

LITERARY JOURNAL



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Editors - in - charge :

Seetha Srinivasan, M.A.

Margaret Clarence, M.A.

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Editors' Note

The Literary Journal of Stella Maris College is a pioneering attempt to encourage critical writing among students and teachers. The first issue was published in April '75. This is our second issue and we hope to publish two issues every year.

It is regretted that the contributions do not conform to the usual specifications of literary journals as they are revised and refined versions of papers presented at student and staff seminars, and assignments and term papers condensed specially for the Journal.

Gitanjali — A Poem of Love

The "Gitanjali" — Song Offerings, embellishes a single theme, a commodity of a kind that is scarce in the world today. Love, Love, pure, unsullied, unselfish and wholly for the infinite; Love so spontaneous, so joyful so free. This kind of love that inspired the poet infused itself into the very essence of the poem, irradiating its soul with a rare incandescence. No human being can read this wonderful sequence without experiencing a compelling sense of humility — humility because the offering is made with a selflessness that the modern man will rarely understand.

Initial considerations establish the view that God is the principal recipient of this Song-Offering. To Rabindranath Tagore God was not somebody to merely look up to in awe, or stand in constant fear of. He did not represent merely the Upanishadic essence or the God of Wrath or Anger, waiting to strike with his Thunderbolt, like the God of the Old Testament. He was a Being overflowing with Love and Benevolence constantly seeking to assimilate into Himself, His Creation, Man, who was but a manifestation of His own Self. With this concept, it was inevitable that Tagore should see in God humanising aspects — God as someone whom he could identify, and realize within himself. If his Soul and Self were part of God, it followed logically that God was within himself. Further, God being endowed with this personality, needs human love, as much as we need His. Thus,

"My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation through my eyes and to stand at the portals of my ears to listen to thine own eternal harmony?... Thou givest thyself to me in love and then feelest thine own entire sweetness in me".

(LXV)

Combined with this was the concept of Brahma — Bihara, or the consciousness of Love, as Tagore calls it. Man had to be eternally conscious of God's Love, and the joy of the Holy Spirit that it embodied. He had to imbibe its qualities and this love had to become the unifying factor of his existence. When Jivan — Devata, — God Himself could love and cherish us mortals, to achieve man's

goal of union with his God, man had to drench himself with this consciousness of Love. And,

".....it is time to sit quiet, face to face with thee, and to sing dedication of life, in this silent and overflowing leisure."

(V)

Love then, to Tagore, was a religion. Love shed of the sensuous and the earthy, rarified into an elemental state, beyond corruption. This is the love that he directs towards the Supreme and offers it as his humble gift. In its acceptance, Tagore believed, God would signify acceptance of his very own Self.

The "Gitanjali" presents a graphic representation of this unique relationship. The devotee is all the time conscious of God's Love that dwells "among the poorest, the lowliest and the lost"; but sees no distinction between this humble home and the mansions of the rich. It is a Love that delights in the simple offering—a flower and embodies its Spirit in the self-same flower. It is a love that loses itself into the tuneful wonders of the simple flute, and renders them more perfect in its reciprocal melody:

"Ah, thou has made my heart captive, in the endless meshes of thy music, my master" (II)

and

"All that is harsh and dissonant in my life melts into one sweet harmony". (II)

It is this love that prompts the lord to come, come and ever come seeking the devotee who is caught up in a mesh of worldly pleasures. He comes not just once, but many times, sometimes in waking, sometimes in the dark, waiting for the devotee to wake up into His consciousness. The devotee realizes only too well the obstacles that hold him away.

"Obstinate are the trammels, but my heart aches when I try to break them... I am certain that priceless wealth is in thee; and that thou art my best friend, but I have not the heart to sweep away the tinsel that fills my room". (XXVIII)

Many a time does this apprehension and doubt haunt the mind. Tagore sees this wavering of the heart and mind symbolized in the storms that lash the outside:

“The sky is overcast with clouds and the rain is ceaseless. I know not what this is that stirs in me. I know not its meaning”. (XXVII)

Yet, the devotee longs for the shower of God’s mercy to soften the dry, arid heart:

“When the heart is hard and parched up, thou came upon me with a shower of mercy”. (XXXIX)

In this state of Grace, the angry storm, perhaps “dark with death” scares him no more. God, who is light, has guided him back to life. “Kindle the lamp of love with thy life, O Lord”.

In this consciousness of Supreme Love, the devotee is appropriately chastened by his mental state. Even as he chides the external pomp and splendour of worship, the meaningless ritual and involved custom, sometimes his heart shies away. Admiring the single-minded quest of his companions for material and worldly security he wonders if his quest for God is unreal. But,

“The question and the cry “Oh where?” melt into tears of a thousand streams and deluge the world with the flood of the assurance ‘I am’”. (XII)

With this confidence, all doubt is alleviated and the devotee begs God to :

“but honour it with a touch of pain from thy hand and pluck it while there is time”. (VI)

Blessed peace comes with this glorious reassurance and the devotee rests.

That, Nature, God’s creation for the joy of Man should distract or frighten him is a point to ponder on. Tagore envisages parallel reactions in the “Gitanjali”. Man rejoices in his surroundings and is in harmony with it. But when he translates nature into something of utility value its beauty disappears, and with it, joy. Or sometimes when nature is looked upon as an entity by itself, without God behind it, then it becomes a distraction from and not a means to realizing the Divine.

Again fear in nature is only an externalization of his own mental state that cringes from the force of God. If the power of nature can be accepted for itself with pride, like the devotee who accepted the sword as symbolic of God Himself then fear can be transformed into hope. And love is the only agent that can effect this transformation.

Love, we have established is the dominant emotion. But deciding upon the addressed person offers debatable conclusions. While the religious fervour, so characterised by spontaneity favours God as the principal recipient, the sequence can also be regarded as an expression of pure love that humans share. Its quality is the same - love that is aesthetic and pure, untouched by animal needs. Infinitely appealing, it is a state that the twentieth-century mind, attuned so much to the physical finds difficult to accept. The heart dictates the mind and with its meek submission sings aloud of its love, to its love, its moods alternating between pained ecstasy and delirious joy that is close to despair. The mundane, work-a-day mind set to the rhythm of this prosaic world, will find it difficult to comprehend or appreciate this category of love. The beloved here forms the axis and pivot around which the lover’s world revolves. Without the beloved, nothing else is

“Days come and ages pass and it is ever he who moves my heart in many a name, in many a guise, in many a rapture of joy and of sorrow”. (LXXII)

The experience itself swings between a silent softness that thrills to a touch or a glance and a discreet abandon that refuses to be contained.

“Ah, the light dances my darling, at the centre of my life, the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love; the sky opens, the winds run wild, laughter passes over the earth.

“Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf my darling, and gladness without measure. The Heaven’s river has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is abroad”. (LVII)

Its nature is intangible and its feeling, fierce. Agony, pain and bitterness coexist with exquisite joy, yearning and an eagerness that seeks fruition.

“Where dost thou stand behind them
all, my lover, hiding thyself in the
shadows?” (XLI)

And it is

“the joy that sits still with its tears on
the open red lotus of pain” (LVIII)

until

“From dawn to dusk I sit here before
my door, and I know that of a sudden
the happy moment will arrive when I see”
(XLIV)

One would note that this co-existence of joy and pain that characterises the lover, in all its intensity is a truly Romantic trait that Keats and Shelley share. It in fact, formed a vital part of the central nucleus of Keat's poetic formula, of which he himself was a living testimonial.

Tagore has set his scene against a background that is truly Indian. With a keen

awareness of its conception and growth the poet enters into the speaker's mood to portray it with characteristic brilliance. The colour and variety, its moments of quaintness, softness and simple joy in each other. But to reach this desirable and ideal state, they need the confidence that comes with the confession that without each other, life is an empty affair after all.

“That I want thee, only thee, led my heart repeat without end. All desires that distract me, day and night are false and empty to the core.

As the night keeps hidden in its gloom, the petition for light, even thus in the depth of my unconscious rings the cry - I want thee, only thee”. (XXXVIII)

Such is the nature of love; such is its dimension.

SOWMYA VARADARAJAN, M.A.

“Gone with the Wind” – a Study

“Gone with the Wind” is the stirring, immortal story of the Old Southa flaming epic of war and reconstruction . it is the story of the fierce love between beautiful and wilful Scarlett O’Hara and unscrupulous Rhett Butler. With its historical background so skilfully and vividly conceived, its scintillating dialogue and abundantly alive characters, it is, without doubt, in the tradition of the greatest of novels.

“Gone with the Wind” is the story of the disappearance of the slow beauty, the dignity, the genial grace of the old beautiful way of living. Margaret Mitchell takes us ever so swiftly over the ten long years 1861 — 1871 and as she fascinatingly unravels the story puts forth the concept of the “survival of the fittest”. “The people who have brains and courage come through, those who haven’t are winnowed out”; that perhaps was what Miss Mitchell wanted to convey. If so, she has triumphed marvellously.

Life in the year 1861 in Georgia is beautiful. Tara, the rolling foothill country, a savagely red land, blood coloured after rains, brickdust in droughts, pink in spring, is warm, bright and sunny, The lazy luxury, the charming glittering barbecues, dances, pretty young belles with flirtatious, dashing beaux... “Raising good cotton, riding well, squiring a lady with elegance, shooting straight, dancing lightly and carrying one’s liquor like a gentleman were the only things that mattered”.

But to shatter it all with thundering vengeance comes the ghoulish nightmare of war. The war comes scourging and seething, fiery and destructive. All the dashing beaux ride away to the war front for the confederacy against the detestable Yankees and Tara is left devoid of gaiety and laughter.

Atlanta, new, young and energetic is humming with activity, producing war materials. Finally there is the sudden end of the war but no peace. The scourge of war followed by the scourge of reconstruction, the Ku Klux Klan, the Democracy, the Republicans, the Scallawags, the Carpetbaggers, Georgia helpless, tormented, hammered down. But in the end the glorious triumphant victory of the

Democrats. They were all out of the woods, reconstruction was over. There was joy, excitement, thanksgiving.

But somehow, somewhere, something was lost. And Margaret Mitchell’s story compounds the varying reactions of its characters to this devastating phenomenon of War and its aftermath.

Rhett Butler, tall, wide shouldered, swarthy, dashing, impertinent and reckless is the unrivalled hero of the novel. Cool, intelligent and courageous, he survives the change.

With his bland impudence, impregnable charm and drawling remarks he emerges unaffected. Throughout the war he is the most execrated man in Atlanta. He does not go to the war, when he does, it is to return without wounds. Scathingly contemptuous of those devoted to the cause, he is the only man with money when the entire South is going hungry. He swindles the “mythical gold of the confederacy” and “kissing the road that chastised me” is not in his line. But finally, by 1871 he recants his Republican heresies and gives his time, money, labour and thought to help Georgia fight her way back. Whether it was for his beloved Bonnie’s future or his own — we know not.

He comes through triumphantly but he too feels the change, the sad loss. Bonnie was to him, a picture of Scarlett before the war, Southern life before the war—young, innocent, energetic and gay. When she dies, the old ways die too. He yearns for the “roots that go deep”. He wants to recapture “the dignity life can have when it is lived by gentle folks, the genial grace of days that are gone”... gone...with the wind. But he saw opportunity in the ruination of a civilization and he made the most of the opportunity. “Only the smart deserve to survive” he says. He is smart and he survives.

Ashley Wilkes, tall handsome, remote, lives in an inner world of his own, spinning brightly coloured dreams, coming back to reality reluctantly. Ashley and Rhett are essentially, the same kind of people. Neither believe in the War, but Ashley enlists and fights. He is

willing to fight a losing cause, Rhett isn't. Rhett likes to look it in the face and talk of it, Ashley cannot, for Rhett is a courageous man and Ashley, a coward. "People like Ashley — they just aren't smart, they can't survive" says Rhett and he is right. Ashley returns from war utterly disillusioned :

"All else is gone ; from those great eyes
The soul has fled :
When faith is lost, when honour dies,
The man is dead".

Before the war, there was "a glamour, perfection, symmetry to it, like Grecian art". But he knows those days have gone with the wind and he is afraid to face the new reality. Melanie is the only dream he had that ever loved and breathed and when she dies all the strength he ever had goes with her. He becomes a child helpless and desperate clinging to Scarlett's skirts.

To Scarlett O'Hara, the war in the beginning is only fun, excitement. But when it does strike her, it strikes her hard. In the middle of an explosive night, the sky rent with gigantic flames, Scarlett is left alone with Melanie and her new born baby. But Scarlett, never willing to accept defeat prods on. She reaches Tara, the only haven she knew, to find her desolate and ruined, her mother dead, her father bordering on insanity. "As God is my witness, I'm never going to be hungry again". Brave and authoritative she kills a Yankee soldier, leads Frank Kennedy into marrying her, takes over his mills - all for Tara, for Tara was in her blood and she would fight, not whine. But though she gets money, clothes, houses - all that she ever wanted she loses her happiness, Rhett and the ways of the old days, for they've all gone, gone with the wind. "I like these days better" she says but her voice is tremulous. She yearns for the "comforting knowledge of all that tomorrow could bring". Ashley fears the future, looks back, fails to face the present. Scarlett was not prepared to go forward with a load of aching memories, "she took life by the horns and twisted it to her will", she goes back to Tara.

But Tara too had changed. The old tranquillity was lost, there was only a resigned peace, a pathetic serenity. Melanie remains a legend, the gentle self-effacing but steel-spined woman on whom the South "had built its house in war and to whose proud arm it

returned in defeat". Atlanta is "a mixture of the old and new Georgias...but now "the old came off second best in the conflict against the rigorous and self-willed new".

While Scarlett goes to Tara hoping to love again in peace, Rhett Butler goes in search of old places, which must still have the old charm. But they will not be able to return to the old days...for those days have gone...away...with the wind.

"Was it for this the clay grew tall?
- Oh what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?"

"Gone with the Wind" is also the story of love, the flaming love between charming, selfish defiant Scarlett and insolent, incorrigible but magnetic and honourable Rhett Butler. The love story is a tragic one and the tragedy has been most pathetically brought out.

Scarlett wants Rhett to fall in love with her, and then bring him down a peg or two. Rhett loves Scarlett but won't tell her because Scarlett is always cruel to those who love her. Scarlett has at last found in Rhett "some one whom she could not bully or break, someone who was stronger than her who was bullying and breaking her". Scarlett loves him but thinks he doesn't want her and will not call him even when she is sick. Rhett loves Scarlett but Scarlett does not call him and he thinks she does not want him. When Scarlett does tell Rhett of her love, it is too late. His love, he says has worn out and he goes away... goes away when Scarlett for the first time ever approaches understanding any other human being... for the first time loves a man for himself. It is a moving love story, a story of charm and suffering, misunderstanding and heartbreak.

"Gone with the Wind" is besides the powerful, moving story of Scarlett O'Hara. It is the amusing story of the flirtatious Scarlett, the indignant story of the bitchy Scarlett, the admirable story of the defiant Scarlett, the poignant story of the passionate Scarlett. Miss Mitchell's power of evoking the right setting, the suitable background is admirable. Her art of characterization is superb.

With feeling and sincerity she relates how "Scarlett O'Hara was not beautiful but men seldom realized when caught by her charm". Scarlett might act like a bitch, she might be

rude, uncaring, monstrously selfish, she might be cruel to those who love her but one can forgive her all this for her courage. In the face of disaster, hunger, sickness, poverty, oppression, she can square her small shoulders and lift up her chin and the reader's heart is filled with admiration as is Ashley's who had "never known such gallantry as the gallantry of Scarlett O'Hara going forth to conquer the world in her mother's velvet curtains and the tail feather of a rooster". Our hearts go out to her, as she loses the only person that really mattered in the world - Rhett Butler. With characteristic defiance she says: "I'll think of it all tomorrow" but as in her dream Scarlett will for ever be running madly like the lost child that she is, groping for Rhett's arms. She might have got the other men she wanted but she cannot get Rhett...for Rhett is strong, unyielding, implacable.

Rhett Butler might be a blackmailer, a swindler, he might be malicious and contemptuous but even he is capable of loving — and loving Scarlett and he can love her for years, patiently, sincerely, expectantly. He can admire Melanie, respect Mammie, adore Bonnie and we can in turn, admire him for his courage, respect him for his principles, adore him for his capacity to love. It is sad and ironical that Rhett who can love as he does is not adequately loved in return and when he is he can't take it. Unemotionally and coolly he tells Scarlett his love for her has faded.

With characteristic openness and honesty he says lightly and softly his last words: "My dear, I don't give a damn". No line could have clinched more superbly the combination of honour and nonchalance in Rhett. A man who loves as Rhett does, perhaps can and perhaps will stop loving as he says he does, even if not, his obstinate pride will keep him from coming back. But somehow, however much he feigns indifference he is not entirely convincing. No two characters in American Literature could have been more marvellously juxtaposed as perfect foils to each other as Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara.

Miss Mitchell's skilful adaptation of character to the theme, of dialogue to character is veritably commendable. To presume to be capable of commenting on her style would be downright impertinence. The reader is spellbound.

She has proved herself to be a "staggeringly gifted story-teller". The story told with such pathos, emotion, fervour and warmth is a moving story...a story that touches the heart, wrings it, wrenches it. It is a book, unforgettable and spectacular, a novel that has become an indelible part of the American tradition.

N. MYTHILI
II B.A. (Lit.)

Among these the fops and fools are the most important. Manly in the "Plain Dealer" contemptuously refers to them as the "gaudy fluttering parrots of the town, apes and echoes of men only". They strive to ape the accomplished gentlemen, and in failing to do so, provide the necessary character contrast. This idea Hazlitt has neatly phrased: "Wit and folly, elegance and awkward imitation of it, set one another off".

Another important aspect of this comedy is its verbal pyrotechnics—wit. "A penny for your thoughts"—"It is not worth a farthing for I was thinking of you"—is a common example of its kind. Dryden assumed that repartee was the "very soul of conversation"; this exchange of epigrams is certainly very stage-effective. And the most frequent participants in these exchanges were the "gay couples" of heroes and heroines.

Any study of Restoration Comedy must seem incomplete if no reference is made to its chief exponent, Congreve. The final flowering of the comedy of manners is to be seen in his work. He borrows from all modes and fuses them into a new harmony. Dryden rightly recorded:

"In him all the Beauties of the Age we see ;
Etherege his Courtship, Southern's Purity ;
The Satire, Wit and Strength of Manly
Wycherley.
("To Mr. Congreve")

Of his plays, "The Double Dealer" (1683), "Love for Love" (1695), and "The Way of the World" (1700), are masterpieces within the limits of the brilliant, artificial comedy. Skilful

and apt in intrigue, lively and arresting in characterisation, brilliant in verbal facilities, they reveal all the strengths of his school.

"The Way of the World" is his chef-d'oeuvre; construction, character, dialogue are alike brilliant. Such characters as Mirabel and Millamant, such scenes as where reputations are murdered by gossip, the witty dialogue running through the whole reveal Restoration comedy at its highest.

Congreve carried to its highest perfection the Comedy of Manners. He regarded himself as the legitimate heir of Dryden, Etherege and Wycherley. Bellmour truly voices the spirit of this world in the opening scene of "The Old Bachelor". "Come, Come," he says to Vainlove,

"Leave Business to Idlers and Wisdom to Fools; they have need of them. Wit be my faculty and Pleasure my Occupation, and let Father Time shake his glass".

Wit was Congreve's faculty and pleasure his occupation; and he succeeded so well, that Father Time still shakes his glass at him in vain.

JAYSHREE RAMACHANDRAN,
III B.A. (Lit).

- 1 Lamb: Restoration Comedy.
- 2 Hazlitt: Restoration Comedy.
- 3 Collier: A short view of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage.
- 4 Dr. Johnson: Prologue spoken at Drury Lane.

Poetry Workshop — 1976

Why did it have to happen
That you had to ride out
On a fateful day like that ?
Was it destiny that sent you,
Or was it your own impulse ?
You've caused immeasurable sorrow
In the hearts of your near and dear.
You've gone — but you've left behind
An emptiness for them.
A person so understanding,
Having signed a pact with peace,
Uttering few but invaluable words,
Rarely smiling yet so charming,
With a willing heart and hand.
Mind as large as the universe,
With stores of rich knowledge.
To love him is so easy,
But to tell him so is hard.

N. VIJAYALAKSHMI
II M.A. (Lit)

I was so willing
to make you
my world
but you gave me away :
to the hooded Bedouin
crossing and recrossing
the desert with thirsty camels ;
to the philosopher
drinking one
of his many cups of coffee ;
to the Eskimo weaving mosquito-nets
to keep out
the cold ;
to Robert Frost
keeping never-ending promises ;
to the 'handsome' factory-owner
counting his pennies in darkness ;
to the garbage-man on 7th Avenue
leering at me ;
to wailing Orpheus
sinking in the Milky Way.
You've thrown away
the earth
from beneath your feet.

SHAILU IYENGAR
II M.A. (Lit.)

Age twenty one
Eating indifferently.
Reading Hobbes and Isherwood.
With sighs for
What was ; hunger
to read and read on
Through the books.
Paper on typewriter
and spectacles
peering lopsided from
the nose.
The telephone rang.
The wedding invitation slipped
Through the diaphragm and
the wire cackled with
rich laughter —
laughter of fresh flowers
of anticipation
Happiness.

A stranger laughing :
' Why do you laugh '
' Do I amuse you ? '
' But you don't even know me. '
So embarrassing
click and double
click.

Age twenty-one
Eating indifferently
With sighs for
What will. Thinking
of love and marriage
of laughter.

To sit in the lounge
of a five-star hotel.
I anticipated it :
People, people everywhere,
Moving like automatons (used simile)
A few, used men, women and children
The eternal lollipop-holder now
sat opposite me,
looking between the long pillars.
And there were no people
This one sat for sometime
and then slid off
the chair,
and I felt the silence.
Silence of the rubber shoes,
of squatting minds.
Silence is sophistication.
This is a five-star hotel.

J. CHITRA, M.A.

after the exploration
into the
geography of each
other's thoughts
we come finally to
our own island
of exclusion
in climates
where new revelations
are reached
we waited
the moment
poised with the
exquisite trembling
of a palm over the
taut curve
of a scorpion's tail.

JEAN MARIE FERNANDEZ
I M.A. (Lit.)

the city skyline slithers
beneath the
curved swing of
stone
listen to
the ritual chant
of
halted traffic
processions
the daily pester of
steady minute
hands
like
whining beggar
children
while in the anaemic
day
a yawning moon
loiters

JEAN MARIE FERNANDEZ
I M.A. (Lit.)

Oh! Ah! my beloved!
You've left me for another!
There's a gaping void in my Heart, which
even painfully sweet memories cannot fill -
I can vividly remember
the time when I
met you at the party - you were in a green sequined frock -
and you blushed when our
eyes collided ;
the night when I
held your hand 'neath the star-spangled sky,
and we hummed a love-song softly
together ;
the day when I
killed a cockroach in your attic and you
kissed my brow gratefully ;
last Christmas when we
kissed under the mistletoe and again
behind the dense rhododendrons, when you
whispered sweet nothings - for so they seem now -
into my eager ear ;
Beloved, I can never forget the day
(it was the twenty-fourth of April) when I
proposed to you and bought you a Ring.
You took the Ring and then
slapped my Face - my cheek still bears the pain -
Oh! Ah! my Beloved,
You rent my Heart asunder,
I am pining for you, drowned in memories.
Oh! Ah! my Beloved,
Come back to me,
or at least
Send back the Ring I gave you.

VANI DESIKAN
II B.A. (Lit.)

Attitudes to Empire in Anglo-Indian Fiction

It is not surprising that the centuries old Indo-British connection should have resulted in a vast body of English language Indian literature which however was not always of the highest literary quality. It would be interesting to examine the imperial idea and the portrayal of India and the Indian character in the works of some authors.

Kipling, to whom the 'East was East and the West was West', was the first novelist to speak of the 'White Man's burden'. British rule in India was to be a means of fulfilling the moral obligation to civilize the more 'Backward' races of the earth. British superiority is so taken for granted that a young boy like Kim can give the lead to his much older Bengali colleague Hurce Chunder Mukherjee by virtue of his white blood. Indians were generally considered to be children, except Westernized Indians, who were considered dangerous because they posed a threat to British rule.

Women novelists like Alice Perrin, Bithia Mae Croker and F.W. Penny followed Kipling's lead, but India is no more than a picturesque, and at times sinister backdrop to their exotic tales. They had little or no first hand knowledge of India. Flora Annie Steel was different. She wrote of India from personal experience, being interested in all aspects of rural Indian life, especially the situation of the women. Like Kipling, she believed the British position would be secure so long as Indian influences were totally rejected. Racial feelings were thought to 'make real social intercourse between the upper classes of the two races an impossibility'.¹ Her pro-British sympathies are evident even in the 'Mutiny' novel "**On The Face of the Waters**" whose avowed purpose was to absolve the majority of Indians of guilt.

F. W. Bain was the only Anglo-Indian novelist of the time to show a genuine admiration for Indian lore, going so far as to adapt the Indian style of writing. Bain made use of Indian myth. "**A Digit of the Moon**" owes its inspiration to the "**Panchatantra**," being a series of tales with a moral. Bain's sensuous descrip-

tions and lovely use of Indian names are delightful.

L.H. Myers attempted a historical novel of the Mughal era in '**The Pool of Vishnu**'. India is avowedly a setting in this novel, and though many incidents have their parallels in history, Myers' Hindu Rajas and Ranis sound more like twentieth century English people than Akbar's contemporaries.

A spate of literature on the empire problem coincided with the loss of confidence regarding the security of British rule in India. Edward Thompson, the missionary, was realistic about the drawbacks of British rule in India and the encroachment of the alien British civilisation. Sympathetic to the cause of Indian nationalism he felt that England was to lose her empire because of spiritual deterioration and a lack of love: "England has given up empire already. She is finished within herself, and wants only to linger out her days in coma".² Like his predecessors, Thompson felt that true rapport between the races was impossible.

E.M. Forster shared Thompson's view that the Indian empire was lost through the boorishness of the British, and was concerned with the moral wrongness of Empire. Mrs. Moore, in **A Passage to India** deplors the self righteousness of the British, feeling that "one touch of regret - not the canny substitute but the true regret from the heart - would have made the British Empire a different institution".³ Forster, like the older school of writers on Empire, felt that Indian was unfathomable, and used the Marabar caves as a symbol of the total negation which is the soul of India - incomprehensible to Europeans. While he was successful in portraying the pompousness and snobbery of the British, his Indian characters were failures. Dr. Aziz, ostensibly the hero, is naive, touchy and at times servile, conforming to the Victorian concept of the Indian as a childlike figure. Forster seemed to think it impossible that the two races should meet on terms of friendship.

1 Flora Annie Steel, **The Potter's Thumb** (London, William Heinemann 3 Vols, 1894) Vol. 2, P. 110

2. Edward Thompson, **An End of the Hours** (London, Macmillan, 1938) P. 127

3. E.M. Forster, **A Passage to India** (London, Edward Arnold 1947, 1st pub. 1924) P. 49

While Fielding and Aziz are riding, they are symbolically separated: "the earth didn't want it — the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds — said in their hundred voices, 'No, not yet', and the sky said, 'No, not here'".⁴

George Orwell, while portraying the darker side of life in British colonies in **Burmese Days**, saw the British empire as a benevolent despotism with theft as its final object. The loneliness of the British colonial is sympathetically portrayed.

Rumer Godden's works on the other hand, were infused with a certain joy. "**Black Narcissus**" is about a group of nuns who are forced to withdraw from a convent they have tried to found in the Himalayan foothills, because their Christian values seem to degenerate under the influence of the primitive world surrounding them. The British are therefore gradually losing faith in their ability to withstand Indian influences. Rumer Godden is one of the few novelists to perceive the timelessness of Hinduism, which remains unchanged like the river of the novel which bears that name. It is Rumer Godden's belief in the benign spirit brooding over India, seen in novels like "**Breakfast with the Nikolides**" which gives her works their unique charm.

Allegories on the imperial relationship have been written by Geraldine Halls and William Buchan in the years following Indian Independence. The former's novel, "**The Cats of Benares**" has a central incident, paralleling the Indo-British relationship. The heroine, after making pets of, and feeding a number of stray cats at Benares, has them destroyed before she leaves the city, for it would be even more cruel to allow them to starve. The British too, took on the responsibility for India unasked, and destroyed the old India when they left, succumbing to the demands for Partition. William Buchan's "**Kumari**" treats of the Indo-British relationship as a love-affair gone sour. Armin Wesley's search for Kumari, the Indian girl whom he had loved, symbolises the search for the lost India the English had once known. The idea of the spiritual withdrawal of the British due to 'tiredness' is to be found also in the works of the later novelist Paul Scott.

John Masters, a former officer in the Indian Army, has written a series of novels dealing with the adventures of the Savage family in India which reflects the spiritual history of the British in the country. Jason Savage in "**Coromandel**" is a seventeenth century adventurer. William Savage of '**The Deceivers**' is a responsible civil servant of the early nineteenth century, who helps suppress "thuggee" through boldness and individual initiative. "**The Night-runners of Bengal**" through its vivid portrayal of the Indian Mutiny of 1857, portrays the British sense of failure through the experiences of Captain Rodney Savage: "he sank into a slimy lake of shame. All that he was had failed... he had failed these men; they who were a part of him had failed themselves."⁵ The history of Robin Savage in **The Lotus and the Wind** mirrors the British search for identity following the Mutiny. **Bhowani Junction**, set in the India of 1946, deals with the Eurasian problem realistically. Rodney Savage, the British hero of the novel, is a thorough professional, but with no real attachment to India, the country where he has worked. His attitude is typical of that of his countrymen during the last days of Empire. Masters' ideas are quite outdated. The 'good' Indians are still those who work with the British, like the Collector Govindaswamy, and the Eurasian heroine's Indian suitor Ranjit Singh Kasel. As in Kipling, East and West cannot meet, and the heroine finally marries a man of mixed blood like her self, after giving up her British and Indian admirers.

The great quartet of Paul Scott's novels on the Indo-British relationship—"The Jewel in the Crown," "The Day of the Scorpion," "The Towers of Silence" and 'A Division of the Spoils'—forms a contrast to Master's out dated attitudes. Scott pictures with great thoroughness the attitudes of various classes of Indians and Englishmen. He portrays both the love and the hatred which was inherent in the Indo-British relationship. Acknowledging British insularity, in-snobbery, narrow-mindedness and conviction of superiority, he also portrays the deep devotion of many English people to India, and the rootlessness resulting from the severance of the Indo-British relationship. Scott's own admiration for India is obvious, and he feels that the end of Empire followed

4 Ibid P. 325

5 John Master, *The Nightrunners of Bengal* (London, Michael Joseph 1955, 1st Pub. 1951) P. 224

the decline of moral responsibility for their subjects among the British. His Indian characters are believable and often admirable. Scott is able to picture them as intelligent individuals, something Forster had failed to do with Dr. Aziz. Scott's quartet is striking also from the point of view of technique. No other Anglo-Indian novelist has been as innovative. Scott's use of the multi-perspective technique creates an illusion of density and authenticity. Paul Scott views the failure of

Empire in the larger context, as a result of a failure in human contact, and as symptomatic of the endless misunderstandings between man and man. It is significant that Scott began work on the quartet in 1962. A certain period of time had to elapse after the end of the Indo-British relationship, before it could be viewed justly, impartially, and lovingly.

C. R. SASHIKALA, M.A. M. Litt.
Department of English

Evam Indrajit — A Cyclic Play

INDRAJIT: There is just a large wheel going round and round. And we go round and round with it.

WRITER: One - two - three - one - two - three - two - one - three

Indrajit's words, born clearly out of helpless anger and frustration at the meaningless monotony of daily existence, concretise succinctly for the first time in the play, a philosophical vision of life that dominates the play. The writer's reply in turn visually and audibly projects a picture of Indrajit's view.

"For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" say the Scriptures. Positively viewed, the line signifies life as a complete entity; a chain of being, though mortal and transient, a cyclic process through a natural turn of the wheel, in which each line in the chain represents distinct stages of development, growth and finally fulfilment in the individual life.

To Badal Sircar, and to Indrajit, the central figure in the play, life is a "giant ferris wheel", no doubt; but fulfilment and perfection are not inevitable in the process. To them life, human dreams and endeavour become insignificant and meaningless, since death spells a return to a former state of perhaps, nothingness. They do realise that, "to seek a break in the unchanging rhythm of death is perhaps the most foolish and futile attempt of man in this world".

Their conflict and endeavour lies elsewhere, in "the audacious assertion of life". But man, they realise is only a negligible atom in the universe: "so many parts and bits and parcels and pieces and molecules and atoms and they mix and mingle and move and turn and go round and round till they become a giant ferris wheel". And later, "I forget that my existence is a pointless particle of dust". Indrajit, enveloped in a world of dream and yearning, aspires for individuality. The writer too seeks, "beyond the limitedness of his experience" which restricts his vision to the undramatic, listless lives of such as Kamal and Amal for a subject for his play. His inspiration conjures up Manasi as a fit counterpart to the seeker Indrajit.

In time, the two realise the impossibility of their dreams. Their aspirations are crushed down and enmeshed beneath the hum-drum day to day struggle for survival in the world around them of which they are a part. Life's journey becomes futile, carries no expectations, is obvious and repetitive. It becomes a spiral, coiling upward and outward to envelop greater frustrations and drawbacks that soon dry the wells of enthusiasm in them. "For us there is only the road..... we are the cursed spirits of Sisyphus. We have to push the rock to the top - even if it just rolls down".

The validity of this philosophy that speaks of life as a cycle - monotonous and uninteresting - we see effectively enacted and expressing itself in the lives of Indrajit's friends Amal, Kamal and Vimal. His dilemma is effectively juxtaposed and counterpointed as an obvious contrast, to the mediocrity, that pervades and is accepted by certain sections of society, represented by his colleagues. The play is in fact, a series of well-connected, contrasting scenes that together present their life-sequence in all its monotony, moving on two levels simultaneously.

Their lives follow a predictable course. Routine, inane talk in college of "cricket, cinema, physics, politics and literature" early in Act I, gives place to the obvious tension of exam results, the feverish job hunting, and a similar round of matter-of-fact office life at the beginning of Act II. Act III presents them in their next stage — an overburdened concern to get on well in the world, attempt at official promotion, security and material prosperity for the future. The unalterable chain of human life continues, so that the past, present and future merge indistinctly; so too each individual's life from the rest. Societal pressures goad them along in their insignificant lives, and so the cycle will continue, we realise.

Juxtaposed to their lives is Indrajit with his feverish search for uniqueness, and the writer with his instability and search for adventure.

"Birds-penguins, ostriches - strange people - Bedouin, Eskimo, Maori", are significantly contrasted with their colleagues' success. A gradual downward trend in spirits - from aspiration, restlessness, tension, to a feeling of

inadequacy, gradual indifference and tiredness, is visible. Indrajit's remarks on life followed as a sequence through the play reveals this. His inspiration dwindles, as Manasi separates from his life. He sees the futility of finding the meeting point of parallel railway tracks or an end to the Sisyphus legend.

Badal Sircar's bold experiments in dialogue, music and lighting do much to project his philosophy, and heighten the feeling of sadness at the human plight. Predictability is an asset to ordinary living. But repetition of this aspect in every life only emphasises the commonality of existence. This idea is deftly presented by the recurrence of certain scenes in life. Dialogue is effectively used to this result as in Act III where the characters speak in rounds and no conversation is individualised.

WRITER: They are Amal, Kamal and Vimal.

AMAL: Plutocracy - monarchy - democracy.

VIMAL: Imperialism - fascism - Marxism.

KAMAL: Economics, politics, sociology.

And so it continues; staccato phrases which do not edit their emotions. Their names are reduced to role numbers; and the puppet-show-like interlude at college, interview and office strikes their final loss of identity. They are insignificant but as a mass; as if to project individuality, the stage plunged in darkness lights up and focusses on Indrajit, Manasi or Writer in moments of tension and helplessness. While the regular beat of the tabla stressing the unchanging rhythm of life increases to a frantic tempo with the rhythmic expression of the writer's philosophy giving a rounded effect is sought in each act. Superficiality and intensity are thereby contrasted.

The dilemma is not merely the characters' life story. They are made relevant to the present situation, as the writer becomes a tired teacher to the audience, presenting through statistics, the current middle-class tragedy. The characters become symbols and are duplicated. Manasi, from the creation of the mind dwindles into another wife: Auntie could be mother, elder sister, anything. The writer is peon and job-hunter too. Each repetitive routine figures in society. Their identities are so similar that the different roles they play don't matter. Insignificant lives is the drudgery of many Amals. The writer seeking beyond the ordinary, is like Indrajit the eternal quester, who finally realises the basic distinction between reality and romance.

Badal Sircar has more to say than merely that life is a cycle. Tragedy and pain are part of it for the sensitive. To go round and round, according to a set pattern, according to the groove is the inescapable fate of lesser ones. To try to modify it, however, is to realise that life is a spiral, a never-ending road, as also to realise man's ineffectual position. Dreams are distinct from reality. Defeat is certain for the many. We drift on - fight and search in life as it suits us.

This is, the writer says "the tragedy of knowing" - "we have no hope because we know the future. Our past is one with our future. We know what's behind us will also be ahead of us" - a sincere and penetrating observation, the result of powerful self-searching, which though cynical and pessimistic is wholly realistic. Cynicism does not spoil the presentation, instead it imbues a detachment and an awareness of the inevitability of the frailty of the human condition.

V. N. USHA, M.A

Heroic Ideal — “The Old Man and the Sea”

In the words of Leo Gurko “To be a hero means to dare more than other men, to expose oneself to greater dangers, and therefore more greatly to risk possibilities of defeat and death”. On the eighty-fifth day after catching his last fish, Santiago, that hero of Hemingway’s great novel “The Old Man and the Sea” rows far beyond the customary fishing grounds; as he drops his lines into water of unplumbed depth, he sees the other fishermen looking very small, strung out in a line far inland between himself and the shore. Because he is out so far, he catches the great marlin. But because the fish is so powerful, it pulls his skiff even farther out - so far from the shore that they cannot get back in time to prevent the marlin being chewed to pieces by the sharks.

The greatness of the experience and the inevitability of the loss are bound up together. Nature provides us with many opportunities but the experience carries with it its heavy tragic price. It is not the apparent defeat that lasts. It is the greatness of the individual struggle that remains as a permanent impression. Hence the struggle is worth it.

Santiago is a prototype of a special kind of heroic ideal. After the First World War the traditional hero disappeared from Western Literature. The new hero symbolised by the common man having a capacity for bravery, independence, individuality, fortitude, and undying perseverance emerged on the scene. Santiago embodies in himself all these truly heroic traits and can be said to stand for Hemingway’s idea of “grace under pressure”.

The huge complicated system of politics, and the factory age began to smother freedom of action on the individual’s part. In his own life, Hemingway tended to avoid the industrialized countries including his own, and was drawn to the primitive places of Spain, Africa, and Cuba. For there, the ancient struggle between Man and Nature still existed and the heroic possibilities so attractive to Hemingway’s temperament had free play. In the story of Santiago, placed entirely outside the framework of modern societies and its institutions, he was able to bring these possibilities into full fruition. The struggle in the novel is

between Man and Nature, the curbing social codes being left far behind.

Within the Universe where there is no limit to the depth of experience, learning how to function is of the utmost importance. According to Leo Gurko “It is not enough to have will; one must also have technique. If will is what enables one to live, technique is what enables one to live successfully. Life is more than an endurance test. It is also an art, with rules, rituals and methods that, once learned, lead on to mastery”. Santiago is not an ordinary fisherman, but a superb craftsman, doing things with skill and thoroughness. He keeps his lines straight where others allow them to drift with the current. “It is better to be lucky” he thinks. “But I would rather be exact. Then, when luck comes you are ready”.

The most significant aspect of heroism here is that when the great trial comes, one must be alone. The pressure and the agony cannot be shared or thrust on others, but must be faced and endured alone. Santiago, his hands chafed and bleeding, his face cut, several times wishes the boy with him to ease his strain, but, it is essential to the heroic ideal that he be unaccompanied, and rely on his own resources and struggle through it all, alone.

Gurko remarks “The stripping down of existence to the struggle between individual man and the natural world during the course of which he rises to the highest levels as himself has an early echo in Keats’ line “Then on the shore of the wide world I stand alone”. Like Captain Ahab, like Lord Jim, Santiago is pitched into the dangerous ocean. Because only there he can reveal his true heroic qualities and come to final terms with life.

That Santiago tests his championship and experiences his spiritual renewal away from the village, in un-spoiled nature links “The Old Man and the Sea” to familiar tradition. Numerous American heroes escape from society to preserve their individuality and vital freedom. Natty Bumppo moves west ahead of the frontier; Huck takes to his raft in the Mississippi; the boy in Faulkner’s “Bear” goes away from society.

Katherine T. Jobs says, "For an individual to be the victim in the natural struggle is no disgrace if he fights well according to his gifts". To lose eventually is inevitable. But the noble creatures in the story - the marlin, the mako shark, the turtle, all of which are in some way identified with Santiago - transcend defeat by displaying intense life at the moment of death, as if defying death and defeat. After Santiago hooks the great marlin, he fights him with epic skill and endurance, showing "what a man can do and what a man endures". And when the sharks come, he is determined to "fight them until I die" he says. In this context, his words, "Man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated" comes alive, with great force and poignancy. Santiago is a fighter whose best days are behind him, who is too old for what his profession demands of him. But he still dares, and will not give up. He is undefeated, he endures, and his loss therefore, in the manner of it, is itself a victory. He continually musters his confidence". "I may not be as strong as I think...But I know many tricks and I have resolution".

Hemingway's heroic ideal in "The Old Man and the Sea" is one of a variety of heroic ideals found in twentieth-century fiction. If Henry James' heroic ideal is "to come to terms with

oneself" or "a realisation of self" as seen in "The Ambassadors", Faulkner's is "to come to a self realisation through love as in "The Sound and the Fury", Santiago symbolises the strength of the inner man translated into external action, a concept familiar to the Indian Epic Tradition.

The concept of the hero whose triumph consists of stretching his own powers to their absolute limits regardless of the physical results gives "The Old Man and the Sea" a special place among its author's works. It confronts us with a man who is not only capable of making the ultimate effort, but makes it successfully and continuously.

According to Clinton S. Burhaus, "From beginning to end, the theme of solidarity and independence pervades the action and provides the structural framework within which the old man's heroic individualism and his love for his fellow creatures appear and function and which gives them their ultimate significance".

SUDHA LAKSHMAN, M.A.

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England between the World Wars

“.....It was not like this in
Queen Victoria’s day.”

—*Bertie Wooster*

A society experiencing the effects of one global war and the beginnings of another must inevitably be a troubled one. Out of this chaos, in England, was born true modernity, for this was the era of Big Business and social decadence, of the New Woman, of the motor car, wireless and the moving pictures, of new fashions, of great advancement and great decay coupled paradoxically together.

Comparative peace since Waterloo had given rise to a dangerous complacency. Hence a young soldier of the public school ethos was fiercely patriotic, glorifying war as Rupert Brooke did so romantically:-

“If I should die, think only this of me
That there’s some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England.”

(The Soldier)

However, bleak realities surfaced and this attitude soured; trench warfare could drive men to hysteria and insanity or change them to indifferent automatons. Wilfred Owen’s ‘Strange Meeting’ expresses the pathos of it all:-

“I mean the truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity of war distilled.”
and the waste of lives, as in “Futility”

“Was it for this the clay grew tall?”

England was on the winning side, but the damage had been done.

English society between the world wars was mentally and physically a sick one. Eliot’s the ‘Waste Land’ portrayed the sterility of the minds of men. They were the “hollow men”,

“Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw”.

Western civilization saw “falling towers” - it crashed - with all its ideals.

There was complete breakdown of spiritual faith and morals; at the National Gallery, one had “Old Masters and young mistresses”.

Huxley thus cynically portrays it in ‘Antic Hay’, — “The great lady slips out, masked, into the street; touches the young man’s sleeve: Come with me. One is accustomed to this sort of thing.” Eliot’s young typist commits the same folly as Goldsmith’s “lovely woman”, but instead of dying,

“She smooths her hair with automatic hand
And puts a record on the gramophone.”

Morality was at its lowest ebb. Women were artificial, neurotic, with total disregard for morals and their own health — “It’s them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.”

Eliot was well justified in his conclusions :

“Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images.”

The social structure at this period is best described by James Hilton’s Mr. Chips,—“The old gentlemanly traditions of family and broad acres were changing, but instead of a genuine democracy inclusive of duke and dustman, things were reduced to the single issue of a fat banking account.” The aristocracy were quite broken by the dominating nouveau riche class—the successful businessmen and war profiteers, a class best represented by Richmal Crompton’s Mr. Bott (of the Digestive Sauce). They were powerful, but “all the best tailors, hatters, barbers, booters of the very best quarter of London could not put them where they pined to belong, — among the English upper classes.”

The stolid upper middle-class formed the backbone of society. In Bertie Wooster’s accurate definition, “There are some chaps, one look at whom is enough to tell you that they are pukka sahibs who play the game and do not do the things that aren’t done.”

The industrial towns were a class apart. The miners and mill workers were a miserable lot. Like Mr. Oakroyd in Priestley’s “The Good Companions”, “the lives of these men were mournful little budgets - ‘How a Man May Live, or rather, avoid death - on Thirty-Five Shillings a Week’”. These, with the assorted workers, disabled soldiers, thieves,

bookies and quacks, made up, to quote Inigo Jollifant, "an awful lot of hard nuts - only soft in the wrong places".

The most startling change in society was the New Woman. The prevalent sentiment, as echoed by Miriam in Lawrence's "Sons and Lovers", was, "I want a chance like anybody else. Why should I, - because I'm a girl, - be kept at home and not allowed to be anything? It's not fair, because I'm a woman". The suffragettes won their battle, and, according to Bertie Wooster - "getting it up their noses and not giving a damn what they did".

Industry was much diversified after the war and those connected with electricity, gas and oil sprang up. That machines and industry, and mining in particular brutalized man is made very evident by Lawrence in 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'. The mining world "was a world of the cruelty of iron and the smoke of coal and the endless, endless greed that drove it all". Mining was slack after the war. The cloth industry also suffered, "because fashionable women in Paris, London and New York have cried to one another, "My dear, you can't possibly wear that!" And it has all ended in machines lying idle". This is the bitter reflection of the unfortunate Good Companion, Mr. Oakroyd, after being laid off. Those industries made money where "men were like gods, or demons, inspired to discoveries and fighting to carry them out", - the chemical works, the car industry, the cinema and connected processes and countless others.

The wars laid waste capital and trade and now there was the problem of demobbed soldiers and unemployed munition workers.

Labour was restive, influenced by Russian Bolshevism. The employers' attitude provoked resentment, as voiced in 'Lady Chatterley's Lover', "It's time us poor folks had some money to spend, rich ones 'as 'ad it long enough". Like Mendoza in Shaw's 'Man and Superman', they were against the car. "all made by labour and on its way to be squandered by wealthy vagabonds in the dens of vice". Labour ultimately became the biggest power.

"The industrial England blots out the agricultural England". This bleak fact became very obvious during the Second World War, when "Dig for Victory" became the slogan

and people worked the land with a belated energy.

War and science brought cynicism and loss of faith. The universal attitude as expressed by Mond in Huxley's 'Brave New World' was, "God isn't compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness". The same idea is expressed by Gumbriel in 'Antic Hay'. "God, as two plus two equals four; that wasn't so clearly alright; were there bridges to join the two worlds?" Religion now was reduced to fads and people like Eliot's "Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante". The middle-class were the most zealous, like William's mother working for Church bazaars, Sales of Work, Temperance Societies and the like. For the rest, the priest was a sort of "automatic preaching and praying concern".

The public school had produced many fine men, but even that old tradition was now broken. The attitude was much the same as Shaw's in 'Man and Superman'. "The schoolboy who uses his Homer to throw at his fellow's head makes perhaps the safest and most rational use of him". Board schools and Polytechnics trained boys for industrial careers, so that technical sciences were taught. The public schools and Universities now became the select preserve of those few still interested in a classical education. For 'Enry Straker, the distinction is simple. At Oxford they teach you to be a gentleman, "in the polytechnic, they teach you to be an engineer or such like".

Girls, who were now "just as free as the lads", to quote Mrs Bolton, had a much improved education and could get jobs on the strength of their diplomas.

Daimler's invention of the motor car brought about, after the Railway, the next positive change in transport and communication. According to Oakroyd, one could "niver tell with-these things", but the car developed from the first shaky models to glamorous saloon cars. Smaller, cheaper models made the car indispensable and every young man, like Tanner in 'Man and Superman' could declare, "I am the slave of that car, I dream of the accursed thing at night". The car palliated the "two pennorth o' misery" of trams, relieved congestion and provided employment.

The other great development was the aeroplane, fully exploited in the Second World War and leading to the formation of the great aviation companies. The railway of Stephen Spender's 'Express', "gliding like a queen", was badly hit by the car and had to be rescued by the government.

"The telegram was apparently the common method of communication in this extraordinary world, where everybody seemed to be 'wiring' everybody else". Priestley here does not consider the many benefits it had, especially in help at sea.

Society between the World Wars saw a changed culture. English fashions, for the first time in a long history, turned sensible and stayed that way. Men wore, - to quote Shaw, clothes of "one of those indefinitely mixed hues which the modern clothier had produced to harmonise with the religions of respectable men". The average man had subdued suit and trousers, aiming in Jeeve's dictum, "at the carelessly graceful break over the instep". A bowler hat, a button-hole and an umbrella completed the ensemble. All variations were made upon this general theme, from the complete Bond Street Man adding such luxuries as silk, braid, suede and silver-topped canes, to the foppish student affecting knotted kerchiefs, brilliantine and spots.

The revolution was more pronounced in women's fashions, which become totally simplified. Billowing gowns gave way to calf-length, narrow, sensible dresses. Hair was worn short, care-fully 'shingled' or 'Marcel-waved'. Beauty could be obtained cheaply from bottles and hence it was suspect - "You've got lovely hair and eyes and teeth - they're your own, aren't they?".

Social customs completely lost all their old rigidity. The rich found the routine dull -

"The hot water at ten

And if it rains - a closed car at four".

Evenings found them at cards and gambling, dancing the Charleston and the Bunny Hug; summers found them at the Riviera and cruising, complaining, like Bertie Wooster, of "the nuisance of having to go and look at the Taj Mahal" - all the necessary vices of the gay 'twenties. That old customs were still relished by the lower classes is evident from Priestley's

graphic description of a funeral. "Mourners, mostly relations, still come considerable distances.....and many scattered families only meet at a funeral." After talk, "long rides, services" and grief, "a mourner develops a real appetite and funeral teas are good, solid, meat teas".

"The Stately Homes of England make good photographs. Now they are being pulled down. As for the cottages of England - great plasterings of brick dwellings on the hopeless country-side". This is the view of D. H. Lawrence. The peers could not maintain their homes and were bought out by the Americans or the industrialists. Some exploited their stateliness and allowed sight-seers for a fee. The average house, however, was now very comfortable, with electric lighting, heating, gas and refrigeration. This was the age of the small worker and of lodgings - peeling and sleazy. In 'Antic Hay' Rosie's is "a dreadful little maisonette, full of awful things." The se remained until the government clearance schemes took effect.

Literature now deteriorated to a mass production of cheap novelettes, the "penny bloods", requiring "no conscious cerebration". These consisted of crime, detection - wheels within wheels - or of romance and sugary sentiment. Even the scholastic Mr. Chips has a sneaking preference for Inspector French and Dr. Thorndyke to Virgil and Xenophone, while Michaelis confesses to Lady Chatterley that his plays are "just like the weather - the sort that will have to be - for the time being".

A lot of money was made in modern art, "all tubes and valves and spirals and strange colours, ultra-modern".

The movies with their sentimentality and happy endings were so popular as to occasion reproof from conservatives like Mr. Oakroyd: "Fowk seems to ha' brass to spend on theatres an' t'animated picters an' suchlike these days when they haven't a sixpence for owt beside". The 'picture palaces' minted money until television arrived.

In music, "Jazz, which had begun as an explosion of barbaric high spirits, was quieter, more subtle and flirted with sentiment and cynicism - it contrived to express all the sense of baffled desire and the sad nostalgia of the

age". The Negro singers made their millions on it.

The English never changed in their love of the outdoors. While golf, cricket, tennis and hunting were the gentleman's sports, football was the workman's passion. In Priestley's opinion, "to say that these men paid their shillings to watch twentytwo hirelings kick a ball is merely to say that a violin is wood and catgut, that 'Hamlet' is so much paper and ink". Commercialism was ruining sport - with big firms sponsoring teams, for men had played better even with no promise of "two thousand paund" or more.

"If some of the old England isn't preserved, there'll be no England at all". If Clifford Chatterley could predict this unpleasant possibility even then, it means so much more today - when all Huxley's impossible visions of a new world seem to be coming frighteningly true. But then, "We've got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen".

MEENA RAMANI
II B.A. (Lit.)

Narayan's 'The Guide'

(Paper presented at a Staff Seminar, March 1975)

R. K. Narayan's 'The Guide' has been acclaimed as a masterpiece bearing the Narayan stamp of "unhurried pace, unfailing good humour, kindness and gentle satire." Written in 1958 when he was in the United States, the novel won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1960.

The novel has been compared to Narayan's other works, especially 'The Bachelor of Arts', 'Mr. Sampath' and 'The English Teacher' as regards character, delineation of 'average humanity' and the ironic view of life. But it stands apart in its structure. It integrates two schemes (in fact three) and has two narrators the protagonist Raju recounting his life in the past and the novelist himself unfolding Raju's present situation.

There is no set plan in integrating the time schemes. The novel opens in the third person, with the novelist narrating in the 'past tense' Raju's present predicaments. The transition from the near past to a remote past is the shift from his conversation with the villager in Mangal to the conversation with the barber waiting to shave the jail-birds set free. Then comes the presentation of Velan's problem and this triggers off Raju's own narration, the link being, "it was in his nature to get involved in other people's interests and activities¹," for his "troubles would not have started but for Rosie"².

Raju tells his own story to Velan who interrupts him "I have a problem". Raju now gets involved in the human problem of Velan's sister and this involvement brings him his basic needs. Again the shift is from the present to his past life — a fit of nostalgia overtakes Raju when he reminisces about his mother and pontifically decides not to think of Velan's problems.

Chapter 2 begins with the past and the rest of the chapter oscillates between Raju's past and his solution of Velan's problem in the present Chapter 3, deals solely with the past, the 'business expansion' and Chapter 4, begins with the present life, the link between two and

four established through the gift of a banana to the boy. Even as he speaks to the elders of Mangal, Raju travels to the past "convinced that he was not such a dud after all". Chapter 5 is a long narration of "Railway Raju" his meeting with Marco and Rosie and his love for Rosie. In Chapter 6 is the story of Raju the saint-designate—"His beard now caressed his chest, his hair covered his back and around his neck he wore a necklace of prayer beads. His eyes shone with softness and compassion, the Light of Wisdom emanated from them"³ "He came to be called Swami by his congregation and where he lived was called The Temple"⁴ This is a crucial chapter in the novel and in Raju's life for it is now that his 'saintliness' is on test. The village faces acute drought. "The talk was always about the rains"⁵ ... Cattle had begun to die and they looked to the Swami for help "to fix it with the gods"⁶ Rising to the occasion, Raju decides that he will never eat tho' 'eat what' was the burning problem.

From 'He is a Mahatma' of Chapter. 6, the novel moves off to a journey in the romantic past which exposes Raju, the forgerer forced to 'take a more realistic view of his finances'. Chapter 7 ends with Raju's eviction from the railway station. Chapter 8 continues to narrate the romantic life of Raju as Rosie's - Nalini's promoter, guide and mentor. His 'involvement with other peoples' activities reaches a peak here even as he rejects his own kith and kin. Rosie's name becomes public property and Raju too basks in the sun of her glory. This is not for long for arguments begin to crop between them - that put the final husband-wife touch on our relationship". The turning point of the romantic past of Raju is when the superintendent issues theailable warrant. The narration of Raju's past life comes to a close in Chapter 10. Chapter 11. begins dramatically "Raju's narration concluded with the crowing of the cock" which alerts us to the fact that we are not the sole auditors - Velan is the rapt listener and this is the strongest link between the time schemes.

1. Page 8 The Guide: R. K. Narayan, Indian Thought Publications.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. Page 76.

4. Ibid. Page 80.

5. Ibid. Page 81.

6. Ibid. Page 83.

Throughout the novel, the transition from one time scheme to another, from the past to the present is effected very smoothly. In the earlier half of the novel especially Chapters 1 and 2, the transition is almost kaleidoscopic where the reader has to make the time leap very quickly but as the narrative progresses a smooth flow without breaks is ensured because of Raju's own emotional involvement in the story of his own life. This is seen when Rosie makes her dramatic entry into his life.

The organic unity of the novel is also due to the novelist's sense of identity with the hero. One extreme point of view is that the protagonist is cast in the image of the novelist. Raju and his creator have the same sense of humour, the same resigned and almost fatalistic attitude to life.

Further the manner of narration is identical in the case of both Raju and the omniscient novelist. One cannot really perceive any marked stylistic differences which will make Raju a different personality. Both narrations will not suffer any set-back if they had the same narrator, such is the closeness of their identity. However, the novel will stand to lose by way of technical dexterity. The techniques used for the simultaneous progression of the two narratives are introspection, flashback and even the stream of consciousness mode. These co-ordinate at various points in the novel and help to coalesce the past and present of Raju. They also emphasize the difference between Raju, the average and Raju, the extraordinary. Raju, the extraordinary muses introspectively on Raju, the average and through flashback exposes the basic irony of his life — that the average railway Raju became the apparently extraordinary man to save Rosie. Though acutely aware of his averageness he cannot escape from the martyrdom of a Mahatma thrust on him by Velan.

The most important technique which is a characteristic feature of all R. K. Narayan's novels is his dextrous use of irony. This is something that pervades the novel and cannot be pinpointed to particular situations or characters. It is neither totally comic nor serious but stands mid-way between the two moods testifying to Narayan's mastery over the portrayal of averageness and his studied avoidance of excesses. He is convinced of the averageness or ordinariness of all human activity. Whether it is the English Teacher, or the financial expert or Mr. Sampath or the Mahatma,

their destiny is to remain ordinary. Their greatness is imaginary, illusory as is the greatness of Raju—the end of the novel is a concrete example of this ironic ambiguity. Narayan's commitment seems to be this portrayal of the efforts of the middle class to extricate themselves from what Walsh terms 'the automation of the past'.

In 'The Guide' the fundamental irony is in the character of Raju and the situations he faces. The progression from Railway Raju, the guide, Rosie's lover and mentor and finally the forgerer to Raju, the Swamiji is an ironic commentary on life itself which does not allow anyone to be what he wants to be. Ironically enough, Raju is acclaimed a saint when he least wants to be one. The minor incidents also contribute to the final irony which verges on to tragedy. Hunger drove him to be a pseudo-saint and in the end he is still hungry—but this is a self-imposed fast to save the people'. Even the beard that he grew as a jailbird becomes a mark of the saint. And Raju never gets over that feeling of guilt which oppresses him both as forgerer and as saint.

The irony of character extends to Rosie and Marco, the ill-assorted pair. Rosie, though a Devadasi, has married Marco, an archaeologist which would partially remove the stigma attached to her. But yet, her dedication to her art and his dedication to his research leads to a communication gap and Raju jumps in to bridge it. Ironic it is that Raju who does not know the ABC of dance or art should be the *raison d'être* of her fame. Since Marco and Rosie are unable to really understand each other in spite of their staunch loyalties, they are forced to separate. Here also is an example of the irony of fate which acts against progressive moves in society such as Marco's courageous decision to marry a Devadasi, a social outcast.

Throughout, Narayan follows a sedate manner of narration. He is rarely pompous or poetic, usually following a direct simple manner of narration which sometimes verges on to the pedestrian. Even in those moments of emotional intensity as Marco's reaction to Rosie's betrayal he only makes a simple statement. "He never said a word." In short, Narayan prefers to understate rather than exaggerate and selects 'the average' and the ordinary for his creative technique. ■

SEETHA SRINIVASAN, M.A.,
Department of English

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