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Editorial

From Tagore to Agha Shahid Ali....

English literary studies has seen many shifts from the time of its inception as a colonial measure to shape citizens of British India. It served as a medium of expression of independence and has been used to voice the concerns of a new nation. While the British rulers invested in English education, there was a generation of scholars, teachers and common people who were easily tri- or multi-lingual. It is ironic that in an independent India the multi-lingual multi-cultural base of Indian expression seems to cause a great deal of concern.

As students of English Literature in India today, we are forced to address each of these categories critically. Are we studying English as part of literary studies? Are we studying literature through the medium of the English language? What can we bring to English literary studies as students from India? What is our anchor in literature in a world that is torn apart by strife and conflicts that are complex? If a student of literature can raise any of these issues in some way, the curriculum has managed to touch the soul of literary studies.

Literary Journal, Issue 34 (2010-2011), is a small attempt to share our thoughts on these changing directions. It is a humble attempt to accept the fact that one cannot say that one 'understand(s)' as Yuimila's poem cries out in anguish. While paying homage to the mastermind of Tagore's internationalism and superior craftsmanship, we are aware of the questions he raised. The 'Heaven of Freedom' he envisaged is nowhere near the horizon of our imagination. Whether it is the sphere of development of the country or the issue of a loss of land, it is dignity and identity that literature draws our attention to.

From the dalit and marginalized voices in India, through the regional Asiatic poems of Darwish, we read Tagore anew. We inherit traditions mediated through contemporary concerns. The issue places on record this shift in our perspective, still nascent but not irrelevant.

V. Padma
K. Latha
Nazneen Marshall

Contents

Tagore's Aesthetics*

In all Tagore's writings one could see God as the datum from which he drew all his inferences. To realize the divine, as the divine actually is, is what he wanted to achieve. A proper understanding of our role in this world is very important for our diurnal existence. "All our knowledge of things is knowing them in their relation to the universe, in that relation which is truth," so says the poet in "Creative Unity". He understood the unity of all things created by God. In the same essay he asks, "What is the truth of this world? It is not in the masses of substance, nct in the number of things, but in their relatedness, which neither can be counted, nor measured, nor abstracted. It is not in the materials which are many, but in the expression which is one." He was also critical of meaningless ritualistic religion. He understood the difference between renunciation and abnegation. He was first an artist, one who knew the true meaning of rasa anubhava. He, therefore, calls his religion the poet's religion.

Virginia Woolf, in her brilliant book *A Room of One's Own*, says that Shakespeare possessed an incandescent mind. One must consume one's passion – the personal does not become political in pure art – before one can be a true artist. Tagore was one in whom one could see the difference between rhetoric and poetry operating very profoundly.

He wrote a brilliant essay "East and West" whose main thesis is that there should exist a complementarity between the two. East looks to the within and the West without and both meet and, as he says, in that essay, "Truth has its nest as well as its sky." If one reads this essay alongside Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* one understands the difference between art and fulmination.

He believed that our consciousness of the world will be incomplete if we didn't realize that all things are spiritually one with our consciousness. We need to sympathize with nature. Herein, according to Tagore, Kalidasa succeeds where Shakespeare fails. In ancient Sanskrit drama and particularly in Kalidasa, one finds the author had recognized the kinship of man with conscious and unconscious creation alike. In all our ancient literature the chasm between man and the rest of the creation is always bridged but in Western drama, Tagore says, "characters drown our attention in the vortex of their passions." In all the Western plays nature is only a "trespasser", avers Tagore. All the plays of Kalidasa, Tagore reads as the dialectics between the within and the without. In none of the plays of Shakespeare, Tagore feels, has nature been given a proper place.

This is a very insightful understanding. Tagore is careful to add, "These observations are not intended to minimize Shakespeare's great power as a dramatic poet." Contrast this with Tolstoy's opinion of Shakespeare. Both Tolstoy and Tagore possessed proper understanding of their métier; both knew, to use George Steiner's phrase, the "law of amplitude". But in Tolstoy there was less dissociation of sensibility than there was in Tagore. Whether one is a disinterested artist or a true spiritual personality, as Tagore says, "there must be self-emptying before divine-filling."

Immanuel Kant wrote three critiques: *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical_Reason*, and *Critique of Judgement,* which respectively deal with the True, the Good, and the Beautiful.

By critique Kant meant a description of the fundamental conditions necessary for any particular mental process. The Greeks believed that if you had these three – the Good, the True and the Beautiful – you had everything else. We have our own idea of Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram corresponding to this. Keats reduced the three to two, suggesting that the Good is included in the other two or, like Kant, was eliminating Good from Truth and Beauty. Tagore would have agreed with Keats no less. Tagore said, "Beauty in its fullness of Beauty is Goodness incarnate." Primarily, he was an artist and only then a spiritual realizer and it is only through the via media of art that he could have achieved the latter. He developed his aesthetics through what he calls the "philosophy of surplus", which is central to his poetry and his aesthetics. He locates this idea in the idea of creation. Creation is, according to him, when the Supreme Being exhibits his superabundant energy in action. Creation in the artist is also due to this excess of energy. Everyone of us has this energy, says Tagore. We use this surplus energy for creation and not for utilitarian purposes. This superfluous energy the poet terms "surplus". This is what distinguishes Man from animals. Remember Shakespeare saying a man who has no music in himself is fit for "treason, stratagems and spoils". Surplus seeks outlet in the creation of art. Tagore says that he took this idea from the *Atharvana Veda*. This makes you assert "knowledge for the sake of knowledge." His philosophy of surplus has echoes in Kant, in the value-free side of his aesthetics. Kant maintained that irrespective of cultural differences the response to beauty, which is physchological, is universal. In every beautiful object, created or natural, the disinterested spectator seeks no profit nor sees an interest in the thing but enjoys it for pure delight. While Kant deals with aesthetics from the spectator's point of view, Tagore addresses it from the creator's point of view. Of course by this dichotomizing I do not intend to present myself as a victim of an epistemological gaffe by even remotely implying that the creator and enjoyer are mutually exclusive.

The reason why the West which also champions Art for Art's sake became disillusioned with the idea was because of puritanical idealism, says Tagore. He drew sustenance from the Sanskrit aestheticians who believed in the idea that disinterested enjoyment is the soul of literature. He agreed with them on the principal of natural unity of the self in pure consciousness (turiya), and of name and form, sound and meaning in language. In the essay, "Philosophy of Literature" he writes, "Art and Literature belong to that revolutionary region of freedom where need is reduced to unimportance, the material is shown to be unsubstantial, and the ideal alone is revealed as Truth; there all burdens are lightened, al things are made man's very own." If you asked Tagore the question, "Should the beautiful be subordinated to the moral and useful?", his answer would have been, "No".

Therefore, his religious sensibility was aesthetic. Poetry should give us joy and not knowledge. Art is dedicated to joy. As the Taittiriya Upanishad says, "Everything is born out of joy." He actually called his religion "a poet's religion." Religion, according to the poet, "is the unification or the reconciliation of both man's inner experience and outer expression." A poem is an affirmation and denial of personality. It is, as he said, "both the 'I AM' and the 'Thou Art' of human existence."

The philosophy of surplus seems to me to be a little more refined than 'Art for Art's sake' theory as it seems to recognize the human element in the creation of art as much as the latter seems too cold a monastic way of looking at art or creation of art. Tagore says, "Universal Literature," answering the question "What is revealed through literature?" It is our wealth, our plenitude, that part of our own being which overflows in excess of our actual needs, which has not been exhausted in the process of practical life.

Man makes things beautiful because the idea of beauty is innate in him. The useful can also be made beautiful. Tagore further exemplifies this idea thus, "We make a vessel because water has to be fetched. It must answer the question why. But when we take infinite trouble to give it a beautiful form, no reason has to be assigned."

Like a true Vedantin, Tagore spiritualizes the process of artistic creation. He says, "Religion, like poetry, is not a mere idea, it is expression. The self expression of God is in the endless variety of Creation." He says in his essay on "Lyric Poetry", "The world of literature and art is man's acknowledgement of the reality in him of the Universe." The entire Indian tradition is rooted in the ideas of humility and surrender. Self consciousness and arrogance are not found in the dictionary of the truly evolved. In such people, humility is not a mask, it is not hypocrisy. Tagore says in the essay "Personality", "In Art the person in us is sending its answers to the Supreme Person, who reveals Himself to us in a world of endless beauty across the lightless world of facts."

In his famous Hibbert Lecture, published as *Religion of Man*, Tagore asserted, "The individual man must exist for Man the great, and must express him in disinterested works, in science and in philosophy, in literature and arts, in service and worship." This he expressed poetically in the *Gitanjali* thus:

From the words of the poet men take what meanings please them; yet their last meaning points to thee." (LXXV)

Tagore also believed in a modified way in the Eliotian idea of dissociation of sensibility. A small quotation from him will help clear this idea:

"The conscious mind invites the attention of the crowd which it is always seeking. The subconscious mind…remains passive, away from the crowd. This is the mind which belongs to the race and to all humanity and which, like some subterranean stream, runs deep in the heart of the earth. You cannot call it your own private well, tank or pond…It does not belong to me. But the poet, through his nature, gives expression to this subconscious mind of man and the race. Thus the subconscious, through the poet, finds a gate, or access, to the conscious field of life" (*The Life of a Poet*).

In a way, Tagore's views on impersonal theory of art is not at variance with Eliot's views. When Eliot says, "Poetry is not the expression of personality," he is referring to the artist's individual personality – the subjective personality which ought not to be revealed. But Tagore says that the poet's universal personality ought to be revealed, and this is the objective personality.

Tagore believed firmly in the reconciliation of the dualism between expression and content. He says, "Of these two wedded companions the material must be kept in the background and continually offer itself as a sacrifice to its absolute loyalty to the expression" *(Lectures and Addresses)*. So Tagore is advocating the subordination of matter to expression. The Vedic theory of language posits unity of sound and meaning and therefore the different schools of Sanskrit aesthetics (alankara – trope; riti – verbal relationship; rasa-dhvani – aesthetic flavour) all had their basis in the idea of unity of form and meaning. Tagore also believed that the art world is created a well-wrought urn. And as Hudson says in his comparative study of Tagore and Emerson, "Invention is the product of abundance, not of dearth, of leisurely and creative thought and not of the pressure of the immediate need." The short essay "A Wrong Man in a Worker's Paradise" illustrates this idea, Well and truly the poet says in "What is Art", "For art, like life itself, has grown by its impulse, and man has taken his pleasure in it without knowing definitely what it is."

The Sitabhanga Caves of the 3rd Century AD in the Ramgarh Hills of West Bengal has a rock-cut theatre. The partial inscription discovered there throws light on how an artist should be. The first line, translated into English, runs thus, "Poets, expansive by nature, by generating a fuller love/identity, inflame the heart." Tagore possessed immensely this svabhava gurutvam, which P.S. Rege describes as openness and the all embracing quality of his sensibility.

It is a fine gesture on your part to choose to remember the man today. He is worth remembering but we need to rediscover him. It was ironical that the West discovered him for us and the whole of India became excited: "They honour the honour in me," he wrote to Rothenstein. People generally know only a little about *Gitanjali* – and let me tell you, Yeats never tampered with Tagore's translation except changing a preposition here and a pronoun there. He must be rediscovered because he has much to offer us. His prose pieces can rank among the best from any country. Some of the titles such as "Sadhana", "Religion of Man", "Creative Unity", "Man", "Personality", "Crisis in Civilization", and "Greater India", to name a few are as brilliantly written as they contain refreshing thoughts. His letters to C.F. Andrews, particularly, his correspondences with Dr. Radhakrishnan, his meeting with Einstein, all contain vignettes of beautiful thoughts. In fact, your department must include some of his writings in your English syllabus. His views on language are worthy of note. His influence on every literature of the major languages of India has been widely acknowledged. This is evident from the papers read at the conferences held in 1961 to mark his birth centenary at Shantiniketan.

**Keynote Address delivered at the Tagore Seminar held in Stella Maris on 22 Sept 2010.*

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SSKV College of Arts and Science for Women
Kilambi

Homeland

Tell me not that you understand
Tell me not that you know
You don't know how it is, being born in a place that rains blood
No, you don't know what it feels like
Waking up to the startled cacophony of gunshots

Can you ever imagine what it feels like
To walk in your own streets with fear?
The streets that are Home; the alleys that are Home
Have you ever experienced the fear of waiting forever?
Tormenting yourself with the thought of your father not returning from his walk?

Don't tell me that you know what it feels like
You don't know the terror seeping through skin
When the uniformed men bang on your door at midnight to search your house
Search warrant? It is never heard of!

Have you ever experienced the grief when a stray bullet claims the life of an innocent child?
A life lost too soon, and for what?
Have you ever been haunted by the sight of the bullet-ridden body of your kin?

Oh! Don't ever say you share my grief
You do not know how deplorable it is to see people cringe in horror
Seeing the supposed discipline makers
Claiming our land and dividing our loyalties

You do not know half the story, do you?
Do you know how frustrating it is when the one you spoke for
Accuses you of treachery? The camouflaged men!
Have you ever lived with the constant fear of abduction by the uniformed men, for helping the camouflaged men?
And the camouflaged men, those deceivers, barging in at gunpoint
Accusing you of betrayal?
Do you know what it feels like?

You know not a thing
All you do is sympathize and empathize
Do I need it? NO!
Don't ever say that you understand
You can never share the grief, the terror, the despair
The despair beyond comprehension...

Yuimila Vashum
III B.A. English

A Mourning in Monsoon

They took him
On a rainy Sunday afternoon
When the fresh-wet monsoon scent
Clung onto the crisp clean air
And her wet curly hair
And the moss cloaked lanes

The pregnant silence
Of the fern covered
Swollen walls
Loomed over her

Chubby ten year old limbs
Swiftly carried her
White petticoat clad form
A bright blur in green hues
Across rain clad paddy fields
Across toxic green murky streams

Within sanitized walls
He held her brown gaze
Before life finally fled
And ceremonial apologies
For unexpected death ended

A secret smile of promises
To meet near toxic green streams
Or monsoon clothed neems
Graced her face which never understood
The black plywood box and
Six feet of brown soggy earth that held it

Vacant spaces Vacant promises

The Monsoon gods laughed uproariously

Elizabeth Rahel George
II B.A. English

Development and its Discontents:
A Study of Vishwas Patil's *Jhadajhadati**

The notion of 'development' is at the heart of many projects in countries today and forms an important component in the self-definition of any nation. To use this as the method of literary analysis would move away from a post-colonial method where, very often, the blame for social, cultural and economic problems is placed conveniently on the coloniser. The model, however, may seem inappropriate in looking at how India has tried to and failed or succeeded in coping with her problems. Some of these problems may have been 'caused' by colonialism, but their solution needs to be more immediate and need-based. This essay will take a very brief look at Vishwas Patil's Marathi novel *Jhadajhadati* to see how it depicts the sufferings endured by an entire community as it falls prey to government machinery and its plans of 'developing' the area.

The model followed by India for development and planning is the five-year plan model wherein the government allocates funds for the next five years for areas that it considers necessary to 'develop' or change. Over the years, a definite shift can be seen in the perspective of the plans. The accent on heavy industries and agriculture in the first four to five plans has given way to a greater understanding that the government needs to fulfil both *practical* needs (providing basic physical needs such as water, food, shelter etc.) as well as *strategic* needs (providing transformative needs like education that can lead to changes in social structure). Very interestingly, the plans also included ensuring environmental sustainability of development processes and empowerment of women and socially disadvantaged groups.

The very process and implementation of development projects have come under severe attack by various groups recently. Ecofeminists like Vandana Shiva argue that the assumption that maximum (rather than optimum) use of natural resources would result in 'development' is basically a Western, masculine assumption that places women and the environment on par as objects of consumption; other feminist critics and sociologists argue that the problems thrown up by development are faced more by women than by the men of a community; environmentalists point to the disastrous effects that many 'development' programmes have on the flora and fauna while human rights activists draw our attention to the number of people – especially indigenous people – whose lives and culture are threatened by these development programmes.

Although fiction in India has been dealing with development and its problems for quite some time, it has for long been read within the tradition – modernity dichotomy. This dichotomy allowed the text and its critics to eulogise rural India and to see urbanity and its markers as eroding the pristine purity of the countryside. Kamala Markandeya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) is a case in point. More recent novels, however, force us to look not merely at the *effects* of development, but at the *assumptions* and *processes* behind it; they have forced criticism to look into the role of the State , the authorities and local organisations in the execution of these plans. *Jhadajhadati,* written by a former Maharashtrian Rehabilitation Officer, Vishwas Patil, is a semi-first hand account and critique of development programmes and their implementation.

Set in the remote village of Jhambali in Maharashtra, *Jhadajhadati* tells the saga of the suffering that the village has to undergo because of the large dam which is to be built over the river that irrigates it. It therefore becomes natural that we read the novel against the background not only of the aims of, but also the reasons for, such irrigation projects and see how the text questions different dimensions of such projects.

Irrigation projects are primarily an attempt to provide one of the basic human needs, namely water, to all sections of society and to make this water available for purposes of agriculture and everyday consumption. Since a large amount of national income is generated out of agriculture, providing water for this purpose becomes a matter of national concern. Moreover, such projects, as Jai Nimbkar mentions at the beginning of her review of *Jhadajhadati* in *Indian Review of Books* titled "Disturbing and Depressing", help in overcoming the dependence of agriculture on erratic monsoon, making electricity available for rural areas and providing employment and basic health facilities. We may note that these objectives address both practical and strategic needs of a community. In the federal system of government, irrigation projects and water facilities come under the purview of the State governments which nonetheless need to get funds for them from the government at the centre. The entire process requires a good deal of teamwork since a lot of planning and documentation is required. For this very reason, they are open to rampant misuse owing to human greed and avarice – especially given the power-mongering nature of rural India today.

Jhadajhadati is not against the idea of development itself; it agrees that such interventions are necessary to correct geographical inequalities. It is however, critical of the underlying assumptions, the implementation and the total disregard for human emotions in the entire process.

Irrigation projects have been divided to mainly two kinds – medium and major irrigation projects. Medium Irrigation Projects have a Culturable Command Area (CCA) between 2,000 and 10,000 hectares and Major Irrigation Projects, a CCA of more than 10,000 hectares. By the end of the XI plan, i.e. by 1997, there were a total of 402 irrigation projects *(Manorama Year Book 2001).* Most of these statistics are official and have usually been projected by the government and government agencies to highlight the achievements of planning and development charted out and followed by them. While they had been quite unquestioningly accepted for a long time, today they are regarded with severe reservation, as it is understood that these projects – especially the major ones – are fulfilled with disastrous effects on the flora, fauna and the indigenous people living in the areas where a given dam is to be built. The rightful publicity given to the Narmada Bachao Andolan has made the common people all the more keenly aware of this condition. One such instance forms the central theme of *Jhadajhadati.*

The plan to build the dam, however, is initiated not as a goodwill gesture or as a genuine attempt to help the people of Baghethan, the dam is to be built so that the local MP – Shingade Patil – can provide his son with a sugar factory in Baghethan. The omniscient authorial voice in the novel, without once interrupting the flow of dialogue, manages to debunk the politicians who make a mockery of the idea of participatory planning.

While the political and personal motive behind the project is one of the reasons for its failure, the novel also implicitly critiques the assumptions behind such development projects. Shiva in *Staying Alive* relates this attitude to Western masculinity and therefore brands most theories of development as patriarchal. The verity of this claim can be best seen in *Jhadajhadati* when the leader of the agitation – Khairmode Master – suggests the alternative of building three small dams instead of one large one:

"Why are you removing these villages? Why do you want to destroy these settlements? Won't it be better to make three small dams instead of one big one? Then no village will need to be evacuated. The other region will also get water. These people will not need to be displaced and we won't have to bear the burden of leaving the village. And development there definitely will be" (64).

Rehabilitation is a necessary correlative in any development project which causes complete or partial destruction of habitable areas or life forms. In the case of the Jhambali project, at least four to five villages will be partially submerged and alternative living arrangements for these villagers have to be made by the government. Evacuating and resituating an entire village, however, is a daunting task and various kinds of practical, documentational and emotional problems have to be faced. In its impersonal execution of the plans, the government machinery does not give any weight to the emotional attachment of a people to their land. At the same time, heavy stress is laid on documentary proof in order that an individual be considered for rehabilitation and compensation. The uneducated status of the villagers – especially women – and the red tape involved in getting the necessary documents create some very pathetic at the same time absurd situations that merely go to reiterate the inefficiency of the ways in which development projects are implemented.

The most absurd situation in the novel, involves Bannu Kaaki and subtly questions the extent to which we need to rely on documentation and certification. Narrated, like most other incidents, as a simple dialogue, the incident takes on ludicrous overtones:

> "What's your name?"
>
> "Bannu – Bannu Sawleram Karbande."
>
> "Is the sarpanch your son?"
>
> "Yes, my husband's other wife's son – he's my husband's son only."
>
> The officer became a little calmer. Lazily, he said, "Old lady, you won't get any money"
>
> "What? How will I not get any money?" Bannu Kaaki almost screamed.
>
> "You are dead."
>
> "What? I am dead?" Twisting her face a little, Bannu Kaaki said, "Saab, why are you joking with an old woman like me?"
>
> "But that's what is written in the record, no?"
>
> "What is that?"
>
> "Your stepson has given a statement of your death and got your death certificate. He has taken both your shares of the money long back." . . . .

"Saab, you yourself tell me, what am I to do?"

"Get your death certificate."

"But, saab, you are seeing, no? I am very much alive," Bannu Kaaki began to cry loudly.

"Old woman, crying won't help you in any way. You will have to get your death certificate," the officer said loudly.

"But, saab, I am alive…"

"We need written proof of that. Get a certificate like that." (102)

Illiterate as she is and having no direct access to law, the long-winding legal procedures that follow make it impossible for Bannu Kaaki to get the money due to her. Apart from the financial and practical aspects of rehabilitation, the entire process involves intense emotional trauma.

The novel puts the very idea of 'project-affected' – in this case 'dam-affected' - at more personal and even religious levels. As the novel moves on, we realise that being 'dam-affected' becomes equivalent to being punished. The very title of the novel reiterates this – *'jhadajhadati'* in Marathi means undeserved punishment or being punished without knowing the reason for the punishment.

Jhadajhadati therefore also acts as a novel wherein the very process of democratic governance is questioned. The government's inability to understand and take into account these aspects of rehabilitation is critiqued and the novel subtly asks for better implementation of development projects and demands a better understanding of the local positions before planning such major projects.

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* *An excerpt from Chapter 5 of Fiction as Window: Critiquing Indian Literary Cultural Ethos since the 1980s.*

Note: All passages from the novel have been translated into English by the author from the Hindi translation.

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An Overview of Tagore's Paintings *

I know not who paints the picture on memory's canvas; but whoever he may be, what he is painting are pictures; by which I mean that he is not there with his brush simply to make a faithful copy of all that is happening. He takes in and leaves off according to his taste. He makes many a big thing small, and small thing big. He has no compunction in putting into the background that which was to the fore or bringing to the front that which was behind. In short, he is painting pictures and not writing history. Rabindranath Tagore, My Reminiscences

Rabindranath Tagore had wanted to paint from a very early age but did not, because he felt he lacked the necessary skill and training. Therefore, when he took to painting in his later years, he was already an established and mature creative person, a poet who had a vision that sustained him. The questions of whether the medium of poetry was inadequate for his effervescent creative energy or whether his own genius was exhausted in poetry and renewed in painting is answered in his own words – "A great part of literature is insubstantial; with some change in the language, it loses its aesthetic power…Painting has, in a sense, greater stability. It is here that seeing through the eyes and seeing through the language are different." It is also important to note that his poems have always had, what Gayatri Sinha calls "painterly images". (qtd in "Drawings and Paintings of Rabindranath Tagore" 5). This can be seen in the following lines --

Thou art a glimmer of gold from the dawn on my life,

As dew drops on the first flower of autumn

Thou art a rainbow from the distant sky blending over the dust,

A dream of the crescent moon touched with a white cloud.

Tagore was exposed to primitive art, Western art and child art. Child art in particular, was one of the primary influences on his own art, and when he saw in an art class for children in Vienna, their spontaneous use of colours and uninhibited strokes, unaffected by their lack of skill or training, Tagore was inspired. His art began as doodling in the margins of his poems' manuscripts. Also, if there was a correction or erasure to be made in the lines of a poem, that was also converted to a work of art, sometimes done over the entire writing too. He preferred his art to be a work of imagination, rather than representation. So he started with images of primeval creatures, and then moved on to the images of people around him, and the people deeply imprinted in his mind. These images were produced with an intensity that did not represent the people as such, but rather presented his vivid impressions of them.

Tagore's painting career can be divided into three phases – the first phase from 1924 to 1930, the second phase in the early 30s and the last phase from 1935 to 1941, when he died. His early works were ink paintings, monochrome, and done with a fountain pen. The pen was used laterally, then fingers and rag spread the ink. The brush was the last to be adopted. Two toned and three toned paintings followed soon. As his art developed, his paintings became polychromes, and predominant colours used were bright orange, brilliant blue and acid green.

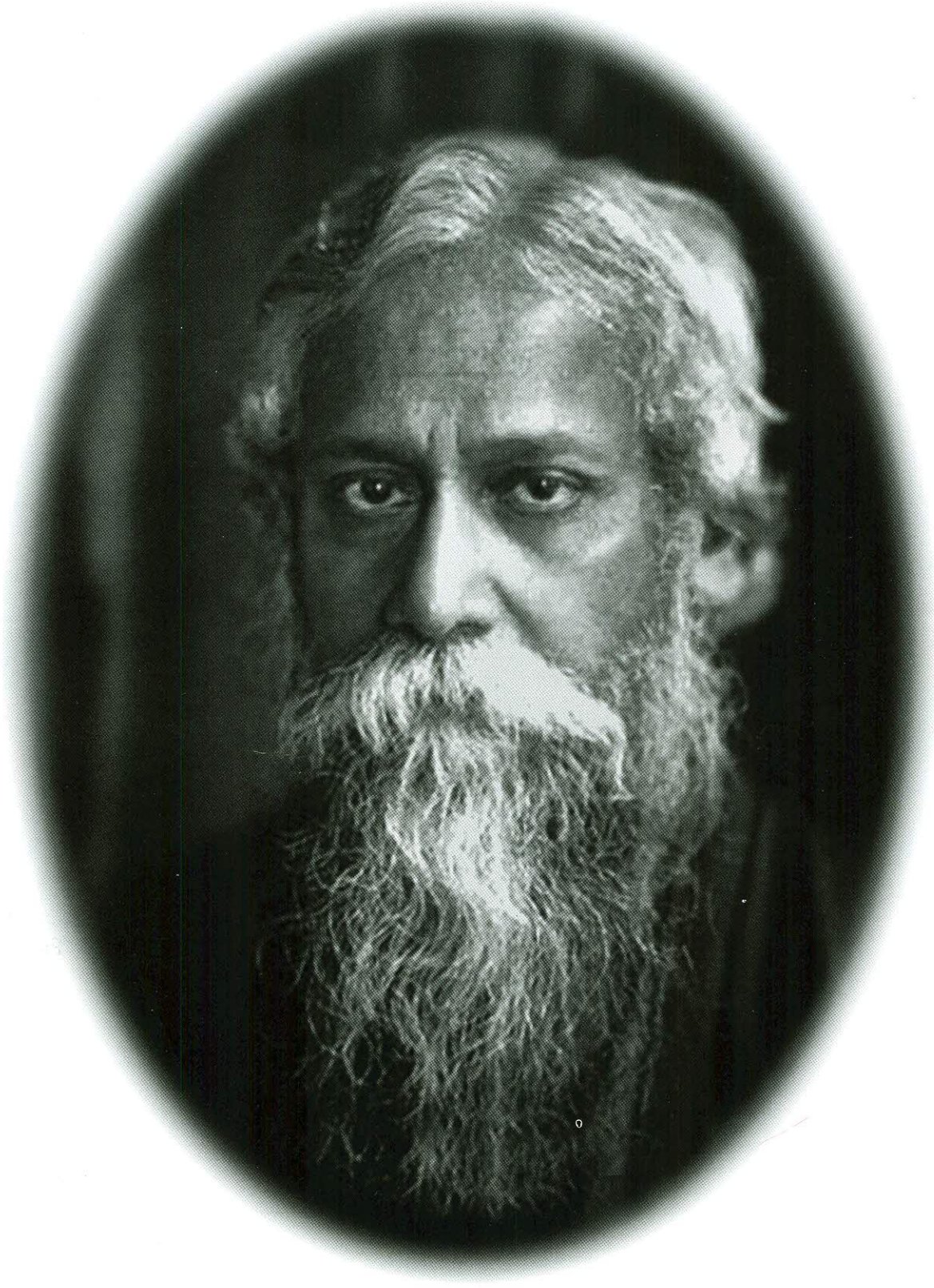
From 1932, as Neogy, an artist from Shantiniketan, observes, Tagore used "opaque colours for rugged texture and sometimes as very sharp highlight. Crayons, experimental corrosive inks, fugitive vegetable colours, varnishes of different kinds were playfully applied on any quality of paper at hand" ("Drawings and Paintings of Rabindranath Tagore" 5). Another notable feature of Tagore's paintings was that his background was plain and neutral, thus adding emphasis to the image itself.

Automatism is a significant aspect of the creation of Tagore's paintings. The artist is therefore involved only in facilitating the birth of the work of art. It is unhampered by reason, and the work of art thus created is *through* the artist and not *by* the artist, and the nature of this art is completely organic. The unpredictability in the process and result of an automatic creative process fascinated Tagore. He states that "Drawing should be made by allowing the hand to run freely with the least possible deliberation. In time, shapes will be found to evolve, suggesting conceptions …" ("Art and Tradition" 8). Unconscious forms appear from the depth of memories.

Tagore did not believe in conforming unwaveringly to any of the traditional structures of art. In fact, he believed in their pliability. "All traditional structures of art", he asserts, "must have a sufficient degree of elasticity to allow it to respond to various impulses of life … to grow with its growth, to dance with its rhythm." Therefore, he strongly believed that "fearfully trying always to conform to a conventional type is a sign of immaturity." Influence from various sources, is not just acceptable, but required. "The human soul", he claims, "is proud of its comprehensive sensitiveness; it claims its freedom of entry everywhere when it is fully alive and awake." and "The power to combine and produce new variations, with no absolute restriction, reveals the truth of the deep unity of human psychology" ("Art and Tradition" 9). Influences from the West on the East enrich art, but it should not, Tagore believed, lead to mindless aping of their art. Indian Art, he asserted, should indicate the Indian tradition and temperament. "Our art is sure to have a quality that is Indian – an inner quality, not an artificially fostered formalism" ("Art and Tradition" 9). This view of Tagore sufficiently explains his role as a revivalist in Indian Nationalist Painting and as a significant exponent of Asian cultural coherence.

Tagore's images are very striking. A woman with large, soulful eyes is almost an obsessive theme throughout and his paintings are replete with faces of women, who as Kramrisch remarks, seem individuals, not types. They are alone, and seem to be brooding, lips unsmiling. Parimoo observes how a significant number of his paintings have "goggle eyed creatures, beaky or with gnawing teeth, quizzical human heads, curvy sinuous snakes" ("The Sources and Development of Rabindranath's Paintings" 49). In fact, the images are projected in so grotesque a manner that it sometimes even becomes difficult to determine which species the creature belongs to. As to the inexplicable nature of his paintings, Tagore famously remarked, "People often ask me about the meaning of my pictures. I remain silent, even as my pictures are. It is for them to express and not to explain."

Tagore's paintings also project a variety of states, as Neogy observes, ranging from mystery, beastliness, incandescence, peace, masks, power and glory ("Drawings and Paintings of



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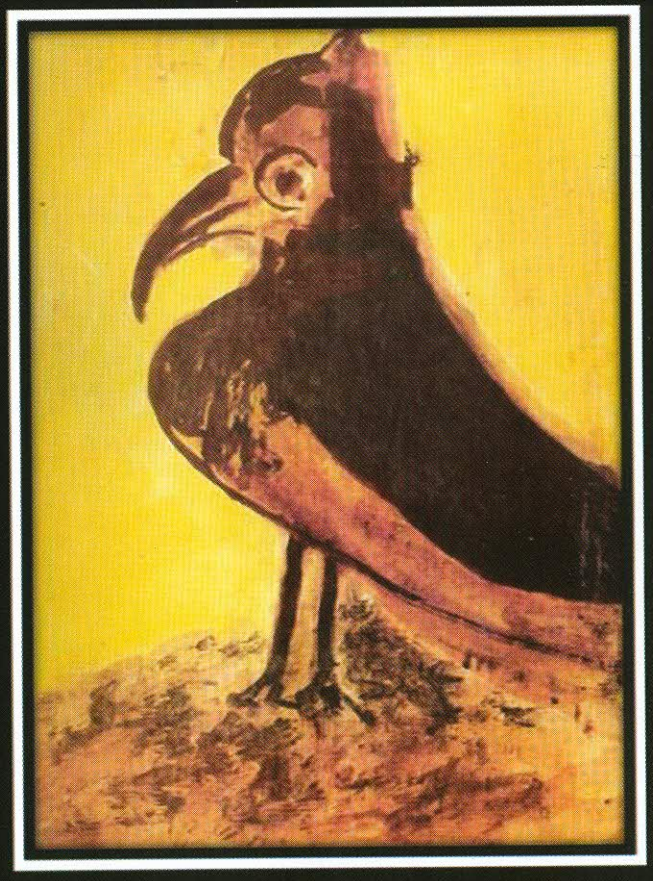

Rabindranath Tagore

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet.
The infinite sky is motionless overhead
and the restless water is boisterous.
On the seashore of endless worlds
the children meet with shouts and dances.

rabindranath tagore

Rabindranath Tagore" 6). The image of the vessel, in particular, is very significant, and Tagore himself was compulsorily drawn to it ("Vessel-Shape as a Pictorial Motif in Rabindranath's Paintings" 99). He used the symbol of the vessel in different shapes – of birds, animals and humans. The human body itself, in the Indian spiritual tradition, is compared to a frail vessel that will be filled only by God's grace – the *Gitanjali* begins –

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.(I)

It also symbolizes the shaping vessel of imagination, integral to any creative person. His signatures, too, were a part of his art as they were close to calligraphy. The Bengali signature was vertically aligned and highly ornamental in style. It read Sri Rabindra. Later, the Sri was dropped, and the signature became shorter and less curvy.

Tagore's paintings have been exhibited in India and Europe, including cities like Paris, Berlin, Moscow and Birmingham. Shantiniketan, which embodies all his aesthetic principles, especially his credo that art should be the response of "the creative soul to the call of the real", has served to inspire, encourage and guide young artists. Another observation by Tagore on art aptly describes his own artistic process. "Art" he says, "is a solitary pedestrian who walks among the multitude, continually assimilating various experiences, unclassifiable and uncatalogued" ("Art and Tradition" 8). Therefore, as Neogy states, the "extraordinary inner journey of a complex individual through the ecstatic affirmation of existence … the dramatic characterization of concepts and association being the total fantasy of the emotional world" ("Drawings and Paintings of Rabindranath Tagore" 7) is traced in Tagore's paintings.

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II M.A. English

Strain of Mysticism in Tagore's play
*The King of the Dark Chamber**

Bengali Literature had two main strains – the socio-political strain of writers like Saratchandra Chatterjee and the social and mystical strain of Tagore's works. Tagore is known for his powerful writing. The play *The King of the Dark Chamber* can be seen as an example.

The King in the play meets his Queen only in a dark chamber. Neither the Queen nor the subjects have seen this King. Some are even sceptical of his existence. To crown it all, the Queen complains about not knowing her husband. On the Queen's insistence, the King agrees to show her his face among the crowd on the day of the Spring Festival. But on that day, an imposter Suvarna, proclaims himself the King. The Queen is misled by the pleasing appearance of the imposter. His physical charm deceives her into believing that he is the King. But the King of Kanchi, who is at the festival, wanting to possess the Queen, chalks out a plan and sets the palace on fire. The frightened Queen seeks protection but is utterly broken when she discovers Suvarna is a coward and not the real king. At this point in the play, the real King shows his face but the Queen is only frightened by his ugly looks and fails to recognise him. Angered by the fact that her husband refuses to punish her in spite of her falling for another man, she then leaves for her father's house. She is unwelcome there, and moreover, is pursued by the King of Kanchi and his men. But the King finally comes to her rescue. It eventually dawns on the Queen that she should seek the King within herself rather than elsewhere.

Clearly, the play is intended to be an allegory. The King represents God whom man cannot see but only realise in the dark chamber of his heart. Queen Sudarshana symbolises the human soul which is ignorant of the true nature of divinity and tries to seek God in the external world. Among many of the play's themes, the relationship between Sudarshana the Queen and the King is symbolic of the relationship between the human and the Divine; and, for some, it represents a romantic relationship between two equally powerful individuals. The King of the title is unseen by his subjects, some of whom question his existence, while others such as the maidservant Surangama are so loyal and worshipful to him that they do not even request to see him. They have no need for proof of the King's existence; they believe him to be real and great. Only those who have renounced their own pride in subjection to their King know him. They have a sense of when the King is nearing and when he is present.

This is seen from an exchange from Act II:

> SUDARSHANA : How can you perceive when he comes?
>
> SURANGAMA : I cannot say: I seem to hear his footsteps in my own heart. Being his servant of this dark chamber, I have developed a sense – I can know and feel without seeing.
>
> SUDARSHANA : Would that I had this sense too, Surangama!
>
> SURANGAMA : You will have it, O Queen ... this sense will awaken in you one day. Your longing to have a sight of him makes you restless, and therefore all your mind is strained

and warped in that direction. When you are past this state of feverish restlessness, everything will become quite easy.

SUDARSHANA : How is it that it is easy to you, who are a servant, and so difficult to me, the Queen?

SURANGAMA : It is because I am a mere servant that no difficulty baulks me... As soon as I bent all my mind to my task, a power woke and grew within me, and mastered every part of me unopposed (21).

It is apparent that Tagore hints at the idea that only those people who can humble themselves in the pursuit of the Almighty can realise Him.

As Srinivasa Iyengar puts it,

"Quite obviously, the King symbolises God. He is everywhere, he is everything, hence nowhere, and nobody, in particular. Each in his littleness or half-knowledge makes out what he can of him. Some deny his very existence. Some try to assume his name and usurp his functions. And some implicitly ("blindly") accept him, and are content" (57).

God is within oneself and not elsewhere is the cornerstone of Indian mysticism. Tagore centres his play on this and intends it to be an allegory. A similar philosophy was propagated by Swami Vivekananda. Vivekananda condemned idol worship. To him, God does not belong to a particular religion; not to a particular form but to everyman. He is not a separate entity but only a power present inside the heart – the Dark Chamber of man. It is evident that the philosophy of Vivekananda had a great influence on Tagore. This is voiced in the end of the play when the King himself says, "That which can be comparable with me lies within yourself." (103)

On the other hand, the characterisation of the Queen is very important. One cannot look for a one to one relationship between a story and a philosophy in literature, even if a particular story reflects a particular ideology. The Queen is made to live in the dark room. The Dark Room symbolises the *Garbha Graha (sanctum sanctorum)*. Though the temple is said to be the place of God, the *Garbha Graha* is never well-lit.

This is explained to the Queen in Act II:

SUDARSHANA : Why, he has no dearth of rooms—why need he have made this chamber of darkness specially for me?

SURANGAMA : You can meet others in the lighted rooms: but only in this dark room can you meet your lord (17).

The Queen wants to satisfy her five senses but fails to realise the greatness of the king in her heart. So she is distracted and tempted by the external beauty of the imposter. (The naming of the imposter is symbolic. Suvarna means beauty. Here, it stands for worldly distractions). Hence, she leaves her place and goes back to her father's home. Only when she feels the greatness of the king in her heart, does she beg for forgiveness and come back to the king.

As Iyengar puts it,

"As the scales lift from her eyes, Sudarshana knows too that in her heart of hearts she had never been disloyal to the true King – none but he had ever entered the dark sanctuary *within*, the miniature reflection of the Dark Chamber *without*" (56).

It is through a process of the humbling and subjugation of the ego of the King's wife, Sudarshana, that the play describes her journey of self-discovery and spiritual awakening. Sudarshana is initially depicted as a proud, yet immature queen, who desperately aches to see and know her King. As a result of that yearning, she falls in love with another king, whom she meets in the world outside, and mistakes him for her husband. It is only when she has been humbled through a series of mistakes to complete despair and has cast away her pride that she can be reconciled with her real husband, before whom she now bows with humility.

Tagore seems to say that human beings are distracted at every stage by worldly pleasures and fail to seek the God within themselves. They run after so many glittering glamorous things in life which ultimately turn out to be fake. It is to be remembered that the imposter proves to be a coward and a worthless person.

The old man and the trusted servant maid in the story strike a contrast with the queen. They believe implicitly and innately in the King. So both the *Advaita* philosophy and the *Dvaita* philosophy, one identifying God with man and the other separating God and man as *Paramathma* and *Jeevathma,* can be perceived in the story.

Critic Nirmal Mukerji comments,

"The story of the *King of the Dark Chamber* is taken from a Buddhist *jataka* tale, but has undergone a great deal of change in the play. It is a detailed allegory. Ajitkumar Chakrabarti, a close disciple of the playwright, has observed that "it was a spiritual drama of a kind which had no precedent in literature, at least in the realm of the drama, though there was a superficial resemblance in regard to the subject matter between *The King of the Dark Chamber* and *The Confessions of St Augustine,* the *Vita Nuova* of Dante and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* of Blake" (58).

There is repeated reference to a mystical figure, who is the King. The deep mysticism of the play renders our reading of it complicated. As any other piece of great literature, it lends itself to many kinds of interpretation.

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**Paper presented at the Tagore Seminar held in Stella Maris on 22 Sept 2010.*

Cibani P

II B.A. English

Another Way

Within me is someone I don't understand.
She's unique, she's different – too different, perhaps.
She's beyond reality. Lives don't touch her.
She's above sorrow, terror can't hold her;
You see, grief only scars the soul.

When I feel pain, she wonders at me.
Then I rise, to join her at her level -
And then I wonder, too.

Because *nothing* is worth pain.
"*Nothing* is worth grief.
Nothing is worth sorrow.
Nothing," she says -
And *nothing,* I mean.

She doesn't care what *might* happen.
"Look only at what is.
Joy.
Life.
Creation.
Everyday, a new miracle.
Of science, of technology, of medicine,
Yes, even of heaven!

"Yes, there are things I do not understand,
And incomprehension is my fear.
Yes, there are great and terrible tragedies in this world.
People die and wish to die, everyday.

"But that is not all that the world is."

This is what she tells me.

This is the poetry of her dreams.

This is the most important thing in the world.

This is what we must understand.

Can we?

She is beyond reality.
She observes, objective and calm.
She is not my heart, my soul, my God.
She is my mind.
And she presents – another way to think.

Priya K
III BA English

Angels Don't Cry

She was an angel
In everyone's eyes
They loved her for the way she lit up their day with her smile
She was cherished for her gentle ways and encouraging sayings
She was an angel to all
She from Heaven did fall

But no one could imagine how hurt their angel felt inside
And she didn't know the reason why
She felt rejected and lost in life
She didn't know where she belonged
What was the use of being everyone's good luck charm
When all she caused to herself was harm?

She possessed a deep void inside
She had the world to share her joys but her sorrows to hide
'Cause she was the girl with a smile
Who should never have need to cry
'Cause angels don't cry.

Candice Rozario
I B.A. English

The Subaltern Autobiography: Investigating Agency, Style and Voice

This paper seeks to analyse the agency asserted by the subaltern women in their autobiographies, the subaltern autobiography as a departure from conventional styles of writing, subversive use of language, preserving the aesthetics of an oral narrative in the written form and the politics of translation as seen in Jameela's and C.K Janu's autobiographies and Bama's *Sangati* which is of particular importance because of its position as documenting the autobiography of a community, raising the question – Can a woman's agency be autonomous?

Nalini Jameela's *Autobiography of a Sex Worker* has two main undercurrents: the first is that Jameela took to sex work purely for socio-economic reasons as is evident in her detailed account of the early years of her life and the second is her assertion to stand by this profession and treat it like any other. She certainly advocates a feminism that recognises and accepts this agency, although there are several instances in the book where a better financial position leads her to quit the occupation. There is thus an inherent contradiction in the standpoint. Michael Foucault spoke of agency as arising from the "dialectic of freedom and constraint." This essentially means that where there is struggle and oppression, a subversive agency will most naturally arise. It is quite ambiguous if Jameela is standing for sex work as a profession to find salvation from stringent poverty or for sex work as a profession without poverty and other socio-economic reasons clouding the decision. It seems as though both positions are tenable. Many of the comparisons she makes in the book support the latter as she delves into the idea of sex, free sex and the social constraints when it comes to sex. By comparing sex with professions such as teaching and music, both of which are greatly valued, she is advocating that sex work be considered a profession. Bringing in the concept of a Veshya, meaning 'she who seduces', she deduces that it is the insulting connotations that have come to make all the difference. Does this mean then that we have a culture that is less "progressive" than that of the days of Veshyas and courtesans?

There is then a deconstruction of the fundamental ideals based on which sex and sexuality have been discussed and an honest dissection of ideological and cultural prejudices. This question "If, by mutual consent, a man and woman decide to have sex, then what is wrong?" is very valid. This agency leads us to question her subaltern position in the context of her profession; clearly she refuses to accept "victim" status as most people term it. But there is a growing necessity to reconceive victimisation as the power of survival. This "survivor not victim" approach came to typify a new approach to women in such circumstances, that later reflected in policy and law. Believing women to be victims had led to protectionist, problematic policies but seeing them as reflective individuals, who had the capacity to negotiate and survive what life threw their way, affirmed their identities that brought into focus their rights.

That makes it plain that Jameela's capacity for survival and a free mind converge to form an agency emphasising the power of both the mind and the body. This also necessitates the understanding that Jameela's victim status (relative to her agency) comes from the social taboo of sex and sex workers more than their economic status and living conditions.

However, there is certainly a need to not undermine her fight for dignity and respect for the lives of sex workers, irrespective of the politics of choice.

Sangati captures Bama's poignant feminist consciousness and assumes a significant place given that it is one of the first female voices to emerge from the Dalit community. She reveals a 'social vision'; that is, the conviction that no matter how submerged a human being is in the 'culture of silence' they are capable of looking at the world critically in a dialogical encounter with others.

Therefore, Bama's socio-feminist stance comes from oppression as well as a constant investigation. The ambiguity of agency, as seen in Jameela's autobiography doesn't surface in a comparable manner here. It is surprisingly evident that her life history and experiences have been instrumental in shaping her agency, clearly conforming to Foucault's theory of freedom and constraint. By detailing the daily lives of the Dalit women, an inherent part of which is cold blooded violence, she shocks the reader with the use of obscene language and the depiction of the oppression of the female body. And this is precisely what Dalit writing sets out to do. The challenge and revolt therefore, extends to both form and content justifying its purpose. 'Dalit literature describes the world differently, from a Dalit perspective. Therefore, it should outrage and even repel the guardians of caste and class. It should provoke them into asking if this is indeed literature. Lakshmi Holmstrom, in her introduction to *Sangati,* says that Tamil literature has been stringent in its distinction between the written and the colloquial form : *Sen-tamil* and *Kodun-tamil*. Despite gaps being bridged in modern times, Dalit literature is still a striking deviant. If it brings to Tamil Literature subject matter hitherto considered inappropriate, it uses a language hitherto considered unprintable.

This account could also be bracketed post colonial where the trinity of religion, men and the upper castes form the coloniser, resulting in a triple marginalisation. Sometimes, women in their ignorance could also play this role; examples are mothers and grandmothers who become upholders of patriarchy.

Hence, in this 'writing back', Bama's colloquial language could also be seen as restoring forms of their oral culture, or as a means of embracing realism. There are multiple instances in *Sangati* where past events, take the form of a song and the Paati is the carrier of many stories, myths and legends. It is altogether another issue that these songs and stories themselves become instruments of oppression rather than a means of liberation. But paradoxically, they lead Bama to question the authenticity of these and a realisation that they were meant to suppress women and keep them in fear leads to the condemnation of these. And this becomes the first step towards liberation. Apart from this, Bama does draw attention to the many cultural beliefs of the pariah community (the original and not the hybrid form that came to be because of the influx of Christianity). These are surprisingly progressive and only a little more conventional than the Adivasi community. Therefore, she "others" the upper caste women in this sense and says that their confinement, financial dependence and a lack of identity in the absence of husbands makes them far inferior to the self-sufficient Dalit women.

C.K.Janu's autobiography, *Mother Forest,* falls under the personal-political categorisation of autobiographies. The agency here arises from the continued state oppression of the Adivasi community although the personal voice is milder. Reiterating the theory of the state or government being the colonial power in the postcolonial context, this account authenticates colonial oppression, given the nature of the struggle in a postcolonial context. In fact, Arundhati Roy connects a particular incident of revolt by the Adivasi community to the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre: 'For the Kerala Police to open fire on a group of hundreds of people including women, children, old people and infants is an act that has few parallels in recent history. The event that comes to mind is Jallianwalah Bagh. … Had they belonged to any other community that mattered to mainstream political parties, the manner in which the crisis and its fallout were handled would have been quite different.' Mahasweta Devi is another prominent figure fighting for the rights of the tribal groups, trying to preserve and document a culture which is increasingly losing its identity.

Unfortunately, Janu never went to school and therefore the autobiography had to be written and translated by someone else and it is possible that certain crucial factors could have been lost in the process. However, a tribal voice has come to the centre of the circle restoring the credibility and dynamism of literature.

These autobiographies represent a literary activism of sorts both in their content and form and also in terms of the questions raised. The fact that these have all been translated into English, a language by and large considered mainstream, highlights the growing interest in listening to gritty subaltern voices. To answer Spivak's loaded question, 'Can the Subaltern speak?' perhaps yes.

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M. Niharika
III B.A. English

Bitter Gourd

I am a journalist. In other words, I make a living out of bad mouthing other peoples' hard work. Yes, my regular writing focuses on complaints. I complain about everything under the sun. Most of my recent columns in fact are related to the treatment I receive at my temporary place of abode - the hostel.

Many days, the hostel management attempted at training us for the most extreme situations and their project even included turning everyone back into their un-evolved ancestors by making us eat raw meat and making vegetarians eat caterpillars, lizards and sometimes even unidentifiable body parts or parts of extraterrestrial beings. When approached, those silly lemon heads argued that that 'thing', whatever it was, was alive which meant that they had not cooked it. On days when we were too lazy to complain about the food they felt dissatisfied so they would purposely not run the motor to stop us from enjoying the pleasure of even brushing our teeth in the morning.

Today: the day was still young but it was already fighting for its place among the list of worst days ever. It was a nightmare come true. I woke up and went to the bathroom and turned the tap but all that came out was a hiss of air. I was furious. I wanted a gun to shoot the management. I went down to the complaint desk which itself was a complaint as the desk was broken and usually unmanned. All that was on the desk was a vegetable, a rotten, soiled and pitiful looking bitter gourd with red gashes all over. I punched the thing, mashed it into unidentifiable pulp. The thing fought back, the pulp flew into my eyes. Urg!

But the day took a turn for the horribly worse when they shut down the goop provider – the mess. And that was that. My anger kept building up like a green stench coming up from a metropolitan man hole. I was going to bring horrible stuff on to the paper today about this little playground of the devils, things far worse than yesterday's lunch – the "fried lice".

I got dressed furiously and rushed to my office holding on tight to the stuff waiting to fill the next ten issues. Traffic was heavy and each horn added to the rage inside me. I was racing down the road like a mad bull in a bull fight and the horns served as death beats.

I reached my office and took out my weapon of choice, my pen and ink. When I sat down, I looked up to catch the sunlight and what filled my eyes was atrocious Medusa style hair that all my female colleagues sported. I looked at the mirror and let out a scream. I too had become a nightmare. Soon I learned that everyone in my office had bad days too-no power, no water and nothing to eat.

Shock of my life, for once this was not my hostel's fault. But then it was the government at fault now. I called my team for a brainstorming session, but it was only me who brainstormed or should I say, stormed. Complain, complain and complain. It was all thanks to the government. My team was happy. They called me the god, the bitter gourd. I opened my laptop and connected to Google to write a letter to the government. Then it struck me like it struck people like me all over the world. There was absolutely no water anywhere in the world. It was our fault. This

time I could only blame myself. All the times that I had complained about water, I wasted water. A small lemon inside me reminded me that all things start bitter but get sweeter as they melt. I wished I could go back and change things.

Splash, Splash! What was that? Water on my pulp filled face. I opened my eyes; all this was just a dream. Yes, right from the time the gourd hit my face and I wiped it and lay my head down on that apology of a table. So whom should I see with a bottle of water next to me? It was the man who had always abandoned the unmanned complaint desk who had come to justify himself and the actions of the management. I didn't want justification any more. I almost kissed him. I felt like he had saved my life. He woke me up from this nightmare that had made me realize my responsibilities.

And that's when I decided it was about time I quit my job. I am a wild life conservationist now. No more complaints from me now. I am no more bitter, I am better.

Tejaswi Murali
II BA English

Prologue

The day was cold and smoggy, a nip in it that was surprising for a New York summer's morning. A heavy grey pall hung over the river, and all but hid the Statue of Liberty.

That didn't deter Ram and Rohini Pillai, though. Up from Mumbai for their honeymoon, they were determined not to let anything ruin their fun. So what if they couldn't see the Statue of Liberty, to see which they had flown at immense expense halfway across the world? They could see each other's faces. And after two months struggling to convince their parents to allow them to marry, there was no sight more beautiful to them.

Ram stroked Rohini's hair fondly. *Was* there a more beautiful sight in the world?

The ferry entered the grey cloud as Rohini looked up to meet Ram's eyes. He stared back. There was. There *had* to be. Anything could be more beautiful! This... woman, with the flashing eyes and the deceptively kind smile, this woman of the tinkling laugh and the luring twinkle, she was his enemy. She had made him change in ways he had not even thought of! How dare she threaten to leave him if he didn't speak to his parents about her, just because she had already told hers? How dare she tell him that, just because she loved him, he could not order her around? *How dare she make him feel ashamed for demanding obedience from his wife?*

Rohini's eyes, still holding his, began to fill with a dark rage. How dare she! What right – His wife's eyes flickered red. The last sane part of Ram had no time to feel shock. With a hoarse scream, Mrs. Pillai leapt upon her beloved husband, teeth bared and talons outstretched. In the force of the leap, both flew off the deck of the *Harmony* and sank deep into the Hudson's shimmering water.

They never rose again.

Still on board the boat, madness had broken out. Friend attacked friend, viciously and without cause or mercy. The very young and the very old, though biting and scratching as hard as any one else, were the first to fall. The captain of the boat had long since abandoned his post – though not his wheel. That he used, to deal deathly blows to any who stood in his path. It was heavy enough for its strokes to be fatal.

Men, women and children fell to the blows of that violently swung wheel. Finally, a young man took it from him, a wild cry of delight escaping him as he stabbed the captain with a splinter. He wiped the blood off on his formerly white Peace Corps T-shirt, and swung the wheel in search of another victim, any victim, who could be injured by its brute force. There was only one.

Himself.

The young crusader for peace slumped on the deck of the *Harmony*, surrounded by the death he had helped deal out, at the foot of the greatest symbol of freedom any land has seen. As the red light died from his eyes in the grey light of the morning, his face looked tranquil, serene. It had never seen such complete calm while it was alive.

The grey smog seemed to coalesce. It drew together in subtle ways the human eye could not quite fathom. The end result was awe-inspiring and as solid as any image seen in the clouds.

A child pointed this out to his mother, as they floated along a safe distance away from the heavy layer of cloud. A gigantic form, neither completely Lion nor completely Snake. The mother smiled, and patted little Simon on the head. *What imaginations children have...* although, she had to admit, she had never seen that deepset almost-glimpse of fire within the smog before.

Neither she nor Simon ever found out how close they had come to death.

The Great Dragon opened His eyes, wisps of cloud drifting past them. He lifted His head, and let out a long, gentle sigh. Smoke emerged from between His mighty jaws, a long plume that tickled the air above Lady Liberty's torch. He stretched out one long-nailed hand, His right fore-paw, and stared at it expectantly.

From the waters He hovered above, a shapeless mass of red-gold metal appeared. It rose steadily from the river, and floated by His hand. He looked at it thoughtfully, and then seized it.

The metal flowed off the lump in a gush of steam, as the Dragon clutched it firmly in a hand that was barely solid. The gossamer strands of smoke coiled and roilled about the metal, taking on a golden hue as the metal vaporised. Nothing had ever looked so beautiful.

Feeding tigers are beautiful, too.

The metal finally stopped flowing off the object floating mid-cloud. A Sword lay revealed in the Dragon's Hand.

MASTER, Ikatta whimpered. I HAVE FAILED YOU. I AM NOT – I AM NOT WORTHY.

THAT IS SO, Thragone agreed. BUT I HAVE NO CHOICE NOW. YOU WILL SERVE ME IN MY COMING QUEST. YOU WILL SUPPORT ME, IKATTA, AND SEE ME WIN... OR YOU WILL DIE.

The Sword seemed to cringe. I KNOW, MY LORD. MASTER, I AM YOURS TO COMMAND.

And the twin rubies set in Ikatta's hilt flashed red in the rising sun, matching the blood on the boat beneath.

Thousands of miles away, Neha Sharma sat up in bed with a gasp.

* *An extract from the forthcoming novel Prophecy : The Dragon's Blade*

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The Beloved Will Leave You Behind*
Eroticized Nationalism in the Poetry of Mahmoud Darwish and Agha Shahid Ali

Whenever the power of the nation is invoked. . .we are more likely than not to find it couched as a love of country: an eroticized nationalism (*Nationalisms and Sexualities* 1).

Exile is a jealous state. What you achieve is precisely what you have no wish to share (*Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* 173-187).

The Beloved will leave you behind from the start, Light is difficult: one must be blind from the start (*The Veiled Suite* 339-40).

Often, in texts that speak of the nation, or are written in a patriotic vein, it is possible to see the nation as woman, as a body that must be protected by the men of the land. This has possible connections to the feminization of land itself – depicted often as the 'womb' which produces crops for livelihood. In her study of the visual representation of the women in revolutionary France, Joan Landes draws attention to the much neglected erotic aspects of patriotism: the nation is a "fantastical projection with erotic overtones" (*Visualising the Nation* 168), even as the feminine image evoked is that of the mother.

John Nathan, in his book *Mishima: A Biography,* adds to this view when he equates patriotism to erotic desire and finds it "identical" (180), wherein in both cases, the ultimate proof of desire lies in the death of the lover: just as the maddened lover is ready to give himself up for his Beloved, martyrdom for the nation is equated to proof of the love of the country, as can be clearly seen in the following lines, from Rupert Brooke's poem "The Soldier": "If I should die, think only this of me/That there's some corner of a foreign field/That is forever England".

Keeping in mind that the 'nation' itself is rendered feminine, and associated with the Beloved for whom the masculine citizen-subject is willing to shed his own blood, it is apparent that in a state of exile, this eroticization takes on an added poignancy. The nation is lost indefinitely to the exiled subject, and its absence, for him/her, is what convinces him of the strength of his/her belonging to it. Edward Said says this of exile: "Exile is predicated on the existence of love for, and bond with, one's native place; what is true of all exile is not that home and love of home are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both. For the exile, the present lies in his past – as Rushdie says in his essay "Imaginary Homelands" –"a lost home in a lost city in the midst of a lost time" (*The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* 428).

This paper aims at viewing the experiences of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish and Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali as exiles, and their depiction of the lost 'home' in the light of the exile's eroticized view of the lost nation. One may compare the plights of Kashmir and Palestine, and find much in common: for the inhabitants of both lands live in constant fear for their lives within the state, and in constant fear of their identities outside it. Until very recently, Palestinians were denied their right to a national identity alone – Golda Meir, the fourth Prime Minister of Israel, was quoted in 1969 as saying that "there were no such thing as Palestinians. . .they simply did

not exist" (*Postzionism 57*) and Israel still has a strong hold over the West Bank and Gaza. In a similar manner, both India and Pakistan continue to claim ownership of Kashmir; India calls Kashmir "an intergral part of [India]", and Pakistan calls the Valley its "jugular vein". Kashmiris themselves, however, feel they belong to neither.

Darwish, who was born in Western Galilee and lived for a while in Egypt and Lebanon, eventually settled in Ramallah, although he was reported to have never felt at home there. Like Shahid Ali, who had eventually settled in America but made the loss of his homeland, Kashmir, a recurrent theme in his poetry, Darwish presents the land he has loved by what he has lost. Darwish, in his poem "Eleven Planets under the Last Andulusian Sky", calls himself "an Adam lost to two Edens" (*The Adam of Two Edens* 147). Similarly, Ali's "Postcard from Kashmir" calls the "half-inch Himalayas" from the postcard he is holding "the closest you can get/to home" (*The Veiled Suite* 29).

Kashmir and Palestine, in these contexts, are represented as the unattainable Beloved. The homeland, here, is presented as the poets' utmost desire – the poet, here, is the pining lover. Darwish uses this image in his poem "Aashiq min Filastin" "Palestinian are your eyes/Palestinian is your name/Palestinian your thoughts, dreams/Palestinian your mantilla, your body/your feet/ Palestinian the words-silence/Palestinian the voice/Palestinian in life/Palestinian in death" "Aashiq 'min Filastin" which following the tradition of the Arabic-Persian qasida[2] lyric (*Mahmoud Darwish, Exile's Poet* 174), evokes the mood of the romantic ghazal when he speaks of the lost Beloved, and gives her an identity, "naming" her Palestinian. Given Golda Meir's denial of even Palestinian identity, this "naming" takes on an added importance.

Ali invokes the ghazal tradition as well – poems of Arab/Persian origin composed often in the honour of an unattainable Beloved (either an individual, evoking ishq-e-majazi[3], or as the Divine Lover, evoking ishq-e-haquiqi) and often written in the couplet form. One of these ghazals, titled "In Arabic", starts with the lines: "The only language of loss left in the world is Arabic/These words were said to me in a language not Arabic". In the same ghazal, Ali speaks of the Kashmiri paisley as tied into "the golden hair of Arabic", and says: "From exile, Mahmoud Darwish speaks to the world/You'll all pass between the fleeting words of Arabic". In another ghazal, titled "By Exiles", whose opening lines echo Edward Said's statement: "You were exiled by exiles", Ali connects the plight of Kashmir and Palestine in the following lines: "By Hudson lies Kashmir, brought by Palestine - /It shawls the piano, Bach beguiled by exiles". Ali clearly recognises the links between the two geographical locations, whose existence – or lack thereof – is dictated by nations that belong to others.

To both Darwish and Ali, these 'countries' are Othered, and it is only through their poetry that these unnamed 'countries' can regain the identity they once had. True to the ghazal/qasida form, the severed connections between the poets and their nations are evoked through the traditional motif of separation and loss, and the richness of their memories that preserve the Beloved – here, Kashmir/Palestine – so that she remains alive, in their memories. Just as within the ghazal

tradition, the Beloved remains desirable in the lover's memory, the exile preserves the nation in the perfection of what it once was.

1 The first line of a ghazal by Agha Shahid Ali, entitled "From the Start".

2 A form of Sufi lyric poetry that originated in pre-Islamic Arabia. The ghazal is said to have developed from the first part of the qasida, in which poets praised their sweethearts.

3 Ishq-e-majazi (often called 'material love') and ishq-e-haquiqi ('Divine love') is often described as love for human beings (the former) and love for the Divine (the latter).

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