon some popular critical misconceptions about the work with a view to suggesting a better reading and some vital areas for investigation.

In order to understand **The Financial Expert** correctly a few preliminary remarks about Narayan would not be out of place.

Narayan has been called an Indian Chekov, an Indian Jane Austen, a Daniel Defoe, an Indian Faulkner, a Joyce Cary, an implicit moralist, a subtle symbolist, an ironist, a purveyor of amusing oddities, a commentator of the broad tendencies of his society and age, and a genial story teller. In his interview with Ved Mehta Narayan rightly said, " Like true reality I am many things to many men." This epigrammatic statement sums up the diverse critcal opinions about Narayan's works. Narayan has been variously understood and often misunderstood.

A perceptive interpreter of the contemporary Indian society and its middle class dilemmas, his art represents his acceptance of moral and cultural heritage. To add to this, he is a comic novelist and maintains an objective detachment from his themes and characters. So to draw from his novels any conclusion about his point of view and value system is rather difficult. What it makes it more difficult is the fact that Narayan seldom comments on his works, avoids interviews and is generally reluctant to speak about his inner convictions. But however detached he is from his themes and characters, it is possible to draw from his fictional world some inferences about his conception of the world. Such conclusions must of necessity remain a hypothesis until the day the celebrated artist chooses to talk about his inner convictions which is, perhaps, not likely to happen, a doubt shared by one of the novelist's close friends, Prof. C.D. Narasimhaiah who once wrote to me about it. Therefore, to test their veracity, these conclusions should always be related to what Narayan has said and confessed in **My Days, My Dateless Diary,** the interview he gave to Ved Mehta and introduction to **Gods, Demons and Others.** His 'Indianness' must be construed in terms of his adherence to the classical tradition and in his exploration of how characters and situations in the contemporary world are linked with the classical norms of Indian cultural and literary values.

With these preliminaries let us take up the job on hand.

In his poineering work, **Indian Writing in English,** K.R. Srinivas Iyengar rightly draws our attention to a characteristic pattern of plot that we find in Narayan novels. The plots follow a pattern of 'Creation - dissolution - rebirth'. Structurally speaking this pattern conforms to the

Hindu view of life, and is obvious in **The Financial Expert** also. Margayya starts as a petty money lender, becomes a financial wizard, his financial empire crumbles. Margayya is ruined with the only prospect of returning to the bunyan tree to start afresh. But what K.R. S. Iyengar's theory does not explain is why is there no complete destruction (or Death) of Margayya as we hold in the creation - dissolution - rebirth cycle. To me the only reasonable explanation that Narayan is a comic novelist and the crumbling of Margayya's financial empire may be taken as a comic equivalent of Hindu philosophy of 'Pralaya' or destruction after deluge.

In order to assess Narayan's technical skill as a story-teller it is necessary to remember Indian Story-telling tradition and Narayan's unconscious affiliation with the tradition. Indian story-telling tradition is essentially puranic and is episodic in nature, with little attention paid to the unity of action. Besides, fantasy is a common quality. Narayan's focus is all on character.3 His preoccupation with human character is so intense that he goes on studying the character by 'Compressing the range to intense scrutiny.'4 Since he is preoccupied with fixing the protagonist personality, he develops situation and background accordingly. Too often he delays the action while he analyses characters. Consequently his novels read like character-study. Besides, his chief difficulties are caused, first by his carelessness resulting in his inability to plan his novel in advance, 5 and secondly, by the fact that the character and human element are at the heart of the fiction.6 And as Narayan himself admitted, the starting point in his novel is not a plot but a character.7 So to judge Narayan's plot from strict Aristotelian point would be unrewarding. To traverse the fictional landscape of Narayan's, foreign crutch cannot always help us.

This reminds me of what S.C. Harrex has said about the fall of Margayya.8 Though otherwise a preceptive critic who has gone to the root of the problem of placing Narayan in the real context and significantly contributed to Narayan's criticism Harrex has wrongly attributed the fall of Margayya's empire to his moral concern, viz., his outrage at Dr. Pal's immoral infuence leading to moral terpitude in Balu. Margayya has never been morally conscious so far as sex is concerned. To decide the issue we should go back to the text. On pages 3 and 20 there are three statements put in Margayya's mouth which testify to my statement. They are; " you may perhaps pledge your life or your wife's saris -." "He elaborated a bawdy joke about him and his capacity -." "Do you think I like a charge of wife everyday?" He cracked his usual jokes.

S.C. Harrex rightly remarks that **The Financial Expert**,1 on the ordinary level dramatizes Margayya's predicament against the backdrop of his family, relating it to his immediate role as a father, as a husband, as a member of the already disrupted joint family and a money-lender. On moral level it is the story of the inevitablity of sequence of events following upon attachment. In order to appreciate the skill that has gone into the making of the novel we have to bear in mind the three themes the novel explores on the ordinary level. They are: Margayya's love of money, his paternal love, and his ambivalent relationship with his brother and sister-in-law. As P.S. Sundaram points out all these themes are treated in an orchestrated way, producing a complex harmony.10 These three different elements are blended into a coherent structure by Narayan's comic sensibility. The best way to trace the develpoment of these themes is to follow the narrative line.

Another remarkable aspect of the novel is the

comedy of manner and the comedy of archetype. This has been very perceptively studied by S.C. Harrex in his book **'The Fire and The Offering."** 11

Now let us study those aspects of the novel which have been studied. Narayan has a sure grasp of psychological essentials of character. He may clothe his characters in outward idiosyncracies, but the idiosyncracies are never the principal things about them. He follows the windings of motive through the most tortuous labyrinths but the characters generally remain the same in all vicissitudes. The consistency that we find in Narayan's art of characterization owes much to his firm grasp of the central clues. How Narayan grasps and fixes the psychological make-up of his characters is clearly evident in his characterization of Margayya. Margayya plies money-lending business before the co-operative bank . At one stage the emloyees in the bank begin to view him as a public enemy **when a peon** is sent for him, Margayya says;'Go and tell them I am not their paid -paid -'. Narayan here tells us about another quality of Margayya's - his quality of being discreet. The novelist adds: 'He was about to say 'servant' but he remembered in time, even in his mental stress, that the man standing before him was literally both paid and servant, and thought it would be injudicious to say so now. So he left off the sentence abruptly and asked : 'Do they pay me to appear before them when they want me?' The answer that the third person narrator puts into the mouth of Arul Doss the peon gives direction to what V.Y. Kantak 12 calls the 'little germ ' present in Margayya which has the 'impulse of enlargement ' and which until not 'only dimly felt as a stirring within the bowels without conscious direction of force'. The peon belittles Margayya saying that the secretary's salary is so fat that Margayya will not be able to earn even after one hundred years of service. Margayya now decides to raise his status by earning money. But this first confrontation is

not enough to precipitate this decision. When loan application froms are snatched away from him and is treated with contempt and threatened with legal action, Margayya's mind is made up. From now on Margayya becomes like one 'possessed'. But given a character like Margayya it is not easy to put him in a situation of no return. Narayan gives us another newsreel footage showing how people can go even to the length of collecting rent on dead body. Margayya realises that money is man's greatest need like air or food. And the obsession with money crystallizes. To understand the essential psychological make-up of Margayya one has to decide the question: Whom does he love more - money or son? I think Margayya does not love money for its own sake, but loves it as a means to an end- his son's well-being, and his obsession with money is not greater or stronger than his second obsession- his paternal love. Though the two obsessions keep sounding simultaneusly, a superficial reading of the novel gives us a wrong idea about Margayya's personality. Moreover, the title of the novel makes the confusion more confounding. Though Margayya begins as a financial expert, he ends as a father, and the road is too tortuous to easily let us form a correct idea about his character. At many critical points Narayan drops hints to suggest that Margayya loves his son more than he loves money. I would like to draw attention to two such significant hints. First, obsessed with money Margayya comes across a priest who takes him to a temple. While the priest, to emphasize the impotance of reverence for god, narrates the story of Kubera who undertook a long arduous penance to atone for spilling a drop of milk on the floor of his palace, Margayya hesitates whether to tell the priest what he wants, and his mind is agitated by fear caused by many 'perhapses': 'Perhaps he is a sorcerer or a black magician or an alchemist', 'Perhaps he has hidden human body in that sack - and extract from the corpses some black ointment

with which he acquires some extra-ordinary power.' 'Perhaps he will ask me to cut off my own son's head.' Then he imagines Balu being dragged and taken into the sack. He leaves the shrine abruptly. In this critical situation he forgets about money as the love of his

son is uppermost in his mind, and the last 'perhaps' suggest is what is dearer to Margayya -money or son. Secondly, in the concluding part of the novel it is love for his son that plunges in a crisis his financial empire. He shows indiscretion in 'shoe-beating.' Dr, Pal who has been instrumental in building his financial edifice and who now having been insulted spreads a rumour to damage Margayya's credit resulting in run on the bank. It may here be recalled that in the earlier part of the novel (p.11) during his first encounter with Arul Doss the narrator mentions that even in time of 'mental stress8 Margayya shows discretion, but he does not show discretion when he finds his son being spoilt in Dr. Pal's company. The conclusion is irresistible. He loves his son so much that he would go to any length to save him from evil influence.

Another aspect which has not attracted critical attention is the use of imagery in **The Financial Expert.** Narayan generally draws on two major reservoirs of imagery: Animal and plant life, and science and technology. A detailed study of the use of imagery may prove rewarding but here I would just make a passing reference to a few cases. Sometimes Narayan uses animal imagery to depersonify human beings as in : He looked like a sloth-cub in darkness-13.

Sometimes he uses animal imagery to present human reletionship. On the loss of the account book Margayya found it difficult to transact business. He had to conceal the loss of the book from his customers lest they should take advantage

of it. One day a customer named Kali confronted him with the question about the book.Margayya felt nervous: Kali was like a tiger which suddenly meets ring-master, without the ring, or the whip in his hand.14

Plant life describes money: It was something like the ripening of corn. Every rupee, Margayya felt, contained within it the seed of another rupee and that seed in it another seed and so on to infinity.15

The significance of the conclusion to the novel has also missed critical attention. After the fall of the financial empire Margayya proposes to go back to his old place under the bunyan tree which underlies the thesis that the plot of Narayan's novels conforms to the characteristic cyclical pattern which may be taken as a symbol of the novelist's faith in the Hindu philosophy.

Lastly I would draw attention to the insertion of after thought. Margayya is shown in pensive mood:

"Later in life Margayya often speculated what would have become of him if he had started back home after speaking to his daughter-in-law a little earlier and missed Dr. Pal's Austin- if he had - allowed Pal to go off after dropping Balu, whom he might probably have tackled with more circumspection and diplomacy; he might even have shared the prosperity with him- that would have saved him atleast the rest of it-16

This insertion of an after thought throws light on an important aspect of Narayan's art, and at the same time, constitutes his failure. Such an after-thought is quite natural as one generally repents one's failings and losses; and by showing Margayya in such a pensive mood, Narayan shows his fidelity to reality. It also proves that Narayan does not idealise his characters. But Narayan handles this after thouhgt clumsily as it is

neither properly sequenced nor properly timed Margayya is shown in indulging in this after thought before his financial empire actually crumbles as a result of Dr. Pal's malicious rumour-mongering and also before the readers come to know of such a catastrope covering about four pages until conclusion. This would have been correct had the novelist taken recourse to a 'flash-back' which he does to advantage in **The Guide**, but as it is, it does not fit in with the narrative line at the place and time mentioned above, and constitutes a narrative flaw. Consequently the otherwise 'extremely ell constructed novel'17 suffers from a blemish.

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ANITA DESAI'S WORLD OF NATURE

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Suresh C. Saxena

As the Orwellian year - 1984 - draws closer, a lot of heat and light is being generated on the issues of ecology and environment. It is the '8n' thing today. The ruthless and ugly march of materialism has taken a heavy toll of nature. The ecological balance is in danger and at last the authorities are waking up to the growing danger of denuded forests and polluted environment. Literature as a barometer of society is destined to play an active role in focusing attention on the 'live' problems - people face.

In recent years, Indian English has acquired a definate edge and status. The Indian English literature is as much a part of Indian literary landscape as any native language. Very few writers among Indo-Anglian novelists have portrayed nature in its multifaced charm. Anita Desai, this year's Guardian award winner for children's fiction, is one such writer. Nature plays an active role in her writings. Her characteristic feminine sensibility imparts a fresh edge and dimension to her outlook on nature. Her love for nature is not phoney or superficial. It is part of a larger canvas on which her stories are painted. Nature provides her novels an exotic charm and colourful touch. In this brief study I have taken her two novels - The first and

the latest - as source material to make my point.

Anita Desai's maiden novel **'Cry, the Peacock'**, published in 1963, presents nature in a number of shades. The focal point of the novel is, of course, Maya's inner turmoil and tragedy. But nature shuttles in and out of the narrative like a character in a drama. It deepens the dark shades of the novel and at times, helps in advancing the narrative. The opening part of **'Cry, the Peacock'** is replete with detailed pictures of natural objects. **'Gentle bees'**, " Unthinking butterflies' hover around the line trees "Where there was a cool, aqueous shade", and the dead body of the pet lay on the string bed. Even after the PWD men took the dead body of the pet "the stench of decaying flesh still hung in the bougainvillage coloured evening air". Maya's neurosis connected with her ill-starred married life gathers strength as the novel slowly moves.

Maya's garden has a large variety of exotic flowers. Desai describes her garden beautifully. " There were still some beds of petunias, floppy white and faint mauve petunias - sentimental, irresolute flowers, I always felt, and yet at - dust, they admitted such a piercing swoon of scent, a poignant, half sweet, half sad fragrance that matched my mood to perfection, and I started to it with the embrace of recognition, taking in deep breaths of this gentle, fading odour that was so laden with wistful remembrance of the winter, a sense of all good things having come to an end, and only the long, weary summer to look forward to .....(p. 18-19)

And here is a poetical description of spring: "Down the street the silk - cotton trees were the first to flower : their huge, scarlet blooms, thick - petalled, solid - podded, that made blood

blobs in the blue, then dropped to the asphalt and were squashed into soft, yellowish miasma, seemed animal rather than flowerage, so large were they, so heavy, so moist and living to the touch. Their pods were clouded with silk cotton and, as they burst, these airy - Faery puffs of silver - streaks whiteness were released and sailed through the air like angelic, soft-feathered birds, and rolled along the streets in radiant billow till the dust soiled them." (-34)

Dust storms frequent the novels of Desai. In ' **Cry, the Peacocks'**, too , she draws a vivid picture of this natural event which matches with the moods of Maya in the closing stages of the novel." ..... and the frenzied boungainvillaeas lashed against the window panes, writhed and lashed, and vulgar purple blossoms by the hundred came to grief, were ripped away, lost to sight and creeper. And then the dust came pouring in and more and more followed, and I could see nothing but its strange, tinted glow, though I could hear the trees bend, creaking and screaming in the wind that tore at them and carried away their dry broken branches at it carried away umbrellas thatch roofs in a seething mass of stinging, and- Sharp grains of red - hot sand". (p. 187)

The title of the novel has a deep symbolical significance. The cries, Calls and mating of peacocks evoke frenzied picture of Maya's anguish and restlessness. " Do you not hear the peacocks call in the wilds? Are they not blood-chilling, their shrieks of pain? "pia, pia," they cry. "Lover, lover, mio, mio - I die,..... How they love the rain these peacocks. They spread out their splendid tails and begin to dance, but , like Shiva's their dance of joy is the dance of death, and they dance, knowing that they and their lovers are all to die, perhaps, even before the mansons come to an end. Is it not agony for them? How they stamp their feet, and beat their beaks against the

stones, to ease their own pain..... Before they mate the fight. The will - rip each other's breast to stripe and fall, bleeding, with their beaks open and panting. When they have exhausted themselves in battle, they will mate .... Living, they are aware of death. Dying, they are in with life....." (p.95-96)

Anita Desai's latest novel for children **'The Village by the Sea"** provides her ample opportunity to delve deep into the countryside and paint a picturesque landscape of rural life in India. The novel is replete with scenes of birds and blossoms which attract children as well as adults' attention. The novel has an authentic ring about it. The focal point of the novel " Thul is the real village on the western coast of India and all the characters in this book are based on people who live in this village....." (A note by Anita Desai).

"In the Village by the Sea" Mrs. Desai creates several vivid pictures of countryside life in its natural setting. The tide in the sea, the sunsetting, birds and their chirping all find detailed coverage in this fascinating novel.

Here is an eye filling picture of the tide in Desai's lucid prose. " In the silence of the late afternoon, with the tide out and the breeze still, they all heard a sound that was like a whisper or a sigh, a deep sigh uttered by the ocean itself. Then the sight extended into a long rustling rippling sound. It came from far out at sea. The ripple lifted itself out of the flat dull ocean - a long, white line that lifted and rippled and rushed closer and closer to land till it dashed against the rocks in a shower of spray. The tide had turned. It was coming in now. Along with it came the evening breeze, fresh and cool and lovely."(p. 21)

The opening chapter offers a beautiful morning scene with colourful details. " The morning light was still soft as it filtered through the web of palm leaves, and swirls of blue wood-smoke rose from fires in hidden huts and mingled with it. Dew still lay on the rough grass and made the spider web glitter. These webs were small and thickly matted and stretched across the grass, each with a hope in the centre to trap passing insects. Butterflies flowers - large Zebra - striped ones with a faint tinge of blue to their wings, showy black ones with scarlet tipped wings, and little sulpher-yellow ones that fluttered about in twos and threes." (p. 8-9) And here is a sensuous picture of fauna and flora. "Then there were all the birds flying out of the shadowy soft needled casuarina trees and the thick jungles of pandanus, singing and calling and whistling louder than at any other time of the day. Flute-voiced drongoes swooped and cut through the air like dazzling knives that reflected the sun and glinted blue-black, and pert little magpie robins frisked and flirted their tails as they hopped on the dewy grass, snatching at insects before they tumbled into the spider's traps. Pairs of crested bul-buls sang from the branches. A single crow-pheasant, invisible, called out." Coop-coop Coop" in its deep bogey - man voice from under a bush and a pigeion's voice cooed and gurgled on and on....(p. 9)

The sun-set scene in a rural setting assumes special significance in terms of colours. "The horizon was brightly lit by the sun that seemed to be melting into the sea like a globe of molten glass. The sky had paled to lemon yellow and in the east it was already mauve. A star appeared, the brilliant evening star that was always the first to shine." (p.142)

The countryside - life comes to life n this brilliant novel with a spectrum of colourful scenes. " At the edge of the village was a big

pond. Here buffaloes stood knee-deep, drinking or bathing lotuses bloomed-crimson ones with crimson leaves and crimson stalks, and white ones with green leaves and green stalks. Ducks paddled between the large, flat, round leaves and china-white egrets stood in the shallow, fishing "(p. 12) And here is the village scheme in the silence of the night." Hari sat watching the white dusty road as it seemed to flow from under the cart like a moon-lit river, and at the field on either side, bare now that the winter wheat crop had been cut, the stubble ghostly in the height of the moon that had risen over the rocky outline of the Kankeshwar hills. Nightjars flew up from the road as the cart approached rattling hoarsely, and owls called from the dark. Now and then they passed a grove of mango trees that were like great black tents pitched in the fields, or an occasional wayside shop in which a single lantern burnt, dimly. A dog darted out from one such hovel and reached beside the cart for a while, barking crazily." (p. 71)

Anita Desai's love and concern for the wild life is genuine. In no uncertain terms she deplores the mangoose-hunting. But her prime spokenman in the novel is Sayyid Ali Sahib who is a slightly veiled portrait of the celebrated ornithologist Dr. Salim Ali " a thin elderly man with a white beard and spectacles on his eyes "and looking for birds into the trees all the times. He champions the causes of environmentalists and birds when he exposes his philosophy before wild eyed Hari- " The birds are the last free creatures on earth. Everything else has been captured and tainted and enslaved - tigers behind the bars of the Zoos, lions stared at by crowds in safari parks, men and women in houses like match boxes working in factories that are like prisons. Only the birds are free and can take off and fly away into space when they like" (p.154)

Anita Desai's voyage in fiction started with

'Cry, the Peacock' published in 1968. Her latest novel 'The village by the Sea' appeared last year. In about two decades Desai has covered a considerable distance in Indo-Anglian fiction. She has explored deep into the female mind in her seven novels published so far. Common link connecting her fictional output is that of nature. Nature appears in its various shades in all her novels. An atmosphere of nature's sights, sounds and smells hangs over her writings. Anita Desai is the only Indo-Anglian writer who has presented nature in such details and with such intensity. She is eminently successful in connecting her readers with nature. It is no mean achievement by any standard.

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"CRY THE PEACOCK"

A study in feminine psyche

By: Kamala Narayanan

Anita Desai occupies an important place among the Indo-English women novelists writing in the post-independence era. She was born in Mussorie on 24th June 1937 and was brought up and educated at Delhi. She has been writing since the age of seven, almost 'instinctively' and her published works include half dozen novels short stories and children's books. She is married and lives at Bombay with her four children.

Born of a Bengali father and a German mother, we find a wonderful blend of the Indian and European sensibilities in her works, which only proves that in literature as in heredity cross-breeding is a source of health. Critics say that the best artists are those who have inherited a mixed strain. With great objectivity she analyses the tentions of modern existence and vividly brings before us the inner lives of men and women living in metropolitan cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi in all their complexity. We may even call her an artist of neurosis because most of her characters are near neurotic, who, haunted by a sense of doom, withdraw into a chrysalis of their own. She is not interested in portraying the social and political issues of the times. She probes deep into the inner self of man and exploring the

feminine psyche especially against the background of the patriarchal or male dominated Indian society is her forte. She delves deeper and deeper into the causes of human suffering within the context of family life.

Anita Desai believes that men and women are not only constituted differently but they also think differently. In art and life the values of a woman are not the values of a man. What appears trivial to a man may be all important for a woman. Men are more concerned with action, experience and achievements, but women are more obsessed with thought, emotion and sensation. Not all the women writers may be so acutely aware of the feminine point of view. Some may even write like men while there are male writers like D.H. Lawrence and Henry James who think and write like women.

Anita Desai is one of the most conscious artists of our times. She writes with the skill of a landscape painter. Her observant eye records nature in all its variegnated moods. During those moments of heightened awareness, her prose acquires lyric dimensions. According to her it is these flashes of vision which guide a writer. She creates a stained glass landscape with details of images, colours and odours.

"Cry the Peacock" published in 1963 is the first novel of Anita Desai. It is the story of Maya, a young and extremely sensitive girl obsessed by a childhood prophecy of disaster. Gripped by the anxiety neurosis, the heroine ultimately kills her husband Gautama and leaps to her death. The novel is a psychological study of the neurotic fear and anxieties experienced by Maya. The causes of her emotional turbulance and morbid preoccupation with death are many and they are rendered with a poetic insight by the novelist, through the technique of the interior monologue. Various factors like marital discord

father fixation, loneliness, absence of a vocation and superstitious beliefs are responsible for her schizophrenic behaviour.

Her loveless marriage is sharply contrasted with the cry of the peacock, whose love-making is an act of violent and passionate involvement. Peacocks tearing themselves to bleeding shreds in the act of love and screaming with agony represent the principle of life in death or death in life. Like Shiva's their dance of joy is the dance of death. Living they are aware of death and dying they are in love with life.

Maya is a misfit in Gautama's family and she is unable to mentally and emotionally adjust to her new set-up. She lives in the world of her father for she suffers from a father fixation. As a spoilt, pampered and over-protected child she needs more than average share of love and sympathy. Gautama does not give her even a normal share of sympathy. She keeps aloof and preaches 'detachment' to her when her pet dog dies. He criticises her over-involvement and always chides her whenever she mentions her father. When she craves for his company most, he deserts her. He does not allow her to enter his world though with her limited understanding she tries to see things from his point of view. His coldness repels her and he suppresses all her natural desires. She keeps waiting for Gautama endlessly on many occasions and her waiting proves fruitless. Gautama is always shown as a tired man, worn out by the day's hard and concentrated work in the court-room, and returning home tired in body and mind. He was all grey.. grey.. all was grey for Gautama who lived so narrowly, so shallowly. I feel sorry, infinitely sorry for him, for this slow, harmless, guiltless being, who walked the fresh grass and did not know he touched it. Nothing touches him. The fragrance of the lime blossoms escapes him. He never hears the cry of the Peacocks. He has no contact with the

world or with Maya. It was she who screamed with the peacocks, screamed at the sight of rain-clouds and screamed at their disappearance.

Neither Gautama nor the members of the family noticed the hysterical state in which Maya spends her days and nights and what horrors and nightmares she suffers haunted by the prophecy of the albino astrologer and her own loneliness. Her mother-in-law is a social worker and never stays at home. Like a busy rhinoceros she would rush away to her dispensary or creche or her workshop for the blind, disabled or unemployed. Occasionally she would ask Maya, "When will your father send me another cheque? Tell him I need it urgently to pay the nurse at the creche." and get busy with her accounts. In Gautama's family, one did not speak of love or affection. They spoke of discussions in Parliament, of cases of corruption or bribery, trade pacts and treatises. They spoke incessantly and played cards to relax. Maya was left out of such discussions, They spoke to her only when it was about babies, meals, shopping, or marriages.She was just their 'toy', their indulgence, not to be taken seriously.

In her anguished moments, Maya longs for the company of her father. She remembers his loving words: "It will all be well, it will all be well soon." Holding her in his arms and wiping her tears, he would repeat these mesmerizing words in deep tones. It is best to accept, Maya - what does it do to cry? Why must you get so upset? Surely it is all for the best. It cannot be undone now - and it must be accepted as it is - you will find that to be the wisest course.

Gautama never understood Maya's emotional needs. For all outward appearances, they are the happily married couple but there are deep chasms separating them. Isn't this Gautama's typical supercilious attitude of the Indian male towards

his wife? How many men for that matter try to understand the female psychology or the emotional yearning of a wife, mother, sister or daughter? Brought up on the Brahminical tradition, Maya cannot also rebel as her father has taught her to accept everything. The philosophy of acceptance comes as an easy way out. It could even be an euphemism for male domination

Maya suffers from another deficiency. She is childless and it is said that childless women develop fanatical attachment to other objects. In Maya's case her Toto is everything to her and she suffers a great emotional loss in the death of her pet dog. But to Gautama it means nothing. He gets rid of the carcass and he feels his duty is over. "I sent it away to be cremated. It is all over. Come, won't you pour out my tea?" he says. Soon he leaves her when some visitors arrive ordering tea to be sent to the study - forgetting her totally and her woes altogether. 'No' she cries and rushes to the bedroom to fling herself on to the bed and cry her heart out, as the image of the pet panting for breath keeps haunting her all the while.

Towards the end when Maya mentions 'Toto' to Gautama while they are on the balcony on the fateful night Gautama innocently asks, 'Who is Toto'. That proves to be the last straw. In her longing for love, Maya is driven mad. Her hasband's non-involvement infuriates her. She longs to be with her father and he is away in Europe on a holiday. Her only brother who rebels and runs away from home is in U.S.A. and she is a total stranger in Gautama's family. Her brother's letter comes to her as a great surprise reviving old memories, and she is haunted by unknown childhood fears. Her utter loneliness and lack of an absorbing vocation result in her nervous breakdown. Moreover, she is obsessed by the albino astrologer's prophecy that in the fourth year of their marriage, one of the partners will die.

Though haunted by the fear of death, Maya is full of sensuous love for life and preservation of life. She is fully alive and responds to the varying moods of nature and its charm. She cannot bear death or cruelty in any form. Toto's death shatters her completely. Once at the sight of cage upon cage of monkeys at the railway station, she starts crying saying " ther's not even a bowl of water for them... and those cages are too small to contain their bodies." And Gautama coolly tells her that those monkeys were being sent abroad for experimental purposes.

Maya's alienation from Gautama and every one around her is by now complete. What she looks for is contact, relatedness and communication which she never finds in her marriage. Maya and Gautama do not share anything in common. Theirs is a union without communion. Maya is unable to establish any point of contact with Gautama. Her relationship with Gautama is like a relationship with death which she struggles to escape. Her loneliness leads her to identify her agony with the agony of peacocks and her desires for life is turned into a death wish. Her agony is like their cry for lover and for death. Her passion is not merely for Gautama, the man. She longs for a passionate contact not only with Gautama but with the pulsating world around her - from the stars in the sky to the owls on the fig tree - all that suggested life. But Gautama could never understand her needs and Maya is tortured by a humiliating sense of neglect and loneliness. She is like a caged bird or animal and longs to free herself from her painful predicament. She envies her brother for rebelling against their father and the old orthodoxy. He could make her choice and she must make her choice now. The spirit of rebellion ultimately overcomes her. She decides that she who is in love with life must live and it is Gautama who must die. He has reached a stage where even death can't disturb him. To her he appears an

ascetic like Buddha. Her neurosis reaches its culmination in her husband's murder and her own suicide.

On that fateful night when the tragedy occurs, Maya and Gautama are on the terrace. Maya is enraptured by the rising moon. The prosaic Gautama as usual fails to understand her trance-like state and obstructs her vision. This ugly intrusion drives her crazy and she pushes him violently off the parapet. By now Maya is completely deranged and starts narrating to every one the details of that horrible deed. She is to be sent to an asylum. But it is too late when her people realise the nature of her malady. We get a hint that she leaps to her death from the balcony, before they could do anything for her.

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W A N D E R I N G

I had been flapping my wings

towards the moon

But they have all been encasked

in that blue lagoon!

It is after a mature thought

I left my wings

to walk on the earth all afoot

breaking nasty rings

I have been descending
eversince

gradually upon the Earth;

but I haven't hitherto touched
upon

a truly human hearth.

Prakash Joshi

THE IMAGE OF SELF IN THE POETRY OF SAROJINI NAIDU

Dr.(Mrs.) P.S. Kasture

Critics differ widely, from acknowledgement to rejection, regarding Sarojini Naidu's poetic achievement. In 1905, when her first collection of poems "The Golden Threshold" was published, the papers praised her enthusiastically. "This little volume should silence forever the scoffer who declares that women cannot write poetry," wrote the "Review of Reviewers;" " Her poetry seems to sing itself as if her swift thoughts and strong emotions sprang into lyrics of themselves," cooed "The Times."1 After the publication of "The Bird of Time", the "Yorkshire Post" acknowledged that "Mrs. Naidu has not only enriched our language but has enabled us to grow into intimate relation with the spirit, the emotions, the mysticism and the glamour of the East."2 In the introduction of her collected poems published many years later under the title "The Sceptred Flute," Joseph Auslander hailed her as "the greatest living poet of India."3 On the other hand, some critics had marked a lack of depth in her poetry. For example, according to Padmini Sen Gupta, "She (Sarojini Naidu) expresses continually the death wish, but, there is not enough depth, as for instance in Eliot's Gerontion. ... Sarojini's flights of song are always somehow never quite real in life."4 Instead of brushing aside this adverse criticism as a

tyrannical fashion, an attempt is made here to capture the truth in terms of a personal encounter with Sarojini Naidu's peotry.

Her poems really diverge in poetic worth. The diversity in the criticism reflects this diversity in her poetry. With a selective citation of her work any argument can be substantiated. To overcome this paradox in criticism, it is now felt that a redress of critical evaluation is in point. The present paper attempts to account for this disparity. It not only highlights her success as a poet but goes a step ahead in presenting the analysis of Sarojini Naidu's oft referred to failure to probe the hidden recesses of human psyche.

In order to clarify man's attitude towards himself, philosophers and psychologists have created such terms as 'I' or the 'self'. Here language presupposes the experience of cognitively present coherent 'I'. The total self of man, being as it were duplex, partly known and partly knower, partly object and partly subject, must have two aspects discriminated in it. 'Me' is the sum of total of all he can call his own. 'I' is the thinker. When 'I' reflects or sees or contemplates the body, the personality, and the roles to which it is attached in life, the various selves which make up our composite self are discriminated aspects and not separate things, because the identity of 'I' with 'Im' is the most ineradicable dictum of commom sense. But this 'Me' does not live in void. It is comprehended with reference to the 'Not Me'. The response of 'Me' to itself and to the 'Not Me', often referred to as experience, sharpens the consciousness through which 'Me' and 'I' are approached to each other. The realisation of this nature composite self transcends the limits of individual perception and achieves deeper understanding of human nature. But whenever, consciously or unconsciously, there is a failure in the naked confrontation of experience, the realised

self at the moment is conditioned by the peculiar response. Consequently, at such moments the work of art fails to attend the supreme success.

A critical reappraisal of Sarojini Naidu's poetry is carried out by apprehending the image of her self as reflected in her work, in her confrontation of experience. For Sarojini Naidu experience is an act of double consciousness. The undulation of her mind between pleasure and pain, nature and mind, love and despair, life and death is the basis of her comprehensive view of life. The Bird of Time, sitting on its fruitful bough, sings the changing measures of glory and gladness of life, of poignant sorrow and passionate strife, of lilting joy of spring and hope of urban years, of the fragrant peace of the twilight s breath and also of "the mystic silence that men call death". She further envisions the roots of this song in the duality of human nature

> In the sigh of pity, the sob of hate,
> And the pride of a soul that has conquered fate.
>
> (65) 5

Sarojini Naidu has an evergreen fascination for the budding and blooming spring. In spring she experiences a symphony of sight, sound and smell. The whole nature joins this revelry. The honey-birds pipe to the budding figs, at the call of honey-blooms wil bees rifle them, king fishers ruffle the feathery sedge, air thrills with butterfly wings in the wild-rose hedge and the luminous blue of the hills. Poppies squander their intoxicating fragrance coral and ivory lilies unfold their delicate beauty to the lake. To her the lovely hue, the dazzling, fugitive sheen of gulmohar is a "gorgeous boon of the spring" (94). So in rapture of ecstacy, she invokes the heart to sing as "**To-day** it is spring!" (p.99)

This heaven of joy is not devoid of human reference. Nature, for Sarojini Naidu, is not only a necessary tool for expression, but is a means of self-discovery. None can discover the inmost glory of he Hussain Sagar, but it holds an allegiance to her as it is a "living image" of her soul (p.120). Nusturtium with its synthesis of bitter perfume and exquisite luminious bloom symbolizes the union of poignant sorrow and radiant virtue in the immortal women of Sanskrit legends.

Your leaves interwoven of fragrance and fire
Are Savitri's sorrow and Sita's desire,
Draupadi's longing, Damayanti's fear
And sweetest Sakuntala's magical tears.(p.95)

In " asant Panchami" sad, doomed Lilavati finds the reflection of her mind in a fallen flower, in a faded leaf. The exub rance of spring is not for her. These songs of joy are "poisoned arrows" in her heart, for they "sla " her heart with bitter memories." So she asks the lilting koel to hush her rapturous notes, crimson Gulmohor to quench its flame and Sirish tree to hold its balmy breath.

Love is another major theme in Sarojini Naidu's poetry. The lovers form a devoted pair. She is ready to offer every thing - beauty youth, glory, fame - for the bright and sacrificial flame of ove. T ey are bound o each other by " ne hope,one purpose, one devotion." In "A Persian Love Song" she envisions their total identity, "That I am you./ Dear love, that you are I!"(p. 82). To her enraptured sight he s the only " over ign and sweet reality" (p.217). Radha, the milk-maid only breathes "G vinda; Govinda;" (p 112).

Sarojini Naidu is also aware of the dark shadow inevitably associated with this bright light. Love proves to be the Path of Tears for her. Love is "the very pattern of my joy and a n."6 She again highlights the strangeness of the "Twin-nurtured

boon of love."

Deep agony and bliss,
Fulfilment and farewell
Concentrated in a kiss? (p.206)

The same dual ty of experience is recorded by Sarojini Naidu in the juxtaposition of life and death in her mind. As an innocent child, she approaches Deity with a request to let her live fully, " spare me no bliss, no pang of strife" and also reveal to her the "inmost laws of life and death".(p. 123) The futility of such an immature effort to fathom out the mystery of human existance is subtly hinted by Mrs. Naidu through the apt epithets such as "**Childhood's** pride" and **"blind prayer"** (italics added). God promises to harken her prayer. When her spirit is chastened through the full-blooded experience of life "all passionate rapture and despair," then in the spent state, she is pardoned and the simple secret of divine peace is disclosed to her

Life is a prism of my light,
And ·eath the shadow of my face (p.124)

She is quite aware that weary soul may be allured by the "kind death" considering "High dreams and hope and love are va n." But the very presence of " blind, ultimate silence of the dead" makes her coscious of the immense value of life. Her death wish is surpassed by a call of life. "'T is mine to carry the banner of song," she declares as her inborn vocation.

Sarojini Naidu's poetry is, thus, rich in thematic range - encompassing the whole expanse of existence through the dialectics of various contraries. The emotional tone also ranges from devotion to challenge and romantic rapture to melancholy. This attempt of critical evaluation does not limit itself to the achievement alone, but

also tries to account for her failure in attending psychic depth.

Of course, she is not totally devoid of such understanding. As explained earlier, "The Soul's Prayer" records one of the inspiratory moments. "In Salutation to the Eternal Peace" delineates another moment of mystic rapture. "Men say, not she herself, that " The world is full of fear and hate" and will be smitten by "relentless fate." But she does not dread the dull passages of doom, loneliness and the mute and mystic terror of he tomb. With golden oriole she soars to eternity.

> For my glad heart is drunk and drenched with Thee.
> O inmost wine of living ecstasy;
> O intimate essence of eternity; (p.137)

At such moment Sarojini Naidu probes deep and soars high transcending the limitations of individual sensibility. But such occasions are comparatively rare in her poetry. Mysticism always faces one danger. f it is an xpression of the genuine experience, it surpasses all other ecstatic raptures; otherwise it reduces itself o a dull reiteration of a wornout ideology. Then the excellence of form and diction does not save the work, it lapses into excess. This is the root of Sarojini Naidu s oft referred to failure of vision.

In "A Challenge to Fate she tries to take arms against the sea of troubles, but it remains a verbal tussle. Instead of riving at the consciousness directly, she begins with the romantic premise of man's ccess to the deep source of all existence. So even if the hope of her being is denied o her, she will stake her individual sorrow at the deep source of universal joy. In "The Sanctuary", also, only t ough trust and not through the deeper understanding of life

achieved through experience, she envisions the possibility of the sanctification of her yearing love and redemption of her struggling soul.

> Stoop not from thy proud, lonely sphere,
> Star of my Trust.' (p. 230)

It is this conditioned response of Sarojini Naidu that creates an impression of unreality about her poetry. This is not, of course, a fault so peculiarly owned only by Sarojini Naidu. It is an inevitable result of the maladjustment of the ideal and the real, as can be seen from its marked recurrence in the work of the great transcendentalist R.W. Emerson.

Emerson acknowledges the fact, "Paradise is under the shadow of sword" and we crave for this sense of reality, "though it comes in strokes of pain."7 Inspite of this awareness of reality, Emerson is hopeful. He places his optimistic faith not so much in men as in the ideal. Because of the nature of order in which we live we have, he believes, the means to resolve the disparity of power and form that makes tragedy of all the souls. His fundamental doctrine that there is one mind common to all takes away the sting of all the forces acting adversely. Emerson's spiritual journey is, thus, conditioned by his premise of cosmic unity. This limitation of his vision is especially felt in his dealing with death theme. The striking parallelism between the reconciliatory attempts of Emerson and Sarojini Naidu facilitates our understanding of her poetry.

Sarojini Naidu's total poetic achievement, thus, reflects her realised self. Her personality is an inevitable formative force for her. The contradiction between critical opinions is not apparent but hints at a deep rooted cause. The interrelationship, discovered here, between Sarojini Naidu's success/failure and her response

to the conflict between the presumed ideology and the naked confrontation of experience points to the essential significance of the present study as a key, rendering a new perspective for evaluating Sarojini Naidu's poetic self.

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THE DARK WORLD OF NISSIM EZEKIEL

HYMNS IN DARKNESS
&
LATTER DAY PSALMS

M.A. Nare

At the outset, let me make it clear to you, that in this brief critical paper I shall make an attempt to show how Ezekiel's poetry stems from the mysterious life in Bombay and his personal development on this island.

Nissim's poetry has a magical power to hold a reader spell bound till he finishes his song or an episode from the life around him. This power of a street juggler comes to him from his experiences as a journalist and as a teacher of English Language and Literature.

Of his work he writes :

'I aim at clarity above all.

I like to make controlled `meaningful statements, avoiding extremes of thought and expression'.

His **Hymns In Darkness** (1976, O.U.P.) reveals his capacity to express himself, with utmost care 'in plain meaningful statements'. In the first poem '**Subject of Change**' we see the poet with 'a different rage behind my face'. And the last line suggests a mood similar to 'the serene and blessed mood' **in Tintern Abbey.**

'_____ The sky

Is smaller than this open eye. 'This mighty image of the human eye suggests the power of a creative mind in action.

Ezekiel walks through his world with this eye wide open. He is found in the Art Galleries, the restaurants, at the seminars and in the slums. The crowded pavements and the diabolic lanes and bylanes in Bombay are not unknown to him.

It seems, he picks up an episode pregnant with poetic fire from the life of the Men and Women around him, and his poetic talent transforms it, into ' a thing of beauty'. These men and women are his **Circus Animals** and through these characters or types he gives us **'his criticism of life'.**

Ezekiel's Island,'unsuitable for song as well as sense', flowers into slum and skyscapers.

'Reflecting precisely the growth.
of my mind, I am here to find my way in it'.

On this Island, he hears different distorted voices of dragons claiming to be human. But he is determined to stay here, to bloom on this Island.

'I can not leave this Isalnd
I was born here and belong'.

He has no longing to go to any 'Lake Isle of Innisfree'. He must find his voice amongst these distorted voices. With this determination, he seems to have overcome the crisis of rootlessness: a chronic disease with some Indo-Anglican Poets. They swing like pendulums between the two worlds or suffer like the owl in the famous fable. Ezekiel has spread his wings on this Island. Poets like Gieve Patel, Adil Jassawalla and others are growing under his kind, benevolent eye.

In **'Background Casually'** he shows the

development of this 'poet-rascal-clown'. He shows how 'Philosophy, Poverty and Poetry', nourished his soul in the London basement room.

Now, Ezekiel walks through the streets of Bombay with a visionary power of a William Blake. This 'poet-reformer-journalist' examines the darker side of Bombay life and shows how the women like **'Ganga'** or the one **'On the Bellasis Road,** can stoop so low in life. He seems to have seen the 'Marriage Hearse' in every street. Like Shaw, in his plays unpleasant, Ezekiel shows us his Men and Women for our intimate understanding and enjoyment. But while doing this, he works like a catalytic agent. The poems start the reaction on the two planes - namely, the Social and the Aesthetic.

Hymns In Darkness, and Latter Day Psalms, present a portrait gallery of Men and Women from this Island. Sometimes, we come across even foreign faces, in this collection.

In **'Ganga'** he compresses a theme suitable for a novel. This poem can be developed into a TV documentary like Premchand's **'Satgati'.** Ezekiel does not spare even the employers of **'Ganga'.**

'We pride ourselves / On generosity/
To Servants. The woman who washes
up, suspected of prostitution.
Is not dismissed. ----

She brings a smell with her and
leaves it behind her, but we are used to it.
These people never learn'.

Ganga awakens our curiosity to know the vicious circle in which the domestic servants and their empoyers are caught on this Island.

The Women **On the Ballasis Road** does not look at the poet but she is waiting for her -

'hawker or mill worker
Coolie or birdman
fortune teller,
pavement man of medicine
Or street barber on the move'.

They are her nameless lovers, her regular customers. Ezekiel shows his loss :

'Of what use then to see and think?
I cannot even say I care or do not care.
Perhaps it is a kind of despair'.

This woman stands against a faded red post box. Mark her association with the post box on the Bellasis Road.

There are some sophisticated women who can demonstrate ' trick or two with child like glee'. About one such woman Ezekiel writes.

'Her false love became infused
with truest love
only in marking love'.

Even some married women are caught in the whirlpool of lust. One such belle defends her illicit love affair with a stranger, on the basis of equal rights :

'It's inconceivable
that he is not sleeping with
Someone these days, so why
shouldn't I? too have my
fling?

I am sure he would be quite amused / to know that I am here with a stranger / free, and frank and in his words, / nakedly beautiful'.

Nudes 1978, and his **Passion Poems** reveal erotic adventures in this red, red city: a whirlpool of

dark passions.

In this city we find - beggars, hawkers pavement sleepers, slums, dead souls of men and gods, burnt out mothers, frightened virgins wasted children

And tortured animal
All in noisy silence
Suffering the place and time
I ride my elephant of thought,
A Cezanne slung around my neck'.

'The skyscrapers and the slums' is a recurring image in his poetry. He fills these soulless, nameless bodies with his breath and they begin to narrate the tales of their woes. Thus his soul tries to seek salvation in this noisy city by singing Psalms and Hymns in Darkness.

'Confiscate my Pass-Port lord.
I don't want to go abroad.
Let me find my song
where I belong'.

These lines show moment of anxiety in his life. But his deep-rooted faith in this Island, saves him from the moods of depression.

This Indo-Anglian Poet reads Sanskrit poetry, in English translations, and finds his poetic ancestors there.

'How freely they mention breasts and buttocks.
They are my poetic ancestors.
Why am I so inhibited ?

This question which troubles Ezekiel the Jew, troubles all Indians. He perhaps wants to show us that our ancestors had a clean attitude to sex. Like D.H. Lawrence he wants to liberate Sex -for he knows, Sex is crucified here.

In some poems he uses surrealistic expressions to reveal the hidden beauty in intimate sexual relationships. For he believes:-

'Darkness has secrets
Which light does not show.

In this Dark World we have his sunny **'very Indian poems in Indian English'**, like the Patriot, The Professor, 'Good Bye Party of Miss Pushpa T.S. and The Railway clerk. All these poems have grown on this Isalnd and they have a native charm of their own.

They are Ezekiel's dramatic monologues.

A few lines from **'Good Bye Party'** will show us the hidden wealth of humour in these poems:

'You are all knowing friends,
What sweetness is in Pushpa.
I don't mean only external sweetness
But internal sweetness.
Coming back to Miss Pushpa,
She is most popular lady,
with men also and ladies also.

Also in these books we have poems like 'Night of the Scorpian', 'The Jewish Wedding in Bombay', 'How the English Lesson Ended',___ which show Ezekiel at his best painting with subtle, masterly strokes 'Men and Women' around him. They must have grown under his pen like Lawrence's 'The Snake' or 'The Mosquito'.

This teacher of American Literature, sometimes can afford to give advice to painters :

'Do not be satisfied with the world,
The God created. Create your own.
Be voracious with your eyes and appetites.
The will to see, the passion in the act of love
or learning lead to better prospects'.

This is Ezekiel's world - his Isalnd - 'unsuitable for song as well as sense', where he walks with inward glory crowned, a man speaking to men.

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R.K. NARAYAN,
THE DRAMATIST

M.N. Sundararaman

Most of the readers of R.K. Narayan may not be aware of the fact that Narayan is a dramatist too. However, this prolific writer of novels, short stories and essays is, like the single-speech Hamilton, a single-play dramatist. But even this single product reveals his grasp of the genre and the potentialities of his success in the field if he should choose to write more plays. The play," **Watchman of the Lake**", like Narayan's famous short-story, "**The Restored Arm**", forms part of the appendices to **The Emerald Route** 1, a kind of tourist-guide to Karnataka, written by Narayan and illustrated by his brother, R.K. Laxman. The author in his introductory note to the play says:

> This one act play is based on a folk theme, the story of a rustic who sacrificed himself in order to save a tank about to breach. I heard this story sometime ago when I travelled by bus from Kadur to Chigmagalur, while the bus halted indefinitely at a wayside stall selling tender coconuts. At this point I noticed a finger-post pointing 'Sakkerpatna' and made a casual enquiry, which was answered

by a fellow-passenger with a local anecdote, which I later developed into a one-act play.I have included it in this volume on Karnataka as the folk tradition and the perinnial philosophy implicit in the theme are worth our study. (Emerald Route,p.99).

Narayan continues that this Sakkerpatna, which is now an obscure little place on the eastern base of the Baba Buden Hills in the state of Karnataka, was, a thousand or more years ago, the capital of a king called Rukmangada. In the centre of this town there is a shrine which "is dedicated not to distant gods or heroes but to a rustic,who was watchman of a lake called Ayyankere,four miles from the town". 2 For the purposes of this little drama, the rustic is called Mara.

The plot of the play is very simple: This Mara has a dream in which the Goddess appears and asks him to inform the king that he (the king) should build a lake to dam up the waters of the river,Veda,which sprang up on the spot where 'Sanjeevini' (Which was brought to Lanka by Hanuman to revive Lakshmana) once had grown. When Mara tells others about his dream they call him mad and a fool. However, he succeeds in conveying the message to the king and getting the lake built. The king appoints him the Watchman of the lake and Mara does his duty sincerely. Many years later, one day,there are torrential rains. Mara gets worried about the safety of the lake and prays to the goddess. She appears before him and asks him to clear out of his hut immediately and declares: " I am going to kick away the miserable stones you have piled up to imprison the water of my Veda. I am going yo destroy your tank". (0.108). When all his pleas with the goddess, who is in a most 'terrible and reckless mood of destruction', fail, Mara begs her to wait till he runs to the capital, inform the king and 'come back'. The goddess agrees

to stay her hand till he comes back. Mara goes to the capital, meets the king but outwits the goddess by asking the king to kill him so that he will not return and the goddess, as per her promise, cannot destroy the lake. In the larger interests of the state, the king, most unwillingly, beheads Mara, but, in appreciation of his noble and supreme sacrifice, builds a temple for Mara and makes the watchmanship of the temple a hereditary right of Mara's family.

Narayan within a short space of five scenes, has very effectively dramatized this great deed of heroism of a simple rustic. The character of Mara is ably portrayed, though the plot itself, does not permit the drawing of a full-length picture. The attitude of others towards Mara's claim about the goddes's command is reflected in the words of the Headman who calls him 'a worhtless dog', 'lunatic' and 'fool'. The Headman is eager to keep Mara out of the way when the king passes that place. He first threatens him that he would have him locked up in the cellar, but later tries to coax him : 'I will give you a fine gift if you behave yourself' (p.101). The reply of Mara to this offer of the Headman, reveals, at one stroke, his love for his wife and his sense of humour:

Headman:Be off. And like a good fellow keep to your backyard till the king departs. I will give you a fine gift if you behave yourself.

Mara :Another person has already given me the greatest gift any man could give.

Headman : Oh! Who is that great man?

Mara : My father-in-law.

THe simplicity and innocence of Mara are revealed when he asserts to the Headman : ' I don't feel I am a fool' and also when he believes the words of the bully Bhima, that his mother had given

him an 'iron decoction' when he was a baby, so much so that it gave him the strength to run up the hill with a large grind-stone on his back.

His sincerity of purpose, which moves the hearts of at least a few, is made clear by his efforts to meet the king and convey the message of the goddess. Even Bhima -' a giant in appearnce ' but with 'the soul of a baby' - lets him go when he hears of his dream and the command of the goddess. Mara slips out of the cellar unseen, climbs a tree, hides himself among the leaves and waits for the king's arrival patiently. His piety and complete faith in the stories of the mythologies are quite in keeping with his rustic nature. After the construction of the lake and his appointment as the watchman, he does his duty faithfully with a kind of pious pride:

> This place is sacred and belongs to the Goddess : and her command is that nothing that flies or swims or walks in these parts should ever be killed. (p. 105)

and I am the master of this place. The king made me so. But for me the Veda would have away and disappeared as she was doing before. I gave her a home, where she stays, and nourishs the fields of thousands of the king's subjects... Even the headman of the village, who once beat and bullied me, will have to beg my permission if he wants to touch the water. Here I am the king; no one can question me. (p.105)

The king also, thought his appearance is very brief, impresses us with certain qualities of his character. He is not led by others, but has a mind of his own. When others say that Mara is unworhty of Your Majesty's notice?, the king says : ' We will hear the man himself speak. Let him be brought forward'. After listening to Mara's words

about the dream, he comes to the right conclusion: " you have the grace of gods upon you. Your words are weighty .. when we return this way tomorrow accompany me to the capital". The king is shocked to hear Mara's suggestion to save the lake: 'No no. What a horrible suggestion." However, later, he is forced to accept the idea on the principle that one life may be sacrificed to save many. The king shows his gratitude to the rustic by erecting a temple in his honour.

We read in the mythologies of the gods outwitting the demons or 'Rakshasas' by turning their words against them, but here a simple rustic outwits a goddess by making her promise that she will not indulge in destruction till he returns but preventing the destruction by not returning at all. There is a tragic grandeur in his words to the king:" If your Majesty's sword is there..." and " Or send for the executioner". Again, his last request moves us not only by its simplicity but also by his love of his family: "My last request is this : when I am gone, make him (his son) the watchman of the lake, and after him his son, and then his son's son to the last generation of our family". (p.109). Above all, there is the irony of one who was called a fool and lunatic coming to be worshipped as a god. The situations and the dialogue are also natural and convincing. Like Narayan's novel and short stories, this play too has in it merits and values that remain hidden under the veil of simplicity in respect of both the theme and the language.

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