

# LITERARY JOURNAL



**STELLA MARIS COLLEGE**  
**(AUTONOMOUS)**  
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***Editorial Board***

**Ishleen and Smrithi  
(Research Scholars)**

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## **Editorial**

**Mosaic... of personal and national memory.**

**The unsuccessful bargain with a phantom to erase a painful personal past, the insistence on alternate national narratives, the flamboyant celebration of multicultural identities all underline both the unreliability and the healing power of memory.**

**Memory defies erasure.**

**Nightmarish realities resist the clichés trapped in celluloid. The quest for lost lands, personal spaces and glossed terrains contests any totalising tendencies.**

**Fragmented, perhaps. But not a melting pot.**

**Ishleen and Smrithi**

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## Counter- Narratives– A Discourse in Contestation.

Mahasweta Devi radically questions the grand narrative of the nation and writes counter-narratives that effectively contest the official/State stance of silence and exclusion. This interrogation is carried out in many ways: by the (re)writing of history/myth from different subject positions (the five women, Souvali), different perspectives (the Nishadin), by dismantling concepts (motherhood, goddesses) and icons of national consciousness (Jashoda, Kunti). Mahasweta Devi's versions not only reveal unsettling counter-narratives but also lay bare the fact that grand narratives are similarly fashioned. History is thus not an objective truth, but a subjective construct that plays into the hands of the dominant State discourse/version. Hayden White's descriptive phrase 'history-as-art' (Thompson 61) underlines the process of selection, and inevitable exclusion, that such arts/acts of representation and narration entail.

Mahasweta Devi believes that mainstream Indian historiography has ignored and blanked out tribal history.

Since the history of India has always been written by historians who were and still are reluctant to see the tribals as part of India, a true history is yet to be written that will give tribals their place in history. It is not apathy. The historians are generally oblivious of tribal existence. If this be the situation it is quite expected that they do not know that denotified tribes exist. (Radhakrishna xiii)

Her writing seeks to lend voice to the tribals, the dispossessed, the marginalised- the subaltern. It is also an attempt to instil a collective, positive identity in them. In the context of the Bursa Munda rebellion she states:

You see tribal rebellions are never mentioned in the history of the freedom struggle. This was the first time that the mainstream came to know about the tribal heroes, their rebellions. This gave them a sense of joy. Sense of pride in themselves. (Masih)

Mahasweta Devi's works insist on the inclusion of these excluded narratives. This is 'affirmative deconstruction' (342) of the grand narrative. It reveals the 'cognitive failure' (334) of the epic to include Souvali, the five widows, the nishadin. According to Spivak, 'The Muse of History and counter-insurgency are... complicit' (334). Mahasweta Devi questions and subverts this complicity by locating the agency of change with the subaltern (Dopdi, Souvali, Rudali), and by 're-inscribing' and emplotting these narratives against the 'grid of failures' (336) that constitute the grand narrative. Once the categories of success and failure are blurred, the 'theoretical fiction' (335) of the grand narrative loses its hold. This paper will study in detail the three stories in After Kurukshetra and will refer in lesser detail to other short stories of Mahasweta Devi (Breast Stories, In the Name of the Mother, Bayen, Rudali) that illustrate this deconstruction.

Mahasweta Devi has re-visioned the iconic Indian classic, The Mahabharata, and used Kurukshetra as a central motif that runs through the three stories. She views this engagement with history as part of the social commitment of the writer. She states:

I have never had the capacity nor the urge to create for art's sake...I have found authentic documentation to be the perfect medium for protest against injustice and exploitation...To capture the continuities between past and present held



together in the folk imagination, I bring legends, mythical figures and mythical happenings into a contemporary setting, and make an ironic use of them... (Bose 133)

Although the stories are spatially and temporally set in the past, Mahasweta Devi's ironic vision situates these three stories squarely in the present, as we are the inheritors of Kurukshetra. The *dharmayudha* is thus part of our collective psyche as a nation, irrespective of religion, language, gender and age. To lead the reader into questioning the *dharmayudha*, its senseless violence, its bloody aftermath, leads to a radical interrogation of the concept of dharma as well as of the canonical grand narrative of the nation.

In the first story, Mahasweta Devi, ironically replaces the Pandavas with the five women, the five widows who must bear the brunt of the glorious war. It is these simple, young women who irretrievably dent the inviolable legend by dubbing the *dharmayudha*, 'a war of greed' (3). Mahasweta Devi foregrounds the class perspective when the women state that their men died in 'the king's war. No *divyalok* for them. That's only for the *rajavritta*.' (23) The war is not their war, *divyalok* is not for them, their lot is to accept death and move on to 'create life' (22). She refuses to glorify the ways of the *lokavritta*, their lives lived in harmony with Nature, without the binding rituals of the *rajavritta* women who exist as 'shadowy ghosts' (17), because that is the only way they can survive. It is a survival technique, nothing more, nothing less. For when the next *dharmayudha* or war against terror happens or the next world war does, these foot soldiers will be needed again to protect the rulers, the State. The narrative of war is never closed.

In the second story Kunti chooses to leave the palace to accompany Dhritarashtra and Gandhari to the forest ashram, because life in the *rajavritta* was tearing her apart. Kunti situates her unease in her treatment of Karna and regrets her lack of courage. Her excuse is that she was blinded by love for the Pandavas. Kunti's thoughts reveal the fetters that bind her. Calling on the Sun God was her one act of free will, the rest of her actions have been bound by the demands of roles she had to play as queen, protector of the throne, queen mother. Kunti can lavish love on motherless Nakula and Sahadeva but not on Karna, because the twins are legitimately royal. The role she has chosen is clearly that of queen mother. Her dharma is thus inextricably linked to the throne/State. The scheme sacrificing the nishadins was a clever strategic move befitting a queen and her dharma. Kunti does what is expected of her and forgets about the incident. Her thoughts on coming across some nishadin women in the forest are illuminating:

Watching the nishadins, it strikes her for the first time that she is wasting herself living like this, subsisting on rotting, withered leaves. Blindly following a predetermined path to death. (26)

Their lives are of no consequence, but her voluntary relocation to the forest is a waste. When Kunti realises that her anguished appeals to Mother Earth have been witnessed by an elderly nishadin, she is seared by the pity in her eyes. The nishadin serve as reminders of her mortality but she never thinks of them as human: 'No more than the mute rocks or trees, or animals' (35). Kunti listens to the 'death sentence' of the elderly nishadin woman and accepts it.

Kunti needed to move out of the confines of the palace to realise the enormity of her crime for in the *rajavritta* this would not count as a crime: 'That was not even a crime in your book' (38). Kunti while waiting for the forest fire does not even know if in the *rajavritta* one can beg forgiveness for killing the innocent. Mahasweta Devi's story challenges the idea that State must make decisions in which people must be sacrificed for the greater good. Some people must lose their lands, livelihood, even life in the name of the progress of the nation. The rhetoric remains unchanged. It also raises questions about dharma, justice. Can justice for all ever be possible? If Kunti's allegiance lies with the State and the *lokavritta* lack political autonomy and are powerless to raise their voices, then on whom does the onus lie? The *nishadin* remind Kunti of her crime but they can do so only when she places herself outside the corridors of power.

'We've been seeking you for years. We don't enter the town, you see. In the end you came to us, it was bound to be.' (35)

The sense of inevitability and grandeur of this speech of the *nishadin*s is undercut by the fact that they are *outcastes*, *vratyas* who were displaced from their earlier dwelling place by the fire in the lac house. The *nishadin* even after their confrontation with Kunti, are fleeing another fire, this time natural. There is also the awareness that it is the author's agency that now gives them a voice. They clearly had no voice in the epic. In Mahasweta Devi's version the *nishadin* find Kunti guilty, and the reader must make her own conclusion.

Souvali's story begins: 'On the margins of the town live the marginalised' (41). A clear, detached statement of fact. The five women come from Kurujangal, the *nishadin* live in the forest, Souvali lives on the outskirts of the town. The 'unthinkability' (M.S.S Pandian) that allows entire terrains of history to be glossed over, allocates to the 'unthinkable' people the liminal spaces identified with nature, the antithesis of culture. Culture and the Epic are the divine right of the centre. Mahasweta Devi writes against the grain and plots the narratives of the marginalised into the fabric of the Epic, blurring the boundaries of each.

The marginalised and the muted culminate in the grand matriarchal figure of Souvali. She chose to walk out of the palace, tried to claim her son from the customs of the *rajavritta*, lost him but waited for his return as a warrior. She refuses to observe any death rites, feasts on food, wears coloured clothes in an act of defiance. She also wistfully wishes that her son realises soon that he will not be accepted by the Pandavas, just as he was never a part of the Kauravas. She has effectively distanced herself from the grand narrative: 'Souvali doesn't even want a mention of her name anywhere.' (49) By investing the name of Souvali that is barely mentioned in Indian history, with agency and selfhood Mahasweta Devi rewrites history. She questions why Souvalya/Yuyutsu is not the archetypal warrior that the Pandavas are, why Souvali who proudly identifies herself as the mother of a warrior, is not accorded the reverence reserved for Kunti and Gandhari, as matriarchal figures. The answer lies in the fact that Souvali is a *dasi* and Souvalya even if he becomes Yuyutsu, is a *dasiputra*.

This attribution of the 'singular affiliation' (20) as Amartya Sen points out prepares the ground for persecution. Souvali refuses to be contained within the bounds of this attribution that equates her identity with the role of *dasi*. Souvali weighs and chooses the identity she wishes to retain- Souvalya's mother, mother figure to the marginalised around her. She sloughs off the tag of *dasi*. She crafts her own identity and attains the



selfhood that eludes Kunti. Kunti accepts the identity the rajavritta burdens her with and makes the best she can of her life. Uttara and the five women are too young and inexperienced to carve out their identities. They reflect the identities ascribed by their differing world views-rajavritta and the lokavritta. However, it is important to realise that Souvali has this choice *because* she is not important in the grand scheme of things.

The constraints may be especially strict in defining the extent to which we can persuade *others*, in particular, to take us to be different from (or more than) what they insist on taking us to be...The freedom in choosing our identity in the eyes of others can sometimes be extraordinarily limited. (31)

This is clearly the case with Chandidasi Gangadasi. She is perceived as a bayen and is forced to live out her life in isolation as a bayen. She has internalised this attribution and allows herself to look only at the 'son of Gangaputta' as he is reflected in the water, or turns her face away. Mahasweta Devi foregrounds the struggles of the tribals, but she refuses to romanticise them. Their superstitions about bayen and witches are included in her critique. However, to use Amartya Sen's term, the 'diagnosis' of this injustice is performed by Mahasweta Devi in the text itself.

Bhagirath went to the government primary school...Bhagirath had come to know that after the Untouchability Act of 1955, there were no longer any untouchables in India...but Bhagirath and his kind knew that their co-students, as well as the teachers, liked them to sit a bit apart, though none but the very poor and needy from the "lower" castes came to the school. There are schools, and then there are schools. (31)

It is this 'a bit apart' that turns the educational institution into a case of 'friendly fire' (Sen 206). Mahasweta Devi provides another explanation for the deep rooted faith in witch cults in West Bengal. In an article on witch hunting she explains that the tribals cling to their superstition because it 'truly belongs to them, something of their own' (Bose 135).

Even as Chandidasi submits to this interpellation, her 'heroic' death frees her from the tag of bayen. She is no longer contained by the term. Other protagonists of Mahasweta Devi try to use this belief in superstition and the witch/goddess cult as a means of survival. Jati Thakurni and Sindhubala are two such protagonists. Jati becomes a Thakurni to be able to feed her simple-minded son; Sindhubala is manipulated into it by her exploitative mother. But Thakurni dies of starvation and through the shradha rice wrangles one more meal for her son, Sadhan. Sindhubala realises that:

If you're human, you must burn. If you're holy, then too you must burn. If life has the same end for both, then why should the woman Sindhu spend her days pretending to be a goddess?

Sindhubala chooses the identity of woman over goddess, but the text remains silent on how she will survive. This attempt at manipulation does not serve either of the women. Mahasweta Devi's goddesses are human-they starve, they long for children, they die.

A common factor that binds these women is motherhood. Jati Thakurni changes from a normal mother to a 'dusk-to-dawn mother'. Sindhubala curses her barren body that lets her down and Chandidasi can never be a mother to her son. Only after her death can Bhagirath proclaim her to be his mother. Jamunabati's mother can give her daughter an

endearing name, can dream of buying her beautiful dolls but cannot save her from death due to malnourishment and disease. Jamunabati's death brings home to her mother that people like her are 'obstacles in the path of progress', entirely expendable. Jashoda, the breast-giver to twenty children of her own and countless milk-sons, dies a painful death, alone in the hospital, succumbing to cancer of the breast. Jashoda, the foster mother of Lord Krishna, is used by Mahasweta Devi as a parable of India after decolonisation. India too is a 'mother-by-hire'. The much touted Indian mother as symbol of suffering and strength, revered as Mother India, is exposed as a farce. The rhetoric rings hollow in a nation where mothers are thwarted and abandoned, or entirely powerless to save themselves or their children. Uttara will lose her son to the customs of the rajavritta, just as Souvali was forced to do. Kunti had to give up her first born and deny her role as his mother to fulfil her duties to the Pandavas. Jashoda must continue bearing biological children in order to feed her foster children, all of whom forsake her.

Jashoda was God manifest, others do and did whatever she thought. Jashoda's death was also the death of God. When a mortal masquerades as God here below, she is forsaken by all and must always die alone. (75)

This, then, is Mahasweta Devi's indictment of both mothers and goddesses.

Mahasweta Devi's Dopdi however offers a figure of active resistance. She can be read as the Mahabharata queen's tribal version. She refuses to be contained by the official lists of appropriate tribal names, just as after multiple rape and mutilation she refuses to be covered by clothes. The infinitely-clothed Draupadi of the epic is a farce, the tribal Dopdi challenges the sanitised rhetoric of the epic where a benign God protects her from State sanctioned violence/disrobing. Dopdi's anger and her naked body are the weapons the 'unarmed target' uses to scare Senanayak, the symbol of State Authority.

Sanichari and her group of marginalised women (that includes the prostitutes from the randi bazaar) exemplify Spivak's concept of the 'emergent collective consciousness' (343) of the subaltern. Mahasweta Devi depicts a community that presents a unified front as a survival strategy. The oppressed need each other to survive against the malik-mahajans. Mahasweta Devi presents a politicised subaltern in the figure of Dulan who indoctrinates Bikhni and Sanichari. Sanichari transforms herself into a rudali who crafts a survival strategy, not just for herself, but for a community of women, by subverting the system, not by open rebellion or challenge, but by using and manipulating it. The commodification of grief as a means to earn a livelihood by manipulating the malik-mahajan's notions of grandeur and feeding their frenzy in a game of one-upmanship is rudali's attempt to 'reclaim the political in order to bring about the conditions to step out from subalternity'. (Galfarsoro)

However, the fact remains that Mahasweta Devi provides her characters with limited acts of resistance and agency.

In my writing, there is a *mukti*, a liberty. They are acting on their own. With the liberation, comes the freedom to act independently which they don't get in their real lives. I feel this should have been the norm. I just want things to be the way they should have been. So the question of justice comes in (Joshy).

This fact explains Mahasweta Devi's refusal to glorify or romanticise the tribals or their struggle. Her anti-fictional, spare and documentary style of writing is part of this refusal



to distance, to fictionalise and render palatable the lives of the tribals. The starkness of her stories and their telling, command a level of engagement from the reader. Spivak views Senanayak as the mirror reflection of first world women (or city dwelling, educated third world women), positing that by 'inextricably mingling historico-political specificity with the sexual differential in a literary discourse, Mahasweta Devi invites us to begin effacing that image' (2-3). Authorial agency is thus responsible for bringing these narratives into the domain of public discourse. This agency is an invitation to help efface the fascist reflection of Senanayak/ourselves. She unrelentingly and systematically destroys any givens that the reader may have about the nation, its epics, its icons, and its justice. The reader perforce must learn to accept the framework of the grand narrative with a pinch of salt, and Lyotardian incredulity.

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## The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain : A Psychological Perspective

The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain, a novella by Charles Dickens may be analysed from the perspective of Jung's theory of analytical psychology. The chemist or the haunted man (Mr. Redlaw), the protagonist of the story is a professor of chemistry who lives in solitude. He does not interact much with people except his servants, the Swiggers (Philip and the Williams). The chemist who is attached to his late younger sister wants to erase memories that bring sorrow. When confronted by a phantom or his shadow, Redlaw is granted the boon of wiping out associations of his past experiences. This bargain with the phantom leaves the chemist indifferent and unsympathetic towards life. He is unable to emote, and this attitude likewise infects other people he meets. Finally he realizes his loss and earnestly pleads with the phantom to redeem him. The solution comes in the form of the motherly Mrs. Williams or Milly, whose tender love and optimistic character help him retrieve his lost memory. In the end we see Mr. Redlaw transformed into an unselfish and humble person.

Carl Jung classified the human psyche into three categories - the ego, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. While the conscious ego relates to experiences that one remembers, consisting of memories that are easily retrievable, the personal unconscious contains repressed memories and memories that cannot be easily brought to one's mind. The collective unconscious can be referred to as "psychic inheritance," a kind of knowledge that everybody is born with. Though we are never conscious of it, it influences our behaviour in unseen ways.

Within the collective unconscious are the archetypes. Jung also called them dominants, imagos, and mythological or primordial images. Hypothesized to be the deepest realm of the psyche, which has the potential to evoke images of a more or less predictable nature, they keep recurring worldwide in all people's psyche and have been reappearing from time immemorial. The archetype is experienced in projections, powerful images, symbols, moods, and behaviour patterns such as rituals and ceremonials. There are several archetypes in the story and one can see a clear archetypal pattern in its delineation. The process of individuation or realization of the self occurs in four stages: persona, shadow, anima and self.

Mr. Redlaw is haunted by the sorrow of the death of a beloved sister, which results in his being gloomy and alienated from the world around him. The portrayal of Mr. Redlaw as a misanthrope, who appears cold hearted and indifferent represents the persona or his public image. Between consciousness and the outer world we interpose our persona. The persona also conceals our true nature and disguises both our shadow and our finest ideals as it tries to approximate our ego ideal. Jung describes the persona as "a complicated system of relations between individual consciousness and society, fittingly enough a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and, on the other, to conceal the true nature of the individual." (Jung, "The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious", 305).

The personal unconscious is not a demonic monster but a natural entity, which is completely neutral to moral sense, aesthetic sense and intellectual judgement. It only becomes dangerous when our conscious attitude to it is so hopelessly wrong that we



repress it. Dickens uses such terms as "phantom" (36 times), "shadow" (14 times), and "shade" (5 times) and "ghost" (8 times) to describe a doppelgänger who when requested, agrees to cancel all of Redlaw's painful memories. Redlaw is haunted by this spirit, which is not so much a ghost as his phantom twin and is "an awful likeness of himself...with his features, and his bright eyes, and his grizzled hair, and dressed in the gloomy shadow of his dress..." (33). This spirit represents the shadow archetype or the dark side of the ego, reflecting the deeper levels of our psyche, where latent dispositions common to all arise. It embodies chaos and wildness of character. Dickens employs vivid imagery and states, "...everything about him took this haunted tone, and he lived on haunted ground". The spectral ambience is created first by describing his appearance- "hollow cheek, sunken brilliant eye; his black attired figure...his grizzled hair...as if he had been, through his whole life, a lonely mark for the chafing and beating of the great deep of humanity..." (2). The characteristics of the ghost are depicted by his mannerisms; an eccentric nature- "...gloomy, shadowed by habitual reserve, retiring always and jocund never, with a distraught air of reverting to a bygone place and time, or of listening to some old echoes in his mind...his thin mouth as if in speech, but silent as the dead...". Next the narrator says that one, "should have seen his dwelling about twilight, in the dead winter time." The devilish or vicious nature of the shadow is captured when Dickens compares 'the shadow of his shaded lamp' to the image of 'a monstrous beetle on the wall'. In order to emphasize on the apparitional quality, it is represented by all the 'quaint objects' around him. Thus he employs phrases such as 'spectral shapes' and refers to 'the reflection of glass vessels that held liquids' as 'phantoms' thereby implying that the shadow is the reflection of our inner hidden personality, as opposed to the persona.

The unconscious, symbolically represented through Redlaw's dwelling, suggests the inaccessible nature of thoughts pushed into it, "His dwelling was so solitary and vault like, - an old retired part...but now the obsolete whim of forgotten architects..." (4). The deep-rooted state of the unconscious is "old, so crazy, yet strong" and manifests in several actions that one performs without one's knowledge. When the door is shut, the 'echoes', 'rumbling and grumbling' are "stifled in the heavy air of the forgotten Crypt..."

The conflict that arises between suppressed thoughts and the conscious state of mind (in a state of denial) has been symbolized by the 'smoke- age and weather darkened' dwelling and the surrounding environment. Several words such as squeezed, choked, droop, struggling, convey the suffocating and stifling nature of the repressed thoughts, which are desperately seeking an outlet.

Wind can be seen as an archetypal image indicative of a state of turbulence, chaos. The wind blows 'shrill and shrewd', making people hide their faces and race against the wind, and also blows away the snow flakes from the frozen ground. The winter weather creates a gloomy, chilly, and mysterious atmosphere and the inclusion of the storm foreshadows some great event that is to occur. Twilight is seen as black, lonely, sullen, and gloomy and marking the oncoming of 'shadows', 'prisoned up all day...gathered like mustering a swarm of ghosts'. (9)

The regular references to the haunted man gazing at the fire are symbolic of the conscious mind as opposed to the twilight scene. Darkness enveloping everything around him is symbolic of the unconscious mind. Initially the chemist sees his sister in the 'fire' but now he 'hears her in music, in the wind, in the dead stillness of the night, in the revolving years,' which shows that these memories have become overwhelming.



Likewise the reference made to 'grave', the 'deep, deep gulf' is indicative of the unfathomable, eerie nature of the unconscious. The play of light and dark and the wind 'rumbling', 'crooning' and 'howling' indicate Redlaw's conflicts. The old trees, beaten, withered and shady, represent a fatal image belonging to the stormy night associated with winter, barrenness, and weariness. The 'mirror' reflects the other half of the haunted man or in other words his alter ego. The archetypal images, 'desert' and 'snow' are symbolic of barrenness and hopelessness, sterility and desolateness.

The struggle of the conscious mind in denying the existence of its shadow is revealed in the lines- 'evil spirit of myself', "If it be an echo of my thoughts- as now, indeed, I know it is, why should I, therefore, be tormented? It is not a selfish thought. I suffer it to range beyond myself. All men and women have their sorrows, - most of them their wrongs; ingratitude, and sordid jealousy, and interest, besetting all degrees of life. Who would not forget their sorrows and their wrongs?" (41). Redlaw claims its arrival as 'unbidden' and retaliates when the truth is spelt out by the phantom- "I come as I am called."

The shadow's taking hold of the personality is suggested by the lines- "When they had full possession of unoccupied apartments. When they danced upon the floors, and the walls, and the ceilings of inhabited chambers..." (9). They assume the shape of household objects where a nurse appears like an ogress and the rocking horse is a monster. Ogress, monster and giant are all symbols of the shadow archetype. The defeated Redlaw declares, "Tempter, whose hollow look and voice I dread more than words can express, and from whom some dim foreshadowing of greater fear is stealing over me while I speak, I hear again an echo of my own mind." This is followed by the phantom's words- "receive it as a proof that I am powerful" and after bestowing the 'so called' gift, malevolently says, "destroy its like in all whom you approach!" (42).

The oldest member of the Swidgers, Philip described as 'a venerable old man with long grey hair', represents the wise old man archetype. The Wise Old Man (saviour, redeemer) represents "knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness, and intuition on the one hand, and on the other, moral qualities such as goodwill and readiness to help, which makes his 'spiritual' character sufficiently plain . . . the old man always appears when the hero is in a hopeless and desperate situation from which only profound reflection or a lucky idea . . . can extricate him. But since, for internal and external reasons, the hero cannot accomplish this himself, the knowledge needed to compensate for the deficiency comes in the form of a personified thought, i.e., in the shape of this sagacious and helpful old man" (Jung, "The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious", 217). The old man's faith in Christmas, his fervent request to the 'Lord to keep his memory green' and optimistic nature, are qualities of a spiritual character.

Mrs. Williams, who represents the anima, is the embodiment of maternal affection, which Redlaw seeks. As Mr. Williams claims, "There's a motherly feeling in Mrs. William's breast" and goes on to say, she is "a sort of mother to all the young gentlemen that come up from a variety of parts..." (15). If one is on good terms with one's Anima she can prove a valuable messenger between the unconscious and the conscious, a connecting link. She is described as a cheerful, simple, innocent looking person and the authorial voice further emphasizes her angelic character "Who could have had the heart to make so calm a bosom swell with grief, or throb with fear, or flutter with a thought of shame! To whom would its repose and peace not have appealed against disturbance, like the innocent slumber of the child!" (17). Milly showers her love on destitute and abandoned children, takes care of a sick student and an orphaned child, providing

financial as well as emotional support. Redlaw is fascinated by both Philip and Mrs. Williams and longs to be in their company.

When overpowered by the shadow the tendency is to project it on other people. Projection may be inferred by the degree of negative emotion aroused within oneself but now directed towards the outside world. Here one sees that the haunted man projects on other people negative emotions in a destructive manner. The Tetterby family (Mr. & Mrs. Tetterby and their seven children) represents another family archetype. Prior to the encounter with the haunted man, they were a united, merry and content lot, leading a simple life, but after interacting with the chemist the curse also afflicts them. They begin behaving in the same manner as the chemist. Likewise with Philip, Williams and the student. As Jung said,

Just as we tend to assume that the world is as we see it, we naively suppose that people are as we imagine them to be. In this latter case, unfortunately, there is no scientific test that would prove the discrepancy between perception and reality. Although the possibility of gross deception is infinitely greater here than in our perception of the physical world, we still go on naively projecting our own psychology onto our fellow human beings. In this way everyone creates for himself a series of more or less imaginary relationships based essentially on projection. ("General Aspects of Dream Psychology", 507)

While meeting the student Redlaw remarks: "The past is past. It dies like the brutes. Who talks of its traces in my life? He raves or lies! What have I to do with your distempered dreams? If you want money, here it is. I came to offer it; and that is all I came for. There can be nothing else that brings me here" (93).

Later he declares, "I am infected! I am infectious! I am charged with poison for my own mind, and the minds of all mankind. Where I felt interest, compassion, sympathy, I am turning into stone. Selfishness and ingratitude spring up in my blighted footsteps. I am only so much less base than the wretches whom I make so, that in the moment of their transformation I can hate them" (102).

He is dejected and troubled by the damage that he has caused and when he chances to hear the Christmas music, instantly tears sting his eyes- 'a dumb stir within him, conveying the value of what he has lost. The song acts as an archetypal image, representing the inner voice of Redlaw. The transformation in the behaviour of the Tetterby family while interacting with Milly is symbolic of the fact that when the shadow identifies with its anima, it changes thereafter into a complete and whole being.

At the end when he identifies with the anima figure- Milly, the shadow departs from his personality, and his heart glows with 'affection' and grateful homage'. This change ripened itself within him and he refers to her as 'merciful power'. The anima being the other lost half of the individual is suggested in the lines, "Your voice and music are the same to me." 'The dove so long imprisoned in his solitary ark' is finally released and moves towards 'rest and company'. Milly declares, "It is important to remember the past and wrongs so that you can forgive those responsible and, in doing so, unburden your soul and mature as a human being." Christmas as an archetype symbolizes rebirth, regeneration, purity and godliness.

Thus the story ends with the realization of the 'self', Redlaw turning into a whole person, symbolized by the image of the 'sedate looking face in the portrait, with beard and ruff' (Christ) and the holly under it. He asks for forgiveness of the 'great heaven for having thrown away thine (God's) own attributes'. "...The ghost was but the representation of his own gloomy thoughts, and Milly the embodiment of his better wisdom" (187).

In this novella one can notice an obvious undertone of religiosity and its didactic nature. As Stanley Tick has remarked, "How blatant the didacticism seems! But a modern, psycho- biographical perspective makes this last Christmas Book intelligible." Apart from this, the plot can also be seen as an allegory, or an extended metaphor, wherein the characters, events, and certain symbols come to represent abstract ideas, relating to the workings of the psyche. As Suzy Anger said, "The Haunted Man might be read as an allegory of autobiographical anxiety: what uncontrollable damage might result from "giving away" ineradicable memories" (221).

Such a detailed analysis of the novella is incomplete without considering the influence of the Victorian era on the human psyche. This period saw the emergence of writers like Charles Dickens, as well as psychoanalysts like Sigmund Freud and his successors- most notably Carl Jung and John Bowlby. The Victorian era was a period of several unsettling social developments that forced writers more than ever before to take positions on the immediate issues animating the rest of society as the growth of English democracy, the education of the masses, the progress of industrial enterprise and the consequent rise of a materialistic philosophy, and the plight of the newly industrialized worker.

The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain warns against an enfeebled vision which limits an individual to a persona and that persona's merely exhibiting commercial and social respectability. As a result of industrialization and materialism, the rich grew richer and the poor with large families were barely above subsistence level. The Tetterby family as well as the Cratchits in 'A Christmas Carol' belong to the latter class. The apparent contradiction between widespread cultivation of an outward appearance of dignity and restraint and prevalence of social phenomena that included prostitution and poverty can be seen as two sides of the same coin. Thus prominence was given to the persona and society expected people to behave in a particular manner. Therefore the pent up shadow would spring out of the unconscious at the slightest opportunity, as it does for Scrooge in 'A Christmas Carol' and Mr Redlaw.

Jung believed that through scientific understanding, the world had become dehumanized. Man was connected to nature and had lost his emotional participation in natural events. Thus Jung remarked:

His [man] immediate communication with nature is gone forever, and the emotional energy it generated has sunk into the unconscious.... This enormous loss is compensated by the symbols of our dreams. They bring up our original nature, its instincts and its peculiar thinking. Unfortunately, one would say, they express their contents in the language of nature, which is strange and incomprehensible to us. It sets us the task of translating its images into the rational words and concepts of modern speech, which has liberated itself from its primitive encumbrances -- notably from its mystical participation with things. ("The Symbolic Life: Miscellaneous Writings", 255)



Thus a work such as The Haunted Man attempts to reintegrate the psyche and reconnect the reader to a spiritual and ethical dimension in order to recuperate the lost memory of a race.

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## Cosmopolitanism In India

With the advent of globalization, the development of a progressively sophisticated media and widespread dispersal of people around the globe, cosmopolitanism is becoming one of the most important aspects of the twenty first century. This paper deals with cosmopolitanism in two novels of Rushdie namely Midnight's Children and The Enchantress of Florence. Though cosmopolitanism is a phenomenon that has existed from ancient times, even today there is no general consensus on what exactly cosmopolitanism is. Two types of cosmopolitanism seem to exist. The first is described as the melting pot where there is an amalgamation of different cultures leading to a new culture which is significantly different from that of its sources. The second kind is that of the mosaic culture where a number of cultures coexist each of them being influenced by the others but at the same time without losing its own identity and fundamental characteristics. Vinay Dharwadkar, in the introductory essay of his anthology on cosmopolitanism defines it as "a validation of inclusive, egalitarian heterogeneity, of the tolerance of difference and otherness" (7).

The study will concentrate on the second kind of cosmopolitanism. This kind of cosmopolitanism can almost be regarded as a way of life in most South Asian countries. The rich diversity in the language, religion, culture in these countries is in itself ample proof of this. One of the reasons for such diversity is their vast history of interaction with the outside world through trade and commerce and also through invasions and settlement. Another reason is the motif of inclusion which is a part of their traditions from time immemorial. This has facilitated the growth of new cultures without compromising the indigenous cultures. This is especially true of India because Indian philosophy does not believe in quelling differences but in recognising them and then rising above them to find a common voice. But there have been exceptions to this which unfortunately are increasing in number. However to a large extent cosmopolitanism still holds true. Historical figures like Ashoka, Akbar, Gandhi, the Sanskrit poems like Meghadutam, the works of the Bhakti and the Sufi saints and such innumerable figures and texts stand for the acceptance and celebration of diversity in India. But this does not mean that cosmopolitanism has its sources only in history. The colonial experience and the increasing influence of the diaspora of India add yet another dimension to any note on cosmopolitanism in India.

Thus through the different influences that have shaped it, India has become so diverse that it defies definition and the only way of life that has sustained it and still sustains it is cosmopolitanism. This inclination towards cosmopolitanism is more explicitly seen in postmodern novels, especially those of Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth and Salman Rushdie.

Salman Rushdie, a pioneer in the shaping of the post-modern novel, in The Enchantress of Florence and Midnight's Children deals with history in unique ways. Rushdie says in an interview with James Mustish, "I'm a historian by training". Multiculturalism, the individual identity and cosmopolitanism are recurring themes in the works of Rushdie. The Enchantress of Florence is set in the reign of Akbar the great Mughal emperor of India. The setting of the novel is mainly India and Florence. The novel has an ingenious plot which connects Akbar to an Italian princess and the entire story talks about multiplicity and cosmopolitanism. Midnight's Children, set in the pre- and post-independence era, deals with the issue of multiplicity and identity with reference to India as a nation.



Rushdie weaves in the idea of cosmopolitanism in the novel through a variety of ways, one of which is the use of allegory. Saleem, born at the same time when the independent India took birth (midnight of August 1947) considers himself inescapably connected to his nation “. . . thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously hand-cuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country”(Rushdie, “Midnight’s Children,” 9). There are a lot of such straight forward admissions of allegory as well as less blatant ones. For example, as soon as Saleem is born his father shatters his big toe and becomes mutilated just as at the birth of New India, the old India loses a portion of itself in the form of Pakistan. Through the fact that Saleem has multiple parents (William Methwold, Vanita, Mary Pereira, Amina Sinai, Ahmed Sinai, Wee Willee Winkie, Nadir Khan, Picture Singh, Dr Shaapsteker, Picture Singh . . . .) Rushdie points out that India has multiple origins. This acceptance of multiplicity of origins and recognition of each culture’s influence in forming the country itself lays down the foundation of cosmopolitanism.

The thoughts of the myriad midnight’s children from different parts of the country (“The voices babbled in everything from Malayalam to Naga dialects, from the purity of Lucknow Urdu to the Southern slurrings of Tamil) who come together in Saleem’s mind and interact “through universally intelligible thought forms which far transcended words” and declared their “existence” and individuality through an “I”(168), symbolises what the founders of the Indian constitution worked for and what the Indian parliament represents. It is not only in terms of language and origins that they are different but in their unique talents (witchcraft, telepathy, “transmutation, flight, prophesy and wizardry . . .” (200) and their view points (“Collectivism”, “Marxism”, “Capitalism”, “Individualism”, “Altruism” (228-229)). Thus Midnight’s Children represents the heterogeneity of the people of India.

Symbolism serves as an effective instrument in these novels to push the theme of cosmopolitanism. In The Enchantress of Florence, Akbar is a symbol for India. Just as how Saleem Sinai considers himself “a swallower of life” inside whom “consumed multiples are jostling and shoving”(Rushdie, Midnight’s Children,9), Akbar the great considers himself “ an incarnation of all his subjects, . . .an apogee of his people’s past, present, and the engine of their future”(Rushdie, The Enchantress of Florence,31). Thus Akbar is portrayed as a man characterised by the alarming opposition within himself ( “a warrior who wanted only peace, a philosopher king: a contradiction in terms” (33). He becomes clearly a metaphor for India - a land where opposites come together.

The ‘chutnification of history’ (Rushdie, Midnight’s Children,459) becomes a symbol for the diverse history of India, ‘. . . the chutney metaphor contains within it the idea of a variety of ingredients that go together to make a history which cannot be captured by one representative part’ (Mee 319).

Through the motif of fragmentation and the “hole” in the body, Rushdie brings out the fact that it is impossible to bring the whole of India under any particular ideology or give its identity a particular shape. The novel lacks any strict structure which itself serves as a symbol of the shapelessness of India in terms of an all pervading principal. ‘Rushdie (said that the) form was created to discuss the fragmentation of truth’ (Mishra 220). However the fracturing does not mean that India has no identity and that to hold it together as a nation is an impossibility, on the other hand it marks the “urgent need to

question the nature of *that* unity" which was "so central to the years of nationalist struggle and the building of the new nation state" (Mee 318).

Rushdie concentrates on specific places and by describing a city brings out a regional and national picture simultaneously. Rushdie's take on Bombay is a masterpiece. Rushdie calls Bombay "the most cosmopolitan, most hybrid and most hotchpotch of cities" and "it is to a great extent, India for Rushdie" (Dingwaney 308). Rushdie describes the statue of Shivaji, Breach Candy swimming pool, Malabar Hill and Mahalaxmi temple and with "its Parsees with sunken eyes"(Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, 452) , "koli fisherwoman"(94), "Irani cafes"(452), "vendors of hot-channa-channa-hot" and with its "Patna rice, Basmati and Kashmiri rice"(93). But the most cosmopolitan of all is Rushdie's presentation of Methwold's estates (which were Roman mansions)with its Parsee racehorse owner Homi Catrack, the Ibrahims, Sabarmatis and Dubashes, the European snake-doctor, Shaapsteker sahib, the American friend, Evie Burns, the Spanish teacher Emil Zagallo, Purushottam the Sadhu, Musa, Wee Willee Winkee and others.

The Delhi of Akbar's time, as seen through The Enchantress of Florence is also cosmopolitan in its own way though not as profoundly as 20<sup>th</sup> century Bombay. In The Enchantress of Florence Rushdie brings out the diversity of the city, "To the east was the Hindu colony and beyond that, curling around the city walls, The Persian quarter, and beyond that the region of the Turanis and beyond that . . .the homes of those Muslims who were Indian born" (28). The palace of Akbar with its "Rajput and Turkish sultanas playing catch-me-if. O-you-can" (27) and its court "full of foreigners, pomaded exotics, weather beaten merchants, narrow-faced priests of the West, boasting in ugly undesirable tongues"(47) seems highly cosmopolitan for a kingdom belonging to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Kashmir also, (as seen in *Midnight's Children*), though considered to be one of the least cosmopolitan states in India has its own share of *Indianness* with its people like Adam Aziz who are torn between different cultures, a Tai who weaves fantastic tales of Jesus Christ and Iskander the Great"(18) and its "blister of temples atop Sankara Acharya, which Muslims called Takht-e-Sulaiman"(31).

Even the magicians ghetto in Midnight's Children, though predominantly Communist, exhibits variety - Naxalites, Trotskyists, Namboodiripad's adherents Stalinists. Even people leading a hand to mouth existence have strong opinions about their allegiances and an understanding of the events taking place around them. This in itself is a characteristic feature of a cosmopolitan outlook.

Some characters such as Amina Sinai are deeply cosmopolitan. Her rescue of Lifafa Das from a mob, her faith in Ramram Seth's prophesy and her administration of the drugs given by Purushottam the Sadhu, her acceptance of Mary Pereira, a Christian from Goa, who proves to be a second mother to Saleem, her approval of the Brass Monkey's fanaticism towards Christianity, her acceptance of her Hindu sister-in-law Pia when the others from her family disapprove of her and other instances prove her infinite ability to embrace cultures and accept people with all their differences.

Akbar as seen in The Enchantress of Florence can be considered as the very embodiment of cosmopolitanism. Though his dynasty had been full of tyrannical rulers Akbar ushers in a governance of tolerance. He ruled that 'no man should be interfered on account of religion, and anyone is to be allowed to go over to the religion that pleases him' (Sen 18).His famous Nine Stars consisted mostly of Hindus. Rushdie says in an

interview "I do think that that period, which goes from Akbar to Shahjahan, is when Indian Islam developed its much more open, multiple, pluralistic philosophy which embraced and was affected by the other older belief systems of India." Akbar's motto itself belonged to "Jesus of Nazareth"(59). Akbar was fascinated by the idea of harmony within diverse perspectives "not the foolish all-men-are-one nostrums of the mystics, but this stranger idea. That discord, difference, disobedience, disagreement, irreverence, iconoclasm, impudence, even insolence might be wellsprings of the good."

The portrayal of the common beliefs of the people and every day life is often the best way to reflect the culture of a society. The knowledge of the stories and myths of another culture becomes a reflection of cosmopolitanism. Saleem constantly refers to such stories "Once upon a time there were Radha and Krishna, and Rama and Sita, and Laila and Majnu; also (because we are not unaffected by the West) Romeo and Juliet . . ." (259). From the local folklore of Mumbadevi to Narada and Haroun Khalif to Sin the moon, the ancient god of Hadhramaut, all find a place in Saleem's narrative.

Rushdie is also skilful in capturing the various nuances and modifications which the English language has gained in India, so much so that it ceases to be a foreign language. "Hey, sonny, man, think. Think only. You've got the experience , yaar . . ." "BHELPURI BOMBAY FASHION"(215), " always making jokeshoke(386) ,"Busineessism (397). Magical realism, which Rushdie employs in this novel, also echoes cosmopolitanism. It introduces an alternative way to perceive 'reality' and brings out the idea that there is no one particular reality but different versions of it which is what cosmopolitanism is all about. In Rushdie cosmopolitanism has indeed become an irreplaceable constituent of the Indian way of life.

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## A Fool's Errand?

She looked out of the window. Sleet and rain. Rain and sleet. That's all she saw. What would she not give to see something other than the gray sky? Earlier she would have thought it an omen; an indicator of the journey ahead but would have rubbished it in the same breath. Omens and signs, what century was she in? To talk of something like omens and signs would have been so out of character for her that no one would have believed her or taken her seriously.

No one did. Everyone just assumed she was joking. This couldn't possibly be the girl they all knew who loved life with such a lazy affection that it was instantly endearing to one. Could this be the same girl? But this journey was now proving the existence of curses and bad luck. It was cursed from the beginning; everyone who learned of it told her not to go through with it. Was she crazy? It was foolishness, suicide!

"Are you out of your mind?"

"Don't be foolish, please, its very risky!"

"Why do you want to do this?"

For the last two months, that was all she had heard, day and night. If she was her old self, she would have retaliated, screamed back, made sarcastic remarks. But of course she wasn't her old self anymore.

And the young are always brave and the brave are almost always foolish. It was a truth universally acknowledged which gave it all the more credit. She too was young and brave; maybe not foolish but foolhardy, definitely. There was a carefree approach to one's life bordering on the insane.

"Why is my life important? I have no husband, no children, no money."

So she got on the train to Kabul, Afghanistan, the war ravaged city of the dead. The smell of acrid smoke mixed with that of decaying flesh gave it a flavour it could never hope to lose. Every pore in one's skin had that smell. You could scrub all you want , take bath after bath, it wouldn't go. And she had learnt that the hard way.

Two months in Kabul on an assignment had given her nightmares for life. She couldn't forget the streets there, with huge moon-sized craters in the middle. She couldn't forget the buildings, crumbling away, exposed for the world to see inside. She could never forget the people, now more like animals , living in a primeval state hunting for food, eyes blood shot and wary, always moving, always darting, looking for danger. She couldn't forget the looks every one gave her, hard accusing stares turning to helplessness, looking for someone to blame. Searching for that someone who was responsible for all of this. Their bodies once fair now blackened by smoke; rail-thin, their ribs showing, bones covered by skin with a layer of muscle in between. She couldn't forget the others, those perpetrating these crimes, the supremely confident men who walked around with guns, drove air conditioned cars and threw people out of their homes to live in them. She couldn't forget any of these. Not even if she tried. Which she had. A lot .

The world prides itself on its humanity. It's ability to feel the pain of those in Afghanistan. They were humane so they would tell the whole world of their suffering. They were humane, so instead of aid they would send television crews and eager cub reporters. They were humane so they would film young boys watch their fathers getting shot. Film that instant recoil as if the bullet had hit the child instead; film the change of emotions on his face, from disbelief to anger to resignation in a matter of seconds. After all he had just seen his mother being shot and was yet to witness his uncle, his brother and his grand parents. They were so humane that this is what they would do. Tell the entire world of the crimes done. Blame "them", the mysterious "them" everyone blames. Who?

She was sent on a fool's errand too, told by her seniors that she would change the world; or at least make a start. She went with a television crew, she filmed that boy, she saw him recoil, she filmed him witnessing his uncle, his brother, his grandparents getting shot and then she filmed him. She saw him recoil for the final time as the bullet went through him. She saw his face go emotionless as he slumped to the ground, the life draining out of him.

That was her last shot; she left, intending to be rid of the nightmares once she left the place that gave them to her. But they didn't leave. The smell didn't go and the nightmares didn't cease. She took bath after bath; they wouldn't go and the invisible blood on her pores was still there, the nightmares too. She woke every time gasping for breath, sweating, desperate for them to go away. That desperation changed to helplessness and then to resignation. There was only one way out. So she was going back, for the last time, to wait for death. To help those there if she could, help them escape their fate if possible. But she would wait for that fate herself.

**Avi Singh, I B.A**



**From Atlantis, Chapter 8**  
**(Work - in – progress – a novel)**  
**Chapter 8**

Nick swallowed hard. Neha could see the outline of his bobbing Adam's apple.

*Neha, we are actually in Atlantis*, he wrote, holding out the pad so she could see. Then he underlined the important words. *We are actually in Atlantis*.

Neha squeezed his hand as best she could, considering that their slimy little gloves didn't let the fingers grip very well. She could only imagine how emotional a moment this was for Nick; she herself had only been involved in the search for Atlantis a few months, but this had been Nick's dream for years. And even she was near giddy with excitement. But –

*Are you sure? Is it Atlantis?*

*Pretty sure. We assumed Natuna Besar was part of the central island of Atlantis; we've been going around in a spiral from there. There was a space which was a little deeper than the average Shelf depth, remember, which could have been the canal around the central island. And look at that dip there*, Nick pointed towards the left of the tower that must be the end of the second ring-shaped island. *You can just about make it out*, Nick turned to point at the dip that went all around the tower in a very wide circle. *It keeps going, all the way around. We must be on the 2<sup>nd</sup> island, now.* He moved slowly, carefully forward, towards the ancient tower. *Look there!* Neha looked in the direction of Nick's pointing finger. *Windows! 11000 years ago! It's incredible! Better not go in, though. Not much water damage, see? It's been soaking in water since the last Ice Age! Think how advanced their technology must have been! But it's all gone now... what a damned shame.*

Nick swam reverentially towards the Tower. He pointed at a pile of rubble right next to it. *It's huge! Think of the size that building must have been! Not as big as this one, but big enough that this Tower clearly wasn't just a one-off experiment. Very little other surviving construction, though.* He moved a little away, to his left, trying to walk on the sea floor while still staring at the Tower, a confused little frown on his face; then he stumbled and nearly fell.

Neha swam hurriedly over. *Nick! You OK?*

*Yeah, I'm fine*, he grinned and nodded. *Look, Neha! This is uncanny! I just tripped over one of the Atlantean navigation/irrigation canals! That's my dream since I was 15! The legends are true...* He looked around him, a wide grin under his visor. *I wonder if this place fits the map Frank drew up?* He paused. *Frank.*

Neha winced as she saw the word appear on Nick's note-pad. She had been hoping Nick wouldn't remember Frank, in the excitement of finally seeing Atlantis. She swam over to put a sympathetic hand on his arm.

Nick smiled. *I'm OK now, thanks*, he wrote as he hugged Neha back, *and, in any case, Frank would've wanted to go like this. We can dedicate the find to his memory. OK with you?* Neha smiled up at Nick and nodded. Of course it was. *A great guy, Frank. Truly*

*dedicated Seeker*. He looked up with a little grimace that faded into a smile as he saw the Tower above him. *Still, we've found Atlantis, Neha. We've actually found it!*

Nick was, of course, dying inside, but there wasn't anything he could do for his friend. And he *really* wanted to explore Atlantis. Plus, all that he'd said about this is how Frank would've wanted to go – he had meant that.

Neha hugged her suffering boyfriend, and decided that he needed some time on his own. She left him staring at the tower, and swam off to explore the surrounds. One perfectly intact building and a pile of rubble *couldn't* be the only signs of an entire civilisation, could they? She drifted off, looking idly around her, allowing her mind to wonder how it was that no one had found Atlantis before them. Although, of course, no one had looked here before. No one had thought of physically searching for Atlantis at this site... until Nick and Frank. She shook her head, smiling. It was all about being in the right place.

**Priya Prasad, II B.A.**

## **December Child \***

The scene plays in my head  
over and over again in an infinite loop  
as I try to understand  
what it would feel like to hold a child.  
The air keen in her lungs, cold and throbbing,  
lightning darting out of her eyes like  
flashes of the future. Heart thundering.

Now all I want to do is sing her a song -  
a promise of magic and laughter and a perfect world  
where she can be anything she wants to be -  
a dream chaser, a cloud surfer -  
queen of the stars!  
But the music dies in my throat  
somewhere between intention and reality -

Because you see, I was taught that a star is just  
a big ball of flamin' gas far far away  
and it's really not that much fun to rule over  
a thermo-nuclear reaction.  
How do I tell her that?

How do I tell her that in this world  
we have created for ourselves,  
parents sometimes have to bury their children,  
and children sometimes have their childhood stolen from them  
and are given guns (metaphorical or otherwise)  
and are taught to kill their parents.

How do I tell her that  
we have poisoned her rivers, carved out her mountains  
ripped apart generations of people -  
"We're sorry, but we thought it was necessary."

How do I warn her about  
the do-gooders who will shoot down her dreams  
when they are still soft and naked,  
with just three words - "not good enough."

How do I sing her this new song of this new world  
when all I wanted to tell her was that  
ever new dawn is a reason to dance.

She looks like nothing more than  
a big pink soggy raisin in my arms  
a mess of snot and hope,  
but when she smiles,  
the light just spills out of her eyes,

and almost drowns me. Hands shaking -  
I cannot fight her strength  
because I am reminded again and again that  
she is a miracle,  
and the end of the world will just have to wait -  
because she is smiling.

I don't need a song of rainbow and stars  
poverty and heartbreak.  
This is my song.  
Just come home.  
We're waiting to see you smile.

(\* audience favourite in the poetry slam competition for performance poetry and spoken word, Dec 2009)

### **Editing at Midnight**

A flick of the slick knife  
cuts away the wheeze of clinging clauses  
and the whirling worlds of wordy wonders  
are slashed with a snicketysnack chop chop  
into a pile of well ordered ideas  
dropped with a thud onto a page.

The truncated stubby ends of sentences heal  
under the crack of fresh mint full stops  
free from the granulous gangrene of verbosity.  
With no bombastic ballast the words go  
flap-flap-flapittyflap and soar away  
into the horizon of a new thought.

The abandoned ideas flip away  
and flop into the dark corner in your head  
where they gyre and spiral like  
chickens with their heads cut off.  
Tick turns to tock as they wait for the  
clunk to click into a new beginning

**Chitrlekha D.R, III B.A**

## Delirium

This is going to be long.  
Long enough for a battle  
grisly and gruesome  
with sanity splattering  
everywhere.

I have travelled in hazy mists,  
with shadows making a pattern.  
ugly and big, they followed me  
through the depths of my mind's  
inter linked alleys, hollow spaces  
everywhere.

I have crawled in thorny wonderlands  
-in pretty skirts that tore apart-  
and bruised my legs.  
You followed me there too,  
like scurrying insects  
waiting to suck on naked  
flesh.

Never daring to reveal your form,  
your soul or your existence;  
imprisoning me in you.  
I searched and searched  
as day after day  
monsters crawled over,  
making me  
claustrophobic.

In the normalcy of the day-  
its soothing, analeptic  
sunlight,  
the exertion of routine,  
in the impossibility of  
excursiveness  
I made a  
beginning.

The heart still abandoned,  
the mind scripted formulas  
for intimacy for love for longing  
for support, for possessiveness  
for passion, intensity, desire  
all in you, just  
you.



In the midst of  
rat races and celebrated contention,  
my eyes moved  
and instinctively settled upon you.  
you, who I knew nothing about  
you, who I knew was all there was  
for that moment, minute, that very  
second.

**Niharika, II B.A**