

10 (b)

**‘Modernity’ and Social Mores Delineation in Psychological Realism in
Indira Parthasarathy’s *Ashes and Wisdom***

Dr V.V.B.Rama Rao

Indira Parthasarathy’s *Ashes and Wisdom* translated from the original Tamil novel *Vendhu Thanintha Kaadugal* by Padma Narayan and published in 2007 by India Writing is a very interesting piece of fiction delineating what many think of modernity and contemporary social mores with psychological realism. The original in Tamil was published in 1981. Modern living no longer believes in conforming to our traditional cultural mores and this leads to shocks, grief, discomfitures and catastrophes called ashes figuratively owing to lack of wisdom. Educated and affluent men and women think that making money and societal climbing are the only purposes and attractions too of living. This is the reason for lives getting reduced to ‘ashes’, minds and souls singed with the neglect of traditional mores recklessly pooh-poohing real wisdom.

The novel is a carefully sculpted narration with the personae tightly presented. There are just two couples Arun and Vimmi and Ramesh and Radhika with their son Rahul. Another character, Damodaran the successful painter too gets paid for his pride and pomposity. The first couple is shown as childless and only the woman has been taken for medical assessment and not the man. The man’s arrogance spells his ruin. The second pair - Ramesh and Radhika - has a school-going son who behaves oddly right from his school age. While it is the man in the first pair that goes totally wrong by his behaviour and temperament, it is the woman in the second pair – married at the age of eighteen - that ruins herself owing to her own faults. ‘Ashes’, anguish and shocks, are the consequence for the characters though they are not without awareness of the normal mores. The fifth major character Damodaran, three feet tall, hump backed, though a good and renowned painter, comes to an unhappy and tragic end because of his pontifications and pomposity. He attracts the attention of the impressed Vimmi who suddenly realizes that life is not merely attending with her hubby to parties as a beautiful, dutiful and charming wife with no ideas or tastes of her own.

Arun is self-satisfied that he has been climbing up in his official position earning profits for his company. He is proud of his wife’s beauty and faithfulness and takes pride in being a one woman man. He never gives any chance to his wife to speak up or asks for her opinion. For him she is a scintillating doll who helps him to go to higher positions, profit for his company and his own growth. Totally bored with attending parties along with her hubby she silently accept to stay docile and self-effacing listening to her husband’s proud talk. Radhika his assistant, number two in the office wants to learn about Vimmi but there is nothing that Arun reveals except his own greatness in having such a wife.

The novel starts with Vimmi's dreadful dream indirectly suggesting to her the inanity and insignificance of life.

Where is she? Is it a desert? There is sand, sand everywhere. Shouldn't there be pebbles? Did someone say he was picking up pebbles? ... My God! Here I am, doing the same work as they! Filling sacks with sand, loading them on to carts, unloading them, opening them and emptying them, over and over again; filling up, loading, unloading and emptying the sacks; filling, loading and emptying!^{1(p.7)}

The dream is a consequence of her feeling that first her mother refusing to accept that she could have emotions and an inner self and later her self-centered husband who does not treat her never asking her opinions on anything. Vimmi hates silently her husband's grandiose fancies. He does not see his inability to produce a child as a challenge. His talk is arrogant: "What if we don't have a child? We shall be youthful forever. I need never become a father or a grandfather, and our perennial youth will make it worthwhile."^{2(p.14)} High education, Westernization and affluence make people like Arun and Radhika violate, shed and even ridicule all social mores.

Radhika is Arun's next highest executive in a company dealing with Export and Import. She is never interested in anything like her husband's requirements or her son's studies and behaviour. She has a feeling of surprise about the relation between her boss and his wife Vimmi. Arun is an extrovert with nothing in his mind except pride for his beautiful wife and arrogance for his ability to go up on his job and making his company profitable using all clever means throwing up parties and maneuvering things. Radhika wonders if there is another Vimmi in her boss's wife Vimmi. Radhika is proud of her husband too. He is not even jealous of her mixing freely with other men. She never tries to find out if it is immense confidence in her or his sheer indifference that makes her husband Ramesh so impervious. She does not realize that her son's never speaking to her is because of her loveless ness in her pride of working with efficiency for Arun.

While Vimmi is a silent sufferer what with her self-effacement and stony silence, Radhika appears sensible in suggesting the possibility of another Vimmi in Vimmi. She asks Arun what he says he wants only profit and climbing up in his position: 'You regard your personal life, your marriage, as something sacred. When it comes to business you say only your success has relevance. Don't you see the contradiction?'^{3 (p.21)} and is explained 'My personal life concerns only me. But business is a social obligation. What is wrong in having separate measures to evaluate them?' She tells Arun openly that she does not see Vimmi as a simple, uncomplicated woman. By accepting our social norms, may be she identifies herself with you. But I do feel there is another Vimmi inside her.'^{4 (p.23)} In spite of this intelligence, Radhika does not know that she has been losing valuable things till she lost all, never to regain them.

Arun has his own concept of living successfully. He harangues his assistant Radhika once: 'Life is an **interesting proposition**. If we impose **unnecessary controls** ourselves and keep to the same **beaten track**, it could get tiresome. If there is always something to look forward to, if we could look out for **surprises of life**, nothing can be more interesting. That would mean living in real **freedom**. Do you think we can ever **tire** of it?' ^{5(p.23)} (Boldness added now) Varun thinks of nothing except being quite happy with his docile and self-effacing wife. Radhika's hubby never showed or expressed his objection to his wife's ways. That way pampered Radhika never thinks either of her hubby or her son. She enjoys her freedom. When Arun tells her pointblank that he is not interested to discuss his wife in the office the dialogue reveals the cracks beginning to show between them. Arun does not see any contradiction between his personal life and business. He tells her that his personal life concerns only him and that business is social obligation.

Damodran is seen by Vimmi in International Centre. A mere three feet tall, with a misshapen body, a huge hump on his back, piercing eyes, he is still esteemed by Vimmi for his brilliance in painting. She only hears him: 'If you had been an average woman, you would not have escaped from that crowd and come here. Boredom is indeed, a big problem. It was boredom that goaded Siddhartha to become Buddha. There are many ways to deal with boredom. You can write, paint, sing...' ^{6(p.31)} Vimmi only sits there; she does not see his form then, she only heard his voice and is totally transformed.

Radhika is in for a shock when her son Rahul tells her that he hates his father, Appa, a colourless person. He tells her that he has left home and that he is ashamed to call his father a coward. He tells her further 'You said he's my father, didn't you? He doubts it.' ^{7(p.41)} Arun too is shocked when he asks his wife what she thinks of Radhika, she smiles first and says that it is the first time he has sought his opinion. There goes on an altercation between husband and wife and Vimmi comes to the core of her heart and lambastes Arun: 'Radhika smokes, drinks and mixes with men without any inhibition. Your sensitivity, steeped in our tradition, does not accept this image. That is why you ask me sarcastically if I want to be like Radhika. You need Radhika to further your business interests. You do not have any qualms about using her. When it comes to your own wife, you expect her to be a personification of all virtues and a storehouse of your concept of our cultural values. I don't like your double standards.' ^{8.(pp. 48-49)} Vimmi tells her husband that she wants to be a different person and that he she has so far lived only to please him and Arun in a whiff tells her that from then on she may live for herself and that he does not stand in her way.

The wall between Vimmi and Arun, wife and husband goes on rising only after Vimmi sees and talks to the painter she got impressed with, Damodaran. After starting her heart's dear engagement in painting, Vimmi is ignited with further emotions and remembers Subrahmanya Bharati. She feels the urge to paint when frenzy began to possess her with the great poem:

A fledgling fire I saw

I put it in the hollow of a forest tree

The forest burst itself out – could

There be young or old in the fire's fury

Thatharikita Thatharikita Dhiththom...^{9(p.54)}

Then she goes to her room, brings out her brushes and paints, closing her eyes reciting the gloriously chilled words in the poem:

Transcending knowledge

Going beyond the five senses

Contemplating the vast expanse of the infinite void

Sans attachments of the mind and flesh

Devoid of feelings of pain and pleasure

Then and there in that state lies

The gresr moment of bliss

And bliss is liberation enow!'

We are told 'She experienced the ecstasy of reducing all the old garbage into ashes. She immersed herself into herself and drowned in an ocean of bliss.'^{10 (p.55)}

Vimmi tells Damodaran of her feeling a wave of ecstatic inspiration and asked about the cause replies that she remembered Bharati's verses. Replies Damodaran: 'Oh! That verse? Who can help being inspired by that poem? Bharati is a complete poet. Can anybody better this description of mystic experience? Mrs Arun, you should have come out only after finishing this painting. ... I doubt if you will be able to whip up the dame intensity of inspiration a second time and work on this picture.'^{11 (p.58)}

Vimmi realizes that when she was merely Arun's wife she led a vegetable life. She feels guilty for having wasted her life. She remembers what poet Bharati said: 'A worthy musical instrument thrown on to dust heap'. She discovers that only now she has discovered the limits of her freedom.

Arun feels distraught when their maid Poornima tells him when he called from Bombay that Vimmi has gone out. He talks to Radhika. She wonders if he has in his subconscious mind a crush on her in his subconscious mind and his doubt about Vimmi's transgression is a mere excuse. Varun's talk with Radhika about his wife is a sign of his weakness like cowardice. When she asks Varun if he knew anything about Vimmi's likes and dislikes he almost blurts: 'I am not all that bad to look at. My family background, my education, my official status, what was I lacking in? What more can a middle-class woman need?'^{12(p.74)} Radhika is right in her reply saying that perhaps it was that attitude of his that Vimmi did not like. Arun is stupid being so full of himself about thinking that he is great in winning the heart of his wife. His question about what more a middle-class woman would 'need' justifies the way he is treated by his wife - the moment a stranger could whip up her real thought and feeling. Vimmi thinks very highly of Damodaran and his words bring a lot of change in her. He says 'If we can live with perfect alignment of thought and deed that would be our *moksha*, the final frontier of living free. ... As long as an artist craves for approbation, we cannot say he lives in total freedom. Only when he remains anonymous after he had his say, would he be truly free. What do we know of the creators of our *Upanishads*? They were totally liberated.'^{13(p.79)}

Arun's altercation with his wife Vimmi becomes the last straw leading to the consequence of their separation. Agry with his wife after his call home is answered by the maid Arun begins the argument. 'It got quite late last night, I suppose.' (Arun begins) 'Yes, it was one o'clock when I came home' (Vimmi replies calmly.) 'Had an interesting time, I guess.' She did not reply. 'I should say I too had a terrific time in Bombay.' With those words, he gave her a searching look. She was not even looking at him. 'With Radhika.' (He says) Her face turned red with anger. 'Are you not ashamed to say it?' He came and stood by her. 'You spent your time until one o'clock last night with some bastard Damodaran. Aren't you ashamed of that? She was in great rage. She did not know how to reply him. She felt like beating him to a pulp, but if she did that, how would she be any different from him?'^{14(p.82)} She explains that she has gone to Damodaran's house to look at his paintings and even tells him that for the first time she has drunk whisky. 'What?' Arun stood up enraged. 'If this shocks you so much, how shocking your attending all these parties should have been to me!' (Vimmi shoots back.) 'What on earth would you call a misdeed? Going to the bastard's house was not wrong, drinking whisky there was not wrong, and who knows what happened there after that?' (Arun asks.) 'Get out,' Vimmi shouted, losing all control over herself. 'You took the words out of my mouth. I should have said that. I don't see any point now in both of us pretending to be husband and wife...' Arun stormed out of the room.^{15(pp85-86)}

Vimmi calls up Arun at his office but it is only Radhika who lifts us the phone. She is surprised since Arun's wife never calls his office to talk to him. Vimmi informs Radhika that she is leaving Arun's home. Arun and Radhika come back from the office to Arun's residence. Radhika tries to make him see reason with her remarks; 'Goodness! You married her and lived

with her all these years and you didn't know that she could paint?'^{16 (p.90)} She continues '... If you have to forego your freedom after marriage, then there is something wrong with the system. Vimmi must have felt she had surrendered her freedom. What a strain it must have been on her to live all these years, pretending that she liked all the things you did? When she reached saturation and pretence became impossible, she resorted to doing what she felt was right. I won't blame her.'^{17 (p. 91)} She gets angry when Arun asks her if freedom meant only sleeping with any male and asks him smiling 'Mr Arun, why didn't thought occur to you last night?'^{18(p. 91)} She finally explains to him telling him that a person's character is not decided only by sexual transgression and asking whether all that they do to rake in profits for their company is nor related to their standards of morality. The reader very clearly understands that Arun is only worried as to whether Vimmi is guilty of sexual transgression. He asks Poornima, the maid, as to how that painter looks and listening to what she says he goes to Damodaran's flat. He asks Vimmi if she is in love with that creature. For the second time she shouts as if possessed asking him to get out.

Six years elapse, Radhika staying with Arun and Vimmi staying with Damodaran with the permission of Damodaran's group. Living with Radhika, Arun still wants to get Vimmi back to him if he could and fails miserably. When Radhika realizes that she is not wanted by Arun while his being with his wife, she is wild with anger and she tells him that he is a coward.

There is a review of Damodaran's and there are Vimmi's painting in the newspaper. The review praises the painter and calls Damodaran a Socrates and a hard-core intellectual. After the party, Damodaran embraces her and she removes his hands from her. When he does not give a reply to his question if she does not like him, he tells her that sex is like hunger and thirst and that people should not give it false sanctity and become slaves of belief. Vimmi is not squeamish. She tells him that it is not true that she is does not have any hatred for his deformed figure and goes on explaining him her ideas at length. 'When I refused your advances the other day it was not because of your appearance. I told you even that I did not want our relationship to be corrupted. I have never been conscious of what you look like. All I see is your education, knowledge and ability to appreciate art. If you imagine it is something else and torment yourself with such thoughts, how can I be held responsible?'^{19 (p.128)} When he goes on drinking fast and heavily, she asks him: 'Do you want to prove that where basic instincts are concerned you are an average man?'^{20(p.128)} The painter, shocked and brought down several pegs, shouts asking her to shut up and go to sleep. That the smug and loquacious and cleverly pretentious painter is just a man of clay feet makes Vimmi only sad and disillusioned and this not the end of the story.

Radhika becomes a little penitent and wonders where her business acumen and ideas of freedom have taken her. A husband who has deserted her, her life with another man constantly suffering from feelings of guilt, a son who has no affection for his mother and daily bouts of whisky what has life come be! She is no position to ask Vimmi if she is happy. Things come to a crisis when the principal of Rahul's college sends for her and she has to go to be told that he has become a

drug addict and the college rules say that he cannot stay in the hostel. Her son himself is belligerent and only the principal is thoughtful in offering to keep the brilliant student with himself in his house. Totally crestfallen she returns advising her son not to succumb to his drug addiction only to be bludgeoned by him: 'Funny, you advising me! It only means that you are weakening.'^{21(p.136)}

Modern man (which of course includes a woman too) is left only flabbergasted with the way things happen. With gusto and in gumption freedom is believed to be fought for, asserted and enjoyed. But things go awry and lead to perplexity as happens in the case of Radhika who says: 'I don't understand any of it. Who can assign reasons for everything that happens? Why did Vimmi leave you? Why did Ramesh leave me? Why was Damodaran born disfigured? What brought Vimmi and Damodaran together? What is it that makes us both sit here now, drinking? Could we have avoided all these happenings? Whether it was fate or some other nonsense, are we not totally helpless?' Pouring out her anguish in an emotion-laden voice, she filled her glass for the third time with whisky.'^{22(p.139)}

Damodaran for all his self-esteem, smugness and self-possession seeks refuge in getting drunk to death. He gets totally deflated because of the simple traditional wisdom of his devout disciple. A man with feet of clay, disenchanted by his ardent worshipper Vimmi who says that he is no different from other males sends to him to an impotent rage and he leads him to finish himself off drinking a whole bottle of whisky. Radhika only asks Vimmi seeing the dead painter lying spread-eagled with head hanging down from the bed: 'You say he's an artist. Couldn't he find an aesthetic way of dying? What was his problem?' and asks her too as to what kind of relationship they had. She is told 'His problem was that there was no relationship.'^{23 (pp149-50)} Vimmi feels her head spin and her dream at the beginning of the novel recurs.

The basic ways of thinking of the modernized and consequently their behaviour in assessing social mores are convincingly presented in the novel. The earlier generations in the contemporary milieu used to have a certain adherence considered both necessary and useful as revealed in her father's thinking remembered by his daughter Radhika: 'Only a Hindu can have a particular life and be a different person in society, even when the two are quite opposed to each other. We can understand the paradox of a man, who, during British days, wore a suit to his office and then came home, wore a dhoti, wore sacred ash, and chanted *Gayatri mantra*. You can only understand that man if you look at him in the context of his social norms. To him there is no contradiction in his two images.'^{24(p.22)} Radhika knows what she is though it is proved to be not the right way as shown in her husband's deserting her and her son hating her with disgust. The novelist has made a valuable contribution to literature by making his readers understand the dangerous attitudes which harm and destroy happy and fruitful living.

Works cited

Page numbers in superscript refer to Parthasarathy Indira, *Ashes and Wisdom*, Indian Writing, Chennai, 2007.

1. p.7
2. p.14
3. p.21
4. p.23
5. p.23
6. p.31
7. p.41
8. pp.48-49
9. p.54
10. p.55
11. p.58
12. p.74
13. p.79
14. p.82
15. pp.85-86
16. p.90
17. p.91
18. Ibid
19. p.128
20. Ibid
21. p.136
22. p.139
23. pp.49-50
24. p.22

Dr V.V.B.Rama Rao (b.1938) is a retired English Language Teaching professional with more than fifty published books in almost all genres both in English and his mother tongue Telugu. Now he lives in Noida (UP). He can be accessed on vvbramarao@yahoo.com or vadapalli.ramarao@gmail.com

The Excellence of Ruth Praver Jhabvala's Artistic Vision and Technical Skill: a Comparative Study of Her Novels

Hemlata Singh, M.A., Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of English
Department of Applied Sciences & Humanities
FET-RBS College, Agra

***Abstract:** Ruth Praver Jhabvala, a world class fictionist and story teller of the present century, has distinctive achievements as a literary artist. Though she is a European, her marriage to an Indian architect and stay in India has given her deep insight into India's social, political, religious, economic, moral and cultural life. Her knowledge about the Indian social and cultural ethos can be marked by the variety of themes that she has undertaken in her novels. She has cultivated and demonstrated the literary qualities which are her own and which primarily emerge from the interaction between the peculiar Indian milieu and the Western set up. However, even having the literary situation her distinction is modified and narrowed down by the rather limited quality of her literary achievement, which is, in part, the inevitable result of her choice, and in part, the artistic outcome of her creativity. This peculiar paradox of her attainments as an artist, is in a way rooted in the environs of her literary effort, and is co-extensive with the range and quality of her fiction. The present paper is an exploration of her artistic vision and literary craftsmanship.*

***Key Words:** peculiar, paradox, exploration.*

Ruth Praver Jhabvala has achieved an international reputation as an Indian novelist. Her eight novels which appeared in quick succession, deals with the themes like, love and marriage in the bourgeois society, East–West encounter, pseudo-modernism in Indian society, the post-independence Indian ethos, affectation and hypocrisy in the Indian middle class society. She handles her themes with dazzling assurance and presents penetrating and compassionate picture of human relationship ironically and realistically. Though Ruth Jhabvala has made a significant contribution to the Indian English fiction, she has not received proper attention from the critics of literature. The characters in her Novels deal with their identity-crisis and how they handle the trauma and possible success, failure or resistance of subjects who in their confrontation with the culture of the other negotiate their new identities. Jhabvala's literary works are concerned with the diasporic postcolonial situation of the lives of Europeans, who are caught between the Indian traditions that they have left behind and a totally different western world that they have to live in, culminating in an

ongoing struggle to adjust between the two worlds of the two cultures. Concerned mostly with the disappointment, failure and at-times success of Europeans immigrants in India, Jhabvala's works abound with female characters who, on being displaced, struggle to survive in the unfamiliar surroundings they are entangled in. Her work deal with the common motif of exclusion, loneliness and the search for an identity and fulfillment.

Jhabvala came to India as a wife of an Indian architect, Cyrus S. H. Jhabvala. In her novels, we find a glimpse of her architectural vision which she gets as wife of an architect. As in *The Householder*:

Over the shops there were wooden verandas and arched windows set in thin crumbling walls. (The Householder.p.131)

One of the most puzzling phenomena of the literary world is the intriguing problem of Jhabvala's identity and classification. She has been variously regarded sometimes as an 'outside-insider', and other times as an 'inside-outsider' and other times as an 'adopted daughter of India'. Highlighting the importance of this problem in relation to Jhabvala, David Rubin writes:

The solution to this puzzle of national identification not idly speculative for on its hangs the far most complex mystery of Jhabvala's sense of her own identity and its relation to the world she has created and ultimately of the real value and meaning of her fiction. (p.672)

As a European writer, Jhabvala's persistent emphasis upon painting the minute details or events adds to the charm of her art. The Western-reader likes comprehensiveness and thoroughness in the subject because it helps the Western readers to understand Indian scene and setting. Her area of observation is very wide and she renders all that she observes in a comprehensive coverage. Sometimes this tendency in producing an actual scene is carried to an excessive degree, consequently an Indian reader is almost bored, but the Western reader who is unfamiliar with the scene is very much delighted and thrilled with the vivid description. The following detailed description of Gulab's sluttishness and her epicurean taste has been described with minute details:

The milk that servant brought them did not have enough sugar in it, so they sent him to put in more, they both liked things to be very very sweet. Half way through Gulab thought, it would be nice to flavour the remainder with rose essence to vary the taste. When they had finished, both have white milk moustaches and they had a good laugh at one another before Gulab wiped their mouths first lovingly his then carelessly her own with the end of her sari. The new servant since he had nothing else to do, continue to watch them. Ravi tickled Gulab and then Gulab tickled Ravi. She yawned, she stretched

herself; she felt contented. Ravi sat on her and rode her as a horse and she laughed. The new servant also laughed, an animal sound, and Gulab lifted her to ask him what did he want, had he nothing better to do than to just stand there and look? (EII,p.14)

When one writes about India as a European and in English as I do, one writes inevitably not for Indian but for Western readers. Problems of communication present themselves; how to translate the idiom of one language into another; how to present a scene to an audience unfamiliar with its most obvious ingredients (such as temples, bazaars and motor cycle-rickshaws.). Keeping in mind her Western readers, Ruth Jhabvala has adopted the technique of minute and vivid description of scenes. She persistently emphasizes upon pointing or describing minute details of apparently unimportant scenes or events. As one notices in the following description of Tarla's drawing-room in *To Whom She Will*:

A fan turned softly from the ceiling, not really necessary in that cool room, but providing a sweet titillating breeze. An enormous Persian carpet covered, the marble floor; it was patterned all over with tiny flowers in pink and green and blue, dainty and fresh and poignantly artificial. The divans were almost at floor level and matched the brocaded silk of the curtains; green and crimson horsemen glittering against a somber background. There was a long low cabinet with bronze grill work twisting behind the glass and on it a tea-set, red and gold, fine as breath, curved shallow cups with long handles pointing upwards. (TWSW, p.25)

It has been observed that her characters are like windows, through which her readers can see the changing image of Indian society. Through her characters she was able to touch almost all the important aspects of Indian Society. A clear clash between traditional and modernization can be understood with the close treatment of relationship between the characters of her novels. She closely connected her characters with all the customs like marriages, child births and mundan ceremony. She has discussed the plight and dilemma of those foreign characters who come India in search of spiritual peace but all they get is disease and depression.

Jhabvala wrote about all her characters like a detached observer. Initially she wrote as an observer writing about things which enchanted her and later on about things she knew too well and found them to be beyond her tolerance and naturally she became bitter and critical. Her criticism always comes through one of her Indian characters. Jhabvala excels in presenting incongruities of human characters and situations. The incongruities have social, familial and cultural implication and consequently in all the novels they become the main source of humour. V.A. Shahne analyzed this aspect of Jhabvala's novel wrote:

Jhabvala merit as a creative writer lies in her being intensely aware of her limitations. She writes about possibly the only social segment of urban Indian that she knows at First hand. (p.231)

Her first phase novels are seen chiefly as satirical portraits of Indian inconsistency, selfishness and immorality. The social documentation is precise; the Indian ethos is captured mainly through explication. With the exception of 'Esmond in India', they are particularly not involved with Europeans but portray rather Indian family-life and its constant preoccupation with finding suitable husbands for younger daughters. The first two novels, 'To Whom She Will' and 'Nature Of Passion' treat the theme of disillusionment in its gentlest and most benign form: the comic mismatching of pairs of lovers who, as the novels progress, discover the difference between illusions and hard realities. Highlighting the Jhabvala thematic perspective Neeta Gupta has observed:

There is an abundance of drab and dreary details of daily living yet amidst all his Jhabvala skillfully unravels the complex web of human relationships –fathers and sons ,fathers and daughters ,brothers and sisters,sisters and sisters, aunts and uncles, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, husbands and wives-and so on. (p.59)

Characters in the novels of Ruth Jhabvala are generally neurotic females, highly sensitive but sequestered in a world of dream and imagination and alienated from their surroundings as a consequences of their failure or unwillingness to adjust with the reality. They often differ in their opinion from others and embark on a long voyage of con-temptation in order to find the meaning of their existence. Having wondered for long , they usually arrive at a juncture where either they find that after all their urgency has been in some essential manner very significant or sometimes simply damaged by the sexual exploitation and unable to solve the mystery that envelops their suffers. Her characters build a large spectrum. The women characters in 'A New Dominion' are main source to expose the moral degradation, brutality and corruption prevalent in the so called religious centre's and spiritual god-men (swamiji) of India :

They placed their faith in Swamiji, thinking he will bring succour to their tormented souls and transform them into new unified beings at peace with themselves and the world. Instead we have a sordid picture of selfish manipulation, social abuse, midnight orgies and callousness verging on cruelty. The Swamiji treat them as his possessions. (S.Krishnaswamy,p.325)

In Ruth Jhabvala's novels we find a different structural technique. Her first novel To Whom She Will has been divided into 39 Chapters. Each new chapter begins with separate scene and incident. But the whole novel has a single action having a good beginning, middle and

an end. The central themes of the novel are marriage, love and parents' opposition in adopting the modern ways of life. Her second novel *The Nature Of Passion* has been divided in three parts. Part one mainly deals with the Lalaji's 'rajasa' passion; part two with the westernization of young generation; part three deals with the consequences of blind imitation of western culture and parents' protection of their children. *Esmond In India* has been divided into 32 chapters. In this novel Jhabvala has successfully projected the problems related to the meeting of East and West. The plot of the novel is well knitted. Again her novel *Get Ready For Battle* has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals with the worldly and political life of Gulzari Lal and Sarla Devi. The Post-Independence Indian ethos has been projected in rest of the chapters. The division of the novel *The Householder* in three chapters is quite significant. The first chapter deals with the nature of house, home; and the problems and conflicts in the life of a new housewife and a householder. The second chapter delineates their moments of separation and third deals with their reunion as matured partners of life. *A New Dominion* has been divided in three parts with different locales. The setting of the first part is in Delhi, the second part is in the holy city of Banaras and part three is in an imaginary town of Rajasthan i.e. Maupur. Each part has been divided in sub-chapters with short titles like 'Lee Travels', 'Asha Is Bored', 'Gopi Comes To Tea', 'Lee Meets Asha', 'Asha Opens Her Heart', and 'Lee And Gopi Eat Kababs'. One scene changes swiftly like the scenes of the films. It also gives us a glimpse of her cinematographic technique that she used later on in writing her film-scripts and screen plays.

If we penetrate through her creative mind we could easily observe her vision of observing Indian milieu. Her novel 'To Whom She Will' is a portrait of Indian society that emerged in wake of Independence. The plot of *Amrita* appears to endorse the wisdom of that institution dear to oriental conversation, the marriage 'arranged' by the family elders between young people who lack the experience or are denied the opportunity to choose partners for themselves.

I agree that in this country an exaggerated stress is laid on such matters. But you know that I myself am not hidebound in this way; that indeed I have allowed two of my own daughters to marry outside their immediate community, and in one case quite distinctly beneath her own level of, shall we say, breeding and fortune..., the discrepancy between two families, wide. It is a gulf that I cannot find it in my conscience to allow you to bridge. (TWSW, p.7)

'The Nature of Passion' is both a novel of manners as well as morals. Its title implies an attempt on Ruth Jhabvala's part to penetrate the passions of the Indian women and to express them in her own feminine terms. From the beginning context of the novel the tension between tradition and modernity is established and Jhabvala portrays the morally, intellectually and aesthetically bleak characters dominating the scene. When Lala Narayan

Das muses about the marriage of his most beloved daughter Nimmi, Jhabvala forcefully underlines the subservient position of women in Indian social set-up as:

A woman is woman and her duties of a manIt is a woman's fate to leave the house of her father and go to a husband's house, to bear his children, to look to the comforts of his family (TNOP, p .112)

A rigorous survey of her fiction makes it clear the exploitation of the women folk has always been the persistent motif of the male power through their mechanism has changed as per the need and convenience of the hour. It is an equally noted feature in her novels that the awareness for self-identity and self-reliance has reached only the middle-class households and the average protagonists are still in a slumber of slavery and predicament to male dominance. The phenomenon of the feminine sensibilities has reached its full exposition in Jhabvala's novels of all the phases where socio-cultural ethics and morality have lost their relevance and women flit from continent to continent with a confessional independence and individuality. A long range of protagonists-Judy, Lee, Olivia, Lousie, Marietta, Harriet, Angel, Lara, Elsa and Renata-are sexuality misused victims of the enigmatically enchanting womanizers but all find themselves in a vicious and mysterious dilemma of indefinable urge to be possessed by their charismatic males even at the cost of lives. Thus Jhabvala articulates the powerful elemental passions and every woman vicariously share the fact of her protagonists and here in lies the beauty of her novels. Due to her creativity in literary world she has been compare both to Jane Austen and Chekhov. In an interview she said:

I have no consciously modelled myself on anyone. Uncounsciously (or does one say subconsciously?) more or less on every writer I have loved and admired. Any writer who has deeply thrilled me- and there have been many, many- has as it were entered into me, and so has influenced me. But to get back to Jane Austen. The reason I used to be compared to her is because my earlier books dealt with the same sort of society as hers did- i.e., the leisured middle classes, mostly concerned with eating and marrying. Also perhaps my way of looking at things may have been somewhat similar to hers- a sort of detachment?.....Again, I feel, not because of any similarity between us how could there be! I wish it were so, even by thousandth of a fraction- but because one deals with similar societies. Present day India does seem to have a lot in common, socially and economically with 19th century Russia. Especially the well to do middle classes, anguished with boredom that Turgeniev and Chekhov were always writing about. (Ramlal Agarwal, p34)

Thus Jhabvala's pictorial imagination takes every small movement of men. Her technique seems curiously similar to be that of Robert Browning in his famous dramatic monologues. Browning too projects a visual perspective in Fra Lippo Lippi or Andrea Del Sarto and it

functions as an 'objective correlative' to the moral perspective. Thus minuteness and precision in Jhabvala's fiction contribute to the physical reality. It is the essence of the whole visual organization of her fictional world.

Being a European and writing about India, Jhabvala is well familiar with the European as well as Indian trends of literature. Hence her mode of expression is a queer blending of two trends of literature. Besides her Indian readers, as a writer, she is deeply conscious of her Western readers too and this awareness has profoundly affected her craft of fiction:

When one writes about India as a European and in English as I do, one writes inevitably not for Indian but for Western readers. Problems of communication present themselves; how to translate the idiom of one language into another; how to present a scene to an audience unfamiliar with its most obvious ingredients (such as temples, bazaars and motor cycle-rickshaws.) (NYT, p.36)

Jhabvala has tried to translate Indian phrases and idioms into English to give them a realistic authentic tone. In *To Whom She Will*, Radha speaks to Tarla. 'You with all your committee-shomittees,' 'you must know somebody'. The variation of committee is authentic Indian style. The following dialogue reveals the translation of Indian proverbs:

Poverty and want are terrible things. In the Panchtantra it is written, 'It is better to be dead than poor.' (TH p.12)

One more example of Indian English is worth mentioning here:

*'You talk as it is my fault that you are.'
Before he could finish, she had asked,
Then whose fault is it? (TH p.23)*

Another translation of Indian idioms can be cited here thus,

They (girls) should be remorse and soulful, like goddess they should be. (Ibid.p.23)

The following translation of Indian poems is worth appreciating.

*My granny's gone to the market
For four bowls she did pay, but
one get broken on the way.' (TH p.138)*

Ruth Jhabvala has also either translated herself or quoted the English translation of Sanskrit poems. Lala Hardayal in his parties recited Sanskrit poems:

*O swollen hath the mango sprouted and budded and bloomed.
O swollen hath our love sprouted budded and bloomed.(EII,p.63)*

And again:

*And do the thought, O lord of hearts,
Ne'er fly to me
Who sit and long, and long for thee?
Induc'd by thy arts
I pine in love's valley
When thou didst once dally
Midst oranges blossoms that cloud the clear sky
As the tear cloud my eye.(Esmond In India,p.63.)*

As a genius novelist, technical embellishments it is noteworthy that her artistic vision and craftsmanship have progressively matured and enriched along with the novelist's passage through the successive phases of her literary career. Technically, she initiated her novels with single plot, and flat stories articulating and emancipation of characters. In her novels Jhabvala introduced not only double but also triple protagonists at a time. The triple protagonists and the masquerade of three and even four generation in flashback are really innovative advancements in the field of novel-writing. In addition to this her mild irony and comic portrayal of the Indian woman turned into satire in due second phase of expatriate femininity and finally this has been replaced by acid sarcasm in the portrayal of the self delusions and disasters of western women in modern times. With the progressive maturity of Jhabvala's vision and skill her focus has probed deep into the feminine soul and psyche of the females with an artistic excellence. It is no exaggeration to state that with these literary embellishments and her superb theme of search for self definition of woman, Jhabvala is certainly a notch or too above not only the contemporary women novelists by also her predecessors in India and abroad.

Work Cited:

Rubin, David: 'Ruth Jhabvala in India; in *Modern Fiction Studies*', 30th Anniversary Issue, winter, vol. 30. No. 4, 1984.

Shahne, V.A: "An Artist's Experience of India; Jhabvala's Fiction" in ed. R .K. Dhawan, *Commonwealth Fiction* (New Delhi: Classical Publishing Company 1988).

Gupta, Neeta: 'knocks of Modernity in Jhabvala's Novels: Women in Indo-Anglican Fiction,' ed. Naresh k. Jain. New Delhi; Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 1998.

Krishnaswamy, Shanta: *White Woman's Burden: The Woman in Indian Fiction in English*; New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1983.

Agarwal, Ramlal: '*An Interview with Jhabvala*', September-October 1974.

Jhabvala, R.P.: '*Moonlight Jasmine And Rickets*' in *The New York Times* (New York, April 22, 1975)

Jhabvala, Ruth Praver: '*To Whom She Will*', London: Penguin Books, 1985 (Referred as TWSW in the paper).

Jhabvala, Ruth Praver: '*The Nature Of Passion*', London: Allen and Unwin, 1956 (Referred as TNOP in the paper).

Jhabvala, Ruth Praver: '*Esmond In India*', London: Allen and Unwin, 1958 (Referred as EII in the paper).

Jhabvala, Ruth Praver: '*The Householder*', London: John Murray, 1960 (Referred as TH in the paper).

Jhabvala, Ruth Praver: '*Get Ready For Battle*', London: John Murray, 1962 (Referred as GRFB in the paper).

Jhabvala, Ruth Praver: '*A Backward Place*', Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984 (Referred as ABP in the paper).

Jhabvala, Ruth Praver: '*A New Dominion*', London: Granada Publishing Ltd., 1972. (Referred as AND in the paper).

Jhabvala, Ruth Praver: '*Heat and Dust*' London: Penguin Books, 1994, (Referred as HAD in the paper)

A Study of Individual Sufferings in the Novel “A Fine Balance” by Rohinton Mistry**N. Kavitha¹, Ph.D Scholar, IACS**

Assistant Professor in English
Department of Science and Humanities
Sri Ramakrishna Institute of Technology
Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

Dr. P. Selvam², EC Member, IACS

Assistant Professor in English
PG and Research Department
Government Arts College
Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

ABSTRACT: *Life is overwhelmed with many problems at different levels. People are suffered by various reasons that also due to the environment. Human problems are always based upon how to understand sufferings and conflict in the individuals. But sufferings come from uncomfortable situations and feelings that lead with negative emotions to the people. Human beings have not only the physical problems but also more complicated psychological problems. Sufferings are not a mistake that is part of our self's plan too. Suffering is caused by the interpretation of situations. This is natural phenomena, which frequently cause a state of anger, jealousy and sadness. But sufferings can ruin a person or it can make stronger one. Positive way of suffering makes hope, kindness and love. Negative way of suffering creates fear, worries and lack of faith. In this paper, it is to be focused how the individuals are characterized and suffered by themselves and others through the novel “A Fine Balance” by Rohinton Mistry.*

Key Words: *Individuals, Sufferings Rohinton Mistry.*

INTRODUCTION:

The Bhagavad-Gita, the Bible, or any other religious books are explaining the cause of sufferings to the human life. Buddhism mainly points out desire is the root cause of all type of sufferings of human life. Desire is like a tree that has so many branches such as ill, will and anger. The tree is mainly rooted with ignorance and its fruits are problems or sufferings. So suffering has a vital place in human life and has an unavoidable part in the journey of life. Physical, Psychological, Social sufferings have major role in human life and relationship and interlink among them. Physical suffering comes out in many different ways to the people. Physical suffering comes through unfortunate events like accidents. Some physical sufferings are based upon sins and

passions of physical desires like sexual harassment. These are away from our control and situations from the outer world.

Psychological suffering causes of pain to the mind as well as the body. Mainly psychological suffering brings out anxiety, anguish and depression to the people. All ages of people who are suffered by the depression that leads them to a permanent disability and even suicide. The psychological problems always try to find only to rearrange their effects. Social suffering describes collective or individual human suffering associated with the society that shapes or collapses the human by powerful social forces. In 1970s, India faced social unrest that mostly affected poor people and down-trodden. Even to get basic human identity, they have to lose so many things. Land lords and upper-class people also exploited and dominated the poor and down-trodden.

SUFFERINGS OF INDIVIDUALS IN A FINE BALANCE:

In *A Fine Balance*, Rohinton Mistry shows the sufferings of poor characters from the parsi community and atrocities of two untouchables from the village. He uses four main characters a woman and three men. Each of the four protagonists has own story. All four stories coming together, the characters begin to live together under one roof in the city of Bombay. The novel is about sufferings and pain of the poorest people. From this way, *A Fine Balance* is the story of the heroic struggles and hideous misfortunes that is based on physical, psychological and social sufferings.

A Fine Balance is mainly rooted with beautification, sterilization, state-of-emergency, political injuries and domination of land lords. Its protagonists- Dina Dalal, a Parsi widow in Bombay, Ishvar and Omprakash, two village tailors from low caste as labours and Meneck Kohlah, the college-student as paying guest of Dina. They all become victims of the turbulence caused by the state –of – emergency. Their attempts at survival become the microcosm for all the suffering people in India. They are also suffering quite lot to get an identity in their society.

The four main characters converge in Dina's apartment as refugees from contracting caste, gender, or social roles. They each live in an unimportant position in the context of India. They are transferred by the community and try to center their own individuality. The apartment is viewed as the worldly site of individuals in a troublesome society. Their life in Bombay is contrary to their expectations and symbolizes the anguish, pain, anxiety and restlessness of people cut off from their native villages.

Dina fights for her independence and individuality but she faces the continuous failures and threats by society. Finally she loses her flat and forced to her brother's home as a servant. Meneck has a peaceful education in a hill-station then he is sent to the ruthless city by his parents for his higher study. He is continuously humiliated by his seniors in the college. He learns and suffers more from the society at different ways and levels. It affects his mind severely and forced

him to commit suicide on the train tracks. Emergency made both Dina and Maneck fail in their attempts to survive of their life.

Dukhi Mochi id Omprakash's grandfather, a lower caste chamaar. He decides to send his sons, Ishvar and Narayan to city for their better future. When they grow up in the city, Ishvar stays in town as Ashraf's assistant in tailoring shop, Narayan comes back to the village who becomes successful in his life. He has a son, Om, and two daughters. It makes angry and jealousy to the high class people and land lords.

On the Election Day, Narayan goes to the polling booth and tries to register a genuine vote. He fights against the Thakur Dharamsi the local Don for the rights of low class people. But Thakur's men beat Narayan and took him to Thakur's farm. There, Narayan and two companions are tortured and hanged by them. Other untouchables are beaten and their women are raped. At the end, Narayan's entire family is murdered by Thakur. From these causes, Ishvar and Om decide to migrate to Bombay. Ishvar's and Omprakash's life in the village describe terrible poverty, public d disturbance and caste violence.

Depressed and demoralized by the ruthless murder of their entire family, pressured by joblessness and hunger and envisioning a bright future for themselves Ishvar and Omprakash migrate to Bombay like Rajaram who says, "thousands and thousands are coming to the city because of bad times in their native place. I came for the same reason". (AFB171) and "the city grabs you, sinks its claws into you and refuses to let go"(AFB 172)

Ishvar and Om escape to the city and live in slum life as tailors. Here too, they face so many problems such as police cruelty, drunken fights and casual murders until they find short relief with Dina. But sterilization camp causes to collapse Omprakash's life. He is castrated by local don when they go to their village for his marriage. Beautification also causes to remove Ishvar's injured legs. Misuse of power and emergency collapse their lives. Now, Ishvar and Om return to the city once again as beggars.

The Policeman also harrase the poor and get money from them. They earn from their poverty and rootlessness.

We are waiting for the train, said Ishvar this is not that kind of station master, who was collecting his weekly tribute of maize and money. You have the best location. That's what others are willing to pay for it. All day the burning smoke blinds my eyes and throttles my lungs, said the endor. And just look at my fingers charred black. Have some pity, Sahab... How to afford fifty rupees? Police also have to be kept happy. (AFB223).

CONCLUSION:

From this way one of the strongest these deeply runs throughout the novel that is ill power of corruption. This is the great example of the misuse of power of the emergency period. This corruption is the order of mistreatment of powers such as police brutality, compulsory sterilization, the destruction of slums. On the other hand, poverty cannot be ignored throughout the novel on many ways. The main characters always employ, but still they are under the poverty line in the novel gives some insight of poverty life. Rohinton Mistry shows corrupt political scenario of India.

The Prime Minister's message is that she is your servant, and wants to help you. She wants to hear about things from your own lips. There will be a payment of five rupees for each person. Also free tea and snack.... Attention, attention! Two people from each Jhopadi must get on the bus! In five minutes-no delay. Otherwise, you will be arrested for trespassing on municipal property. (AFB256)

Rohinton Mistry highlights crucial events in the country's chronical by depicting the background of each protagonist. A Fine Balance illustrates the deeper insight of political, nativity and struggle of suffering people. It always focuses on the deep structure of the individual's existences of the human life. A Fine Balance is taken up for analyzing the human sufferings in which Rohinton Mistry ultimately gives a space of endless sufferings of the individuals.

REFERENCES:

Mistry, Rohinton. A Fine Balance. New York: Vintage International, Vintage Books: A Division of Random House, INC, 1996.

Bharucha, Nilufer E and Toye, William. The oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, 2nd, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997, P-756-759.

Nelson, Emmanueel S. "Rohinton Mistry(1952)" Writers of the Indian Diaspora A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Source Book. West Port: Greenwood Press, 1993.

Treblay, Reeta Choudhari. Inter Trading Nations Indo / Pakistan / Canadian Reflections on the 50th Anniversary of India's Independence Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1998.

Portrayal of Women in Shashi Deshpande's - THE BINDING VINE

Dr. Rushmeet Kaur Arneja

Assistant Professor
Guru Tegh Bahadur Institute of Technology
Indraprastha University, New Delhi

***Abstract:** The aim of writing this article is to highlight the theme of helplessness on the part of a woman. Whether she is a mother, daughter, sister or wife, the society always desires that she should be docile, timid and submissive. Through this particular novel Deshpande is trying to highlight the change towards which our society is moving but still millions of miles need to be covered for this change to be visible.*

***Key Words:** Relationships, society, marriage, sufferings*

Shashi Deshpande's 'The Binding Vine' (1993) is very much similar to her earlier novels, as it sketches her middle-class female protagonist predicament in a male-dominated world, where she has very little scope to give voice to her concerns. Although the story in this particular novel at the superficial level appears to be very identical to her other novels, but if one explores it deeply he can easily sense the peculiarity in it. In all other novels we find that the protagonist is of paramount importance and all the other characters are used to feature her concerns and feelings. But in this novel the minor characters play a very significant role; the protagonist Urmi plays the role of anchor, it is she who is used by the novelist very cleverly to expose the sufferings of women from different sections of our society.

The Binding Vine deals with the multi-facetedness of its central character Urmi. Urmi is an intelligent, educated middle-class wife, who is employed as a lecturer in a college. Urmi's vision towards life is quite different from other women of our society. She is one who affirms her independence and freedom in each and every judgement of her life. Urmi united in marriage with the man whom she preferred, but is desperate in her married life because of her ego and to some extent Kishore her husband is accountable for it. The problem with Urmi is that she is brimming with confidence, as is financially independent and well settled in her life. Due to this economic stability she has developed a kind of super ego in herself which makes her reluctant to submit before her husband. Moreover, she cannot tolerate the submission of Vanaa (her sister-in-law) and her mother before their spouses.

She says:

"...but her submissiveness, her willingness to go along with him in whatever he wants makes me angry.

You let him get away with too much; I tell her what do you want me to do? 'Assert yourself. You don't have to crawl before him. Do you, 'I don't crawl. I do what I want'.

'No, you don't. You're scared of him, yes you are. I've seen you. You don't ever dare to call your daughters anything but Mandira and Pallavi, no, not even when you pet them because Harish doesn't like Baby talk.....' "(80).

From the initial days of her marriage Urmi starts feeling that the bond between her and her husband is not that of love and there is lack of emotional support and understanding. Although Urmi knows that for a woman to adjust in a totally new world, love and compatibility on part of a husband is very essential, but on the other hand Urmi's husband Kishore is the true reflection of the conventional Indian husband, regardless of being an educated Merchant Navy officer. Every time when Urmi tries to reveal her emotional insecurity, whenever Kishore goes away from her, he asserts himself sexually rather than understanding that her desire is not physical what she needs is something else. "Each time you leave me the parting is like death", she tries to tell two times, and both the times, he finds solution in the physical relationship. But to her,

"..... sex is only a temporary answer. I came out of it to find that the lights had come back..... 'Go to sleep' he said. He was kneeling by me his face close to mine, but the closeness was only physical. His voice was cold. I could see the goose bumps on his shoulders, his chest. I did not look into his face.

I was afraid of what I would see, I turned round and fell asleep "(140).

Thus, we can say that Urmi is leading an economically and socially secure life like a normal human being even without the support her husband. But sometimes she feels erotic feelings growing within her because she is deprived of true love and she finds it hard to control her wishes;

"I could put my desire into a deep freeze and take them out, intact and whole, when he returned "(65).

Here Deshpande is trying to make a point that financial security cannot curb the need of a person to be pampered and cared within a relationship. It is this vacuum in her life which leads to

the advancement of her friendship with Dr. Bhaskar. The point here is that the realization of the need and demand of sex by the new woman who is independent in various aspects of life has been effectively suggested by Deshpande.

Urmila is the primary figure in the novel which connects all the threads, in the plot - the stories of Mira, Kalpana, Shakutai, Sulu, Vanaa, Priti and Inni. It is Urmila's anguish, who mourns over the death of her one-year old daughter which intertwines all emotions and themes into one. It is Anu's death that sensitizes Urmi towards the pains and agony of others. Thus her narrative is encompassing of all the three tales broadly - one about Kalpana who is a rape victim, Mira, a victim of marital rape, who is Urmi's mother-in-law, and Shakutai who is Kalpana's mother. The most assertive tale which closely weaves all these tails together is that of Urmi herself, Urmila starts to battle with her loss, with unanswered questions of the past, and an introspection of herself and her marriage to Kishore after she comes across her mother-in-law Mira's poems and after her involvement with Kalpana who had been savegely raped.

Urmi finds it almost impossible to get out of the memories of her dead infant daughter. She fights with the reminiscences of her daughter but also realizes that forgetting is unfaithfulness:

*"I must reject these memories, I have to conquer them.
This is one battle. I have to win if I am to go on living.
And yet my victory will carry with it the taint of betrayal.
To forget is to betray"(21).*

She also realizes her accountability and responsibility towards her son who desires her love and affection and watches her anxiously. When Inni wanted a framed photograph of Anu on wall she rejects the idea and is reluctant to do that and says:

*I don't need a picture to remember her,
I can remember every bit of her, every moment of her life" (68).*
When her friend Lalita asks how many kids she has,
she replies, *"Only one. A son."*

And soon she realizes that she has done injustice to Anu:

*"Only one, a sonthe words keep hammering in my mind.
How could I? That was betrayal, treachery
How could I deny my Anu? Only one son how could I? "(106).*

S. Indira aptly observes: *"She clings to her pain
and allows her memories of Anu, every small*

incident to flood her with longing and a great sense of loss."

In such a disturbed state of mind she comes across Shakuntala, mother of a rape-victim Kalpana. She meets her in the hospital where her sister-in-law works.

Kalpana's mother thinks that her daughter has met with an accident. But Dr. Bhaskar the doctor in charge on examination of Kalpana reports reveals that she has been brutally raped, the response of Shakuntala to this statement of Dr. Bhaskar is that of typical Indian mother bred in an oppressive male dominated society, which functions on terms and conditions laid down by male section of society. She tells Vanaa:

"It's not true you people are trying to blackmail my daughter's name"(58).

When she comes to know that her daughter has been raped from the conversation of Dr. Bhaskar and Vanaa, she cries in agony and fear:

*No, no, no. Tell him, Tai, it's not true, don't tell anyone.
I'll never be able to hold up my head again, who'll marry the girl,
we're decent people, doctor," She turns to him don't tell the police"(58).*

In her fearsome state of mind she gives us an insight into the society's attitude towards victims of rape. She says:

*"If a girl's honour is lost, what's left?
The girl doesn't have to do anything wrong,
people will always point a finger at her "(59).*

The novelist has very sensibly laid bare the fear, anger, helplessness and anguish of Shakuntala. When Urmi escorts Shakuntala to her home that night she comes to know about Kalpana from her. What we as readers find that she has kind of mixed feelings for her daughter, that is sometimes she is full of praise and love for her daughter but the very next moment she condemns her for her present condition. She says:

*"She is very smart, that's how she got the job in the shop.
Kalpana even learnt how to speak English. People in our
chawl used to laugh at her but she didn't care.
When she wants something she goes after it, nothing can stop her.
She's stubborn, you can't imagine how stubborn she is" (92).*

She is full of praise when she talks about her daughter's physical appearance she says:

"She's very pretty, my Kalpana. She's not like me at all. When she was born, she was so delicate and fair, just like a doll. I wondered how a woman like me could have a daughter like that"(93).

Although she adores and loves her daughter very much, she puts all the blame squarely on her shoulders because she has a conventional mindset, and feels that if her daughter would have restricted her moves this would not have happened. And she bursts out in tears and says:

But she went her way. You should have seen her walking out, head in the air caring for nobody. It's all her fault, Urmila, all her fault"(14).

But the point which Deshpande is trying to make is that it is not the victim who is responsible, but it is society at large which is to be made accountable for such savage acts against woman.

Some people have the boldness and guts to seek individuality and hold their convictions like Kalpana did, other women may unconsciously approve of it and even desire to do so themselves but are afraid to break rules which have been laid down by the society. Therefore they react in a similar manner as Kalpana's mother did.

Urmi finds it very hard to agree with Shakutai that Kalpana is culpable for her condition. She tries to persuade her by telling her:

"It's not her fault, no, not her fault at all" (147).

The susceptibility of the girl child in our society towards such heinous acts is clearly brought out by their conversation. It is very clear that relationship within the family is no protection against the sexual vulnerability. In Kalpana's case Sulu's husband (i.e. her mousi's husband) was the culprit. Shakutai fears that whatever came about with Kalpana will completely ruin the life of Sandhya her second daughter at this she tells Urmi:

"Take her, Urmila, take her away with you. I can't look after her, I don't want her. I'll destroy her like I did Kalpana. Take her to your house, keep her there, I'm not fit to look after her"(192).

Very soon we come to know about Shakutai's tragic past. She is the most unfortunate out of the whole lot, soon after her marriage her husband leaves her in her father's house with an assurance of earning a better livelihood. Even after a lapse of period of six months he did not return, so Shakutai decides to join him in Bombay. But very soon she comes to terms with reality and realizes that he is passive and worthless. Meanwhile she gives birth to three children after which she decides to work for the sake of wellbeing of her children. Despite all her hardwork

and efforts to sustain her relationship, her husband deserts her for some other woman. Since her husband has left her she is the one who is to be blamed for anything that goes wrong in the family. The reason being in our society if a marriage fails it is always the woman who is held responsible for such collapse. Shakutai tells Urmi,

*"That's been the greatest misfortune of my life,
Urmila, marrying that man." (110).*

She also tells her that she is the one who will be held responsible by the society for the pitiable condition of her daughter. She bitterly tells Urmi:

*"what can you expect, they say of a girl
whose mother has left husband?"(147).*

Shakutai's sister, Sulu, has her own tragic life. She is very supportive, affectionate and caring and helps her sister a lot who is living a miserable life. She was even ready to take the responsibility of bringing up Kalpana but that seemed beyond the bounds of possibility because her husband Prabhakar had a strong desire for Kalpana. Sulu under extreme pressure from her husband proposed to Shakutai Kalpana's marriage to Prabhakar. Both Shakutai and Sulu herself wanted that Kalpana should marry her mousaji' otherwise they knew somewhere inside that she will suffer for the rest of her life. The result was similar to what these ladies thought; Kalpana took her own decision not to marry him the result being she was brutally raped by the man whom she discarded. Sulu who is an personification of love and submissiveness commits suicide after she comes to know about her husband's fateful deed. Shakutai who is full of praise and admiration for her sister tells Urmi".

*"After marriage she changed. She was frightened, always frightened.
What if he doesn't like me, what if he throws me out?
Nobody should live like that, Urmila, So full of fears "(195).*

Shasli Deshpande suggests here that how sometimes a marriage entirely ruins the persona of a woman by making her enormously meek and passive.

Yet another tale of submission, grief and unhappiness is that of Mira, who Urmi's mother-in-law is. When the novel opens Mira is already dead we come to know about her through her writings. Urmi becomes familiar with her when (Akka) Kishore's step mother gives Urmi her writing masterpieces. After reading and interpreting them Urmi comes to know that arranged marriage did not work for Mira.

The novelist here for the first time touches and raises her concern on the subject of marital rape. It is Akka who tells how Kishore's father saw Mira at a wedding and felt in love with her. Since then he had "single-minded pursuit of an object; marrying Mira"(47). At last their marriage was

arranged and approved. But from the starting itself there had been no place for Mira's sentiments and emotions as a consequence her encounter with her husband becomes rape within the institution of marriage. Mira's diary is a glaring revolution of her extreme dislike of the sexual act with her husband, a physical repulsion for the man she married. Taken collectively her poems and the diary entries point out molestation in marriage the degree of which can be gauged from the following lives:

*But tell me, friend
Did Laxmi too twist brocade tessels
Round her fingers and tremble,
Fearing the coming of the dark-
Clouded, engulfing night. (66)*

This is further demoted by the dairy entries like the following:-

*But I have my defences; I give him the
facts, nothing more, never my feelings....
And so it begins," Please," he says,
" Please, I have you. "And over and
Over again until he has done "I love
You": Love! How I hate the word.
If there is love it is a terrible thing. (67)*

When she came to her in-law's house she was christened Nirmala-the first estrangement from her individuality. Though explicitly she does not react but puts down her reaction in these lives:

*A guttering ring gliding on the rice
Carefully traced a name (Nirmala)
Who is this? None but me,
My name hence, bestowed upon me.
Nirmala, they call, I stand statue-still,
Do you build without erasing the old?
A tablet of rice, a pencil of gold
Can they make me Nirmala? I am Mira.*

This brings about how marriage is a loss of self hood and identity for women. Mira's dairy further tells about her meeting with Venu a poet, who later became a grand old man of Indian literature. When Mira gave him some of her poems to read, he said, why do you need to write poetry? It is enough for a young woman like you to give birth to children. That is your poetry; leave the other poetry to us men" (127). These views of Venu are quite insightful of the

handicaps and hardships that women writers have to face in a male- chauvinist society. The same sort of soreness was given expression on by Kamala Das in her poem "An Introduction".

*Dress in saris, be girl
Be wife, they said. Be embroider, be cook,
Be a quarreler with servants. Fit in on.
Belong, cried the Categorizes.*

This attitude which our society follows is quiet symbolic of how women are deprived of imagination and the power of communication. The poem of Mira haunts Urmi so much that she decides to bring her thoughts back to life by getting her poems published. But when Vanaa Urmi's sister in-law who is an archetypal Indian pativrata comes to know about this she is infuriated. She feels that this stride of Urmi will destroy and demolish the honor of her family. In fact in our society the women are brought up in such a way that they start looking at the world and interpreting it from the male point of view. Their own individuality, perception and thought process is marred by their own conventional female counterparts.

Besides sharing the sufferings of Mira her Mother-in-law, Urmi also tries to bring some sought of relief to Kalpana by getting the accused punished for his brutal act. Talking about rape Deshpande says', everybody wants to hush it up..... I would say yes, make it public, but when it comes to my own daughter, my own self, would I ? Sometimes organization lack compassion and sensitivity on dealing with these conflicts. In Binding Vine I have tried to represent this situation."

This particular novel is a beautiful reflection of mother and daughter relationship. Each and every facet of mother daughter association is highlighted through three characters in the novel who are Shakutai in her relationship with Kalpana, Inni's relationship with Urmi, and Urmi's relationship with her dead daughter.

To conclude we can say that Urmi is the true reflection of a woman, revolting and finally coming to terms with herself. Sashi Deshpande has portrayed Urmila as chaste women whose sympathy for the less fortunate women is sparked of by the death of her daughter Anu. Despite her frustrations, longing for the compassion and love of her husband Urmila is not a radical feminist, but one who comes to term with her own sufferings and anxieties when she sees the harsh realities of life.

The central theme of the novel is the 'binding vine' of feeling and emotions between parent and child and between husband and wife. The true symbolic importation of the title is discovered in the following lines of Mira's poetry:

Desire says the Buddha, is the

*Cause of grief;
But how to escape their cord
This binding vine of love?*

It is love which is the binding vine of life

"The most important needs is to love. From the moments of our births, we struggle to find something which we can anchor ourselves to this strange world we find ourselves in. Only when we love do we find this anchor. But love makes you vulnerable" (137).

At last Urmi realised that relationships bind one another and that:

"Each relationship, always imperfect, survives on hope" (141).

Towards end we can say that very skillfully the novelist has painted the necessity and significance of love and understanding in one's life. Through female characters from different sections of society she has raised this issue that how they are deprived of love and compatibility which leads to loss of their personality and individuality. The whole endeavor made in this particular novel is to make the people recognize, that it is not only the male who is accountable for the plight of women but it is the society at large which has to take the call. The refinement needs to be made in the basics of upbringing and rearing of a child whether he is a male or a female, only then we can imagine a society which is liberated of corruption and occupied of love, admiration and sympathetic attitude towards each other.

References:

Deshpande, Shashi. *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1990.

Sandhu, Sarbijit K. *The Image of woman in the novels of Shashi Deshpande*, New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1991.

Deshpande, Shashi. *The Binding Vine*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1993.

Das, Kamala. *The Best of Kamala Das*. Ed. P. P. Raveendran. Calicut: Bodhi Publishing House, 1991.

Agarwal, Malti. *New Perspectives on Indian English Writings*. Delhi: Atlantic Publisher and Distributors, 2005. Print.

Kavitha. " *The Dark Holds No Terrors: An Introduction.*"

The Indian Review of World Literature in English 2. II (2006) Print.

Pandey, Birendra, *Indian Women in English*: Sarup and Sons, 2007. Print.

Prasad, Amarnath. *New Lights on Indian Women Novelists*. Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2005. Print.

Prasad, Amarnath. *Indian Novelists in English: Critical Perspectives*. Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2003. Print.

PROBLEMATIC IDENTITY OF A WOMAN IN JOHN UPDIKE'S NOVEL S.**SUMBUL**

Research Scholar,
Department of English. A.M.U. Aligarh, India

***Abstract:** Identity is an umbrella term used to describe a person's conception and expression of their individuality. In fact, Identity is a difficult term: more or less everyone knows more or less what it means, and yet its precise definition proves slippery. In popular culture, it tends to be explicitly invoked only when it is seen as being in trouble. So we are accustomed to hear of identity crises, in which people are not quite sure who they are. This might suggest that it only becomes important when it is missing or otherwise a problem.*

Updike was a major prolific American writer. He is concerned with the Loss of Identity of an individual in a dehumanized society, which is marked by erosion of spiritual and moral values. In a world obsessed with material pursuit and prosperity, human self gets reified.

S. is a biting satire of life on religious communes. It is a deep and true story of an American woman in search of herself. The novel can be called an affectionate meditation on American womanhood. S. attempts to celebrate freedom of women to pursue their emotional ends, self and identity.

Key Words: Identity, Womanhood, Crisis.

This paper is an attempt to map a woman's emotional crisis with reference to John Updike's S.

Identity is one of the cardinal issues for every human being. Identity is an umbrella term used to describe a person's conception and expression of their individuality. The word, identity points to something singular. It may not always be a conscious decision, but everyone, at various times in their life, adopts different identities i.e. the subject keeps on fading, reinventing and reemerging. It is this that, in turn, shapes others' perception of us. "To review the concept of Identity means to sketch its history. In the twenty years since the term was first employed in its particular sense...its popular usage has become so varied and its concept so expanded that the time may seem to have come for a better and final delimitation of what it is not. And yet, by its very nature, what bears such a definitive name remains subject to changing historical connotations." (Erikson 1968).

““Identity” and “Identity crisis” have in popular and scientific usage become terms which alternately circumscribe something so large and so seemingly self-evident that to demand a definition would almost seem petty, while at other times, they designate something made so narrow for purposes of measurement that the over-all meaning is lost, and it could just as well be called something else.”(Erikson 1968).

“Identity is a difficult term: more or less everyone knows more or less what it means, and yet its precise definition proves slippery. In popular culture, it tends to be explicitly invoked only when it is seen as ‘being in trouble.’ So we are accustomed to hear of ‘identity crises,’ in which people are not quite sure who they are....This might suggest that it only becomes important when it is missing or otherwise a problem.” (Lawler 2008).

Updike was a major prolific American writer. During his career he occupied a central position in the American literature. He was born and brought up in Shillington for which he has a deep love. He says “the time spent anywhere in Shillington was delicious.”(Updike 1989). He is concerned with the Loss of Identity of an individual in a dehumanized society, which is marked by erosion of spiritual and moral values. In a world obsessed with material pursuit and prosperity, human self gets reified. Many novels of Updike dealing with this subject are bestsellers and masterpieces and *S.* is one such magnum opus. It is very interesting, strange and problematic to find how a male writer tries to delve deep into the psyche of his female character with empathy and see the world with her very eyes. Some may argue that he is a failure if he is trying to capture female psychology and its nuances in this novel but his attempt is still commendable for no human being can understand another human; neither man another man nor a woman another woman.

In this novel John Updike gives us a witty comedy of manners, a biting satire of life on religious communes, and the story -- deep and true -- of an American woman in search of herself. *S.* can be called an affectionate meditation on American womanhood. Sarah comments, “The strange thing about womanhood is that it goes on and on – the same daily burden of constant vague expectation and of everything being just *slightly* disappointing compared with what one knows one has inside oneself waiting to be touched off. It’s rather like being a set of pretty little logs that won’t quite catch fire....” (Updike 1988).

S. is an epistolary novel which deals with a woman’s quest for identity. *S.* primarily narrates a woman’s perennial attempt to rebegin. She renounces her home and family for the pursuit of identity. The chief character Sarah P. Worth says about her husband, “I shed you as I would shed a skin with some awkwardness perhaps and at first a sensitivity to the touch of the new, but without pain and certainly without regret” (Updike 1988). She adds, “Perhaps it *was* your fault. Leaving me alone so much amid our piled-up treasures, you gave me time to sense

that my life was an illusion, *maya*.” (Updike 1988). Women have had a metaphorical hunger brewing in them as a result of inequalities suffered at the hands of male supremacy. The focus is the female self in general, striving to define and assert itself both in relation to and in opposition to the male self. “The ambivalence toward power in women emerges in *S*.” (Olster 2006).

The eponymous *S*. is Sarah Worth, the protagonist of the novel who is a housewife and is fed up of her mundane household life. She gets no emotional satisfaction in her married life. Her emotional vacuity leads her to go searching for it outside her house in the Ashram. In her letters and tapes, Sarah relates the circumstances that prompted her to leave domineering and philandering Charles and to seek communion with the Arhat and his band of *sannyasins* (pilgrims) in the ashram. About this kind of recourse into different cults and religion taken by people especially Americans, one of Updike’s characters Tom Marshfield says:

Is not even faithlessness, which once assaulted our piety with the vigor of a purer piety, now a desert beyond reclamation, a feeble and featureless wilderness where none but the most degenerate of demonic superstitions-astrology, augury, Hinduism-spring up in the hearts of the young, until they too soon cease to be young, and nurture in their blasted greenness not even these poor occult weeds? What has our technology that boasted its intention to reconstruct paradise, shown itself to be but an insidious spreader of poisons? Where has it landed us, as its triumph and emblem, but upon the most absolute desert of all, the lunar surface where not even lichen or a microbe lives? (Updike 2007)

Tom’s approach is that of a non-believer. He believes that God has his chosen ones and even if we do good we are not rewarded and the Lord’s elected ones in spite of doing the wrong are not reprimanded. Also he says that Americans try to find solace in Hinduism not because they believe in that or has high regard for it but as a fad of modernism or as a desperate and clueless attempt to find solace.

Sarah’s character is vividly delineated by Updike. In fact he seems almost to luxuriate in the persona of Sarah, exploring aspects of her past and personality that go far beyond the practical demands of the plot.

She rejects the bonds of societal institutions such as family and marriage that have not provided her with existential purpose. Despite having all the material comfort at home she feels there is a void in her life. Her husband Charles is a doctor for himself but Sarah’s identity always remains relational. She is a wife in relation to her husband. She is a mother in relation to her daughter Pearl. She says, “It’s so hard to know how totally we’re supposed to live for others and what we may do for ourselves” (Updike 1988). She tries to befit every role assigned to her; whether be it that of a daughter, a mother, or a wife.

Sarah as a daughter had puritan upbringing due to which she never tells anyone that she wanted to marry someone else and not Charles. Even now she thinks about her mother's well-being and therefore instructs her not to make any wrong decision.

Sarah as a wife gives up her studies for Charles. Sarah makes many sacrifices: sacrifice of her personal choice for marriage, sacrifice of her education for her husband's education etc. Sarah as a wife carries out all her duties well. In one of her letters she writes she has served as a party doll, bed warmer etc. But she is never given any credit by her husband. She realizes that she is just a trophy wife. Charles treats her just like any other piece of furniture in the house. As Sarah complains "To him I was another piece of furniture and unless I got coffee spilled on me or squeaked like a rusty door he never gave me a glance" (Updike 1988). She calls her marriage of twenty-two as "...twenty-two years of respectable bondage and socially sanctioned frivolity." (Updike 1988).

Sarah as a mother cares for her daughter Pearl and warns her not to commit the same mistake of leaving her studies in between for marriage as she had done in the past. She advises, "...you'll allow him to put a permanent cramp in the ongoing splendid adventure of your womanhood just as your father with the connivance of my parents did to me twenty-two years ago." (Updike 1988). Sarah finds that Pearl blames Sarah for leaving the house and not Charles and takes Charles as a caring father then she tells her;

You write of what a tender and attentive father yours was when the sad truth is he hardly bothered to kiss you goodnight most nights let alone read a bedtime story as you and he both seem to be fantasizing. Worse yet, even when you had a cold or mumps that time your face looked like a gourd, or that very odd fever up to 105.5 degrees that had me so worried about possible permanent brain damage, your father the big Boston doctor couldn't be bothered to doctor his own daughter but had me drag you over to the Beverly Hospital and sit there in the waiting with...the air so thick with germs you refused to breathe and turned bright blue. Precious Pearl, make no mistake: I nursed you...I dried your tears. I sang you songs when you were nervous at night, on and on until my own eyes could hardly stay open. (Updike 1988).

Sarah clearly informs Pearl that, "...raising you was not an equal partnership..." (Updike 1988).

Her bottling up for a long time makes her a simmering volcano. Finally she decides to quit and relinquishes her home and her husband and goes to the Arhat ashram. She says, "I'm making my leap into a new life." (Updike 1988). In the ashram also she takes care of everything

like accounts etc. She cannot move up in her social scale despite that she has organizational and managerial skills. “Men are sometimes bitter when they are cast aside.” (Bellis 2000). In the Ashram also, her identity is once again that of a second class citizen as a woman, as she and no woman character in the novel stands a chance to occupy the centre by dislodging bejeweled in diamonds Arhat who held the supreme position himself. She is relegated to the second class position. “. . . Arhat has this theory that women are stronger in selflessness than men, which may be a nice way of saying they’re subservient.” (Updike 1988). Every man whom she comes across was found to be after her body. A woman is either objectified or idealized which denies her both agency and voice.

The narrative resists identifying the masculine as simply active and creative and the feminine as passive and receptive. “What a woman has to realize is that as far as she’s concerned she’s number one, too, just like a man” (Updike 1988). It subverts the claims, according to which the subject of desire is male and the object of desire is female. “. . . being a woman...has its dukha but I wouldn’t be a man for anything . . .” (Updike 1988). Her search for identity in this patriarchal society is not fulfilled either at home or at the ashram. She tries to escape the net of the society and thus quits the ashram also at the end. She says, “I’ve decided to leave the ashram.” (Updike 1988). Thus, her vacuity with which she leaves her home continues to haunt her throughout her life.

Thus *S.* attempts to celebrate freedom of women to pursue their emotional ends, self and identity.

References

- Bellis, Jack. De. (2000). *The John Updike Encyclopedia*. London: Greenwood Press. Print.
- Erikson, Erik. H. (1968). *Identity, Youth and Crisis*. London: Faber and Faber. Print.
- Lawler, Stephanie. (2008). *Identity: Sociological Perspectives*. U.K: Polity. Print.
- Olster, Stacey. (2006). *The Cambridge Companion to John Updike*. England: Cambridge University Press. Print.
- Updike, John. (2007). *A Month of Sundays*. London: Penguin Books. Print.
- Updike, John. (1988). *S.* London: Andre’ Deutsch Ltd. Print.
- Updike, John. (1989). *Self Consciousness Memoirs*. New York: Alfred. A. Knopf. Print.

DISILLUSIONMENT, FRUSTRATION, PROTEST AND ANGER: *PALAVAR FINISH AND BLIND MOON*

Jenjekwa Vincent, BA, PGDE, M.ED.

Lecturer in English Department: Morgenster Teachers' College, Zimbabwe.

ABSTRACT: *The paper closely examines Chenjerai Hove's Palaver Finish and Blind Moon through the application of Historical Criticism. Blind Moon and Palaver Finish complement each other in presenting Hove's disillusionment, frustration, protest and anger at the level of betrayal displayed by political leaders of independent Zimbabwe. While Hove still shows his passion for historicity, his version of events in Zimbabwe around the year 2000 seems compromised by his apparent detest for ZANU (PF) which he accuses of taking the people's revolution off the rails through corruption and violence. In the process, Hove also confirms that he has dumped the revolutionary party and some ideals of the struggle for independence to sometimes pose as a propagandist for the newly formed Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) which was formed in 1999, oblivious of the emotive and yet unfinished business of the land question which had occasioned the often chaotic and yet necessary Land Reform Programme implemented by the ZANU (PF) government. This ideological somersault seems to be occasioned by the love lost between him and the ZANU (PF) government which he allegedly accuses of persecuting him into exile in 2003. The paper concludes by affirming that, indeed a writer as a social being cannot stay free from contamination by social circumstances of his time.*

Key Terms: *Historical Criticism, Disillusionment, Frustration, Protest and Anger.*

1.0 Introduction

Palaver Finish and *Blind Moon* are artistic offerings by Chenjerai Hove born out of the turbulent period of Zimbabwe's post-independence political chaos, specifically focusing on the period before parliamentary elections of 2000 right up to the bloody presidential plebiscite of 2002. Zimbabwe, during this period, smarted from political polarisation as a result of the entry of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) into the political arena to give credible opposition to ZANU-PF's two decades of uninterrupted rule.

Hove stands out as a critical and yet subjective voice in his depiction of this unfortunate historical phase of Zimbabwe's history. He is driven by the conviction that history as captured by historians is grossly inadequate because "a historian is one who thinks and analyses history" (Hove, 2002:57) as opposed to a writer who "feels history, be it colonial or post colonial" (Hove,

2002:57). This is a confirmation of a writer's subjectivity in the depiction of historical events. As will be seen in this article, Hove's vision of history around the year 2000 is, in most cases, infected by his emotions of frustration, dejection, revulsion and anger towards what he sees as a case of missed targets because of greed and selfishness by those wielding political power.

1.2 History as depicted in *Palaver Finish* and *Blind Moon*

Hove displays outright disillusionment, frustration, protest and anger towards the ZANU-PF leadership which he accuses of reversing the people's struggle and taking the masses of Zimbabwe to the "Dark Ages" (Hove, 2002:37) as he writes in "*The New Millenium in the Village*" in *Palaver Finish*. It is the anger, frustration, and disillusionment which seem to blur his vision of history, and resultantly, in some cases, reducing him to appear like an MDC propagandist. From the subtle criticism in his earlier works, Hove in *Palaver Finish* and *Blind Moon* names and attacks those he accuses of being behind the anarchy. He attacks political leadership for allegedly using violence and destruction to gain and retain political power as captured in the poem "trail" in *Blind Moon*:

on your way
to the house of power
you left footprints of blood
so many broken hearts
so many broken brains
so many broken bricks (Hove, 2003:3).

The endless trail of innocent blood shed on the altar of political expediency is what Hove attacks perhaps with the hope of reminding the political leadership of their commitment to the poor and vulnerable masses to ensure that there "are no corpses on the road to the ballot box" (Hove, 2002:81).

The volatile and strife-ridden historical context of *Palaver Finish* and *Blind Moon* arose out of what Hove believes to be a desperate attempt to hang on to power by the ZANU-PF, in spite of dwindling support from the people. In the short story, "*Africa's Abused Soldiers*" and throughout the collection of essays in *Palaver Finish*, Hove looks at how ZANU-PF, faced with waning popularity owing to the economic slump which was occasioned by the president's impulsive decisions to award gratuities to veterans of the liberation war in 1997, and the subsequent military incursion into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to fight on behalf of that country's government, led the country into unprecedented economic downturn which riled the majority of Zimbabweans especially the poor (Hill, 2003).

Historians like Chung (2006) allege that in 1997, the president of Zimbabwe had used his excessive constitutional powers to take unilateral decisions in the case of the gratuities for war

veterans and incursion by Zimbabwe into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) war, making use of an enabling provision in the constitution which had been crafted on partisan and euphoric basis by Eddison Zvobgo, the then legal secretary of ZANU (PF) (Chung, 2006). Slowly, the political leadership, according to Hove, consolidated its position as a dictatorship which unleashed widespread violence against its own people as portrayed in the poem “*to a dictator*” where Hove attacks the leadership for betrayal of the ideals of independence:

in your time
you took away
the flowers of our freedom.
in your time
the weak defended your weakness,
and the land cried;
the moon too
was dark
in your time (Hove, 2003:10).

The poem refers to the restive years from 1999 in Zimbabwe that saw Zimbabwe abandoning any principles of democracy and supplanting them with despotism because of autocratic and despotic leadership styles (Hove, 2006). Hove seems to have a conviction that the military had become a wing of ZANU-PF and, together with armed militia, used extreme violence against perceived opponents of the government. This is what “*Violence, Tear Gas, Handcuffs and Democracy*” reflects. The ensuing events in Zimbabwe after the formation of the MDC reflect anarchy in Hove’s view:

Zimbabwe is in a state of anarchy. The laws that our
parliament has made have been thrown into the rubbish bin.
The ruling party thinks anarchy can be cherished for political
expediency (Hove, 2002:45).

This state of lawlessness according to Hove (2002) was created as the ruling party sought to keep a hold on power. Unfortunately this led to a sad disruption of normal lives amongst the majority of Zimbabweans. The poem “*what are you doing?*” attacks the alleged terrorism of ZANU-PF militia which results in the creation of a wistful situation where

the joyful songs die
from lips that starve.
the birds that sing
are shot dead
and the militia determine

the red colour of the sky.
village kings kneel
to the murderers
in prayer to be spared another
death (Hove, 2003:30-31).

This, according to Hove, confirms the absence of the rule of law which he unfortunately blames entirely on the ruling party. Because the militia has overwhelming power and acts with impunity, it is seen as determining the “red colour of the sky” (Hove, 2002:30). “*Collapse of Law: Collapse of Conscience*”, shows revulsion towards the war veterans whose claims for gratuities, in Hove’s view showed lack of conscience yet the payment of gratuities to war veterans is not unique to Zimbabwe but is a world-wide practice. These soldiers to Hove lack the humility and sacrifice epitomised in Hove’s poem “*Death of a Soldier*” where the freedom fighter dies “Homeless, a glorious rover” to “cleanse the land he manured” (Hove in Kadhani and Zimunya, 1981:135). “*Death of a Soldier*” shows a freedom fighter who dies a humiliating and painful death and there is no doubt about his selflessness which contradicts the “charlatans” (Hove, 2003:57), who were led by Chenjerai Hunzvi (Rupiya in Raftopoulos and Savage, 2004) to terrorise the peasants and workers well after independence.

In short, Hove seems to be saying that all progressive Zimbabweans, made sacrifices: some with material resources and others making the supreme sacrifice of offering their own blood to see Zimbabwe free. He believes that those in towns would send money and food to the fighters in rural areas and they would provide safe havens for those hunted by the colonial regime. As for peasants, Hove argues in that,

In rural areas villagers were left without a chicken to their name. They sacrificed their all to feed and shelter ‘the children of the soil’. The rural businessmen, agricultural officials, nurses and teachers were often pillars of the struggle. And yet, today, they are rubbished by the so-called war veterans (Hove, 2002:7).

Hove, in this way, seems oblivious of the fact that the war veterans became restive as they saw those in positions of power using their positions to accumulate wealth. Raftopoulos and Savage (2004) believe that the absence of a proper rehabilitation programme for the war veterans was likely to manifest itself in the way it did.

Chenjerai Hove’s prose and poetry during the turbulence of the turn of the new millennium in Zimbabwe also seeks to paint a situation where the ruling party seems to use money to gain political mileage as summarised in the poem “*kokoriko*” in *Blind Moon* where Hove makes a

subtle reference to ZANU-PF through reference to the party's symbol of the cock which makes a "Kokoriko" sound when cockerelling. Unfortunately, from the metaphorical allusion, the party has been mortgaged to those with mercenary agendas, hence,

the village dies.
a man with money came,
bought the cockerel-
the only one left in the village.

kokoriko is gone-
like the village-
on the ticket of money
(Hove, 2002:38).

This might be alluding to the abandonment of socialist policies in favour of capitalist ones by the ZANU (PF) government.

The use of violence by political leaders is also, according to Hove, a remnant and legacy of the colonial regime. Because Smith, the last colonial prime minister of Rhodesia, used brutality and prioritised the acquisition of military hardware, the new government seems to have consciously or unconsciously inherited this trait. In the essay "*Africa: Reality and Imagination*", Hove argues that

we inherited violence, prisons, handcuffs and guns from
the West after they had destroyed our own institutions.
Our post-colonial leaders came to power with instruments
of repression firmly established (Hove, 2002:33).

It is this violence which has created numerous exiles in the form of Zimbabwean exiles in foreign countries (Hove, 2002). Hove sees violence as largely behind forced migration. In his autobiographical reflections in "*Shades of Power: Colonial and Post-Colonial Experiences of a writer*", he makes it clear that the displacement and violence suffered under colonial rule is now happening again, but sadly under black rule.

Palaver Finish, further observes that the soldiers in Zimbabwe during the restive years of bickering and conflict with the newly formed Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), became the primary violators of law and order by breaking into public places like bars to beat up revelling members of the public before committing outright theft of the money from the cashiers. The soldiers, "raid every day, armed with guns and sticks, beating up everyone, asking them why they voted for the opposition" (Hove, 2002:2). The extent of the violence makes Hove in the

poem “*Blind Moon*” present nature as indifferent and helpless in the face of this bloodshed. The moon is a

blind moon,
doomed to see
all these corpses.

blind moon
so blind
doomed to see
all these shadows
of political corpses.

blind moon,
it is better to remain blind (Hove, 2003:32).

Hove is showing that nature is blind to the gross violations of the rights especially when most political violence happens at night when the moon shines. This indifference of nature is conveyed again in Hove’s other poem, “*sunk*” where he moans and laments what has happened to the once promising nation:

our moon was sunk
our sun was sunk
both red with planetary tears,
of blood from our own veins

help us cry for our moon
help us cry for our sun
help us demand our smiles back (Hove, 2003:35).

The moon and the sun are also symbolic of the movement of time. By referring to sinking of the sun and the moon, Hove depicts how the time for the toiling citizens was wasted on unproductive agendas.

Hove also believes that alongside physical violence, language is manipulated negatively to do a lot of harm to government enemies. Use of violent language by politicians and the media in general engenders a culture of violence and can encourage civil strife. This is so because, as Ngugi (1981) rightly observes, language conveys culture, and vice versa. In “*Collapse of Law: Collapse of Conscience*”, Chenjerai Hove argues that

corruption begins with the corruption of language. If a senior politician uses vulgar language in public, that is the beginning of corruption... Once language degenerates into a vehicle for untruth, people are engulfed in a form of corruption (Hove, 2002:5).

Through satiric humour in the short story “*Palaver Finish*” Hove presents his frustration with this corruption of language which manifests itself sometimes in “voluble yet meaningless deliberations” (Muponde and Primorac, 2005:57). The apparently ordinary and uneducated man has realised the vanity of endless ‘palaver’ or talk and he would not speak any more:

A silent foolish man is a good man. A palaver foolish man is a palaver dangerous man. A silent politician without palaver is a wise man. Politician with too much palaver is dangerous man (Hove, 2002:26).

This is a clear indictment of the political leaders who expend effort on talk and nothing else.

This deceitful conduct of the political leadership leads to violence to gain power at whatever cost. This is why in the poem “*trail*” the leaders’ ascendancy to power is marked with disregard for the wishes of many people because

on your way
to the house of power
you refused to listen
to the tunes of birds:
the birds of your conscience (Hove, 2003:8).

If only the political leaders would have ‘two ears and one mouth’, to underscore the need for listening to advice and reduced unnecessary rhetoric, as advised in the folktale “*Two Ears One Mouth*”, they would avoid a miserable end to their political lives. Though rooted in orature, “*Two Ears One Mouth*” is undoubtedly dealing with the contemporary African situation in general and the Zimbabwean situation in particular because the parallels to the fictional characters are all too clear to be misunderstood.

Closely related to the abusive use of language is the issue of censorship. Censorship is the withdrawal or modification of information which is supposed to pass on to the public domain in order to create certain impressions which favour the interests of those in power (Hove, 2002). In “*Culture and Censorship*”, Hove believes that power is an instrument of censorship. Perhaps Hove is informed by legislation passed after 2000 as the ruling party restructured state structures

to make them immune to the incessant political pressures. Two pieces of legislation, Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) were passed in 2002 allegedly “to restrict the activities of the opposition and civic forces in the public sphere and to control the independent press” (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009:214).

Hove sees the need to control information by the state as absurd, reflecting ZANU-PF’s hatred of rural teachers and rural buses as well as the private media. In “*Rural Teachers, Rural Buses and Violent ZANU (PF)*”, Hove looks at the political leadership’s desperate bid to block ideas from flowing into areas it regarded as uncorrupted. Rural teachers, in Hove’s view, were harassed and searched in case they carried the ‘subversive’ *Daily News*, an independent newspaper which the powers that be believed to be telling lies to discredit it. In “*The Fear of Ideas*”, Hove concludes by saying, “At worst, a dictatorship will burn books and bomb printing press” (Hove, 2002:64) in reference to the bombing of the *Daily News* printing press in 2001 by suspected ZANU-PF functionaries (Hill, 2003).

Hove’s historical writing could therefore be seen as an attempt to recover the lost conscience, “the conscience of bones, blood and footsteps” (Hove, 1988:5). He has deep reverence for Nelson Mandela, the first black South African president whose selflessness saw him spending twenty six years under incarceration by the South African apartheid regime. Indeed, Mandela deserves such recognition because his reign was marked by peace, reconciliation and tolerance as well as voluntary exit from office. Hove glorifies him in the poem “*mandela*” by saying that Mandela gave

flowers of the heart
just as others gave bullets
and tears for their inheritance (Hove,2003:51).

Unlike Mandela, most African leaders lack proper moral standing. To Hove, the death of morality on the part of leaders and thinkers inevitably leads to a death of conscience. Hove seems to have the conviction that most African leaders have failed to live up to the challenges of leadership and in the process leave an indelible legacy of violence and misgovernance.

There is no doubt that by keeping track of dates and content of particular significant developments in Zimbabwe and in Africa in general, Hove’s writings become clearly historical. *Palaver Finish* and *Blind Moon* portray Zimbabwe’s historical realities. Their depiction of certain events and perspectives serves, however, to confirm that history cannot escape the trappings of subjectivity. The writer being an emotional being is likely to ignore objectivity even where it stubbornly exists.

The depiction of the political terrain by Chenjerai Hove where violence seems to be perpetrated entirely by ZANU-PF is ostensibly unbalanced in the case that when the MDC was formed in 1999, the leaders advocated *jambanja*, which is *Shona* slang for violence (Hill, 2003). In fact, the roots of the MDC lie in the violent mass stay-aways which were led by the ZCTU which had as its president and secretary general then, Gibson Sibanda and Morgan Tsvangirai respectively who then took leadership of the MDC upon its formation. Even the MDC party symbol of an open palm was construed to be a sign of a slap *mbama* in *Shona*. As ZANU-PF chanted its, *Pamberi ne ZANU-PF, Pasi neMDC (forward with ZANU-PF, Down with MDC)* the MDC chanted, *Chinja maitiro (change your ways)* and *Mugabe Mudenga, roverai pasi, bwaaa! (lift Mugabe high up and then crush him down)*. Violence was incited perpetrated by both sides. Later in 2005, The MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai, openly declares at a rally that if President Mugabe did not leave power voluntarily, he would be removed violently. To blame violence entirely on the ZANU-PF government might be an imprecise observation. What ZANU-PF government could be guilty of is the use of disproportionate state force against the MDC.

The labour movement also has a hand in facilitating the economic decline in the late 1990s. As observed by Raftopoulos in Raftopoulos and Mlambo (2009:203)

By the end of 1997 some one hundred job actions had taken place, and in January 1998 food riots, in response to the steep rise in the cost of mealie-meal, erupted in the capital city and smaller towns such as Beitbridge, Chegutu and Chinhoyi.

The makes it clear that the labour movement is an accomplice in the economic decline through its engagement in economically destructive mass stay-aways and riots. Quantifying the one hundred job actions monetarily would reflect a significant knock on the national economy. What is even of serious concern is that the stay-aways themselves resulted in anarchy with widespread looting of private properties which the organisers of the stay aways claimed they represented. Indeed, the state can be accused of brutality but the government had a constitutional right to maintain law and order.

In addition to the stay-aways, foreign prescriptions to economic challenges from organisations like the IMF also had the net effect of alienating ZANU (PF) from its support base by removing encouraging removal of subsidies in areas like health and education (Chung, 2006). This is sadly not depicted by Hove in *Palaver Finish* and *Blind Moon*. Hove's writings by ignoring these complexities of the Zimbabwe historical landscape deliberately miss crucial key points in Zimbabwe's post independence crisis.

The conception of the land question Hove shows in works like *Bones* and *Red Hills of Home* is not sustained in *Palaver Finish* and *Blind Moon*. The Lancaster House constitution of 1979

which brought Zimbabwe's independence fell short of addressing the land question once and for all because "it protected property rights for 10 years, and dictated that 'European' land be acquired under a 'willing buyer, willing seller' agreement" (Alexander, 2006:105). This was a clear legalisation of the status quo because land transfer would be on the basis of full compensation (Wolmer, 2007). This effectively meant that at independence the land question was not addressed.

As land hungry ordinary indigenous Zimbabweans and former fighters agitated for land, the ZANU-PF government turned its attention to this unfinished business. In any case, the land occupations of 2000 and beyond were not the first such protests since independence. In the 1980s there were a number of occupations of land which, abandoned by its owners, was acquired by the government and transferred to the occupiers and in the 1990s, there were further occupations owing to the slow pace by the state in the land reform programme (Moyo, 2001). President Mugabe himself made an eloquent declaration that land was at the core of the struggles of Zimbabweans from the First Chimurenga up to the current struggles of the turn of the new millennium:

We knew and still know that land was the prime goal for King Lobengula as he fought the British encroachment in 1893; we knew and still know that land was the principal grievance for our heroes of the First Chimurenga, led by Nehanda and Kaguvi. We knew and still know it to be the fundamental premise of the Second Chimurenga and thus a principal definer of the succeeding new Nation and State of Zimbabwe. Indeed, we know it to be the core issue and imperative of the Third Chimurenga which you and me are fighting, and for which we continue to make such enormous sacrifices (Mugabe, 2001:92-93).

Against such a background, Hove's silence about the other side serves to show his partisan stance, a stance which is a far cry from his stance in his earlier works like *Bones* and *Red Hills of Home* which seem to be fairly balanced in their criticism of government.

It is unfortunate that Hove does not seem to see the value of the Agrarian Reform Programme which he dismisses as an act of political opportunism. Maybe it is because of his lack of interest in farming which made him turn down an offer of a farm from the government. Hove confesses his dislike for farming in an interview with Primorac (2007). This could be so because Hove wrote the two books in exile as a guest of the French in *Blind Moon* and the Norwegians.

One is left wondering what has infected and affected Hove's mind to the point of turning his back to his own heritage. Perhaps his stay in exile made him forget that land remains an invaluable legacy whether one works it like Okonkwo or is averse to land like Unoka (Achebe, 1959). Perhaps Hove could have quarrelled with the execution of the land reform, which sought to reclaim land from "Manyepo" (Hove, 1988) to its rightful owners.

Hove seems to be grossly intolerant in his criticism of the ZANU (PF) government. Whether ZANU-PF would emerge with spin-offs from land reform in the form of election votes would be something else. What is clear is that *Palaver Finish* and *Blind Moon* seem to have forgotten totally the pain and suffering inflicted on blacks by whites during the colonial period. It appears that Hove has abandoned the thinking he shows in his writings soon after independence where he felt that the developed countries should not continue to play big brother to Africa because "the land is here" (Hove: 1985:35). For Hove to reduce the whole conflict to black versus black is indicative of his partisan position.

One other glaring omission Hove makes is to show the real genetic make-up of the MDC. MDC was a product of strange 'bedfellows': employers and employees, students and peasants. There was a general thinking that ZANU-PF's removal from power would result in dramatic change of fortune to all classes of people (Hill, 2003). The truth as Ngugi (1986) observes is that at independence the economies of the newly independent states were secured in the hands of whites who owned the means of production and therefore wanted perpetuation of the status quo. The employers who joined hands with MDC were a manifestation of foreign capital, stolen from Africa through the likes of "Manyepo" in *Bones*. To a revolutionary party like ZANU-PF, a situation where white farmers would write cheques and give the MDC leaders openly was the height of political naivety and it invited an appropriate response for ZANU-PF. Unfortunately Hove ignores it.

Hove does not seem to appreciate that anything positive can be and has been done right by the government in the years of conflict with the MDC. In a way, he is caught up in the polarisation and feels more like an MDC party activist who is under instruction to offer negative criticism of ZANU-PF at every turn. His view of history, like all historical accounts, is seriously contaminated with subjectivity. For the construction of a true consciousness, there is need for a balanced depiction of reality failing which literature becomes a divisive and a misinforming tool. Unfortunately and to a very large extent, *Palaver Finish* and *Blind Moon* seem to terribly fail the objectivity test. Despite this apparent tendency to be one sided in his depiction of historical situations, one consistent trait of his writings still remains: his sensitivity to history, especially the history of the toiling masses of Zimbabwe who are robbed of their productive potential owing to betrayal by their political leadership.

Ultimately *Palaver Finish* and *Blind Moon* appear to be painting a bleak picture where “*kokoriko*” (Hove, 2003) is gone yet as of now, a good number of former peasants; the likes of Marita in *Bones* (Hove, 1988) are proud owners of land. Hove’s vision can perhaps be understood against the background of serious polarisation which engulfed Zimbabwe from 1999 onwards. As a mortal being, he had to make a choice, a choice which unfortunately makes him partisan. Hove’s choice to write the way he does can also be understood from the perspective that

The writer as a human being is himself a product of history, of time and place. As a member of society, he belongs to a certain class and he is inevitably a participant in the class struggle of his time (Ngugi, 1981:72).

Though the situation looks grim, Hove’s writings are not completely pessimistic. There is always a glimmer of hope. This is why in “*Streams of Power*” Hove declares his hope for Zimbabwe through the Shona proverb that “*chinobhururuka chinomhara* (that which flies will eventually perch)” (Hove, 2002:60) with reference to political leaders he thinks will eventually have their wings of power clipped. The essay “*Violence of Gokwe*” affirms the optimism by saying “you cannot trim a bird’s wings forever. One day it will fly, and fly high” (Hove, 2002:74). It remains unclear though whether Hove hopes for restoration of land to blacks or to whites.

1.3 Conclusion

While *Palaver Finish* and *Blind Moon* can be seen as a perpetuation of Hove’s historical literature which he started just before Zimbabwe’s independence from colonial rule, the dynamics of the Zimbabwean society around the year 2000 have the net effect of blurring his vision of events in Zimbabwe making his writing lack in critical depiction of perennial historical challenges like the land issue in Zimbabwe. It is uncontested that Zimbabwe suffered economic meltdown after about two decades of independence and that violence and corruption perforated Zimbabwe’s social and political fabric during the same period, but the root cause cannot and should never be ZANU (PF) alone. There is need to properly put the historical developments which lead to the turbulence of the post 2000 period in Zimbabwe into proper perspective, appreciating the fact that independence brought political and not economic freedom as well as interrogating closely the role of organisations like The International Monetary Fund (IMF) with their foreign prescriptions to economic challenges of African countries like Zimbabwe.

REFERENCES

- Achebe, C. (1959). *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann Educational Publishers.
Alexander, J (2006). *The Unsettled Land*. Harare: Weaver Press
Chung, F. (2006). *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga*. Harare: Weaver Press.

- Hove, C. (2003). *Blind Moon*. Harare: Weaver Press.
- Hove, C. (1988). *Bones*, Harare: Baobab Books.
- Hove, C. (2002). *Palaver Finish*. London: Weaver Press.
- Hove, C. (1986). *Red Hills of Home*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Kadhani, M. and Zimunya, M. B. (eds.) (1981). *And Now the Poets Speak*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Moyo, S. (2001). 'The land occupation movement and democratisation in Zimbabwe: Contradictions of neoliberalism', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 30 (2), p321.
- Mugabe, R.G. (2001). *Inside the Third Chimurenga*. Harare: Government of Zimbabwe.
- Muponde, R. and Primorac, R. (2005). *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture*. London: Weaver Press.
- Primorac, R. (2007). *Dictatorships are Transient: Chenjerai Hove Interview*. Retrieved from <http://www.weaverpresszimbabwe.com/interviews/239-interview-chenjerai-hove-by-ranka-primorac-.html> (Accessed 11/08/12).
- Primorac, R. (2007). *Chenjerai Hove*. Retrieved from <http://www.icorn.org/articles.php?var=47> (Accessed 22/08/12).
- Raftopoulos, B. and Mlambo, A. (eds.) (2009). *Becoming Zimbabwe*. Harare: Weaver Press.
- Raftopoulos, B. and Savage, T. (eds.) (2004). *Zimbabwe: Injustice and Political Reconciliation*. Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation.
- WaThiong'o, N. (1981). *Writers in Politics*. London: Heinemann.
- WaThiong'o, N. (1986). *Writing Against Neocolonialism*. Middlesex: The Red Sea Press.
- Wolmer, W. (2007). *From Wilderness Vision to Farm Invasions*. Oxford: James Currey.

Fragmentation to Integration in Postmodern Novels of Susan Howatch

Kala Chandrasekaran, M.A. M.Phil., PGCTE

Assistant Professor of English
Faculty of Engineering
Avinashilingam University
Coimbatore 641 108

Abstract: *The Postmodern condition has given rise to increased instances of paranoia, schizophrenia, fragmentation and disassociative personality disorders. Susan Howatch's St. Benet's Trilogy viz. The Wonder Worker, the High Flyer and The Heart Breaker highlight how childhood trauma and parental apathy could cause personality disorders in individuals. Focussing one's mind on spirituality and anchoring oneself in healing effects of other-centredness can help one cope with the demands and challenges of the postmodern period. Lasting integration can be achieved if we connect with our authentic selves. Making peace with ourselves will only help us to obtain peace with the outer world.*

Key words: *fissures, trauma, authentic self, integration, forgiveness*

"The basis of healing is forgiveness – forgiving the person responsible for the hurts..."
Rev. Richard Holloway

Introduction

The attributes of postmodern works are varied and in some cases contradictory. The changing and declining world is the recurrent theme in postmodern novels. Leading writers like John Cage and Kelly Link's works reflect fragmentation of the postmodern world through the content, style and structure of their pieces, be it music or texts. The characters in postmodern novels suffer from fractured personalities and their lives are full of contradictions but some novels do not mirror this fragmentation in their narrative style and content. The novelists themselves might be undergoing periods of uncertainty and division in their lives. But this entropy in their lives need not necessarily be reflected in their works. In some cases the works are chaotic and disorderly but the creators of such pieces are very secure and stable in their private lives.

Under what category does Susan Howatch fall? She has been publishing her novels since 1965 and for the last 47 years she has polished her craft to a high lustre. Her early novels, mostly gothic romances, mysteries do reflect the youthful vibrancy of a budding novelist but as she matures, she is like an old wine – smooth, mellow with a sharp caustic tinge now and then. Howatch's 1970's novels Penmarric, Cashelmara, The Sins of Fathers demonstrate the growing maturity of the novelist. Howatch reaches the summit of story-telling in The Wheel of Fortune

where she marries the excellence of multiple narration with the intricate plot of the saga of a family torn by guilt, remorse and redemption.

While writing these family sagas, Howatch herself was going through a divorce, uprooting herself and her small daughter from the United States of America to England. (Meyers1998) Howatch's ecclesiastical novel series written in the eighties explore the need for an anchor in the rudderless lives of postmodern human beings.

Is it necessary for a writer to go through all the courses in the University of Life before she can become a mature writer? Is it not possible for a creative artist to explore and express the varieties of emotions without experiencing them in real life?

Do the modernist and postmodernist periods hold the right to fragmentation and fractured personalities? Is it the prerogative of the modern and postmodern period alone? Did the earlier periods not have souls who were tortured and crippled? Before Freud talked of the convolutions of a human mind, did human beings not suffer from mental illness or disorders? I believe they did, but they were not aware of the psychological implications of it. Previously they were known as being possessed by devil or by evil spirits. Only the terms used to describe them were different as knowledge of the human mind and its significant role in human lives were not known.

Memory: Human Beings Vs Animals

The main distinguishing feature between human beings and beasts is the ability to remember. As the animals live in the present, they have a life of simple happiness. On the other hand the sixth-sensed humans have to live with the trauma of the past and the wishes and aspirations of the future. The efficient memory of individuals causes neurotic suffering to them. Neurotic disorders are the result of repressed wishes and unconscious memories. If the innate ability to integrate contradictory aspects and tendencies into a coherent whole is missing, then the character splits into different personalities. This is the safety valve used by the brain to shut out unwanted and undesirable memories. Such a life can lead to a chronic feeling of inner loneliness and emptiness. Affected people live in an unreal, illusionary world compartmentalizing unwanted trauma of earlier memories. In cognitive psychology it is known as 'context dependence of memory'. (Anderson, J. R. 1983)

Fragmentation - Definition

According to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2002) fragmentation can be defined as 1.'Separated into parts' 2. 'Incomplete'. What could cause this fragmentation in personalities? The root cause could be a traumatic past with lack of parental empathy and maltreatment or if one is brought up in a dysfunctional family by a strict authoritarian figure.

The postmodern society itself is fragmented and episodic in nature – the result of breakdown of family and community structure – pluralistic, mobile society where bonds between people are ephemeral; there are many adults without a sense of security in relationships. There are no preformed identity patterns or common worldviews. Human lives are far more random and lacking in cohesion. People with fragile egos and borderline dynamics are affected most as they need ideological and interpersonal stability. If there is no firm base, these individuals affect false selves.

People suffer from fractured selves and go through the tribulations of life before they identify their true selves and find harmony. They understand that life is not a Utopian dream but it could be a heterotopian world where one could live with countless worldviews but follow one's own heart.

The Postmodern individual is not a single dimensional figure with a single taste and a single idea and value but he is multivalent, multi-tasking with many facets to him. Multiple personalities are vying with each other in him.

Postmodern metaphor and cinematic Detachment

Jean Baudrillard in his *America* (1988) associates postmodern America's national derealization with film. Baudrillard states that "it is not the least of America's charms that even outside the movie theatres the whole country is cinematic. The desert you pass is like the set of a western, the city a screen of signs and formulas" (Constable 2004, pg. 44)"It is this sense of reality that has been completely pervaded by cinema, resulting in the apprehension of reality as film which is one of the key metaphors of the postmodern." (Constable 2004 pg.44)

Frederic Jameson in *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, says the "sense of being condemned to the perpetual present [as being] emblematic of the postmodern condition" (2005 pg. 48)

Some of the postmodern individuals live in an illusory world far away from the world of reality. They delude themselves thinking that the world they live in is constant. They live in the surface without depth. This world of simulacra and hyperreality (Baudrillard 1994) appears so real that their personalities are fractured. The inferno of emotions leads to poetics of depersonalisation and alterity. There is a hellish sense of split self subject to existential insecurity in them. The subjects who have this ailment suffer from a disconnect not only from the exterior world but also from itself. Their mind becomes a wasteland with a heightened trepidation with regard to identity.

Postmodernists may call 'identity' itself as a social and cultural construct. They are threatened by 'dilemmas of the self'. (Giddens, 1991) Then what happens to this shattered sense of identity when the human subject becomes depersonalised or estranged from its sense of self?

Individuals become mere spectators of their own lives during moments of heightened stress. They unconsciously practice what T S Eliot refers to as 'Objective Correlative', (Eliot 1920) an estrangement from their selves while experiencing intolerable tragic pains in life. Perhaps this distancing from the self is required for the subject to bear this irreparable loss and to survive their tortured lives. As Simeon and Abugel quote for these depersonalized selves Milton's words 'The mind is in its own place', 'ring true with profound insight.'(2006 pg.5)

A diagnostic reading of Susan Howatch's trilogy reveals a close relationship between postmodern cultural and critical theory with the psychiatric disorder, emotional vacuity and spiritual bankruptcy of the characters.

The Wonder Worker

In the first novel of the trilogy, *The Wonder Worker*, Alice Fletcher and Francie start with disintegrated personalities. Alice is obese using food as an anesthetic to escape from the self-hatred she suffers from. Alice Fletcher brought up by her rational aunt, is shy, bored and when she finds herself during lunch hour in St.Benet's Healing Centre, hardly foresees she would be drawn into the vortex of the mysterious, irrational world of Healing. The inhabitants of the Healing Centre are themselves waging a constant moral battle while they try to help others survive the maelstrom of modern life.

Francie is in an imaginary world of her own, disillusioned with her husband's frequent travels on business and her two sons leaving the nest empty. She is faced with midlife crisis looking for some excitement. Francie is exorcised by Nicholas Darrow to drive out the evil spirits residing in her. Alice Fletcher's soothing presence, acts as a balm on disturbed souls. She is healed of her urge to eat while she heals the obstinacy and cynicism of Father Lewis. She also heals the arrogance in Nick Darrow.

There are three people who are on the edge of breakdown in *The Wonder Worker*. They are Nicholas Darrow, when he was assaulted by self-realization, Francie under the euphoria of infatuation with Darrow and Stacy who committed suicide when he was accosted by Nicholas' wife.

Nicholas Darrow in his desire to 'fix things' and to anaesthetize himself from facing the collapse of his marriage to Rosalind, calls Francie to come to Westminster Abbey for evening service so that he can convince her that her infatuation with Darrow was futile as he very much wanted to remain married to his wife. Darrow felt himself omnipotent ready to handle any problems when he himself was wrought with obsession. As Rosalind describes Darrow is 'a power-junkie hooked on deliverance, crisis-addict mainlining on salvation.' (WW pg.233) When Francie arrived he immediately 'was sure she wasn't unbalanced merely in the area of her life which related to me. The euphoria made me start thinking again of manic-depressive psychosis. Or if

she was completely out of touch with reality, maybe I was seeing some form of paranoid schizophrenia' (WW pg 399)

Francie told Nicholas that Rosalind had confessed to her how Nicholas had to hypnotize her to get 'some decent sex.' Nicholas realized his marriage had collapsed not because of his wife's adultery or due to the 'mud-slinging rows' but his wife had told this 'deeply disturbed woman' details which should have been revealed only to a professional. This was the final nail in the coffin of their marriage. When he saw 'how shallow she (Rosalind) was, how unreliable, how utterly lacking in integrity', it was like looking into a mirror. It appeared strange that he derived security from a woman 'who could offer no security at all.' Darrow' had been obsessed with an image____how typical of the 1980s preoccupation with "style"!(WW pg 399)

When he looked at Francie, 'in Francie's shining eyes I finally saw my own insanity reflected.' (WW pg.410) This was a moment of revelation.

'The earthquake roared again, the ground breaking open with a volley of whiplash cracks, and at my feet I saw the abyss open up to reveal the unspeakable, indescribable darkness churning below.' (WW pg.404) At last he had seen the 'unreasonable demands, the violent pursuit, the mental and physical oppression' he had inflicted on his wife. Nicholas had been doing what he had been sermonizing against! All along Nicholas was self-centred, running away from the duties of a husband and a father while serving society under the guise of a priest.

Lewis warns Alice about not being blinded by illusions of Nicholas' love 'Nicholas is so destabilised at present that he's taken to throwing common sense to the winds.'(WW pg.524)

Stacy too was dejected and wanted to lash out at the world by his terrible 'act of rejection' (WW pg.467) - suicide. Stacy's basic problems were 'the homesickness, the alienation, the concern about his job, the worry that he might be letting Nicholas down, the difficulty about finding a steady girlfriend.' (WW pg.467) 'He was just hung up and horribly depressed' (WW pg.468)

Rejection by both the parents in infancy in Alice Fletcher's case, intellectual and spiritual arrogance of Nicholas Darrow and Stacy's obsession with his sisters were the determinants for their fragmentation.

The High Flyer

In High Flyer, Carter Graham has a life plan according to which she has to have an enviable job, an apartment in a high-rise and she should marry a handsome, financial bigwig all before she is thirty five! She achieves all this but soon her dream marriage turns into a nightmare with her husband being associated with Elizabeth Mayfield. The sinister Mayfield has a malign influence on people who cross her path. When Carter comes in direct contact with Elizabeth Mayfield, she experiences the hell of a stranger invading her psyche, and confesses to Eric Tucker 'My mind

has been hacked.' Mayfield has implanted the virus in Carter's mind that she would throw herself down from her 34th floor balcony. (HF pg.197)

What kind of hold does she have on her husband Kim? Carter realizes Kim is not only lying about his past but about his present as well and she has to contend with a web of deceit, corruption and lies. Carter is in a labyrinth of uncertainty when Betz is economical with truth. How much of what Kim says is true? How dependent is he on Mrs. Mayfield?

Kim remains a fragmented personality with Mayfield wielding too sinister an influence on him and he is not able to find his true personality. He is doomed by disintegration to self-destruction. Kim Betz lives a lie. His personality has fissures which are smoothed over most of the times but the fissures are more pronounced other times. Then the split personality takes over. When he feels whole, fully integrated, he is like a dolphin. When his personality is in discord, he is like a shark.

When he commits suicide, Carter has to unravel the answers herself. She comes close to collapse, nervous breakdown trying to find the reasons. She is enfolded in a blanket of unconditional love, understanding and patience by the St. Benet's team. She also understands that reason and logic cannot answer her queries and that some things are beyond explanation.

"The difference between a crime of evil and a crime of illness is the difference between a sin and a symptom." (Gladwell, 2010) So was Kim evil or just suffering from illness? Carter finds her right mate in Eric Tucker and also learns that she has been punishing herself with a tough life just to pay back her parents. She turns her back on her high flying career and finds satisfaction and a rewarding life fundraising for the Healing Centre. Kim remains a benign presence in her mind and an important part of her past.

The Heartbreaker

We have Gavin Blake a classic example of a person whose personality is fragmented. He is tortured by low self esteem and crippled by self-doubts that he thinks Elizabeth Mayfield is the only woman who loves him and believes in him. When she picks him up from the gutters and makes him a successful 'leisure worker' catering to London's business bigwigs, he thinks he is truly doing a social service supplying to the needs of the gay. He provides essential relaxation to stressed out city guys and they pay him megabucks for the service. He is an upmarket leisure worker. Elizabeth Mayfield convinces Gavin Blake who is a heterosexual that there is plenty of money, power and panache in being a gay prostitute. Gavin Blake ran away from home after his brother Hugo died because he thought that his parents wished it was him who had died instead of Hugo who was gregarious, good in sports, charming and social. He felt he was a waste, useless and not wanted by anybody. He creates a false self to block off the pains of childhood. He was not good at escort work as he could not bear to see women being pathetic. But while servicing men he did not consider them as persons but loads of meat or flesh. He does not realize that

many men fall for him, making fools of themselves and that he breaks hearts and damages lives. Gavin Blake wantonly courts this unreal life to anesthetize his true pains. He uses opera to anesthetize his mind. "Isn't it weird the tricks your mind can play when you're stressed almost out of your skull?" (HB p.282)

To relieve the unbearable stress Gavin Blake resorts to self-inflicted injuries. (HB pg.352) There is no true emotional interaction between him and his clients. Blake is in deep denial about his life of a prostitute. His clients are just flesh to be satisfied for money. That is why he gives each one of his clients a nick name. (eg. Chicky Dicky, Mr.Moneybags, Iowa Jerry and Mr.Charisma). Even though the profession he has chosen to make megabucks involves constant physical contact, there is no real emotional connect. The only person who penetrates this barrier is Richard Slaney who shows Blake a window to another world which he inhabited earlier.

It is ironical that while living the life of a prostitute like Blake does not get genuine touch - care - share contacts. Gavin becomes a social recluse when he has a nervous breakdown. Gavin's fragile self-esteem is exploited by his manager Elizabeth Mayfield and she uses him for enhancing her bank balance in addition to satisfying her desire for the dominatrix game. Elizabeth Mayfield gets her high through wielding power. She has psychic powers but she uses them for wrong purposes, to dominate other people. Blake already low on self-esteem and riddled with self-doubts, falls a victim in her hands. He is a mere pawn in the checkerboard of a dominatrix game she plays with Asherton. He is just an animal with no thoughts or ideas of his own. His job is to do as he is told. After an encounter with Asherton he says, "I'm left feeling shit-scared and subhuman, like a circus animal who's messed up a trick in the ring and can think of nothing but the trainer with the whip." (HB pg.64)

He recalls that the only time he felt 'so unified, so all-of-a-piece' (HB pg.19) was when he went sailing with Richard down the Solent towards the Needles. He captures the lost paradise of his childhood past. A chance connect with Carta Graham makes him long to establish contact with his lost world. They are destined for a long, profound spiritual journey which heals both of them. Gavin Blake takes a long time to come out of his nervous breakdown and to come to terms with his dubious past. The St.Benet's team treats him with respect and dignity and helps him become his true self.

Establishing Emotional Connect

The postmodern age is ephemeral. The books, films, artifacts and architecture are fragmented. As literature is the mirror of life, the people of the postmodern age are also full of conflicts and contradictions. The scourge of alienation, isolation and disconnectedness in society is far bigger during the late 20th and early 21st century. When posed with life's real challenges like pain, loss, heartbreak, insecurity, anger, the youngster's minds are not equipped to deal with it. Emotional buffers are shrinking and there is no intellectual sharing of vulnerabilities. Touch, tears and

feelings are ways of sharing emotional contact time and as this is in short supply, emotional energy of the youth gets manifested and released in violence. Their troubled minds close their doors against anything positive.

Howatch with her wonderful grasp of the human psyche writes of the spiritual and moral struggles of her characters with psychological sophistication. Her novels reiterate the words of Dalai Lama "We can never obtain peace in the outer world until we make peace with ourselves." (TOI, pg.10) Immersing oneself in spirituality would lead to the road to integration.

Conclusion

Howatch presents the modern day illnesses of depression, obesity, anorexia, nervous breakdown suffered by her characters and how Christianity and the Church help them to integrate their personalities. How's the Church relevant to the postmodern times and the contemporary reader? Corrosion of Character can be avoided if one acknowledges ones responsibilities and obligations, roots oneself in spirituality.

People who have been physically and mentally abused have warped relationships. Howatch herself went through a period of 'trying to hold my divided self together'. (Myers 1998) Hence Howatch succeeds in peopling her novels with characters who have many personalities uncomfortably sharing one hapless body. The team in St.Benet's help the divided selves to find their authentic selves.

The St.Benet's team has a solution for integration from fragmentation. The key determinant is forgiving those who cause the damage. The quality of mercy can be achieved by 'centring the mind in times of prayer.' Or in psychological jargon it is 'No urge to self-destruct can withstand the power of the drive to integration when the drive is properly channeled.' (HF pg.251)

References:

Anderson, J. R. (1983). A Spreading Activation Theory of Memory. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 22, 261–295.

Baudrillard, Jean (1994) *Simulacra*. The University of Michigan Press

Constable, Catherine (2008) *Adapting Philosophy: Jean Baudrillard and "The Matrix Trilogy"* [Paperback] Manchester University Press, pg.44

Dalai Lama Times of India dated 14.1.2013 pg. 10

Eliot, T.S. (1921) *The Sacred Wood-Hamlet and His Problems*
<http://www.bartleby.com/200/sw11.html>

Jameson, Frederic (1990) *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press, pg.48

Gladwell, Malcolm (2010) *What the Dog Saw*, chapter 'Something Borrowed' Penguin (pg. 226)

- Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Later Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Holloway, Richard. (2002) *On Forgiveness – How Can We Forgive the Unforgivable?* Cannongate
- Howatch, Susan (1998) *The Wonder Worker*, Random, New York
- Howatch, Susan (2000) *The High Flyer*, Ballantine, New York
- Howatch, Susan (2005) *The Heartbreaker*, Random, New York
- Milton, John *Paradise Lost*, Annotated edition, Macmillan, (1992)
- Myers, Doris T (1998) *Anglican Theological Review* Vol.80 No.1
<http://www.questia.com/library/1P3-26637041/forgiven-sinners-susan-howatch-s-church-novels>
- Sennet, R. (2000) *Corrosion of Character*, Norton, New York
- Simeon, Daphne & Abugel, Jeffrey (2006) *Feeling Unreal: Depersonalization Disorder and the Loss of the Self*, Oxford University Press
- Stefanucci, Jeanine K. (2007) *Augmenting Context-Dependent Memory*, University of Virginia

THE THEME OF DEATH AND HOPE IN JOSEPH HELLER'S NOVEL CATCH 22 – A PSYCHOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Mr.G.Immanuel, M.A., (Ph.D)

Research Scholar,Loyola College (Autonomous).

Assistant Professor of English,

Aalim Muhammed Salegh College of Engineering,

Nizara Educational Campus, Muthapudupet, Avadi- IAF., Chennai – 600 055. Tamilnadu, India.

ABSTRACT: *Joseph Heller (May 1, 1923 – December 12, 1999) was an [American satirical](#) novelist, [short story](#) writer and playwright. He wrote the influential novel [Catch-22](#) about American servicemen during [World War II](#). The title of this work entered the English lexicon to refer to absurd, no-win choices, particularly in situations in which the desired outcome of the choice is impossibility, and regardless of choice, the same negative outcome is a certainty. Heller is widely regarded as one of the best post-World War II satirists. Heller's principle emphasis is on the internal struggle with conflicting values and the characters' evolution.*

There are many ways for a man to die, but there is no way to bring him back after he has entered the world of dead. Catch-22 is a novel satirizing war, and because of this, it inevitably has a strong underlying theme of death. But unlike many war novels, Catch-22 doesn't use violent depictions of fighting or bloody death scenes to denounce the evils of war; it utilizes humor and irony to make an arguably more effective point. And even more importantly, Catch-22 is ultimately a novel about hope, not death.

This paper discusses and explains in detail both the themes hope and death prevalent in the novel with a psychological overview taking into consideration Viktor. K. Frankl's "Logotherapy", and Sigmund Freud's "Pleasure principle".

Joseph Heller was an American novelist and dramatist who was best remembered as a satirist who characterized through his satire the military-industrial complex and those organized institutions which seem to manipulate people's lives in the name of reason or morality. His famous novel underscored with dark humor "Catch-22," influenced, among others, Robert Altman's comedy "MASH" and the subsequent long-running TV series set in the Korean War. After publishing this book, the phrase "Catch-22" was entered in the dictionary as an expression then signifies a no-win situation, particularly one created by a law, regulation or circumstance.

Catch-22 is a satirical, historical novel by the American author Joseph Heller, first published in 1961. The novel, set during the later stages of World War II from 1944 onwards, is frequently cited as one of the great literary works of the twentieth century. Catch 22 concerns a

World War II bombardier named Yossarian who believes his foolish, ambitious, mean-spirited commanding officers are more dangerous than the enemy. In order to avoid flying more missions, Yossarian retreats to a hospital with a mysterious liver complaint, sabotages his plane, and tries to get himself declared insane. Heller is widely regarded as one of the best post-World War II satirists. Heller's principle emphasis is on the internal struggle with conflicting values and the characters' evolution. **Catch-22** is a general critique of bureaucratic operation and reasoning. Resulting from its specific use in the book, the phrase "Catch-22" is common idiomatic usage meaning "a no-win situation" or "a double bind" of any type. Within the book, "Catch-22" is a military rule, the self-contradictory circular logic that, for example, prevents anyone from avoiding combat missions.

There are many ways for a man to die, but there is no way to bring him back after he has entered the world of dead. Catch-22 is a novel satirizing war, and because of this, it inevitably has a strong underlying theme of death. But unlike many war novels, Catch-22 doesn't use violent depictions of fighting or bloody death scenes to denounce the evils of war; it utilizes humor and irony to make an arguably more effective point. And even more importantly, Catch-22 is ultimately a novel about hope, not death. Although the inevitability of death is still a prominent motif, it ultimately leads the main character, Yossarian, to become conscious that the desire to live is imperative and also he can't simply live; he must live free of hypocrisy and oppression.

Life is uncertain and death is certain and inevitable. A man born on earth must also leave the same in some point of time. The most significant of death is how one attains the end of life (the nature of death and the reason for one's death). , Yossarian, the protagonist of the novel Catch 22 is always visualizing and contemplating his own death and is absolutely flabbergasted by the total number of ways in which it is possible for a human being to die. The specter of death haunts Yossarian constantly, in forms ranging from the dead man in his tent to his memories of Snowden.

The anxiety of death is the outcome of mere hopelessness of the situation. The hopelessness caused due to Catch 22. "Catch-22" is a military rule, the self-contradictory circular logic. phrase "Catch-22" is common idiomatic usage meaning "a no-win situation" or "a double bind" of any type.

'Sure there's a catch,' Doc Daneeka replied. 'Catch-22. Anyone who wants to get out of combat duty isn't really crazy.' There was only one catch and that was Catch-22.....

(Heller, Joseph pg. 52)

'Catch-22?' Yossarian was stunned. 'What the hell has Catch-22 got to do with it?'

'Catch-22,' Doc Daneeka answered patiently, when Hungry Joe had flown Yossarian back to Pianosa, 'says you've always got to do what your commanding officer tells you to.'

'But Twenty-seventh Air Force says I can go home with forty missions.'
'But they don't say you have to go home. And regulations do say you

*have to obey every order. That's the catch.
(Heller, Joseph pg.67)*

Yossarian being emotionally constrained and congested by the tyranny of catch 22 rule, slipped into a state of 'Hopelessness' and eventually into a condition called 'anticipatory anxiety' as mentioned by Viktor.E.Frankl.

Anticipatory anxiety. It is characteristic of this fear that it produces precisely that of which the patient is afraid. An individual, for example, who is afraid of blushing when he enters a large room and faces many people will actually be more prone to blush under these circumstances. In this context, one might amend the saying "The wish is father to the thought" to "The fear is mother of the event."

(Viktor.E.Frankl, .125)

Such anticipatory anxiety leads to any kind of fear. Yossarian here in the novel experiences the fear of death – which made him constantly anticipate death which hasn't reached the maturation point in the life of Yossarian. This anticipation is prevalent in the following statement made by the Yossarian :

*'They're trying to kill me,' Yossarian told him calmly.
'No one's trying to kill you,' Clevinger cried.
'Then why are they shooting at me?' Yossarian asked.*

'Whoever's trying to poison me,' Yossarian told him. 'Nobody's trying to poison you.'

'They poisoned my food twice, didn't they? Didn't they put poison in my food during Ferrara and during the Great Big Siege of Bologna?'

*'They put poison in everybody's food,' Clevinger explained.
'And what difference does that make?'*

'And it wasn't even poison!' Clevinger cried heatedly, growing more emphatic as he grew more confused.

As far back as Yossarian could recall, he explained to Clevinger with a patient smile, somebody was always hatching a plot to kill him. There were people who cared for him and people who didn't, and those who didn't hated him and were out to get him.

(Heller, Joseph pg.19,22)

The above quoted lines clearly bring out the state in which Yossarian finds himself. He wants to live and not to make his life prey to anybody's mischievous want. So Heller in his novel to portray how people are scared of the ills and the outcome of the war, he has successfully done it by creating a kind of reverberation in the mind of the protagonist towards the certainty of death likely

to be caused unmindfully by the voluntary or involuntary forces. The protagonist is unable to trust any of his acquaintances because he always believes that somebody was hatching a plot to kill him.

Nately's whore plays a crucial role in conveying the message about life and death in catch 22, even she doesn't become an important character until the novel nears its climax. Although Yossarian is only the messenger bearing the bad news of Nately's death, Nately's whore holds him responsible and follows him back to pianoso in an attempt to murder him. Yossarian somehow manages repeatedly to escape from her as long as he continues to disobey the illegal and immoral rules of the military. When he agrees to meet with Colonel Cathcart and Colonel Korn, she catches him and seriously injures him. This may imply that by submitting to the oppression of the bureaucratic military system, Yossarian is only headed towards death and disaster. And in the midst of Yossarian's final revelation and his decision to desert the military. Nately's whore was hiding behind the door, ready to stab him. But

"...the knife came down, missing him by inches, and he took off".

(Heller, Joseph pg.463)

Nately's whore was never able to kill because Yossarian doesn't want to lay down his life for a meaningless and hypocritical cause.

"Logo therapy sees in responsibility the very essence of human existence.

(Viktor.E.Frankl, Pg. 114)

The 'responsibility' in any man makes him conscious about life and death and makes him aware of the fact that life has got a meaning in all circumstances and that meaning should only be identified, addressed and accepted and must not be simply shattered by sacrificing life for any insignificance. This kind of responsibility enabled Yossarian to survive the most critical point of time in his life.

Yossarian's most startling glimpse into terrors of war and death reaches its peak when he spends a night alone on the streets of Rome. He sees homeless children; he witnesses men beating children and dogs, a rape and a convulsing soldier; he walks over a littered street with broken human teeth. Such a kind of a devastating scenario is seriously portrayed in order to bring out the cruelty and inhumanity of the world which is the outcome of death of true spirit of humanism. Cruelty and inhumanity becomes common when the God-given conscious is deliberately murdered. The scene comes to climax when Yossarian returns to his apartment and discovers that Aarfy has raped an innocent maid and then has thrown her out his window. Here comes in Sigmund Freud's 'Pleasure Principle'.

"In Freudian psychology, the pleasure principle is the psychoanalytic concept describing people seeking pleasure and avoiding suffering (pain) in order to satisfy their biological and psychological needs. Specifically, pleasure principle is a driven force of id".
(Wikipedia)

The soldiers in order to ease or avoid suffering or pain or to rescue themselves from the mental blow created due to the bureaucratic pressure, they indulge in seeking solace through satisfying their biological and psychological needs. They seek pleasure by playing havoc on moral uprightness. The subject (women) to whom due respect and honour has to attributed is being treated as object signifies death in morality. A maid raped by Aarfy and was thrown out of the window, shows how mean men turn to be when once their brutal instincts are satisfied.

Yossarian is arrested for being in Rome without a pass and Aarfy is given apology for the disturbance, his hideous crime going unpunished. Yossarian begins to really recognize the true face of the military and the meaning of Catch 22; when he goes to a brothel and the old woman tells him that the girls have all been kicked out of their home by soldiers.

She explains to him that,

“Catch-22 says they have right to do anything we can't stop them from doing”.

(Heller, Joseph Pg.417)

The horrors that the military generates will never stop and Yossarian begins to become conscious that he cannot fight and die for a system that causes so much meaningless death.

Yossarian's transition from rebelliousness to hope is Snowden's death. It functions as the climax of the novel. After Yossarian notices the disgusting, massive hole in Snowden's ribs and watches helplessly as Snowden dies on the floor of the plane, he comprehends that Snowden's death exposed a secret:

“It was easy to read the message in his entrails. Man was matter, that was Snowden's secret. Drop him out a window and he'll fall. Set fire to him and he'll burn. Bury him and he'll rot, like other kinds of garbage. The spirit gone, man is garbage. That was Snowden's secret. Ripeness was all”.

(Heller, Joseph Pg.450)

The final atrocity reveals to Yossarian that man is only made of matter, but the aspiration to live is the most important inclination a man can have.

According to Frankl's Logotherapy,

“We can discover this meaning in life in three different ways:

- (1) by creating a work or doing a deed;*
- (2) by experiencing something or encountering someone; and*
- (3) by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering”*

(Viktor.E.Frankl, Pg.115)

If a man discovers meaning in his existence then automatically he would desire to live in any unfavourable situations or condition. Yossarian wants to live but he feels strongly that he cannot

live a life of hypocrisy or oppression under the military; and this is what finally pushes him to desert. The awareness that Orr finally paddled all the way to Sweden gives him hope. Even that Orr finally paddled all the way to Sweden gives him hope. Even though he knows it will be difficult, but there is no other options left.

Although Catch 22 is a novel about War, it is not only about death. The message it ultimately conveys is one of hope. Catch-22 may allow the military to do whatever the people can't stop it from doing, but it can't destroy hope. So this paper is a part of the research work done and it is open for further research.

WORKS CITED:

1. Heller, Joseph (1961) *Catch 22*, Jonathan Cape Ltd., New York. ISBN 0099477319
2. Frankl, Viktor (1959). *Man's Search for Meaning*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press. ISBN 0807014265

Jeanette Winterson's Fiction: A Postmodernist Fabulation

Isha Malhotra

Assistant Professor
Central University of Jammu

Abstract: *The present paper examines Jeanette Winterson's works in relation to postmodern theories of narrative and history and, critically analyses the indeterminate identity of the subjective narrator. It explores how Winterson in her oeuvre has self-consciously explored the ambiguous status of objective reality and has also questioned the suppositions about narratorial identity. Her use of deconstructive strategies to interrogate the assumptions about sex and gender and her deconstruction of binary oppositions like fiction/history, art/lies and male/female also form a purview of this study. A detailed postmodernist analysis of her novels *Sexing the Cherry* and *Written on the Body* is made to exemplify postmodern aesthetics and the high degrees of self-reflexivity, pastiche and intertextuality in her works. In addition to it, the postmodern themes of constructed and performative nature of identity, gender and sexuality is also looked at in these works.*

Key texts: *Sexing the Cherry, Written on the Body*

Key Words: *postmodernism, deconstruction, historiographic metafiction, binary oppositions*

Jeanette Winterson is a prominent contemporary British writer who self-consciously explores the ambiguous status of objective reality in her works. Her postmodern credentials have never been in doubt and since her debut novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1984), she has been widely described in academe as a part of British postmodern stylists which includes Angela Carter, Martin Amis and Salman Rushdie. The metafictional assumptions about narratorial identity and fictional artifice are continuously questioned in her fiction. She produces fictional narratives that deconstruct deep-rooted cultural binaries and hierarchical discourses, presenting a crisis of legitimation. Postmodern fiction reveals how the past is always ideologically and discursively constructed, what Linda Hutcheon describes as "historiographic metafiction", that narratives foreground the recognition and "narrative is not objective and that any representation of history is always an ideologically laden discourse." (Grice and Woods 27). It is a fiction that is directed both inward and outward, concerned with its status as fiction, narrative or language, and also grounded in some historical reality. Postmodernism tends to "use and abuse, install but also subvert conventions through the use of either irony or parody." (Woods 56) The stories and narratives of postmodernist writers push at and play with the limits of fictionality and become complex forms of complicity between author, text and reader. Such fiction shows a plurality of forms, skepticism towards generic types and categories, ironic inversions with a strong

inclination towards pastiche and parody, and a metafictional insistence on the unpredictability of the text's power to signify.

Winterson in her fiction constantly foregrounds narrativity, whether it is in the pattern of narrative or in the fictional representation of history. In an interview she once said: "People have an enormous need ...to separate history, which is fact, from storytelling, which is not fact...and the whole push of my work has been to say, you cannot know which is which." (Harthill 1990). Her refrain throughout her novel *The Passion* says, "I'm telling you stories. Trust me" points directly to her assertion that the world is both fictive and historical. Similarly, Winterson's fictional works such as *The Passion*, *Sexing the Cherry* and *Written on the Body* combines the self-referentiality characteristic of metafiction and the pleasure in epistemological hesitation characteristic of the fantastic with a seemingly contradictory realism-enhancing interest in history and the traditional aspect of storytelling. Her novels not only seek to change the world, but to make one from language. Fiction, therefore, is no longer mimetic in her works but constructive and representation is no longer to be seen as a form of mirror-like reflection, but more a form of construction, of creating something new. So, postmodern fiction seeks to "insert the crevices of history, censored, forgotten, marginalized or otherwise eccentric aspects, and makes its narratives by supplementing history, by filling it out." (Grice and Woods 31). In *The PowerBook* section of her website she cautions that:

We can't go on writing traditional nineteenth century fiction, we have to recognise that modernism and postmodernism have changed the map, and any writer worth their weight in floppy discs will want to go on changing that map. I don't want to be a curator in the museum of Literature, I want to be part of what happens next.

The literary evolution – "the part of what happens next" – necessarily involves postmodernism, and Winterson's relationship to postmodernism remains complex, a "contested category". On the one hand, postmodernism conflicts with the more materialist, lesbian-feminist matrix of Winterson's work and on the other, her novels exemplify postmodern aesthetics, revealing high degrees of self-reflexivity, pastiche and intertextuality in addition to frequent mimetic and temporal dispersions. Her dominant themes and tropes which include existential contingency and spectacle, the performative nature of gender and identity, and the ontological burdens of love are also quintessentially postmodern.

In numerous essays Winterson has attacked the tenets of classical realism, and over the course of ten novels she has "evolved a signature blend of postmodern prose, a mélange of Linda Hutcheon's 'historiographic metafiction', Diane Elam's 'postmodern romance' and Amy J. Elias's 'metahistorical romance.'" (Keulks 147). In *Art Objects*, which is a theoretical manifestation of her works, Winterson claims that she does not write "novels" and that "the novel form is finished." (191) By "novel" she means a wholly realistic genre, born alongside the development of patriarchal humanism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, achieving its

height in the Victorian period and its point of exhaustion with the advent of modernism. What Winterson seems to dislike, then, is the banality of the Victorian attitude to art, which she describes as the absurd attempt of Victorian writers to transform art into “a version of everyday reality.” (31). Her suspicion of realism is so visible that she is ready to forego one of her most valuable and distinctive gift, that of storytelling. Thus, she self-consciously justifies the inclusion of “stories within stories” in her fiction as “a trap for the reader’s attention”, insisting that she is “not particularly interested in folk tales” and that she is a “writer who does not use plot as an engine or foundation.” (189).

Although, Winterson’s themes range widely, conforming the richness of her imagination, yet, the quest for the self or identity is one of the central themes of her fiction, for it is through them that Winterson attempts the metaphorical mapping of the self that resides at the base of her fiction as well as postmodernism itself. Moreover, there is always one theme to which she invariably returns: the power of stories to shape desire, to defend against the weight of inevitable loss and to move towards love. “Love” is a “grand-narrative” that occupies a predominant position in Winterson’s trope and re-occurs quite frequently in Winterson’s oeuvre. Winterson told her former partner, the Australian critic Margaret Reynolds in an interview that, in her work, the same themes “do occur and return, disappear, come back amplified or modified, changed in some way, because it’s been my journey, it’s the journey of my imagination, it’s the journey of my soul in those books.” (Andermahr 7)

Winterson’s work has always pushed at the boundaries of storytelling in order to stretch language, to show what language can do. Her concern with the transgressive clearly includes crossing and re-crossing the conventional limits of narrative. And as she highlights the fictionality of her work so she also foregrounds the practices of reading. Winterson is archly aware of the fact that her books only take on existence when read; that is, that reading re/creates the text: “When I talk about writing I have to always come back to reading” (2006). In *Art Objects* (1996) Winterson convincingly argues that reading is itself an art, one that is difficult to acquire and has to be practiced and refined. The non-linear narratives and temporal eclecticism in her novels insist that the reader is conscious of the practice being enacted; indeed, Winterson deliberately makes her readers aware of the fact that one is reading, “I’m telling you stories.” In addition to the ways in which her novels make the reader work, Winterson’s characters themselves are often readers and their reading skills, or lack of them, become central to the unfolding of story/ies. Thus reading is highlighted in two different ways – one, the texts demand attention and interaction from the reader and simultaneously the texts explicitly represent readers and reading. Another very pertinent aspect that has to be kept in mind is Winterson’s own reading and her representation of canonical works. Her writing abounds with intertextuality and literary allusion as she reworks both traditional stories and traditions of storytelling. These aspects work together to blur the conventional distinctions between author, reader and text. “The

author is also the re/reader; the reader 'writes' the work; the text is a site that shifts its significance, that is continuously in flux." (Carpenter 70).

It seems unnecessary to state that in Winterson's works, writing and reading are inextricably linked. The connection is not, however, always explicitly made. Winterson's novels demand that the reader is active and engaged. In Barthesian terms her work broadly conforms to the characteristics of the "writerly" text in that reader is not a passive recipient of the story but rather participates in the creation of meaning. The reader's relationship with the text fluctuates and thus interpretation remains open-ended, this will become clear by a postmodernist reading of her works *Sexing the Cherry* and *Written on the Body*.

Sexing the Cherry

Winterson's fiction constantly rewrites history and myths. *Sexing the Cherry* describes how the narrator constantly feels her subjectivity escapes her, the narratorial 'I' in the novel shifts, from the Dog Woman to her son Jordan. In *Sexing the Cherry*, the narrators Dog Woman and Jordan are autodiegetic, that is, they are both narrators as well as protagonists, reporting their life stories in retrospect in a manner characteristic of Bildungsroman. Thus, the novel simultaneously moves in two opposite directions. On the one hand, the physical journey of narrator progresses from past to present along a chronological time. On the other hand, their minds move backwards as they try to recover the lost memories and repressed desires of a past that seems fragmentary and incomprehensible to them. As early as 1994, Paulina Palmer situated Jeanette Winterson with Margaret Atwood and Angela Carter in "a postmodernist trend characterized by the delination of subjectivity as fractured and decentred." (Palmer 181) In *Sexing the Cherry*, explorations into the nature of subjectivity lead to theories of the self as able to transcend time and space in the construction of a new concept of time and space as flexible and at the command of the self: "Time has no meaning, space and place have no meaning, on this journey. All times can be inhabited, all places visited. In a single day the mind can make a millpond of the oceans." (80) The novel concerns spaces that remain as yet undiscovered despite the explorations taken by humans on earth. This in turn affects the conception of time in the novel, as it repeatedly dislocates our conventional understanding of time, questioning the metaphysical conceptions of time erected by language. Within this dislocation of space-time, the novel asks one of the central postmodern questions about the relativity and certainty of epistemology: "Maps are being re-made as knowledge appears to increase. But is knowledge increasing or is detail accumulating?"(81) Winterson's world is not simply one of facts, but one of stories and narratives, which are folded within each other; hence, the realms of the aesthetic and the imagination assume a new importance. The novel extols the realm of the aesthetic, set against the pure empirical world, realizing the realm of the imagination to form other important and acceptable places that need exploring. *Sexing the Cherry* is about the insertion of fantasy into what is taken to be reality, or history, and the supposed fixed oppositions of these two categories.

What appears to be a history of the English Civil War, and the early seventeenth century, turns out to hide the myths of the Dog Woman and the twelve dancing princesses.

The magic is a way of decentring the realism, or suggesting an alternative way of life. Winterson is always interested in those aspects that are covered up by narratives. At the beginning of her novel *Sexing the Cherry*, the protagonist states:

Every journey conceals another journey within its lines: the path not taken and the forgotten angle. These are journeys I wish to record I wish to record. Not the ones I made, but the ones I might have made, or perhaps did make in some other place or time.
(2)

The defining characteristic of postmodernist art is its paradoxical nature, its deliberate refusal to resolve contradictions and to raise questions about or render problematic the commonsensical and the natural. Indeed *Sexing the Cherry* may be set to belong to Hutcheon's category of "historiographic metafiction, a paradoxical type of postmodernist novel that combines "self reflexivity with history." Thus, its main story line is situated in the 17th century, at a time of extraordinary upheaval in English history, but the historical events that take place in *Sexing the Cherry* are not focused from the generalist and totalitarian prospective required by world history but rather from the subjective prospective of two marginal narrator characters, a huge dog breeder who lives by the bank of the Thames, nicknamed the Dog Woman, and her foundling son, Jordan.

The fact that Jordan can cross the boundary separating the world of common day reality from the world of fantasy suggests the complementarity and reversibility of real and the unreal, of the imagined and the actually lived. Moreover, the merging of events and characters widely separated in time in what appears to be an atemporal present successfully challenges the chronological notions of past, present and future in favour of the cyclical temporality of myth. Further, the weird coexistence of real and fantastic worlds is reflected in the paradoxical characterisation of the Dog Woman and Jordan. While the young man has a perfectly normal physical appearance, his narration is wholly concerned with his travels to unreal cities and his relationship with fantastic characters. By contrast, the Dog Woman in *Sexing the Cherry* is described as a flexible materialist and has never travelled beyond London and is a fantastically huge giantess, who, like "the awe-inspiring ogres in fairytales, has murdered or maimed thousands of men, including her own father." (107) She herself constantly alludes to her grotesque Swiftean parentage. For instance, she refers to her body as "the mountain of my flesh," and when a frustrated lover complains that she is too big for sex, she resorts that all her bodily parts are "all in proportion" to each other (107). Her huge body and her ugly face with a flat nose, a few broken black teeth and skin covered with pock marks as big as caves where fleas live (24) provoke in male onlookers a misogynist nausea. The Dog Woman shows a most benign and

protective side towards her numerous female friends, including nuns, prostitutes and the wives of the Puritan men she loathes.

Winterson's powerful depiction of communities of women and her presenting an alternative female symbolic realm beyond "heteropatriarchy" shows how while existing in the realm of fictional myth, these are politically powerful images for women. The postmodern critics and queer theorist's foregrounding the deconstructive potential of sexual identities and gender blurring in her works. Drawing on Butler's theories of gender as performance and queer models of transgendered body, Dog Woman's grotesque body can be described as a "queer body" which challenge sexual stereotypes and deconstructs the concepts of natural body, and thus presents a new sexual politics based on difference, diversity and plurality, all tenets of postmodernism.

Indeed, it is only with men, especially Puritans with a double standard of morality, that she displays the all-devouring and deadly facet of her Mother-earth personality. To this type of man, the Dog Woman appears to be, literally, a monster. Thus, her parson has forbidden her to enter the church on the contention that "gargoyles must remain on the outside" (SC 14). And, on seeing her for the first time, the half-wit who kept the gate of the royal gardens tells Tradescant in utter discomfiture that the "garden had been invaded by an evil spirit and her Hounds of Hell" (29), thus comparing her, as Patricia Waugh acutely notes, "to Milton's Sin with her brood of hungry dogs."

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar have pointed out how the monstrosity of mythical female hybrids such as sirens, harpies and sphinxes is invariably located in the lower half of their bodies, thus symbolising men's fear of female sexuality and power. Similarly, the Dog Woman's monstrosity is located in her lower half and is associated with her sexual power. The day she lifts her skirts over her head to show the public that she is not hiding any weights, before competing with an elephant in a fair attraction, she provokes "a great swooning amongst the crowd" since she is "wearing no underclothes in respect of the heat" (25). From Lacan's perspective, the Dog Woman's colossal inability to understand the metaphors of patriarchy further augments her position in the unsymbolised realm of the imaginary and confirms the epigraph's assertion that language is the decisive battle ground for the transformation of the symbolic order. Added to her grotesque monstrosity, the Dog Woman's literal-mindedness situates her in a strategic position to reshape patriarchy's false picture of the world, since it is only by transforming the metaphors of patriarchy that she can aspire to create a new symbolic order capable of responding to her own, more feminine and authentic picture of the world.

Jordan also Compares his secret book to the invisible letters written by the ancient Greeks, remarking that they were "written in milk" (10). This remark adds crucial insight into the type of individuation process he is initiating, since it points to Jordan's invisible book as an example of *écriture féminine*, the type of writing written with *langue lait*, the 'white ink' of "mother's milk" that Helene Cixous proposes as an alternative to the 'phallogocentric' writing of

patriarchy, carried out as she asserts, with a pen/penis. As becomes clear at the end of the novel, Jordan's individuation process involves his understanding of the constructedness of binary oppositions like father/mother; man/woman; culture/nature; head/hearth and the eventual revelation of his bisexuality. Dog Woman's only fear is not that Jordan might be bodily injured in the course of his journeys, but that he might lose "his heart. His heart" (41), knowing as she does that "he has not my common sense and will no doubt follow his dreams to the end of the world and then fall straight off"(40). If Jordan has to find his own identity, then, he will have to overcome his feeling of incompleteness, symbolised by his obsessive search of Fortunata, and acquire his mother's androgynous completeness.

Thus, one can examine the intersection of lesbianism and postmodernism in *Sexing the Cherry*. Winterson fully uses both lesbian-feminism and postmodernism to deconstruct the sexual identities of her characters and displays how the template of sex and gender can be opened up and the identities can become unstable and fluid. Further, the alternation of narrative voices in the novel complicates its basic pattern, as does the undercutting of the narrative flow by the interpolation of additional texts. In these metanarratives, that is, a narrative within a narrative, fictional discourses such as fairytales, fragments of romance, poems and religious and mythical texts are juxtaposed with the objective discourses of history, medicine, psychology, critical theory, Greek philosophy, Newtonian science, the New physics and so on. The trespassing of narrative and ontological boundaries and the juxtaposition of realistic, fictional, mythical and biblical variations on the same events is a postmodernist narrative technique consciously employed by Winterson to subvert and question the earlier texts and histories.

Written on the Body

Written on the Body, Winterson's fifth novel, presents a narrator which questions gender identity through a complete absence of gender identification. There is no physical description of the narrator's body throughout the novel – it remains invisible. The lover's body in *Written on the Body* is invisible to any objectifying gaze. It can be seen as female, male, hermaphroditic, transgendered, differently abled, from any culture in the world, with any sexual preferences or any combination of the above. With this non-specific narrator, Winterson is evading the consequences of gendering that Monique Wittig, in her article "The Mark of Gender," expresses clearly: "Language casts sheaves of reality upon the social body, stamping it and violently shaping it." (78) Winterson evades the enforcement of a gender-bound heterosexual concept of love by giving the lover an invisible body, which is fabulous because it cannot be classified nor it can be put into neat compartments, moreover it is enigmatic and full of endless possibilities.

Jeanette Winterson's language opens up imaginative possibilities rather than delimiting them, perhaps because as Winterson writes, "the important things are often left unsaid; rather, they are inferred, between the lines, or written on the body." () In part, this is because Winterson most often avoids the conventions of realism as for her they point to "a terror of the inner life, of

the sublime, of the poetic, of the non-material, of the contemplative.” () Winterson uses the poetic, the fantastic, the imaginary and the magical in her fiction and evinces a commitment to revivify and transform language.

In the novel, the body is positioned as a text that can be both written and read. Or, conversely, the text is represented as a body and, as such, as an animate object that is constantly changing and that can exert not only intellectual but also physical pleasure, and, conversely, pain upon the reader. The relationship between reader and text is located as more than a cerebral activity; it is intimate, embodied and has the potential of changing lives. The idea that the body can be read and re-read, written and rewritten is the central motif of *Written on the Body*. The novel tells of a love affair between a married woman Louise and the unnamed narrator. The gender and physical aspect of the autodiegetic narrator are never made explicit and the identity of the narrator is problematised, thus suggesting that s/he enjoys the type of bisexuality Jordan achieved in *Sexing the Cherry* at the end of his quest for individuation. The programmatic nature of the narrator’s bisexuality in *Written on the Body* has not always been interpreted differently by different critics. Thus, Rachel Wingfield considers the narrator’s androgyny as an example of formal experimentation, the result of the author’s “postmodernist pre occupation with writing about writing.”

It seems that Derrida’s insight is clearly shared by Winterson, as one of her most characteristic narrative strategies is to place language in quotation marks, as if it were, and in so doing to reframe meaning. She writes:

My work is full of cover versions. I like to take stories we think we know and record them differently. In the re-telling comes a new emphasis or bias, and the new arrangement of the key elements demand that fresh material be injected into the existing text. ()

Importantly, then, while meaning is contextually bound, contexts are boundless. As Winterson insists, “there is no limit to new territory....Reality is continuous, multiple, simultaneous, complex, abundant and partly invisible”

Winterson has remarked that art has the capacity to allow us to apprehend more than the visible world. In her work, she explores desire, the “valuable, fabulous thing” that remains difficult to articulate. Winterson is trying to establish the same thesis as put forth by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* that identity is not something one is born with, but a fluid, ever-changing and complex ideological process, determined by the individual’s relationship with other individuals. We cannot refer to the narrator as a “she”, meaning hereby that narrator can’t be referred to as a woman/lesbian because that will ignore the text’s insistence that we use the slashed forms “s/he” and “her/his” even if having to use the slashes is irritating, precisely

because it is this irritation that will challenge and set into question the objectivity of patriarchal assumptions about identity.

As the title suggests, *Written on the Body* is a self-conscious experiment in ecriture feminine, carried out by an autodiegetic author-narrator, whose aim, as Ute Kauer has succinctly put it, is “no longer self-discovery, but rather self-construction.” (6) In this sense, it is important to realise that, like earlier Winterson autodiegetic narrators at the beginning of their narration, the nameless narrator of *Written on the Body* is a purblind hero/ine engaged in a quest for self-individuation. The novel begins with the narrator presenting her/himself as a reckless Lothario (20) involved in numberless love affairs with partners of both sexes that only last for a brief span of time, either because of the partners’ various oddities; because of sheer incompatibility or, more often, because the narrator’s sexual partner is a married woman who tries to lessen the unhappiness and monotony of her married life by indulging in a secret and passionate sexual affair, without ever, however, contemplating the possibility of setting her marriage at risk. This is a source of endless suffering for the narrator, who hopes for a more stable and affective relationship and invariably ends up heartbroken, feeling misused, objectified and forced to find refuge in her/his own private “island” (27). The narrator's rakish behaviour unexpectedly comes to an end when s/he meets Louise Fox, a beautiful Australian woman who has splendid red hair. Unlike the narrator’s earlier partners, Louise falls in love with her/him, sees no reason to hide their relationship and is ready to divorce her husband, Elgin Rosenthal, a well-to-do cancer specialist, whose orthodox Jewish background is made to symbolise his uncompromising patriarchal ideology. After several months of shared bliss, the narrator learns that Louise is suffering from leukaemia and makes the unilateral decision to leave her in the hands of her husband so that she can undergo specialist treatment in his private Swiss clinic.

After telling this story, the narrator raises the question of her/his own reliability, addressing the reader in a self-conscious frame-break: “I can tell by now that you are wondering whether I can be trusted as a narrator.” (24). The narrator repeatedly addresses the reader with this type of questions, so that, as Kauer has noted, s/he “ironises his/her own role constantly as well as the role of the reader [and] plays with the moral objections the implied reader might raise by anticipating them.” Near the end of the novel, the narrator, who is now living alone in a remote cottage in the Yorkshire countryside and is feeling quite sick with yearning for Louise, overtly acknowledges the fictionality of her/his account, when s/he admits that s/he is “making up my own memories of good times” (161). This remark confers a circular structure on the novel and situates the author-narrator in the position of earlier Winterson protagonists like Jordan and Henri, who also wrote the stories of their lives in retrospect and warned their addressees that they were telling stories or reporting imaginary voyages, not facts.

Once the fictionality of the memoirs is taken into account, it is easy to see that the one-dimensionality of the narrator’s lovers is that of well-worn literary types. Inge, for example, is a butch in the invert tradition of the butch/femme couple of early lesbian fiction. By contrast,

Jacqueline, the narrator's latest partner, is a clear example of lesbian 'femme' She is described as a "sort of household pet" (25), and we learn that she installed herself in the narrator's house and assumed the role of housewife without asking first. Other lovers mentioned by the narrator are equally one-dimensional and parodic. The novel *Written on the Body* opens with the question: "Why is the measure of love loss?" (9). This question reflects the narrator's state of mind at the time of writing, which is of utter despair and misery after having lost Louise. This is the question the narrator tries to answer by writing her/his fictional "memories" and the sentence that, according to Jeanette Winterson, concentrates the "single image" around which the whole novel develops (*Art Objects* 169-70). Once posed, the question triggers off what can be described as the narrator's "remembrances of things past." Structured chronologically in the form of diary entries, the evolution of the narrator and Louise's relationship follows the natural rhythm of the seasons through the year, thus suggesting that it has the wholeness of a cosmogonic cycle: it begins with the happy memory of "a certain September" when Louise declared her love; reaches a climax of passion in an August ; is interrupted when the narrator decides to leave Louise to save her as she is suffering from leukaemia on "Christmas Eve" ; and concludes in October with the lovers' reunion .

In the first entry we find the narrator struggling for the right words to write about love. As s/he reflects in *Written on the Body* that, "love demands expression" but it is difficult to express love adequately, since "I love you" is always a quotation (9) and there are too many clichés surrounding the question of love:

Love makes the world go round. Love is blind. All you need is love. Nobody ever died of a broken heart. You'll get over it. It'll be different when we're married. Think of the children. Time's a great healer. Still waiting for Mr Right? Miss Right? And maybe all the little Rights?

It's the clichés that cause the trouble. (10)

Susana Onega in her full-length study, *Jeanette Winterson: a Contemporary Critical Guide*, has said that the narrator's words bring to mind Umberto Eco's definition of post-modernist irony by reference to love in the *Postscript to The Name of the Rose*:

I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows he cannot say to her "I love you madly" because he knows that she knows (and that she knows that he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still, there is a solution. He can say, "As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly". At this point having avoided false innocence, having said clearly that it is no longer possible to speak innocently, he will nevertheless have said what he wanted to say to the woman: that he loves her, but he loves her in an age of lost innocence.(67)

According to Eco, then, the only way in which we can still use the well-worn words of love with the purity and intensity of their pure meaning is by having recourse to irony. From this perspective, the jokes made by the narrator of *Written on the Body* in the recounting of her/his absurd sexual feats and her/his acknowledgement of the fictional nature of the events narrated acquire the double irony, for, although s/he makes constant use of literary clichés to describe her/his sexual feats, the narrator seems to be frankly unaware that s/he is behaving according to these clichés. The lack of self-directed irony in the narrator's report surely is what produces a distancing effect in the readers, revealing the narrator's moral bluntness. This is made evident, for example, when, surprised by the realisation that Louise is not reacting like her/his previous married partners, the narrator says that she is not following the set directions: "This is the wrong script. This is the moment where I'm supposed to be self-righteous and angry. "(18). In her/his relationships with numberless married women, the narrator invariably assumed the role of pleasure-giver and victim. When the narrator realises that Louise is not behaving like other married women, that she is in fact offering her/him a relationship built on terms of equality and love, s/he is panic-stricken about living an experience that does not respond to the habitual scheme: "Yes you do frighten me. You act as though we will be together forever. You act as though there is infinite pleasure and time without end. How can I know that? My experience is that time always ends" (18). If s/he is to grow morally and spiritually, then, s/he will have to become aware of the seriousness of Louise's proposal and of the artificiality and wrongness of her/his sexual behaviour.

Before falling in love with Louise the narrator was bisexual in the sense that s/he had sexual intercourse both with women and men, but the relations with her/his partners followed traditional patriarchal patterns of binary opposition and inequality. Her/his bisexuality simply meant that s/he could switch sexual roles: s/he could be the victimiser and the victim, the butch and the femme, the rakish Don Juan/Lothario/Casanova and the masochistic sexual toy of middleaged married women. It is this fear of "infinite pleasure", then, that the narrator must overcome if s/he is to acquire the wholeness and maturity of Cixous's "other bisexuality" which Jordan achieved at the end of *Sexing the Cherry*. Thus, Winterson subverts the traditional gender roles and binary oppositions in her postmodernist text to show that gender and identity are social constructions by her introduction of a narrator whose name, sex, gender and age are intentionally kept hidden so that "heteropatriarchy" and binary oppositions can be questioned and hence deconstructed.

Thus, the novels *Sexing the Cherry* and *Written on the Body* provide a politically useful postmodern unsettling of fixed boundaries and gendered identities. Winterson by employing postmodern techniques construct her narratives in such a way that it questions the social constructs of sex, gender and sexuality. She fruitfully exploits the techniques as well as the ideology of postmodern historiographic metafiction to challenge and subvert patriarchal and heterosexist discourses and ultimately provides an oppositional but positively forceful critique.

References

- Andermahr, Sonya , ed. *Jeanette Winterson: a Contemporary Critical Guide*. Great Britain: Cromwell Press ltd, 2007. Print.
- . "Reinventing the Romance." Andermahr 82-99.
-
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge, 1990. Print.
- Carpenter, Ginette. "Reading and the Reader." Andermahr 69-81.
- Eco, Umberto . *Postscript to The Name of the Rose*. New York: HBJ, 1994. Print.
- Grice, Helena and Tim Woods, eds. "*I'm telling you stories*": *Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading*. (Postmodern Studies 25). Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998. Print.
- . "Winterson's Dislocated Discourses." Andermahr 27-40.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. New York and London: Routledge, 1998. Print.
- Keulks, Gavin. "Winterson's Recent Work: Navigating Realism and Postmodernism." Andermahr 146-162
- Onaga, Susana. *Jeanette Winterson*. Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 2006. Print.
- Palmer, Paulina. "Postmodern Trends in Contemporary Fiction: Margaret Atwood, Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson" *Postmodern Subjects/ Postmodern Texts*. Eds, Jane Dowson and Steven Earnshaw. Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994. Print.
- Winterson, Jeanette. *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995. Print.
- . *Sexing the Cherry*. London: Bloomsbury, 1989. Print.
- . *Written on the Body*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992. Print.
- Woods, Tim. *Beginning Postmodernism*. UK: Manchester University Press, 1999. Print.
-

THE LOVE OF THE LOVED: ECHOES FROM 'MY GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE' BY KAMALA DAS

Mrs.K.L.Rekha, M.A., M.Phil., (Ph.D)

Research Scholar, Manonmanium Sundaranar University,
Assistant Professor of English, Sakthi Engineering College,
Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

ABSTRACT: *Love is a choice and it springs from appreciating goodness. It need not happen but can make it happen. Love is active and strong. Love sees good in others rather than the bad. Love is universal and love can also be unconditional. An unconditional love is selfless, non-egoistic and relenting. It expects nothing, expresses everything, bears and holds even the worst of anything, accepts hurts and stripes and bears bruises, suffers long and kind. All the above stated ingredients of unconditional love were found in the life of kamala Das' Grandmother and in the poem 'My grandmother's House' she yearns for it. In common the love of Grandparents towards Grandchildren is unconditional and incomparable.*

This paper is written based on Kamala Das' My Grandmother's House which envisages the qualities of the ancestral home and the love depicted by Kamala Das.

Keywords: *Love, Unconditional love, Loved, appreciating goodness.*

*One carries the memory of a 'home' to which heart retreats in times of anguish.
One feels nostalgic at the thought of happy moments in the past.*

Kamala Das is a famous Contemporary Indian writer who is called Kamala Suraiyya who wrote in English and Malayalam her native language. She is called by the name A.K.A. Madhavikutty. Kamala Das was born in Punnayurkulam, Thrissur District in Kerala, on March 31, 1934, to V. M. Nair, a former managing editor of the widely-circulated Malayalam daily *Mathrubhumi*, and Nalappatt Balamani Amma, a renowned Malayali poetess. She spent her childhood between Calcutta, where her father was employed as a senior officer in the Walford Transport Company that sold Bentley and Rolls Royce automobiles, and the Nalappatt ancestral home in Punnayurkulam. Like her mother, Kamala Das also excelled in writing. Her love of poetry began at an early age through the influence of her great uncle, Nalappatt Narayana Menon, a prominent writer. However, she did not start writing professionally until she got married and became a mother. Her popularity in Kerala is based chiefly on her short stories and autobiography.

My Grandmother's House

*There is a house now far away where once
I received love..... That woman died,
The house withdrew into silence, snakes moved*

*Among books, I was then too young
 To read, and my blood turned cold like the moon
 How often I think of going
 There, to peer through blind eyes of windows or
 Just listen to the frozen air,
 Or in wild despair, pick an armful of
 Darkness to bring it here to lie
 Behind my bedroom door like a brooding
 Dog...you cannot believe, darling,
 Can you, that I lived in such a house and
 Was proud, and loved.... I who have lost
 My way and beg now at strangers' doors to
 Receive love, at least in small change?*

Kamala Das, the Indian poetess recalls her ancestral home and her dead grandmother in the poem "My Grandmother's House". Kamala Das' poems as well her imagery is extremely personal and drawn from life. This poem takes the form of a confession comparing her present broken state with that of being unconditionally loved by her grandmother. Published in 1965 in summer in Calcutta the poem is a reminiscence of the poetess' grandmother and their ancestral home in Punnayurkulam in Kerala. Her memory of love she received from her grandmother is associated with the image of her ancestral home.

*'There is a house now far away....
 I received love.....'*

The poem begins like a story introducing a house which was visited long back and it's too far from the place where the poetess lived at the same time it indicates the farness of the embracement that Kamala Das once received. But one thing is clear, the house is still there physically standing without any live activity in it. The poetess expresses very clearly that love was received, which throws light on the fact that now she is bereft of love and that's why she craves for that which is lost. The poet now lives in another city, a long distance away from her grandmother's house. But the memories of her ancestral house make her sad. She is almost heart-broken. The intensity of her emotions is shown by the ellipses in the form of a few dots. Now, in another city, living another life, she longs to go back. With the death of the Grandmother, the house ceased being inhabited. It now became an isolated and remote entity, echoed by the phrase 'far away'. The poetess asserts that with the death of her grandmother, silence began to sink in the house.

*'.....That woman died,
 The house withdrew into silence,.....'*

The poem is a reminiscence of the poetess' grandmother and their ancestral home at Malabar in Kerala. Her remembrance of love she received from her grandmother is associated with the

image of her ancestral home, where she had spent some of the happiest days of her life, and where her old grandmother had showered her love and affection. With the death of her grandmother the house withdrew into silence. When her grandmother died, even the house seemed to share her grief, which is poignantly expressed in the phrase “the House withdrew”. The house soon became desolate and snakes crawled among books. Her blood became cold like the moon because there was none to love her the way she wanted.

She understands that she cannot reclaim the past but she wants to go back home, look once again through its windows and bring back a handful of darkness – sad and painful memories, which she would have made her constant companion, to keep as a reminder of her past happiness. The poet is unable to proceed with her thoughts for sometime as is indicated by the ellipses (dots). The poet is now garroted with the intensity of grief. She hankers for love like a beggar going from one door to another asking for love in small change. Her need for love and approval is not satisfied in marriage and she goes after strangers for love at least in small quantity. But she does not get it even in small change or coins. Her love-hunger remains unsatisfied, and there is a big void, a blank within her, she seeks to fill up with love but to no avail. The image of the window is a link between the past and the present. It signifies the desire of the poet for a nostalgic peep into her past and resurrects her dreams and desires.

‘.....snakes moved
 Among books, I was then too young
 To read, and my blood turned cold like the moon
 How often I think of going
 There, to peer through blind eyes of windows or
 Just listen to the frozen air,
 Or in wild despair, pick an armful of
 Darkness to bring it here to lie
 Behind my bedroom door like a brooding Dog...’

The moon is being an emblem of love. The worms on the books seem like snakes at that moment, in comparison to the size of the little girl; and in keeping with the eeriness of the situation. The poetess also implies that the deserted house is like a desert with reptiles crawling over. The poetess now longs to 'peer' at a house that was once her own. She has to peek through the 'blind eyes' of the windows as the windows are permanently closed. The air is frozen now, as contrasted to when the grandmother was alive-the surroundings were filled with the warmth of empathy. Kamala Das pleads with us to "listen" to the "frozen" air; that is an impossibility. Neither is the air a visual medium, nor can air cause any displacement because it is "frozen". In wild despair, she longs to bring in an "armful of darkness". Note firstly, that it is not a 'handful' but an armful. Secondly, 'darkness' that generally has negative shades to it, has positive connotations here of a protective shadow. It also reflects the 'coziness' inside the house. This armful of darkness is her essence of nostalgia.

*'.....you cannot believe, darling,
Can you, that I lived in such a house and
Was proud, and loved....'*

Kamala Das was very proud about her grandmother and the love she received. The Ellipsis after the word loved shows how much she grieves at the loss of the person who unconditionally loved her and satisfied her to the core. She was so convinced by the environment in which she lived, that the loss of it was indigestible, and uncompromisable. She feels so proud of her grandmother and the house in such a way that she wants all the others know how promising and satisfying was the atmosphere at the grandmother's house.

*'.....I who have lost
my way and beg now at strangers' doors to
Receive love, at least in small change?'*

The pronoun 'I' here is very emphatic and also melancholic. Emphatic in order to tell the world that no one would or could have come across such an admiring part of life the poetess lived and melancholic to let the readers know that she is a great loser and there can be no loser like her in the world. It also echoes her inner reverberations that when her grandmother was alive she was rich with love and after her demise she became bankrupt and started begging at stranger's door. She dint expect the equal amount of love that she received from her grandmother from the society she was in but only little. Even that little love she was deprived of. This makes it clear that Kamala Das' grandmother was an embodiment of unconditional love.

Why grandchildren are much attached to grandparents than the parents?

This is a common tendency which one witnesses in the any family for that matter. Generally most of the grandchildren get more attached and engrossed and enthralled by their grandparents' selfless and unconditional love. It is because of the fact they are pampered and petted among all odds they commit. Grandparents are more matured than the parents to handle the immatured and the innocents in turn the grandchildren get more attached to the grandparents. The reasons for grandparents being loved by grandchildren are enumerated by Jacqueline Carroll

Grandparents

- Are up for adventure as the kids do.
- Know many stories.
- Can grow things (garden) in which kids like to soil their hands.
- Are great guides.
- Are not afraid to be silly. Did a grandchild make a mask or a funny hat? grandparents will try it on.
- Let grandchildren take their own time for any task.
- Make best audience even if it is silly.

- Have coolest pets to share with the kids.
- Love to travel.
- Know tons of good songs the kids like.
- Are patient listeners always optimistic.
- Are always thrilled to hear something from the kids
- Are walking history books.
- Send kids the coolest care packages when they go away to camp, to college, or just for the fun of it.
- Sometimes pay grandchildren for household works.
- Believe whatever stories grandchildren want them to believe.
- Have skills to teach grandchildren which can't be learnt in school.
- We will snuggle up on the couch, when grandchildren aren't feeling well.
- Read favorite books to them, over and over again.
- Stay in touch and make sure grandchildren know that they're thinking about them even if they live far away.
- Let grandchildren teach us things, like how to use a cell phone and share photos online.
- Want to make every day they spend with their grandchildren special.
- Love grandchildren unconditionally.

When there are so many things that grandparents could impress grandchildren obviously the feelings of the poetess Kamala Das proves true and eternal.

The poem springs from her own disillusionment with her expectation of unconditional love from the one she loves. In the poem, the image of the ancestral home stands for the strong support and unconditional love she received from her grandmother. The imagery is personal and beautifully articulates her plight in a loveless marriage. Thus, the old house was for her a place of symbolic retreat to a world of innocence, purity and simplicity, an Edenic world where love and happiness are still possible.

"Love is a behavior." A relationship thrives when lover and the loved are committed to behaving lovingly through continual, unconditional giving — not only saying, "I love you," but showing it.

- Dr. Jill Murray

References:

1. <http://www.thegeminigeek.com/who-was-kamala-das/>
2. http://www.poemhunter.com/my_grandmother's_house
3. <http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/kamaladas>
4. <http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/love>
5. www.shvoong.com

**QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN UMAPARAMESWARAN'S
"ROOTLESS BUT GREEN ARE THE BOULEVARD TREES"**

DR. S. KALAMANI¹

J.ABIRAAMI²

¹Associate Prof.

²Asst.Prof. in English

Dept of Science and Humanities

Faculty of Engineering

Avinashilingam University for Women

Coimbatore108

Literature of early days focuses mainly on reuniting of legends, praise of peasants and writing about personal experience which give a befitting expression to their thoughts and feelings, visions and aspirations of the writers. However, this lasted only for several decades and the quest for identity is a recurrent theme in modern literature. The term 'identity' and 'identity crisis' is looked at from different perspectives relating to the issues of personal experience and the unhappiness of the immigrants in settling down in other countries. The distinctive formation of identities and their preservation are consequences of survival instincts have become a perennial problem for the immigrants from time immemorial. The sense of identity is a perennial sustaining creative force for the writers when they happen to be the victims of marginalized societies, groups or individuals. They live with the unlivable crisis of identity by either shedding off these concerns in their works or by seeking shelter in concerns themselves. At times distance dilutes difference that defines the identity. With the advent of new technology, the whole globe has become a village the identity is no longer fixed. A person got his identity by virtue of his profession, caste, religion, region, but the moment he shifts to another place, country, region he has become marginalized because of his demographic caste, religion and regional patterns. Hence the question of marginalized is related to identity and self and this has become the major source for the writers who are marginalized. . Hence Identity is an imprecise term which refers to "a configuration arising out of constitutional givens, idiosyncratic, libidinal needs, favoured capacities, significant identification, effective defences, successful sublimations and consistent roles".(Anita Desai's Introduction,1993 ,Pg XI

This paper would discuss about the agonizing problem of identity crisis expressed by the Uma parameswaran. She is one of those modern Indian writers in English focuses on the condition of Indian Immigrants in Canada. All her protagonists suffer from the loss of a sense of identity at one point or the other. The immigrants do not enjoy the life in "Straight lines" and smooth plains and neither can completely detach herself from her past nor do her characters have any certainty in the future. In the quest for identify as an Indo –Canadian writer Uma parameswaran expresses

the culture, mythology, rich traditions of India with sarcasm and and irony and tries to bring out that “Life outside India no doubt shapes one’s responses to India” and the responses may vary a lot depending on one’s own personality and values.

As the Professor of English at the University of Winnipeg, She expresses her own experience in Canada. She admits that there is racism and under employment in Canada. Her struggle to identify herself with the new host country enables her to write from a wider and more exciting angle. In her Canadian experience, immigrants were lost souls but in her transformation to a writer and a resident of the Canada in the process of immigration is something different. In her opinion woman experience diaspora under 3 conditions – first they grow up in a foreign land with their migrant parents, second by virtue of their homeland, third, they exercise their conscious choice to do to other countries in order to pursue higher education or for lucrative job. Hence, whatever the classification, in real life also, they caught between psychological problems of diaspora such as dislocation, unbelonging, marginalization and cultural dissonance that are common to men.

In *Rootless but green are the Boulevard Tree* “She narrates her own experience as well as the life of an average Indo –Canadian family which migrated to Canada for better prospects. In this play, the Bhaves a Maharastrian family migrates to Canada, leaving a well-settled pattern of life back home. Sharad who was comfortably placed at home as an Atomic Energy Scientist, migrates to Canada,

“ to live without tension and yet with dignity, to give our children good food, a liberal education, a healthy environment where, because the body doesn’t have to scrounge for sustenance, the spirit can aspire to higher experiences than this sorry world allows”. (77)

But in Canada, he couldn’t get a suitable job and ends up as a real-estate broker and encyclopedia seller, much to the decision of his own son. For all his optimism behind his migration sharad has to come across many unpleasant situations and has to find out his identity. He visualizes situation as

“It upsets me profoundly to find myself in a crowd. All these alien faces staring at or through you. It makes me wonder. Makes me asks myself, what am I doing here? Who are these faceless people among whom my life is oozing away? Each so self-contained, so complete, looking at me as though I shouldn’t be there .” (82).

In another situation, Vejala, sharad’s sister quit her Assistant Professor post in a Canadian University because of the insipid academic scenario and the colour- cum-gender bias prevailing in the University. The younger generation of immigration keenly feels that they have to face lot of challenges in terms of appearance race, faith, ritualistic practices, language and

political power. They have no hope of assimilating with the Canadian mainstream for the whites don't want to mingle with them. In spite of all these difficulties the immigrant achieves success by losing their identity in the process of assimilation. In due course, the immigrant feels the danger of a sort of pseudo complacency creeping in and creativity getting stilled and the ethnic identity getting erased.

As for as Uma Parameswaran is concerned, the immigrant spaces are homogenous they depend on how they adjust and adapts to the new environment and nation. She believes that one should feel part of the Community, one has adopted and try to grow roots there and for this one has to face the trauma of self –transformation. In this play parameswaran gives expression to a vocabulary of resistance especially to that of younger generation. In this dimension, parents ready to bear the pangs of criticism where as children are frustrated against it Jyoti; the Twenty year old girl says to her brother Jayanth.

“I'm sure hope it get into that thick head of yours that we are different and no matter what we do, we are never going to fit in here”.(27)

It shows the issue of oppression subjugation, discrimination and also the dilemma of the immigrant families who feel the pangs of dislocation. But the younger generation tries to adopt a compromising attitude as Jayanth comments,

“Dad there's no our people and no old country for anyone in the world, any more, least of all for us. This is our land and here we shall stay”.

This shows the mindset of the new generation that they want to establish their identity rather than fall back upon the old memory and nostalgia. They are individuals with their own psychology and biography reaching to situations in their own individual manner. Vithal who is Veejalas son and sharad's nephew unlike others condemns the merging and assimilation and says “They want us out we will be squashed like bugs soon. They've never wanted us and now we are a threat, we have to stay separate from them and stay together within.(54), expressing the fear of the minority. They overcome this problem as they have developed the quality of adjustment and try to grow roots through self-transformation. It is a gradual absorption where the immigrant has to adopt the organic process of gradual growth to carve space for oneself.

Hence we observe that a search for new identity, a loss of home and memories of the past were felt not only by the characters but also by the writer. She has handled the problem of exclusion and discrimination meted out to the South Asian immigrant and the settling of the Indian Community in Winnipeg through affirmative vision. She portrays this situation “by planting Ontario popular trees in Manitoba, all setup overnight around the new apartment block, appearing green and flourishing but which gradually take roots”. The only solution the reader

can conjecture is to accept the fact that all immigrants involves anxiety and belonging to two communities which forces a kind of struggle that they face in alien place. Parameshwaran deals with every possible aspect of immigrant experience through the varied degrees of emotional involvement and they have created a new culture, have travelled a long way from “Unthinking scorn, unfeeling barbs, closed fists and closed hearts” to being accepted and appreciated. Hence growth is painful experience for the expatriate and the recognition of doubleness, “fluid identity” is even more painful. But it is an acknowledgement of alternative realities where we take from each other’s cultures and redefine our hopes and as aspirations.

References:

- 1) Parameshwaran, Uma,” Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees” Sac lit Drama Plays by South Asian Canadians, Ed. Uma Parameshwaran. Bangalore: I BH Prakasham, 1996.
- 2) Jain, Jasbir. Ed .Writers of the Indian Diaspora. Jaipur: Rawat Publication, 1998.