VOLUME 29
2007
NUMBERS 1 & 2

THE ALIGARH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

Editor
Sohail Ahsan

DEPARTMENT OF
ENGLISH
AMU, ALIGARH

THE ALIGARH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES
(BI-ANNUAL)

Statement under Section 19-D Sub-section (b) of the Press and Registration of Books Act read with Rule 8 of the Registration of Newspapers (Central Rules) 1965.

1.	Place of Publication	:	Aligarh
2.	Period of Publication	:	Bi-annual
3.	Printer	:	Aligarh Muslim University Press
4.	Publisher	:	Sohail Ahsan
5.	Editor	:	Sohail Ahsan
	Nationality	:	Indian
	Address		Department of English Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh - 202002
6.	Owner	:	Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh

7. I, Sohail Ahsan, declare that the above-mentioned particulars are correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sohail Ahsan
Publisher

Reg. No. 29062/76

THE ALIGARH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES

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Department of English
Aligarh Muslim University
Aligarh

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The ALIGARH JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES is edited by Sohail Ahsan and published by him on behalf of the Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh-202002, India. AJES aims at bringing out, twice a year (April and October), critical and research articles dealing with subjects in all the main areas of English studies. Contributions, addressed to the Editor, should adhere to the MHRA style sheet, be neatly typed and double-spaced, and with notes and references at the end. Articles on floppy disk [(3.5") 1.44 MB, MS-Word format, along with a hard copy will be a great help in processing. Articles could also be e-mailed to us at the following addresses:

editor_ajes@yahoo.com
dept_english@rediffmail.com

Annual Subscription
Rs 120 / US $ 10

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The Aligarh Journal of English Studies

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Ismail Baroudy

A Historical Concordance of Thoughts: Where Goethe Encounters Hafez

Never was the saying "great men think alike" more aptly rendered applicable than it is of the immortal Hafez of Persia (Iran) and Goethe, the multi-dimensional genius of Germany. Hafez was born about the year A.H. 720/C.E. 13201 in the city of Shiraz, the capital of Pars (from which the name of Persia itself is derived) at a distance of about 38 miles (about 57 Kilometers) from the ancient Achaemenian Capital, Perspolis (Takht-e-Jamshid). He then lived there all his life of above 70 years till his death about the year A.H. 792/ C.E. 1390. Goethe, on the other hand, was born in 1749 (28th August) at Frankfurt-am-Main and died in 1832 (22nd March) at Weimar, formerly in East Germany. Although there is a time gap- distance of about four and quarter centuries between the two-there is a remarkable likeness of thinking amongst them. Further, the circumstances of their life-spans are also notably similar. For instance:

1- Both Hafez and Goethe lived during periods of great political turmoil and disturbance. About half a century earlier Shiraz, and for that matter, the whole of Iran had seen the devastations of the Mongol invasions, and their wars of consolidation. Even the local dynasty (the Injus) had indulged in much fratricidal wars, and his patron Shah

Shuja to whom he has made references in his poetry, was himself the product of much intrigue, crime and bloodshed. Then the vicinity of Shiraz was infested by bands of ferocious and heartless robbers who presented a great problem of law and order to the local rulers. To crown, above all, hardly had Shah Shuja settled down to a peaceful life when the country had to face the ravages of the invasions of the world conqueror, Timure-Lang. Goethe, in this respect, was far more fortunate than his 'twin' Hafez, Based on poems and anecdotal accounts during Shah Shuja's reign, Hafez served as a teacher at the local madrasa to provide a modest living for himself, and some additional revenue from the panegyric in his oeuvre. Thus, similar to Goethe, he enjoyed a reasonably stable pattern of occupation. Also Hafez and Goethe both enjoyed considerable international reputation in their own lifetime.

Conditions in Europe during Goethe's age were tumultous and the boundaries of the countries were constantly changing. There had been wars of the Polish succession, the Restoration of large territories to the Turkish Sultan, the bloody consequences of the claims of the stubborn Maria Theresa which dragged on for seven years in Europe (1756-63): Russian troops invaded East Prussia and Hanover (North Germany) was attacked and occupied by France. In the mean time, the storm of the French Revolution was brewing and although it brought ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity amongst educated classes in Germany, also it brought tidings of untold horror, guillotine and bloodshed in France, which tended to propagate anarchical ideas in

the rest of Europe and which seemed to present serious problems of law and order. Force let loose in consequence of the French Revolution culminated in another force which enveloped the whole of Europe in the shape of Napoleonic Wars.

2- It has been observed that great epochs in literature, so rare in their occurrence, have had a peculiar relationship to periods of extraordinary political commotion. Both Hafez and Goethe were not only inheritors of Sublime literary tradition but themselves became the culminating points in their respective literary achievements unsurpassed by posterity. Hafez was preceded by the luminous stars of the unmitigated glory in the galaxy of the Persian sky like, Anwary, Sa'adi, Attar, Sanai, and the towering personality of Rumi. Moreover, the atmosphere of Shiraz in which he was born and bred was itself permeated with literary genius.

Western scholars, during the enlightenment phase, endeavored to impartially view east to prove that the world of east is no longer a world of war and bloodshed, violence and invasion, and anti-Christian or anti-European. On the contrary, they invited their audiences to review their position and discern east as a world of beauties, narratives, expectations as well as wonders (Schimmel, 1990). In the same way, Goethe lived and moved in a highly intellectual atmosphere. His exposure to classical culture during his Italian sojourn of 1786 deeply influenced him. A part expression of this can be seen in the shaping of his plays 'Iphigenic auf Tauris' (1793) and 'Ttorquato Tasso' (1790) and the poems 'Romische Elegian' (published in 1793). His

friendship and correspondence with the poet Schiller sharpened his aesthetic theories, heightened further by his sensitive mind so amenable to female beauty. In addition, far more important, was his receptivity to foreign literature including the English poet Shakespeare and many Iranian poets out of whom the great Hafez of Shiraz cast a peculiar spell on him and resulted in the production of the immortal 'West-Ostlicher Divan.' Moreover the influence of Jean Jacques Rousseau, Edward Young and James McPherson on him was also profound. But the chief impetus came from the oracular utterances of Johann George Hamann (1770-88)2, the "Magus in Norden" wherein he observed that the basic verities of existence are to be apprehended through faith and the experience of senses and pointed out the value of primitive poetry. Poetry, he declared, was the mother tongue of the human race and not product of learning and precept. Similarly, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803)3 who regarded, and no thinker before him, the idea of historical evolution, likewise interested Goethe in foreign literature including that of the East. Thus, Goethe's intelligence, so free, insatiable and unconfined, set the ideal for comparative study and he predicted a Welt-literature in which all nations have a voice.

3- Both Hafez and Goethe deeply impressed the powerful conquerors of their times. Thus, Hafez impressed Timur-e Lang while Goethe impressed Napoleon.

The following famous couplet of Hafez has been the subject of much interest and many are the versions of an interview of Hafez with Timur about it:

(If that Shirazian Turk is able to capture my heart, I will give the entire territories of Samarqand and Bokhara in return for the black mole on her face)

About the interview, which seems to have taken place between Hafez and Timur and in which Timur seems to have questioned Hafez about the above couplet, the account given by Dr. Zarinkub in his 'Dar Kucheye-Rindan' seems to be more worthy of credence. It is said that Zaynu'l Abidin, the younger brother of Shah Shuja, who assumed the reigns of authority over Shiraz after the sudden death of Shah Shuja, while all the princesses of the territory acknowledged Timur as their overlord, Zaynu'l Abidin still held out his own. Therefore, three years after Shah Shuja's death, Timur came to chastise him in A.H. 789 ,and stayed in Shiraz for two months. In spite of his illiteracy and violent temperament, the world conqueror had the habit of showing the utmost regard and deference to men of learning and piety. He used to converse with them kindly and freely and every one in the locality believed that if Hafez meets Timur, the poet will be well received. He had written a ghazal deprecating the cruelty and faithlessness of the Timurid forces. Also, in order to gain favour with the recalcitrant Zaynu'l Abidin, who had not submitted to Timur, he wrote his famous couplet already, quoted. In this, Hafez means to call Zaynu'l Abidin as the Shirazian Turk as against Timur whom he called Turk-e Samarqandi. The rightful ruler of Samarqand and Bokhara (Timur) summoned the aged poet to his presence. As was his wont in Isphahan and elsewhere Timur, says the contemporary historian Abdur-Razak,

demanded ransom from Hafez for the lives that had been spared in his locality. Hafez, who was leading a life of abject poverty, pointed to his tattered clothes and said he was so poor that he had nothing to offer. At this, Timur reminded him of his couplet and said, "How can one, who can give away Samarqand and Bokhara in return for a mole, be penniless." At this, Hafez "wits seemed to have returned to him and he replied "It is my unbounded bounty, Sire that has led me to this condition." The witty answer not only spared Hafez of any demands, it won for him a robe and a generous amount of money.

As for Goethe, Napoleon was likewise not too happy with him because of Goethe's outright condemnation of the use of force by Napoleon in subduing and chastising the greatest European emperors of his time and in the wake of persistent wars, bringing about misery to people, whom Napoleon himself once pitied and called "Bleeding humanity"[4]. Napoleon regarded Goethe with his towering intellect and pervasive pen, as one of his greatest enemies. When in 1808 Napoleon granted an interview to Goethe, they discussed many subjects including religion and philosophy. Napoleon was mightily impressed with Goethe's political opinions; he said, "Our enemy is wiser than us. He is a real man[5] in all implications of this word."

Napoleon had himself a great faith in the powers of the human intellect, and deprecating brute force he had once said, "It is not arms that win the battle. In war, all is mental. It is the mind that wins the war". Goethe and Napoleon talked about thought and belief concerned with the inter-

related concepts of God, reason, nature and man. They talked about Islam and Holy Muhammad, and both expressed great reverence for Muhammad and affirmed the truth of the Message of God as in Holy Quran. They condemned men like Voltaire who had talked irreverently and scoffingly about the Holy Messenger of Allah. The interview was a great enlightenment for Napoleon, who continued to have great regard not only for Islam but also for Goethe. Later Goethe wrote his play "Muhammad" and therein gave details of his interview with Napoleon.

4- Both Hafez and Goethe have that profundity of thought and feeling, that deep comprehension of the facts of life, which has an enduring and a lasting effect. The grand power of their poetry is its interpretative power; the power of so dealing with ideas, to use the words of Wordsworth-'on Man, on Nature, and on Human life' as to awaken in use a wonderfully full, new and intimate sense of them, and the relation of the individual to them. Matthew Arnold rightly observes that "the poet ought to know the life and the world better than an average poet and this accounts for their lasting effect. Every person, who knows Persian right from the highest scholarly adept to the humblest villager, sings the songs of Hafez, and the same is true of Goethe. Both are inspired poets and are the "Lisanul Ghayb" [the Tongue of Mysteries (Unknown)] of the East and West respectively.

5- Both were heavy wine-drinkers. Goethe drank wine to an excess and did not desist the admonitions of his friends to the contrary. So did Hafez. His Divan metaphorically and figuratively begins addressing the waiter a couplet :

(Hello! O Cup-bearer, pour the wine into the cup and let us drink; for though love seems easy first it soon embarks on hazards.)
so does Goethe say in Wanderer's Equanimity:-
"We must all be drank! Youth is wineless drunkenness and old age that drinks itself young again is marvelous virtue. Life, bless if, takes care to supply us with cares, and the caster, out of cares, is the vine (grape plant from which wine is derived). As long as we are sober, we like what is inferior, but when we have drunk, we know what is what. Yet excess, too lurks near at hand; oh teach me Hafez, what your wisdom thought you".

For I hold not unjustly, that if a man can not drink, neither should he love... If a man can not love, neither let him drink.[6]
To the Waiter

Don't slam the jug down in front of my nose like that you curmudgeon 7 I want friendly looks from any one who brings me wine...etc. And so says Hafez:-
Don't cast a glance with contempt on a poor intoxicated fellow like myself. Please realize that no vice or virtue can take place without God's will.
All these talks about 'how and why' gives you a headache!
O heart, hold the cup and let your life rest for a moment.

In fact, Hafez's poetry in reference to wine is so voluminous that it would be idle to recount the whole of it. It should almost amount to rewriting the Divan. He even wants to merge the distress of his poverty, want, and worldly afflictions in the intoxication of wine when he says:

(In times of want and poverty, strive to drown your worries in wine and intoxication. For this alchemy is such that it can make a Qaroon 8out of a beggar).

6- Be that as it may, both Goethe and Hafez regarded wine as their sincerest friend and confided in their respective cups as in no one else.

Goehte acknowledges in one of the pieces in Ranj-Nama (Tale of Woe) and Saghi-Nama (the story of the cup-bearer) both of which are chapters in Goethe's Divan, that is used to keep his innermost feelings hidden from the hypocrites and self-seekers. The cup of wine was his only companion. Precisely in the same manner, Hafez says,

(We relate our grieves only to wine; as we can not rely on any one else in such matters)

7- Both Goethe and Hafez had a stoic forbearance of the sufferings and miseries wrought by wars and bloodshed. Von Hammer wrote in his introduction to Hafez, "During the life-time of Hafez, the land of Pars saw repeatedly upheavals and fluctuations. Kings and chieftains recurrently fell out with each other; and as a consequence, lost their governments to one another. And, in these ups and downs; comings and goings, blood was inevitably shed in profusion.

With all this Hafez did not lose the composure of his temperament, nor his native good honour and maintained his interest in the song of the nightingale, the sweet-smell of the flower, the intoxication of the mystical wine and his love for beauty. He saw divine beauty in every comely form and these faculties of his nature never faded till the last.

Goethe, in this approach of Hafez to the things of life, saw a reflex of his own nature. He too had, since his earliest youth till his most advanced years, appreciated beauty and light of the sun, the song of the Nightingale and felt the intensity of love very much like what Hafez says in the following verse:

Of Hafez's celebration of wine and love, it was disputed from the onset whether they should be interpreted hedonistically or mystically. As for Goethe, certain passages in the Divan suggest that he found the oriental style and setting particularly appropriate to the expression of a sense (increasingly characteristic of his old age) of dissolving of boundary between earthly love and the love of God.

(Come into the secluded corner, sit merrily and watch the happenings of the world with a contented, smiling face)

8- From this flows another conclusion namely that both Goethe and Hafez, although optimistic, were not necessarily optmistists as Hafez beautifully sums up:

A few days' love of the revolving sky is just a matter of fiction or a magical spell. Thus if the friends show kindness towards you, you may just take it a brief spell of good fortune.

9- Both believed in a life of freedom of thought and action and waged an endless war against cant and hypocrisy. When Goethe first thought of collecting together poems and verses inspired by Hafez and naming them the 'Divan' (14th December 18th), he wrote as under:

"I want to produce this Divan in the shape of a world reflecting mirror, like a cup as that of Jamshid, where I would

see the reflexes of the eternal world as distinguished from the world of cant and hpocracy; and I will discover the way to that everlasting paradise which is the abode of Ghazal-singing poets, so that I may be able to find my place by the side of the Hafez of Shiraz".

Here Goethe speaks in much the same way as Hafez did in the following couplet:

(I take my cup and seek aloofness from the hypocrites. In other words, I choose a pure-hearted companion out of all the things of the world)

Hafez goes on to say:-

Again he says:-

They regard hypocrisy as permissible and the cup of wine as forbidden by religion. What a path and a community! What a law and a belief!

You wear the cloak to hide your hypocrisy. So that you may earn your living and yet keep God's men away from the Divine path.

God is displeased a hundred times with the cloak, which has a hundred, idles up its sleeve.

or

The five of Cant mixed with prayer will burn off the property of Religion. Hafez, throw away this woolen cloak and go your way.

or

My donning of cloak is not due to my excess of religious-mindedness. I am only throwing curtain over hundreds of my hidden faults and sins.

or
Come! So that the hustle-bustle of this workshop may not diminish and let there be the playfulness of men like you and the sinfulness of men like me.
or
Name of Hafez got somehow connected with sinfulness, otherwise in the code of the merry-makers, the writing of good and bad is not there.

Sometimes Hafez feels that his community is unable to appreciate his ways and says;
These people lack insight and understanding. Help me O God so that I may take my genius to some other buyer (customer).

Happily this buyer came out to be Goethe himself.
10- Both Hafez and Goethe are passionate lovers and see the reflex of Eternal Beauty in the worldly beauty. To both, to use the words of Keats, "beauty is truth, truth is beauty" and likewise to them "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever". Goethe says: [9]

"I will remember you, Holy Hafez in both abodes and taverns; then my sweetheart.[10] Lifts her veil and shakes the sandalwood scent from her hair. Yes, the poets' whisperings of love shall fill the very houris with desire.

And if you would envy him this, or even try to spoil his pleasures, let me tell you that the words of poets are forever hovering round the gate of paradise, softly knocking on it, begging and winning everlasting life".

Though you may hide yourself in a thousand shapes, yet, All-Beloved! at once I recognize you. You may cover

yourself with magic veils, at once, all present one, I recognize you.

In the young cypress-trees purest upward growth, all-shapeliest one, at once I recognize you; in the pure living moving waters of the canal, All-Flattering one, How well I recognize you.

When the leaping fountain-jet unfolds, All playful one, joyfully I recognize you; when clouds form and re-form themselves, there too, All-Manifold one, I recognize you. In the flowery veil, the tapestry of fields, All-Starry-Many-coloured one in your beauty, I recognize you; and when ivy stretches forth its thousands arms, there, All embracing one, I know you

. When morning catches fire on the mountains, at once All Gladdening one, I salute you; then the sky grows pure and round above me, and then, lifts of All Hearts, I draw breath in you.

All that I know by outward and inward sense, teacher of All Men, I have learned from you; and when I name the Hundred Names of Allah, each of them is echoed by a name for you.

To this Zuleikha adds:

"The mirror tells me I am beautiful! You all say I am also destined to grow old. Before God all things must stand still for ever. Love Him in me for this moment."

What a likeness the above is to an immortal thought expressed by Keats in the 'Ode to the Grecian Urn', where the poet consoles the forward bending lover on the Urn, the lover arrested and presented in immortal relief by the

sculptor's hand before he can kiss, with the line, "for ever wilt thou love and she be fair"

Similarly Hafez says:

Listen, O one, who is so unaware of the bliss of our continuos drinking, we have seen the reflex of the face of The Beloved in our cup.

Again he goes to say:

The un-initiated are in wonderment about our eye's interest in beauty. Actually I am what I look; as for the rest, they all know best.

When Hafez was writing this fond verse, the bird of his fancy had been caught up in the slip-knot of Divine Love.

Goehte also saw his own picture in the above writing of Hafez, as he himself said in his "Memoirs" I have appreciated beauty, youth and sunlight right till my eldest age, and seen Divine Beauty and Love in the sweet smell of flower, the song of the nightingale and the love of the world of beauty

And a most burning verse of Hafez opens up the floodgate of great spiritual knowledge. It says:

They hold me in high esteem in the Fire-Temple for this specific reason, that the fire which never dies resides within my soul always.

He is thus proud of the eternal fire of love within his heart. At another place Hafez says:

Hereafter, I will draw light from my heart and shed if on the expanse of the horizons as the dust subsided when we reached the sun.

When the reflex of the face fell into the cup, the Soofi became confused for the hubbles in the wine showed him many faces.

At yet another place, he explains the same idea in these words.

Your face had only one appearance in the mirror but the multiplicity of mirrors caused it to appear in the shape of so many faces.

Again, deeply conscious of his own spiritual height, Hafez says:

The music of the stars cannot make a mark at those heights where Hafez reaches his voice.

He sums up his mystic comprehension with great self-confidence, which the following verse explicitly, reveals:

No one lifted the veil of doubts and errors and reached the Ultimate Reality as did Hafez, but this truth could not dawn upon their minds until the seekers of truth combed the hair of the brides of my speech.

11- The above also shows that both Hafez and Goethe are mystics of a very high order, and this fact is fully illustrated above.

12- Both are profoundly lyrical poets. This perhaps needs no illustration so far as Hafez is concerned, because the ghazal style of poetry is essentially lyrical. The following verses may however be quoted as an illustration:

A hundred realms of heart can be purchased by half a glance of the eye. Only the beautiful ones are miserly in giving the glance.

Drink wine, because if you observe a little more closely, all are guilty of this sin of hypocrisy whether there be the scholar, the Hafez, the Judge or the city police Chief himself.

Authors and poets of romantic school aspired for recognizing the root of languages. Moreover, they came to accept see that all natural languages of the world are deeply rooted in the east. The poets and authors of this period were in search of their lost self and Human beings essence and innateness amongst classical eastern works (Hadadi, 2006:9). Admittedly, lyrical poetry, in its broadest definition, is basically romantic due to the fact that it tends to give a colouring of its own mind over a basic reality, as has been claimed:

"Distance lends enchantment to the view."

or

"distance presents the object fair."

But there is a subtle difference between the two: in as much as 'lending enchantment to the view' is true romanticism; but when an object is relevant there and only the distance is presenting it fair, it is wonderfully poetic, has a romantic element but it can not strictly be called romantic as romanticism does not predominate it but is subdued. Goethe was a poet who falls in the latter category. Goethe did not like romanticism due to its unreality and he defined it in 'das Romantische' in a much quoted saying, as a disease (das Kranke). Nevertheless a substantial part of the West Ostlicher Divan as also that of "Faust" can be called as much romantic as are the work of poets like Wordsworth and

Coleridge. Goethe's unique production, "Faust" has an exceptionally pervasive lyricism.

A significant point to mention is that Goethe in his terminal literary chronology, coinciding with Romantic period in Germany, paid meticulous heed to literary works of other countries, in particular the *oriental literature*. That is why besides "Sturm und Drang"19, encounter with letters of other nations and alien cultures occupied a particular position within his literary activities (Hadadi, 2006:6).

13- That both Goethe and Hafez are freedom lovers and much aggrieved with the fault-finding "traders in religion" has already been partly explained and will be explained more fully when we discuss 'The West Ostlicher Divan'. In passing however a few of Hafez's verses may be quoted to illustrate his bitter resentment of the intolerant Sufi and Hafez's revenge of him. He says:

the quality of Sufis is not always purity and piety. There are many a cloak which deserve to be burnt off outright.

Although even with a hypocritical cloak, to drink red coloured wine looks highly objectionable; but at least I do no sin, I wash off the colour of cant with that liquid.

The above is somewhat apologetic. But Hafez falls heavily on his fault finders in the following verses:-

The same chief imam of the city (who leads prayer in the Cathedral mosque) and was carrying his prayer rug on his shoulders, was himself being carried by people on their shoulders the day before in the tavern lane.

Come to the tavern and let your face flush with drinks of wine. Don't go to the prayer-house (mosque) because there are men of black deeds there.

They have closed the door of the tavern. O, God, also disapprove the keeping open of the door of cant and hypocrisy.

If the Magian priest (here it means the old man of the tavern) became our guide and instructor, what is the harm? After all every one, apparently even the most sinful, can still have a spark of Divine Inspiration in his head. And Goethe in his Divan (Wanderer's Equanimity) says: let no one of forces. It rules amid rottenness with great profit to itself, and manipulates righteousness exactly as it pleases. We must be drunk! Youth is wineless drunkenness and old age which drinks itself into youth is a great virtue etc.

14- Both Hafez and Goethe are international poets. They stepped far beyond the bounds of their own countries and have achieved universal appeal. We all know that Hafez has been translated into nearly all the languages of the world, and his poetry is read and appreciated in all the nooks and corners of this globe. The very fact that his Divan could inspire as great a genius as Goethe and because a direct cause and source of Goethe's West-Ostlicher Divan which is itself proof-conclusive of Hafez's universality of appeal. Goethe has left indelible marks on the sands of time and is by universal consent a man of all times and of the whole world. His fame transcended the boundaries of his country and time due to his, (to use the words of T.S. Eliot), "amplitude, abundance, universality, representatives and

wisdom. "In his Divan Goethe's language reaches never surpassed heights of sensuous power. Professor Barker says, Goethe's was probably "the most wide ranging body of lyrical poetry that ever came of a single mind", although his humanism was even greater than his poetry; which Goethe in his wonderful statement said, "what you lose at a poet, you will gain as a human being" (Der Mensh gewinnt, was der poet verliert").

Goethe never rested at familiarising himself with learning only the poetry of his time. He mastered classics of all countries and of all times-Latin, Greek, Indian, Persian, Arabic and even Chinese. He undoubtedly, in the words of Matthew Arnold, "knew a great deal of life, without doubt a great deal more than his contemporaries". And as genius cannot soar, to use the words of Maulane –e Rumi, without "the wings of knowledge"[20], Goethe took his art to a perfection due to this all-pervasive knowledge which he always sought after and reached closest to perfection. Besides being an unsurpassed poet, and a genius whom even Shakespeare can only equal when he is at his highest Goethe is versatile and many sided. He is the sage and the aphorist: one of hie most famous aphorisms is, "I place the faculty of speech at the pinnacle of all human arts. It is undoubtedly the greatest of God's gifts to man." Goethe is a great many things more. He is the scientist, the critic, the statesman, the theater and director, and the man of the world.

In the field of poetry however, he not only holds a most eminent place in the European elite but also in the world elite. And nevertheless, Goethe the poet is the least European

of all because he crossed all frontiers and obtained a place of glory amongst the world galaxy of poets.

Goethe's great love of Persian poetry can also be seen diverging from the conventional rhyming and prosody of European Writers and attempting some versification like that of Hafez as in the ghazal couplets [though in Goethe's poetry rhyme is observed, but it is merely the recurrence of rhymes that are utilized, not what usually seen in ghazal. They can be accounted for nothing but as quasi-ghazal (2003:70)].

Having said this about the various similarities between Hafez and Goethe we may now directly touch upon the manner in which the former's thought lyricism influenced the later and which ultimately led Goethe to write his immortal Divan (West-Ostlicher Divan) wherein his personality into the East. He broke off from formal Christianity and read the Holy prophet of Islam.

Communicating Vessels: Goethe Herder, Hamann and Hafez

As we have already said, Goethe was, since his Strasburg days, interested in literature of other countries and had in fact, predicted a weltliteratur (World literature). The idea of historical evolution21 was firmly believed in by Herder and he too was instrumental in Goethe's oriental studies. Goethe, under the influence of Herder, sees poetry not merely as the spontaneous outburst of an isolated soul, but as the natural outgrowth of individuality that uses for its own ends the rich inheritance of culture and tradition. The question of originality versus imitation as it was posed

in Goethe's day called for tact rather than dialectical subtlety. Against the mechanical imitation of the neo-classicists it was necessary to present one front; against the robustious fellows who proclaimed themselves invincibly original it was necessary to present another.

It is characteristic of Goethe's career that he usually found the teachers he needed, in science, literature, and the fine arts. During the months when he sat at the feet of Herder in Strasburg, he was learning how a poet might rightly draw inspiration from the literature of the past. Herder was an enthusiast for the primitive. He had learned from older contemporaries the gospel of a return to nature. But the modern way of returning to nature is not to reject tradition altogether, but to seek the recovery of an uncontaminated tradition. It was in this spirit that the early Renaissance had exalted Greek literature; it was in this spirit that the leaders of the Reformation had tried to return to the very letter of the Bible. Moreover, to Goethe's generation, the generation which came after the Enlightenment, the Renaissance itself offered a great tradition to which ardent youth might return. The enthusiasts of the late eighteenth century were continuing the quest for an art which should be not merely artistic, but the original and authentic utterance of humanity. The Renaissance was one of the great foci for Goethe and his comrades of the Storm and Stress. But the Renaissance was also the period of heightened national feeling. In all this welter of themes, those which were both Renaissance and German took the strongest hold on the poet, and came

so close to him that he hid his concern with them even from his master Herder.

I most carefully concealed from him my interest in certain subjects which had rooted themselves within me, and were, little by little, molding themselves into poetic form. These were *Gota oon Berlichingen* and **Fauri.** The biography of the former had seized my inmost heart. The figure of a rude, well-meaning self-helper, in a wild anarchical time, awakened my deepest sympathy. The significant puppet-show fable of the latter resounded and vibrated many-toned within me. I too had wandered about in all **sorts** of science, and had early enough been led to see its vanity. I had, moreover, tried all sorts of ways in real life, and had always returned more unsatisfied and troubled.

So were the oracular utterances of Hamann, who among other things had pointedly emphasized the value of primitive poetry. But it was on the 7th of June 1816 that he first heard the name of Hafez. Johann Von Hammer who had been working in the Austrian Embassy in Istambul a number of years picked up a fairly good knowledge of persian, and on his return to Wein, West Germany he produced in 812 a translation for the first time, of the whole of "Divan of the Ghazals of Muhammad Shamsuddin Hafez, the poet of Iran". The publisher of Goethe's works, Kota, sent to Goethe (probably for review) two complimentary copies of the translated Divan-e-Hafez. As in the case of all the other new publications, Goethe began to browse the book with interest and care. But hardly had

he gone through a few pages of the book when a spontaneous cry of approbation burst forth from his lips. In his own words "he had come across a poetic masterpiece that like of which his eyes had never seen till that day". He in fact, had discovered the rare and talismanic "Cup of Jamshid"-the mirror of the whole world, which he had been seeking after, all his life, and which, in the words of Nietsche, "Was a versatile wonder of human art" and which literally bewitched Goethe.

Hafez was to Goethe a new world, a new inspiration, a new message that come from the Best and which acquainted him with the real spirit, the real thought, the Philosophy of the East as Heina, a German-Jewish philosopher had remarked, "Having been despaired with cold spiritualism of the west, Goethe's soul thirsted for the spiritual warmth which he discovered in the bosom of the East": Goethe says:

There, where life is pure and good, I will go back to the deep origins of the races of men, to the time when God still taught them heavenly wisdom in early tongues and they didn't have to rack their brains; when they paid high honours to their fathers and resisted all foreign bondage. I will enjoy the limitations of that youthful age.... Those lands where the world carried such weight, because it was a spoken word.

I will mingle with herdsmen and refresh my self at oases, as I travel with caravans and trade in shawls and

coffee and musk; I will tread all the paths between the wilderness and cities....

Up and down rough mountains tracks your songs, Hafez, give consolation, when the train leader, high on his mule, rapturously sings to wake the stars and scare the robbers."

Perhaps the desire to flee from the atmosphere of the turbulent West and look for the serene peace of the East could also be likened to Hafez's own desire to leave Shiraz and go over to Baghdad when Hafez had said,

(The climate of Fars is curiously favourable to the cads. I wish I cold find a companion in whose company I could pull off my tent from this country) and
(I have never, in Shiraz, been able to tread the path of success the achievement of my objectives. Blessed would be the day when Hafez takes his way towards Baghdad.

Nevertheless the beauties and attractions of Shiraz were too dear to be given up and he says"
the aromatic breeze of the flower bower of Mussalla (A tranquil location in the vicinity of Shiraz) and the charm of the Ruknabad stream do not permit me to undertake any kind of Journey from here.
Similarly, Goethe writes in his biography. "I wanted at any cost to flee from the world of reality which had become unbearable for me and seem to draw my body and soul into a rack. I wanted to take refuge in a world of fancy, which was my foremost objective: a world in which I wished to draw my breath in peace and to enjoy the beauty and

tranquility of the Eastern atmosphere. Also he once wrote to Luise on of his lady-friends. "East is indeed acting like a balm which I am using as an anesthesia for my soul in these days of great mental affliction."

Under the little 'Hejrat23 in Mughni-Nama (A songster's epistle), a chapter in Goethe's Divan, he says: "North, West and South are in turmoil, crowns are tumbling down and empires are shaking. Come, leave this Hell and commence your journey to the peaceful East, so that its spiritual breeze may blow on you; and in the assembly of love and wine and the pleasing sound of the Caspian sea may revive you to youthfulness."

It may be mentioned here that the West Ostlicher Divan of Goethe which was conceived in the sequence of a direct inspiration from the Divan of Hafez, comprises twelve chapters as under: Mughni Nama, Hafez Nama, Ishg-Nama, Saghi Nama, Suleika (Zuleykha) Nama, Parsi Nama, Timur Nama, Khuld Nama, Takfir Nama, Ranj Nama, Hekmat Nama and Mis'l Nama.

It is already evident that there was an unusual spiritual likeness between Hafez and Goethe. He was, in fact, the Hafez if his age in matters of love for beauty, wine and his lyricism. Like Hafez he too loved deeply and passionately. At least nine ladies can be named who attracted his amours during the various periods of his life. These were (1) Fridderike, the daughter of the country parson. This was rather early in 1770-71. (2) Sudden passion in 1824 for Urilk Von Levetzow who inspired Goethe's poem Marienbad Elegy, a beautiful meditation on Schillers

exhumed skull (1826). (3) Louise Snedtler whom he wrote in 1816 about his desire to flee from the disturbed atmosphere of the West, and to look for peace I the East. (4)Lotte Kestner, (5) the elegant Lili Schonmann (Belinda) and above all (6) sisterly Lida, also (7) Christine Vulpius, (8) Frau Von stein, who loves like a wife with him and caused a scandal in Weimer. (9) Christine was his lawfully married wife (10) But the lady who has created history and appeared as Suleka (zuleykha) in Goethe's Divan is Mme. Marianne Von Willmer an opera actress in Frankfurt on Maine, a poetess of considerable merit, whose poems have been adopted and included by Goethe in his Divan under the heading "Suleka Spracht". She was the wife of a banker of that city. It would be interesting to note that although Frau Marianne Willmer created such an impact on Goethe's heart and inspired some of his finest verses in addition to contributing some wonderful pieces to Goethe's Divan, the fact of her friendship was mentioned by Goethe all his life. As a matter of fact, it remained a complete secret for several years even after his death. He did not disclose his attachment for Frau Marianne even to his closest friends. The fact came to notice for the first time in 1869 when Harman Grimm, a nephew (sister's son) of Marianne, who was himself an eminent writer and critic, disclosed in his article 'Preussische Jardduche' the real name of "Suleika" of the West Ostlicher Divan of Von Goethe. He also produced documentary proof to substantiate that certain pieces of the Divan were sent to Goethe by Marianne herself. In this way, the purely imaginary "Suleika" of the Divan become a tangible, living

reality. Frankly speaking, "West Ostlicher Divan" is the most crucial letter of confessions that as been uttered by a westerner towards oriental values" (Schami, 2005).

When Marianne was 14 years of age, her mother had taken her to Frankfurt (am Main) where she learnt ballet dancing and became an opera dancer and actress of considerable repute and popularity. In the height of her fame as an opera actress, an eminent banker, Herr Von Wilmmer proposed to her and they were married. All this time Marianne was only seventeen years of age while Wilmmer was seventy-five. Goethe, who was an old friend of Wilmmer was at that time sixty five. During the courtship of Marianne and Wilmmer, Goethe was staying in Wilmmer's house; when in 1814 and 1815 he had re-visited the Rhein am Main and seen of his youth and had occasion to meet Marianne several times. This developed into a great mutual regard and friendship between the two. Her romantic nature, her intelligence, her poetic talent, and her personal charms and beauty completely bewitched Goethe. But as she became the wife of another man, who was incidentally a great friend and also host of Goethe, the whole affair assumed the nature of purest love and personal regard, as will be seen from the fact that although Marianne returned his love, this belief idyll was ended by renunciation and permanent withdrawal on Goethe's part. This sentiment is perhaps very beautifully explained in an Urdu quatrain of Iqbal:

(This business of attachment (love) is full of bewilderment and confusion. Even more confusing is my colourful verse. There are moments when I yearn after the

bliss of Union; yet at others. I equally thirst after the burning desire, be gotten by separation.)

Nevertheless, the unending fire kindled by love continued to smother unabated even up to his very last years and they continued to write to each other with the full knowledge and permission of Marianne's husband, Von Wilmmer, the poem Dem Aufgenhenen vollmonde written in 1828 refers above all to Marianne; and finally the eight line Vermachthis (1831) accompanied the letters which she had witten to him and which he returned to her shortly before hie death.

Both Marianne and Goethe had a great liking for Hafez and, as has already been said, Marianne was herself a poetess of no mean order. In the Divan, when we read verses under the heading 'Suleika speaks', the same were written by Marianne herself and adopted by Goethe with slight alterations, which are not necessarily improvements although it is true that Marianne's poetry did get an impetus under the guidance of Goethe.

In the summer of 1814, Goethe shut himself up from every one and devoted himself to the exclusive study of Hafez. He read every ghazal of Hafez once, twice, even ten times, until he thoroughly familiarized himself with the spirit, the thought, and even style and prosody of Hafez, as also his rhetorical devices, his metaphors and smiles etc., which he started adopting in his own poetic expression. Towards the end of summer, he wrote as follows in his autobiography;

I think I will go mad if I do not give expression to my powerful feelings about Hafez. I find myself simply unable

to bear the impact of the thought of this extraordinary man who has so suddenly set his foot in my life."

Soon Goethe began to compose some verses whereof the inspiration was drawn from Hafez. At first he had no intention of collecting them in the form of a book, soon their number swelled so that he began to conceive of publishing a German Divan. In his own imagination he undertook a vicarious journey to the East and thought he would carry himself a present to be offered to Hafez. In his autobiography he again says, "I prepared myself to visit Shiraz spiritually and to make that city as my permanent abode; whenever the potentates and chieftains of Iran, move their armies around Shiraz to undertake their military campaigns there, I would stage a temporary exit from that city and move back to it again when peace is restored. As regards his intended book he said,[25] "I want to produce my Divan as a mirror of the world or like the world reflecting cup, in contra-distinction to the thinking of the hypocritical and the outwardly religious, I will see the reflex of Beauty and ultimate Reality and will take my place by the side of Hafez in that heart of paradise where the souls of the singing poets rest in eternal peace."

And now to quote from Goethe's Divan:[26]

"And though the whole world sink to ruin, I will enjoy you Hafez;
you alone! Let us, who are twin spirits share pleasure and sorrow;

to live like you, and drink like you, shall be my pride and my life long occupation.

"That you can not end is which makes you great and it is your destiny never to begin. Your song moves like the vault of the stars, its beginning and ending is for ever the same…you are the true poetic fountain head of delights; and waters unnumbered flow from you. A mouth for ever shaped to kiss, a deep-voiced sweetly flowing songs, a gullet ever thirsty, a heart of self-out flowing kindness."

"My wandering leads me into confusion, but you can straighten me out. When I act and when I write, may you be the guide of my ways..

he adds, "you weakened this lock in my mind, you gave it to me; for the words I spoke in delight and from your sweet life, rhyme answering rhyme as look answer look." And may you still hear them even from afar; words reach their goal, though voice and sound may have died away."

IDEAS IN GOETHE'S DIVZN AS INSPIRED BY HAFEZ-SHIRAZ

I

IN MUGHNI-NAMA

HEJRE (HIJRAT)

27 "The North, The West and the South are disintegrating, thrones are bursting,

empires are trembling; make your escape, and in the pure Orient taste the air of the patriarchs! Amid loving and drinking and singing, let Khiz'r's fountain (Chisers Quell) renew your youth."

The expression "Chashme-ye-Khiz'r" or "Ab-e-Khiz'r" used by Hafez in the following couplets:
If the eternal benediction could be bought with gold or by worldly might, the water of Khiz'r would have fallen to the lot of Alexander. (thought taken from Nizami –e-Ganjavi's story of Sikendar Zu'l-Qarnain's search for the water of immortality and his failure.)

The breath of Christ is but a reflex of a fine utterance from your red lips. Similarly Khiz'r's water of immortality is a symbol of the sweetness that drops from your lips.

In another Couplet; (which is not authentic), Hafez is said to have written as under:

The breeze of the Garden of paradise, and the water of the fountain of Khiz'r emanates from the dust of your footsteps.

Another reference to the water of immortality can be seen in the following famous couplet:

(Yesterday morning I was freed from mortification and frustration and in the darkness of night I was given the water of immortality.)
Goethe's following verses in Hejre (Hajrat): -
"I will remember you, holy Hafez, in the bath-houses and taverns, when my sweet-heart lifts her veil and shakes the sandalwood-scent from her hair," remind us of the following couplet of Hafez which seems to have inspired the thought:
(If you are a friend inspired by true love and sincerity then be steadfast; be my companion in my hermitage, in the bath-house and in the flower garden (where I be) and;

Imagine the sweet smelling musk, which the morning breeze releases from her locks; witness, how hearts bleed to see the curl of her scented hair.

An English poet, Arthur J. Arberry, has translated the above in the following verses:

"So sweet perfume the morning air
Did lately from her tresses bear.
Her twisted, musk-diffusing hair-
What heart's calamity been there!

(The above is a fine translation except for the fourth line which somewhat spoils the effect.) 32

"Love is like a fire which cannot be concealed. In the day-time, its smoke discloses, its presence and at night its flames reveal the secret of the lover that tries to hide his sentiments, his looks proclaim his heart's emotions."

Similarly Hafez in the sixth couplet of the first poem says:

(All my affairs proceeded from festivity and success to disgrace and infamy. After all how can an affair which is itself the subject of so much gaiety in merry parties remain a secret?)

As a direct inspiration from Hafez, Goethe lays down the following four pillars of good poetry in his Divan:

Pillar No. 1-The poet should adopt love as the main subject of his poetry. As Hafez says:

(In the wilderness of our heart, O God, Thou endowed us the Treasure of Thy Love; and shedst the radiance of Thy love in this desolate corner.)

Pillar No.2- One should praise the rose coloured wine.
(May it never be that the pen of my heart should ever write anything other than the account of the musician and the wine.)
Pillar No. 3-The power of the poet's speech should be victorious in its mission, so that the fiery crown which he places on his head should lend him a divine majesty.
This reminds us, unmistakably, of the following couplets of Hafez, who evidently has inspired the thought contained in the above writing:-

The saintly wine drinkers stick to the door of the tavern. And such high in their thinking that they can take or give away the kingly crowns.
(O Worshipper who knows and treads the path of divine knowledge, know that you have set fire to the cloak of piety, strive hard and become the chief of the circle of the merry wine-drinkers of the world.)
Pillar No. 4- The poet should eschew evil and put up a fight against it. Because it is the duty of the poet to rid the world of the darkness of Ahriman and lead them on to the light of Yezdan.
This reminds us of the following couplet of Hafez:
(No one lifted the veil from the face of doubts, as did Hafez. This applies to all who combed the locks of poetry with their pens.)

As for his fight against evil, the study of the following couplet of Hafez would be pertinent:

(It has been written in golden letters on this blue sky that nothing shall subsist except the good deeds of men of noble nature.)

Concluding his compliments to the poetry of Hafez, Goethe says, "if a poet is able to achieve the above qualities in his verse, he will be able to produce poetry of everlasting appeal, as that of Hafez; and would find a place in the hearts of all mankind."

The above also reminds us of the great calibre of Goethe as a critic. But I have deliberately omitted this aspect of Goethe's genius as may also appear from couplets like the following"

I saw yesterday (before Man's creation) that the Angels were knocking at the door of tavern, thus creating the clay of man and with the same they likewise molded the wine-cup.

As the clay from which my body was molded in the eternal past, was kneaded with wine, I ask my opponents as to why I should give up a thing, which has crept into my creation itself.

In the Ishq-Nama (story of Love) Goethe addressed Hafez in these works;

"Forgive me O teacher if I lay down my heart at the feet of a love-some toddling cypress (Die Wandelnde Cypress)"

This thought seems to have been derived from the following hemistiches of Hafez:

(Why doesn't the Cyprus of my heart get inclined to visit the garden.... etc.

or

(It is the cypress which rises vertically)

In Mughni-Nama sub-section "Mandane existence" Goethe says:

"O Hafez when you sing your song in the memory of your beautiful beloved, how delightedly you tell the tale of the dust of the path leading to her house!... The very breeze which blows in her path and scatters its dust, smells for you sweeter than the scent of the musk and the rose." The above thought is inspired by the following couplets of Hafez:

Oh morning breeze, bring the sweet smell of the dust which lies in the path of the friend, take away the agony of my soul and bring the welcome message from my sweetheart.

In another passage in the chapter of (Moghni Nama), Goethe says "die that you may love".

Curiously, Hafez also lived in a cultural climate which permitted a certain religious latitude in its poetry, due in particular to the mystical vein of amatory poetry that had been epitomised by his predecessor Rumi and to some extent by his fellow Shirazi Sa'di, but exactly to what effect Hafez exploited this latitude, and hence just what manner of poet it was that Goethe chose as the locus and inspiration for this encounter with Islam, is to this day a matter of debate (Fennell, 2005: 238). As a point of fact, inspiration from the Holy Quran's verse is also directly derived from the following couplet of Hafez:

(Be patient Hafez! and realize that whosoever did not surrender his life, did not reach the beloved).

In "Ishq-Nama," the chapter on "Love" Goethe says: "O Hafez, in the same manner as a mere spark is enough to ignite and burn away the capitals of Emperors, your firy speech has caused such a conflagration in my soul, that the whole person of this German counterpart of yours seems to be in tumult."

In the like Manner Hafez says:

The lightening of LOVE ignited the fire of sadness in the heart of Hafez and burnt it off to ashes. See! What an old friend did to his sincerest friend.

In the same chapter, elsewhere, Goethe says, "O Holy Hafez, you have learnt the secrets of life and of mysticism without adopting the methods of the hypocritical and of the seemingly pious; and led men on to their eternal welfare even though your success in this path will not be acknowledge by the temporal heads of law enforcing agencies."

This again has been suggested by the following verse of Hafez:

(The worshiper who concerns himself only with ostensible virtue; is unaware of my inner self, let him say about me whatever he likes. I can't force him to change his ideas.)

In the poem IM GEGENWARTGEN VERGANGNES (The past in the present) Goethe himself acknowledged his debt to Hafez in these words:

"Roses and lilies full of morning dew blossom in the garden near me; and behind and beyond it the friendly bush-covered rocky slope rises... And at this point in our song we come back to Hafez; for it is fitting to share the joy of the day's completeness with masters of experience.

In Suleika-Nama Goethe says: "I asked for but little.... I have often sat happily and content in a tavern or in a small house. But as soon as I think of you, my spirit expands like that of a conqueror." This is again inspired by the following couplets of Hafez:

"I who has been endowed with the limitless treasure of beauty of my friend, can now turn into the richest Kings (Qaroons) a hundred beggars like myself."

Goethe goes on to say: "The kingdoms of Timur-e-Lang should serve you, his all-mastering away obey you, from Badakshan you would receive a trilente of rubies, and of turquoises from the Caspian Sea.

You would have dried fruits sweet as honey from Bokhara, the land of the sun; and a thousand sweet poems from Samarqand, written on the pages of silk. All the above is inspired by the couplet"

But, Goethe goes on all this kingly riches will sadden your heart and sicken your soul. Because the truly loving hearts get no pleasure except when they sit by the side of their sweethearts! These following verses of Hafez inspire this:

If in both worlds I can draw one breath in the company of my friend, I will consider that one breath is my most valuable acquisition from the two worlds.

One can accordingly conclude that Hafez served as an archetype that Goethe intelligently adopted to assimilate. He accepted to creatively imitate flattering some one deserving the act. Goethe, in fact, grasped the happy idea, seized the day, made the best of the occasion, and met the moment of truth. He discovered who precariously he is and what he vicariously strives for.

Not only great men think alike but also they consecutively recapitulate each other in the span of time. Great men indispensably recur as nothing but great men. Great men never go with the wind; they constantly remain by reproducing themselves. They are steadfast by reproduction. They are honestly duplicating the archetype they are a genuine elicitation of. A great man should be the product of the past he chose to be ascribed to. Someone who cares about his omni-presence and looks forward to staying in the borderless future truly benefits from a communicating past. Occasionally, whirling wind and shifting sands create versions of great men but some voluntarily try to become the variety historically made available to them. Goethe did so marking his tracing past in Hafez. He could not find it in India, China, Greece or somewhere else. He eventually ran across that justifiable expectation, somewhere serene, the Shiraz of Pars. He perceived the cure for the infectious malady, the reconciliation for the wounds and deformities war made Europe suffer from. How lucky he was, to be the one he tapped to be, to heal the mass he roamed around, to love the way he felt to survive.

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The Aligarh Journal of English Studies, Vol. 29, Nos. 1& 2, 2007, pp. 41-50

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A Relook at Wordsworth's *The Ruined Cottage*

Ever since Jonathan Wordsworth published Wordsworth's *The Ruined Cottage* in his book *The Music of Humanity* (1968) in a text which has now come to be regarded as the final version of the poem which had several earlier versions, the poem has been treated as one of the most significant in the canon. It is remarkable for the ways in which it blends intensity of feeling with unobtrusive but effective artistic design and expression and an ultimate restraint. It is worth considering some of the ways in which the 'simple Wordsworth' achieves this in the poem.

The poem embodies strong sentiment with a scrupulous avoidance of a lapse into the sentimental. Margaret's sorrow is captured with intensity but it is also suggested that the ultimately excessively fond hope and false anticipation in which grief lands her does her in. Wordsworth's evoking of Margaret's grief at her husband's loss and of the suggestion that ultimately it is unwarranted hope that kills her as well as of the feelings and responses of the story's pedlar-narrator and his traveler-listener, the persona in the poem is

set in the frame of a narrative structure that is carefully organized and uses a technique of reminiscences coming through in filtered fashion, which creates effects of distancing and close empathy at once with variations of focus. Wordsworth approves the depth of Margaret's feelings, but not her 'tumult' of the soul.

The multiple narrative is conducted in the closely impinging background of the seasonal cycle and of the state of the garden of Margaret's house. The persona of the poem, the traveler encounters the pedlar who tells the tale of Margaret. He begins with a contrast between what Margaret's ruined cottage, its gardens and environs are now and what they were once. It is an example of change in the village, no doubt. But it should be noted that Wordsworth is not concerned so much about change in rural society as about what happens to the individual and her psyche and the family relationships. The distinction needs to be made, especially in the context of the recent cultural critics putting almost all the emphasis on the social sense and the social shaping of Wordsworth and his fellow Romantics. The pedlar starts recounting what Margaret, her family, house and garden were originally like. He stresses her unfailing hospitality and cordiality of reception which are characteristic of rural tradition. Her husband John was hardworking and prosperous as a farmer. He also practised spinning and well tended both his lands and

garden. Then several successive seasons and years of drought and famine ruined him, and, having exhausted his savings and resources, he came to feel helpless and started moping about. It was also a period of war fought by England on the continent. Driven to despair, he crept away stealthily from home, without ever so much of a farewell to Margaret and to his family and enlisted as a soldier in the army. Margaret could only guess about this on happening upon a purse of gold left by him, on the window sill, again stealthily, a few days later. Left in distress and misery, Margaret nursed a fond hope that her John would return to her. She continues to cling to this hope for far too long and it ultimately kills her.

It is interesting that what sets off the tragedy is the combination of famine and war. The former is doubtless a phenomenon of nature, the failure of rains. more evidence, is provided by Wordsworth in *The Prelude*, of the fearsome and hostile aspects of nature. The latter war, a man-made evil suggests that the disharmony and dislocation in the essential bondedness of man and nature is the root cause of all the trouble, and the existence of the bond is a basic conviction, underlying Wordsworth's scheme of things.

The pedlar-narrator recalls his visits to Margaret's cottage every time he happens to pass that way, often or once or after twice of long intervals, once five

years. The state of Margaret's cottage, its garden and environs, is a forceful synecdoche of her inner state in the narration. In the course of the years that Margaret spends in her forlorn hope that John would come back to her, she loses her two children; the elder a boy who is forced to take up the job of a page boy through the parish's charity and the younger, an infant. Still Margaret holds on, pining for the impossible to happen. She aimlessly wanders in the countryside, often peering into the distance to see if the figure that she espies is that of her John and makes fruitless enquiries about him to soldiers or mendicants occasionally passing by. Finally, after years of isolation and loneliness, she dies broken-hearted and disappointed.

The poem seems to imply that Margaret's failure to recognize her husband's loss and her inability to accept it and readjust her life in the changed circumstances proves her undoing. In a sense, she unknowingly snaps the bond with nature in the process.

We may now sample a few passages from the poem to see some of the ways in which the poem works its effects of intensity, complexity and a supervening sense of calm and tranquility. Apart from the story being set against the cycle of the seasons and years, the narration itself takes place in the background of the diurnal progress of the long summer afternoon in which

it takes place. The narrator begins with a reference to the poets in their elegies citing natural phenomena as sympathetic fellow-mourners with them for the dead:

> The poets, in their elegies and songs
> Lamenting the departed, call the groves
> They call upon the hills and streams to mourn
> And senseless rocks nor idly, for they speak
> In these invocations with a voice
> Obedient to the strong creative power
> Of human passions. Sympathies there are
> More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth
> That steal upon the meditative mind
> And grow with thought. (ll 73-82)

The same 'sympathy' between humankind and nature is what Wordsworth harks back to at the end of the First Part, and, in a different form, towards the end of the poem:

> Why should a tear be in an old man's eye?
> Why should we thus with an untoward mind,
> And in the weakness of humanity
> From natural wisdom down our hearts away?
> To natural comfort shut our eyes and years
> And, feeding on disquiet, thus disturb
> The calm of nature with restless thoughts. (ll 92-98)

The idea is, again, that we should not fail in or neglect

our free and open response with our eyes and ears, our senses in general, to the experience of nature, and attune our sensibility to the "sympathy" between us and nature. Towards the close, when Wordsworth exhorts us:

> Be wise and cheerful, and no longer read
> The forms of things with an unworthy eye
> She sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is here .
> (ll 510-512)

Margaret is now one with nature. She has now been gathered up into nature, and we should do wrong to bemoan the development.

The same relationship of our life and living to nature is implied in the lines in the poem which show how the decay in Margaret's life is reflected in the condition of her garden:

> The unprofitable bindweed spread his bells
> From side to side and with unwieldy wreaths
> Had dragged the rose from its sustaining wall
> And bend it down to earth. The border tufts,
> Daisy, and thrift, and lowly camomile,
> And thyme, had straggled out into the paths
> Which they were used to deck.
> (ll 314-320)

Apart from the sense conveying the idea of the decay and neglect of the garden, the rhythm and movement of the lines carry a shift from the even tenor of the verse so far, and suggest a dislocation and a disruption of orderliness through the ruggedness and harshness in the sound values. This is part of the unobtrusive art of the 'simple Wordsworth'. The sense of neglect is conveyed by the later lines:

> ... and her few looks,
> Which one upon the other heretofore
> Had been piled up against the panes
> In seemly order, now with struggling leaves
> Lay scattered and there, open or shut
> As they had changed to fall. (ll 404 - 408)

But the rhythmic values in these lines do not seem to make any special contribution. The same is more or less the case with the lines:

> ...His Sunday garments hung
> Upon the selfsame nail, his very staff
> Stood undisturbed behind the door.

Margaret kept them intact, hoping her husband would come back one day.

The persona, the traveler, who listens to Margaret's tale is finally left with a profound sense of the 'secret spirit' and the 'still-sad music of humanity' underlying the story. He

> ...reviewed that woman's sufferings and it seemed
> To comfort one while with a brother's love
> I blessed her in the impotence of grief.
> (ll 498 - 500)

He is able to feel into

> That secret spirit of humanity
> Which, mid the calm oblivious tendencies
> Of nature, mid her plants, her weeds and flowers
> And silent overgrowings, still survived
> (ll 503-506)

The old man's (narrator's) words that follow strike the final note of 'calm, all passion spent'

> I will remember these very plumes,
> These weeds, and the high spear grass on the wall,
> By mist and silent raindrops silvered o'er,
> As once I passed, did my mind convey
> So still an image of tranquility
> So calm and still and looked so beautiful.
> (ll 510-518)

The narration of Margaret's story takes place so close to the locus of the story that the ruined cottage and its environs with all their tell-tale details of appearance loom large on the eyes and mind of both the narrator and listener. With the presence of these registering in the narrative prominently, the faithful recall of the details of his meetings with Margaret in the cottage where she lived and came to pass through her sufferings, and the matter-of-fact and forthright manner of the narration serves, at once, to intensify and balance the feelings of both the listener- persona and the reader as they take in and respond to the story.

Wordsworth's poem is not one about change in the village in the sense of Goldsmith's 'The Deserted Village' or the poems of Crabbe and Clare near contemporary with Wordsworth. Nor does the poem contain like 'Tintern Abbey Lines' of the *Prelude* Wordsworth's recounting of his memories of mystic experiences of his communion and sense of unity with nature. But *The Ruined Cottage* is remarkable for the ways in which it captures the intensity of Margaret's suffering, deprivation and grief, and creates in the process an abiding sense of the still, sad music of humanity, for the reader.

If we set the present poem alongside 'Michael' or 'Resolution and Independence', we immediately

notice an overall resemblance in the three themes. However, there is little in *The Ruined Cottage* of the emphasis on the covenant of Michael with nature with which he continues his communings long after his separation from his beloved son, or on the humanity of the old leech-gatherer or the dignity of Michael, though man-nature relationship forms the groundswell of *The Ruined Cottage* also. Similarly, *The Ruined Cottage* is no crisis-lyric like 'Resolution and Independence', and Margaret does not assume the symbolic dimensions of either Michael or the old leech-gatherer who with their endurance and determination, hope and perseverance lift the poet out of his mood of despondency. Moreover, while the feelings of Michael and the leech-gatherer are brought home to us directly, those of Margaret come mediated through the framework of narration and response by the listener. This framework enables us to contemplate the ultimate significance of the story by setting it in the overall context of what Wordsworth calls 'man, the human heart and nature'.

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The Aligarh Journal of English Studies, Vol. 29, Nos. 1& 2, 2007, pp. 51-69

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East - West Encounter in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's *Esmond in India*

The meeting of the East and the West as a theme has become a stereotype in Indo-Anglian literature. The theme has been given a rich variety of treatment at different levels by different writers: "The definition of East as well as of West varies from novel to novel"[1] Kamala Markandaya's *Possession, Some Inner Fury, A Silence of Desire* and *The Nowhere Man;* Manohar Malgonkar's *Combat of Shadows;* Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope;* G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr;* Anita Desai's *Bye Bye Blackbird,* Santha Rama Rau's *Remember the House* and Nayantara Sahgal's *A Time to be Happy* depict the problem and prospects of establishing a harmonious relationship between two different racial and cultural groups.

The East-West encounter is a part of the Indian experience as a legacy from her colonial past. While looking for India Columbus stumbled upon America and the first step was taken towards the great encounter with America on its other side. When the East and the West were first brought together in trade the Indians were exposed to Western culture. The two centuries of British rule which had exposed the Indians to a new mode of life extended the way for an East-West encounter. A dialectic between the values of the East and of the West became, therefore, a natural corollary to this cross-cultural encounter.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala deals with the problem of East-West relationship in her novels. She writes about the complexes of Easterners in relation to the Westerners. She seems to be Kiplingian in seeing that the East is East and the West is West and never the twain shall meet.

In *Esmond in India*, Jhabvala deals with the theme of East-West encounter and marital dissonance. These two themes are the major themes in Jhabvala's fiction and they are mutually interlinked in their negative context. Though both the negative and positive aspects of marriage are depicted in Jhabvala's fiction, the negative aspects of disharmony and dissonance dominate her human world.

The story of Esmond in India is set in post-independence India. The Britishers living in India are no longer rulers but visitors. Esmond Stillwood is an Englishman who just forgets to return home and stays on to guide tourists who visit the Red Fort or the Taj Mahal. He earns his living in India by teaching Hindi to the wives of Foreign embassy officials and giving them expert lectures on Indian art and culture. For Esmond, orientalism is a trade; he earns his living by it.

Gulab is the paragon of Indian beauty who falls in love with Esmond and marries him much against the wishes of her own people. It is a sudden wave of passion that prompts her to marry a European who had lectured once or twice at the college that Gulab had for a short time attended.

While writing about Indian life, Jhabvala's European imagination creates a world of its own, which pleases the readers of Europe and America. She describes traditional marriages and the various complexities involved in them. She portrays the friction in the life of Prema and Suri in *To Whom She Will*. Prema is not happy with her husband because he visits other women. In *Get Ready for Battle* the disagreement occurs owing to the attitudinal differences in the life of Gulzari Lal and Sarla Devi. In *The House Holder* Prem's marital relationship with Indu is not without discord. In *Esmond in India* Gulab and Esmond ruin their marital harmony through misunderstanding and loss of perspective.

The marital incompatibility in the life of Esmond and Gulab is not only because of temperamental differences but also because of the cultural disparity. Their life is a dramatization of the conflict between Eastern and Western culture. The marital disharmony due to cross-cultural marriage is treated with dexterity and an intense awareness of its complexity. The Western culture of Esmond finds it very difficult to cope with the Eastern culture of Gulab. They represent the problems and prospects of establishing intimate and meaningful relations between the two different racial and cultural groups.

As a perceptive novelist, Jhabvala probes deep into Esmond's weaknesses as a European, and also examines Gulab's shortcomings. Gulab marries Esmond for love and is totally disappointed. Esmond seeks the glories of Indian

culture and tradition in her and is utterly frustrated. When he first met her Esmond thought that Gulab's eyes were deep, sad eyes full of wisdom and sorrow of the East. Later he realizes that they are just blank. He feels he is trapped in marriage with an animal: "He thought of himself as trapped-trapped in her stupidity, in her dull, heavy, alien mind which could understand nothing: neither him, nor his way of life, nor his way of thought".[2]

In Jhabvala's novels the love of spicy food becomes an aspect of the sensuous and pleasure-loving character of individuals. In her realistic depiction, the author vividly brings out the differences in their tastes and habits of food. Gulab, the Indian wife of an Englishman, is very fond of spicy dishes and this novel is characteristic of organic art, emphasizing food habits.

Gulab creates scenes at meal times. She is full of the spicy smell of Indian cooking. She is the only daughter of a doting mother, petted and pampered and brought up in a sheltered home. She is now living in a well-furnished flat, expecting a visit from her mother with good Indian food. Gulab's interests in life do not go beyond sleep and food. She loves to sleep on the floor when Esmond is away from home.

A typical Westerner's distaste for strong, hot, spicy meals is seen in Esmond: "He sat alone at his smart little dining table in his smart little dining corner and ate his cheese salad" (41). Everything on the dining table is colourful and modern reminding one of a "beautifully photographed

full-page advertisement in an American magazine".41 By this description, the pseudo-romantic identity of Esmond is brought home to the readers. Esmond's food is very different from Gulab's spicy meal eaten on the floor out of brass bowls.

The birth of their son Ravi widens the gulf between them. Esmond wants him to be fed on boiled English food, to keep away from Indian scents, and to sleep in a separate bed. Esmond believes that if the child sleeps with Gulab there will be "far too much petting and unhygienic sharing of beds".43

Gulab, true to her tradition, wants to give Ravi spicy and oily Indian dishes and pets him all the time. The bringing up of Ravi becomes a matter of dispute. Gulab's mother Uma, turns out to be a mouthpiece of the Eastern way of child care against Esmond's Western style. Uma bursts out angrily on how Ravi should be brought: "... good strengthening food cooked in plenty of ghee!...Such food he needs, and also he needs to have his legs rubbed with oil to make them strong... and in the night he must sleep with his mother so that she may comfort him if he wakes with bad dreams !"(141-42)

Oiling the hair, eating hot, spicy food or the mother and child sleeping together may be trivial things, but Jhabvala shows the basic differences between the English and the Indian characteristics that keep them apart. According to her, Indians are emotional. Esmond belives that the Europeans alone are equipped with a unique capacity to enjoy the fruits of culture and sophistication. he

is very fastidious and wants his house to be kept clean and beautiful. Gulab is least bothered about personal and environmental hygiene. Esmond wants her to be his companion, and expects her to be a guide in his career as an expert on Indian culture and literature. But she refuses to come out of her flat and accompany him. They cannot understand each other and so their marriage becomes a cold affair. She keeps aloof from his friends, and finally he finds that "her absence is more impressive than her presence".(42) Disgusted with Gulab, he turns to Betty who talks his own language and shares his attitude, and in whose company he feels as though he is in his own homeland.

Betty and her Englishness, in sharp contrast to the heavy oriental Gulab, is the one emotional reality which Esmond clutches in desperation. Jhabvala shows an understanding of Esmond's predicament. Bored and irritated, he goes out for a picnic to Agra and gets involved in an affair with Shakuntala and seduces her.

The oriental and occidental attitudinal difference in the social institution of marriage is crystal clear in Jhabvala's portrayal of Esmond, the married man's involvement with Betty and Shakuntala and Gulab's 'finding a god' in her husband.

The exposition of the frailties of married life, the clash of wills in matrimony, and the association of the husbands with strange young girls sound odd to the Western ear. To to a Westerner, there is either marriage or divorce. But to an Indian, marriage is a divine union between husband and

wife and one cannot abandon his/her life-partner in times of turmoil. Jhabvala's depiction of the cross-cultural marriage brings forth the wide disparity between Eastern and Western marriages. Esmond and Gulab enter into a marital relationship with ulterior motives and the relationship, untouched by mutual love and regard, is not lifted to a higher plane.

By presenting the impossibility of a meaningful relationship between Esmond and Gulab, the novelist comes to the inference that it is impossible to have a harmonious relationship between the East and the West. The predicament born out of the cross-cultural marriages reveals the interaction between European and the Indian cultures, which are contradictory to each other.

In the social context they are confronted with the problem of adjustment of diverse and contradictory backgrounds. Jhabvala evinces rather profound concern for the problem of European men and women trying to adjust to Indian society and its traditions.

In *Esmond in India,* the novelist depicts not the experience of Esmond and Gulab as a separate entity but as the social segment that serves as a setting for Esmond's experience in India. The theme of social and political change in independent India is sharply dealt with. She depicts people who fought for independence but could not share its booty, as well as people who did not fight for independence, and yet became its sole beneficiaries. Jhabvala portrays a direct clash between the Westernised, rich,

materialistic family of Har Dayal and the idealism of Ram Nath. She portrays Har Dayal prosperous and rich and Ram Nath as a rich man who lost his old glory after independence. Both have been to Cambridge and studied together there, but are now in very different fields. Har Dayal is an anglicized and modernized liberal. His Europianisation is sustained by the equipment of occidental culture and education. He is considered as an important man working on many committees of cultural affairs. He is the focal center of all kinds of social and cultural activities and is considered to be a man of culture.

Jhabvala defines India through people like Har Dayal, the nationalist, who never went to prison, and who lives in independent India in the cool luxury of his Delhi house. She shares an irritable intimacy with characters like Har Dayal. She has an uneasy sense that, in India, her own exercise of the craft of fiction is inevitably an exercise of bad faith.

The novelist is adept at drawing parallels and presenting striking contrasts. Ram Nath is a great idealist. He comes from a rich family and could have settled down to a comfortable life. But he sacrifices all he has in the service of mother India to make her free from the clutches of the British imperialists. He instills the same spirit in his son Narayan, who is a brilliant medical practitioner, but turns his back on the chance of a lucrative Delhi practice and goes to serve as a doctor in the isolated villages of rural India.

The impact of the West on Indian society is an interesting feature of the East-West encounter. It is the absurdities resulting from a senseless aping of Western manners that catch the eye of a social satirist like Jhabvala. Shakuntala enters her father's sophisticated circle of expatriates and rich Indians. True to her father's expectations, she turns out to be individualistic in her temperament. In a bid to be emancipated, she even accompanies a group of English ladies to Agra with Esmond as guide and falls romantically in love with the flamboyant Esmond. Shakuntala's feeling for Esmond is not a simple, flat love but it drives her to the extent of adoring him. Contrary to the Western outlook, her attitude is one of surrender. It stands in striking contrast to occidental individualism and pragmatism. To Esmond she says: "Esmond, I know you are married and also you have a child, but I tell you all this means nothing to me. Only I know you have come into my life and now it is my duty to give everything I have to you, to adore you and to serve you and to be your slave... I want to humble myself before you".(184)

It is very clear that Jhabvala is pointing an accusing finger at Eastern sentimentality and simplicity. An East-West encounter can only be possible in a world of utter sensuousness in which the rationality of the West and the spirituality of the East remain separate entities: "Only this sensuousness can bring Esmond and Gulab together, only the accentuation of this sensory feeling can bring Esmond and Shakuntala together".

Shakuntala is an extension of the Amrita-Nimmy image. Like Amrita and Nimmy, she is born and brought up in a middleclass family. Amrita, in her strong desire to be modern, wants to marry Hari. She does not bothered to find out whether he is the right man for her. Shakuntala goes a step further by offering herself to the already married middle-aged Esmond. She wants to humble herself before him. She blames Gulab for being slow stupid and unfit for the company of European ladies. She competes with the Billimoria at being more westernized.

'Westernised' Indians like Mrs. Kaul of *A Backward Place* and Har Dayal and Shakuntala of *Esmond in India* are removed from the real India. They live luxuriant lives, intermixed with westerners, but are naïve about the real India. The inferiority complex of a formerly dominated race that tries to out-west the West is caricatured in the unattractive Billimoria sisters who loudly decry Indian music, while the English ladies express a desire to understand it. Jhabvala's sharp tongue against westernized Indian deserves to be noted:

> They [The Westernised Indians] introduce a kind of pseudo-culture in their homes by having lavish food and music no one listens to, donning clothes to the point of being overdressed, adopting nicknames, aware mostly of being like the Westerners themselves. No real effort is made to improve and preserve the true values of India .

Indian society has always been an in-group society in which the atomization of the West is still foreign. The event and situations in Indo-Anglian novels unfold the broad social context in which one life reflects another. Jhabvala writes with an intimate knowledge of English and Indian societies, acquired through twenty four years of experience in India. Since her experience constitutes a one dimensional image of Indian society, Western readers are deprived of a view of the sparkling side of a bright India.

Jhabvala elucidates the breakdown of a traditional social order in most of her novels. This is caused by the alienation or isolation between one individual and another in marital relations, in family life and in society at large. The deft projection of the East-West encounter through mixed marriages is prominent in Jhabvala's fiction:

> In such marriages, the thin veneer of modernity can be of no help. The sharp contrast between the two ways of living and thinking causes awkward and unseemly situations in conjugal life. The easy going Gulab, with her oriental taste for carrot halwa, spices and hot red curries: her typically Indian bashfulness of high society and indifference towards modern furniture, is a glaring contrast to her husband, Esmond, with his innate craze for orderliness, smart and sophisticated society, and up- to-date furnishings.

In her earlier novels, Jhabvala depicts the solidarity of joint family in India. She shows how the joint family system smothers an individual member's freedom and initiative. At the same time it stands by him and gives him a sense of security and a sense of belonging. She feels that if certain problems of Indian society spring from the joint family system, it also solves a few. She shows her deep awareness of this aspect of this Indian society. Many of her novels and short stories are primarily concerned with either the fulfillment or the frustration of individuals in the undivided Hindu joint family system. *The Nature of Passion* presents Lalaji almost like a benevolent *'pater familias'* and his only concern is the welfare and happiness of his children and other members of the family.

In *Esmond in India*, the families of both Har Dayal and Ram Nath share the common practices of an Indian joint family. They sit together to decide important issues like marriage alliances. Jhabvala makes note in her essay *Myself in India* that in India, the family or clan members gather together and enjoy each other's company.

There is another dimension of this Indian familial setting which Jhabvala presents with considerable power and acute sense of inward understanding. The Europeans married to Indians have to face immense adjustment problems in such big families. In her short story, *The Aliens*, Jhabvala reveals the pain and predicament of Peggy, with her English background, against the coarseness of the members of aristocratic civilization. She feels rather isolated in the large joint family. This is not merely a minor question

of social background but one which highlights the difference between the individualistic European families and the socially close-knit Indian families. Jhabvala shows keen awareness of this Indian social system, and in this context she is both European and Indian.

Esmond in India is a novel of social importance. The novelist presents the corporate life in which personal predicaments inter mingle with social and familial dissonance. Before Gulab's marriage to Esmond, she had been proposed to Amrit, the son of Har Dayal. But Gulab is courageous enough to marry an Englishman much against the wishes of her parents. All her individuality and strength of will vanish once the marriage actually take place.

Esmond believes that he loathes his wife because he wants in marriage a 'companion' rather than a 'slave'. His wife is obedient not to him but to her Indian ideal of how a wife ought to behave. Esmond wants to rouse some response and protest in her but fails pathetically. She seems ever docile and placid like a cow. To her, he is a god and she has to remain chaste for him.

Though Gulab bears the atrocities of her husband meekly, she claims that it is his duty to protect her. He should see that she is safe in his house and that no stranger can cast insulting eyes on her. But while he is away from home his servant tries to molest her. Even though her mother keeps on begging her to leave Esmond and come home, she resists the idea. But this particular insident tells her that since he failed in giving her protection he is no more her husband. She thinks that it is her husband's neglect of her that

emboldens the servant to attempt to molest her. At the end of the novel we see Gulab with sudden determination, getting her things out and deciding to return to her mother's house. She does not care to shut the door of her husband's flat because the flat means nothing to her.

Jhabvala depicts the uneasy and comic manner in which the East and the West are shown meeting, but only superficially. She describes how funny, incongruous and tragic such a meeting is. She is quick, sharp and intelligent enough to perceive that only surface level changes have taken place under the Western influence in Indian society.

Though the married life of Esmond and Gulab is said to be the dramatization of the conflict between the cultures of the East and the West, it would be to far from the truth to generalize that Esmond and Gulab represent western and eastern traits of character respectively. The shallow, superficial and pompous Esmond Stillwood is not a true representative of European culture in India. Gulab's lethargic inertia, her weakness for Indian food and her unhygienic way of life have been unduly highlighted by the novelist. Jhabvala has failed to portray a typical Indian woman in Gulab and this failure is attributable to her inadequate understanding of Indian culture and its behavioural pattern. As a foreigner she has not acquired a thorough inwardness in her understanding of the typical Indian woman. So the novel leaves us with the impression that Jhabvala's treatment of the theme of East-West encounter does not have in it that note of conviction and

authority which one finds in the novels of other Indo-Anglian writers.

Contrary to the rational, pragmatic and scientific philosophy of the West, the East believes that man in his earthly life is a victim of time. Fatalism and stoic suffering become an accepted creed. Jhabvala comically explains how the Indian commiserates his failures and pitfalls and relates them to the punishment for the wrongs done in a past life. Lakshmi, Ram Nath's wife, wonders what sin she had committed in being punished in this life. Ram Nath's Western education makes him pragmatic enough to tease her that she might still be punished in her next life for not showing respect to him.

The eastern Hindu faith in astrology is revealed in Uma's constant visits to the astrologers to find when Gulab's times will improve. She believes that astrology is a very ancient science and everything is written in the stars. Lakshmi also shares Uma's belief in the stars, and consoles herself by believing that it is written in her son Narayan's horoscope that he will prosper in life eventhough he is a doctor in the wilds of Madhya Pradesh.

The East believes that evil is destroyed by suffering. The West minimizes evil by conquering it. Gulab is dead silent in front of the cruelties of Esmond. Esmond, with his Western upbringing and philosophy, cannot accept her passivity and inertia. There is hardly a meeting point between the two. Idealism, mysticism and fatalism of the East are ranged against the pragmatism, materialism and individualism of the West.

Jhabvala is alive to the fact that Indians react strongly to Europeans. Esmond is caged behind the bars of his own nature. His personality is absolutely inadequate to the situation or the predicament that India presents. He realizes that it is only the prospect of leaving India for good that can make him feel young and free again. Without knowing the fact that Gulab has already left the flat, Esmond decides to flee to England.

Jhabvala, with her foreign background, says that her Western characters, including herself, have reason to be appalled at the transformation to which they are being subjected. She herself passed through the different stages in her reaction to India and its people. Her Western character Esmond, experineces a stage of enthusiasm for India where everything seems marvellous, to the other extreme where everything seems irritable. In his initial reaction to India, the East and all that is foreign to him, he enthusiastically studies foreign folklore, traditional poetry and history. Perhaps this explains his fascination for and marriage to Gulab who is the very opposite of all that culture stands for, to Europeans. His initial delight turns into strong disgust. He finds that his admiration for Indian art, architecture, literature and his intellectual and aesthetic approach to Indian culture are no protection against India.

The birth of their son Ravi presents the changing stages in Esmond's life by hastening the process of alienation:

> Ravi was as dark as his mother; he looked completely Indian. At first, when Ravi was

> born, Esmond had been very happy about this: he had wanted an Indian son, a real piece of India, as he had wanted an Indian wife. Now, however, he thought wistfully of fair sturdy little boys with blue eyes and pink cheeks. Angels, not Angles, he often found himself murmuring, quite out of context; Angels, not Angles. He could see them. But Ravi was definitelydark.

Esmond was attracted towards India in the same way as he was attracted towards Gulab, but staying in India and with Gulab soon made him realize that underneath the beautiful façade there was something which cause repulsion. Just as Gulab proves to be a slovenly woman, India turns out to be a scene of unredeemed poverty.

The weather conditions of North India contribute to Esmond's growing uneasiness. Esmond delivers the lecture on the Indian love-lyric on an open terrace at sunset when the whether is warm. When the Western women's organization visits the Taj at Agra in summer, he gets annoyed at Betty's delay which makes the morning heat unbearable to him. Back in Delhi, in his little flat, the heat becomes oppressive. By tracing Esmond's rapidly accelerating journey from comparative calmness to mounting hysteria during the period covered by the action of the novel Jhabvala is able to trace the stages by which the experience of India affects the Western sensibility.

All these situations help Jhabvala to project her own non-acceptance of the country of her adoption. The pathetic rootlessness of Esmond in India is directly applicable to the novelist. She externalizes her personal predicament, the predicament of transforming her inner life according to the dictates of the outer life. *Esmond in India* can be viewed as the expression of the author's inner dilemma: her rootlessness in a foreign country. She knows very well that to live in India and be at peace one must become an Indian and adopt Indian attitudes, beliefs and habits. There is always some frustration and disillusionment at the end conforming Kamala Markandaya's contention that the East and the West cannot meet as friends, at least not yet. Esmond, having lived some years in India, realizes it is time to leave India for England among its solid grey houses and people where he will not feel constantly dwarfed by the unchanging, unending expanse of a meaningless monotony of the Indian sky.

The heat and dust, the backwardness and the artificial forwardness of India have finally drawn Jhabvala a third time to a place with which she does not have any kind of association– The United States of America.

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The Aligarh Journal of English Studies, Vol. 29, Nos. 1& 2, 2007, pp. 70-86

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Victims of History, Culture and Gender: Women in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

It is only works by Indian or African writers which are usually given prominence in any discussion of diasporic writing in English. However, there are also some writers from other lesser known places whose writing is basically diasporic in nature. Afghanistan is one such country which has had a very troubled history in recent past. The country has seen the migration of its people to Pakistan, the Middle East and the West. In fact, because of the difficult conditions prevailing in Afghanistan the issue of survival was uppermost in the minds of people which made it almost immpossible for writers and artist to contribute meaningfully to Afghan culture. When writer are faced with fullfilling their basic needs, and more importantly when there is no freedom to give vent to one's feelings and ideas, one can hardly expect to see the writing of literary works. Hanif Kureshi says "writers not only need other writers to work alongsside, they need publishers, editors, booksellers and a culture to support them."[1] It is probably for these reasons that most of the Afghan writing in this period has been attempted by writers who left Afghanistan and who would certainly be called diasporic because their writing is mostly about a sense of loss, about dislocation and about issues and problems relating to migration. Forced to leave their country

they find their memories very dear and write mostly about their country. The act of writing becomes a means to preserve a past, rather to recreate a past which was known for better things, for Bamian Buddhas, for its culture of tolerance and for other positive things. The writers are also trying to make sense of their experience during this period, taking stock of what has gone wrong in their country. Most of this writing is available in Dari and Pashto. Works by Afghan writers in English are few and far between. And of all the works in English, Khaled Hosseini's two novels on Afghan life – *The Kite Runner* (2003) and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) – are certainly the most worthy of critical attention. It is only those Afghan writers who are settled in the West who can afford to write and get published in English, or for that matter in French. Khaled Hosseini, who is based in California and whose family had been granted political asylum in the United States, has made good use of this advantage. On the other hand, after 9/11 there has been a sudden interest in Afghanistan, its people, its culture. In the news for all the wrong reasons, Afghanistan has rarely been discussed for its literature and culture in recent past. Curiosity about this country is now tremendous and books about Afghanistan are suddenly hot property. No wonder that fiction about Afghanistan should find not only publishers but also an international market, a point proved by the reception accorded to Khaled Hosseini's novels.

Khaled Hosseini's two novels *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* present the grim reality of day today existence in Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion down to

the period of the Taliban rule. What is probably true about both the works is that they reveal Hosseini as a good storyteller. It is debatable, however, if merely good storytelling can turn a novelist a good novelist it being well known that there are any number of great works which are not known for the storytelling skill of the novelist. Reading these works the reader probably does not learn anything that he did not already 'know' about Afghanistan from her reading of newspapers and magazines. Amitava Kumar says that 'By one definition, then, the province of the novel is what you read in your newspaper each morning or watch on your television at night. The novelist's task is to explore how the news enters peoples lives and indeed becomes a part of daily life.'[2] Probably many books about Afghanistan discuss all those issues taken up by Khaled Hosseini in a more comprehensive manner. However, it has never been the purpose of literature to discuss issues in a discursive manner. If it is the job of literature to present a felt experience, then Khaled Hosseini succeeds in making his readers experience the horrors of life in Afghanistan in the last few decades.

And nowhere does he succeed more than in his delineation of women characters, particularly in *A Thousand Splended Suns*. This is especially true about the life of Mariam. Used to swallow insults from everyone without any protest since her childhood, Mariam was often promised happiness in the form of her many pregnancies only to be robbed of it by a cruel fate. Perhaps the happiest moments in her life are those when she feels a bonding with Laila and her children.

Ironically their tragic fates bring them together and make them see a common enemy in the form of their husband Rasheed. The details of a very well-brought up Laila fallen on bad times and becoming dependent on a vicious person like Rasheed after the death of her parents would possibly look the part of a naturalistic novel. Then there is the dismal setting, the oppressive political and social context explored in the novel against which is viewed the life of all characters. Death, destruction and decay define everyday reality in the novel where different factional groups are perpetually at war. There is nothing unusual in Laila's knowing that 'somewhere in the city someone had just died, and that a pall of black smoke was hovering over some building that had collapsed in a puffing mass of dust. There would be bodies to step around in the morning. Some would be collected. Others not. Then Kabul's dogs, who had developed a taste for human meat, would feast.'[3] The popular adage 'truth is stranger than fiction' holds possibly true in the case of this novel. Readers brought up on the reading of Western fiction may find these things unreal, bizarre or even exotic in the novel but to Khaled Hosseini they present the aspects of everyday reality in Afghanistan. The 'unreal' nature of this reality at some places may remind readers of Columbian fiction. It may be recalled that some critics and authors, Marquez included, had objected to the indiscriminate use of the term magic realism for novels based on life in Latin America. They believed that the use of this term somehow fails to understand what is real in the life of the people, say in Latin America, in Columbia in particular,

and the real because so very different from Western reality, appears magical to the Western eye. The question of placing the novel in a genre- realistic, naturalistic or epical- notwithstanding, the ultimate irony of the book lies in the fact that people, actual people, have suffered the sordid reality presented in the novel and the characters and the setting are typical of an Afghanistan which has been the site of power politics and which has not recovered from its trauma yet.

In fact, often questions are asked about the morality of making stories out of the grim reality of the people. Is it all right, it can be asked, if novelists should churn out stories out of the suffering of the real people. Should Gujarat, Rwanda or the Holocaust inspire writers to sell stories? The answer is provided by the volume of 'good' works, say, on the excesses of Puritanism in New England, the Partition of India, the Holocaust in Europe, and Communist rule in Eastern Europe. Such works probably ask readers to remember the lessons from the past. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* also makes it impossible for us to forget—a point repeatedly made in numerous books and articles on Afghanistan (though it has also been contested by many)—that the worst sufferers in the troubled history of Afghanistan were women. It presents the suffering and the double marginalization of women in Afghanistan. In fact, women's lot is described in such a manner that this novel lends itself naturally to a feminist reading. However, any feminist reading of this novel should not lose sight of the fact that the terminology of Western feminism would not quite

capture the intensity of Afghan women' suffering, its almost morbid nature and the level of degradation to which women were reduced.

The entire life of Mariam, an illegitimate child of Jalil, one of the wealthiest men of Herat, shows this kind of degradation. Mariam's mother has been turned into a stereotypical wretch, a witchlike creature, an always complaining, nagging kind of woman largely due to her non-acceptance by Jalil or by the society at large. Her condition begs the question whether the psychological problems of women are really psychological or they are ultimately political in nature. They are political because in a different context and in more humane, equitable and civilised set-up the problems may not appear as scary. Her only fault was her being the mistress of Jalil. In her bitterness Mariam's mother Nana tells her daughter that the only skill a woman like her needs in life is to learn to endure. She would further try to disillusion her by talking in essentialistic terms, presenting man as the oppressor and woman as the oppressed. 'A man's heart is a wretched, wretched thing, Mariam.It isn't like a mother's womb. It won't bleed, it won't stretch to make room for you. I'm the only one who loves you. I'm all you have in this world, Mariam,and when I'm gone you'll have nothing. You are nothing (p.26)!' Her words prove prophetic and soon after her mother's death Mariam's illusions would be shattered and she would not get any help or support from her father. He would rather arrange to marry her off to a widower three times her age. For this act she will have to feel grateful to Rasheed, her husband, for

having married her and providing her protection. Rasheed, a Pashtun originally from Kandhar, is a shoe-maker settled in Kabul and can speak Farsi which is Mariam's mother tongue.

Like most Afghan men he would do anything to keep his *nang* and *namoos*, his honour and pride especially with regard to women. He holds the traditional ideas about the place of women. In fact, he is very critical of the 'modern women' living in Kabul who wear Western dresses, who are educated and who know the use of technology. For Mariam who does not know any life beyond her experience of life in Herat these women are a marvel, reminding her of her lowly station in life, filling her with low self-esteem. However, as it would turn out later, Rasheed turns out to be a hypocrite and he secretly nurses a desire for these modern women. Mariam discovers that he is fond of pornography though, true to her nature she condones his behaviour. Later the way he takes advantage of Laila's circumstances and marries her suggests that he always had a desire to control these modern women.

The plot of the novel is inextricably linked to the political context of Afghanistan of the period after the overthrow of King Zahir Shah in 1973.It is really ironical to learn how a hapless person like Mariam who has not even heard of American or Russian President is badly affected by the policies adopted by these countries. Ordinary people do not have much of a political consciousness. Mariam does not know anything about Communism or Karl Marx and Rasheed has some vague notion of Communism. When the

country becomes the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion, ordinary people do not even know whether it is a good or bad development in their life. To Mariam's question if it is good or bad Rasheed confusedly says: 'Bad for the rich, by the sound of it...Maybe not so bad for us (p.92).'What actually happens during this period can be described as very direct kind of propaganda and a subtle kind of indoctrination of the ordinary people. School, one of the important institutions to exercise ideological control over the life of people, is used by this government to fill the children's mind with all that is good about Soviet Union and bad about America.

Life in Afghanistan is not only precarious but also dangerous because of landmines which are buried across the country. Whether it became even more precarious after the Afghan warlords started fighting against each other following the forced withdrawal of Soviet forces cannot be said unequivocally. Accounts of Afghan life during the period of Mujahideen and the reasons for the Taliban's sudden rise to power are often marred by misinformation, propaganda and hearsay. It is difficult to separate fact from fiction. John Jennings (he covered the collapse of Taliban for *the Washington Times*), writing about the period from 1992 to 96, comes out with some facts which debunk some myths about life in Afghanistan during this period. Talking about the Kabul visit of a Peshawar based humanitarian group he writes: 'There they found co-ed schools, crowded bazaars and kabobis. Still-chic Kabuli women, making only the barest nod toward an Islamic dress code, shopped

unmolested alongside Kalashnikov-trotting mujahideen. Reluctant to accept the evidence of their own eyes, reluctant to doubt the account of communist sympathizers—and very, very reluctant to spend more than a few days at a stretch in the Afghan capital—some went to truly surreal lengths to square propaganda with reality.'[4] Another interesting point that Jennings makes is that it is important to know the reasons for the rise of Taliban. He writes that 'a crucial factor in perpetuating Western public ignorance about Afghanistan has been the dearth of serious discussion about conditions that fostered the emergence of the Taliban.'[5] Hosseini's depiction of life in Afghanistan is at variance from Jennings's and he paints a totally negative picture of Afghan warlords and the Taliban.

A Thousand Splendid Suns also depicts the period when people are forced to move out to other countries. Mostly they find shelter in Pakistan but a few also manage to go to the United States of America. Tariq leaves for Pakistan and Hakim's effort to move out of his country is aborted by his accidental death. It is really ironic that at such times even a country like Pakistan appears a paradise to those fleeing Afghanistan. Interestingly the novel tries to establish the point that the United States of America is the country which is really the beacon of hope for the suffering mankind, a land of opportunity, a place where one can live with freedom. Hakim, the most humane, educated and enlightened character in the novel wishes to flee Afghanistan to settle down in America. He hopes to open an Afghan restaurant in the United States for his livelihood and is

convinced that Laila can continue her education there. Perhaps his wearing a secondhand T-shirt with a picture of San Francisco red bridge on it at the time of his leaving Afghanistan is symbolic of his dream and also the almost impossible odds stacked against attaining this dream.

The novel presents a patriarchal set-up in all its nefarious power and wide reach. The household of both Jalil Khan and Rasheed is marked by the exclusion of women from any decision making. Whether it is the question of dress or food it is the man's word which has to be obeyed. When they are married to Rasheed, both Mariam and Laila have to carry out his orders. In this set-up a son is valued and daughters are not very welcome. Mariam's social status suffers because she is not able to give birth to a son. In fact, Rasheed takes great interest in naming his son. He is not happy about the possibility of a daughter being born to Mariam. 'If it's a girl," ... 'and it isn't, but, if it *is* a girl, then you can choose whatever name you want(p.79).'Predictably he is not very happy when Laila gives birth to Aziza but his happiness knows no bounds when his son Zalmai is born.

Man's power over women is also supported by not only the social ethos but also by the political order of the country. The laws restricting the freedom of women are not fully enforced during the period of Mujahideen because they are always busy fighting each other. However, once the Taliban take over the country in 1996, the laws become more explicit in nature and are enforced very strictly. It is not that men are spared the tyranny of Taliban's rule but women are especially targeted for conforming to their decrees as some

29 restrictions are forced on women mercilessly. In their period women were supposed to remain indoors and it was forbidden for them to work, to attend school, to wear jewelry or charming clothes, or to even laugh in public. In fact, Taliban even established a department of vice and virtue which would keep a watch over the behaviour of the people and punish them if they transgressed the law. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* makes a reference to Mujahideen resorting to the rape of women belonging to the rival factions in order to settle scores. The incidents of rape during the period of Taliban are not often supported by evidence and to quote Rosemarie Skaine, a commentator on Afghan life, 'in Taliban-controlled areas, treatment of women has improved slightly'[6]. However, when it came to the question of women's freedom, Taliban very systematically curbed it.

Despite the stranglehold of patriarchal values Khaled Hosseini presents characters in his work who think differently. Laila's father Hakim is a wellread man who understands the value of women's education. Though he is opposed to the Soviet invasion of his country, for that matter he also holds a very contemptuous view of the warlords who know only fighting, he realizes that even in their oppressive rule they have rightly emphasized the equality of sexes, the need to educate women and the inclusion of women in the workforce. No wonder he pays utmost attention to Laila's education and his advice to his daughter marks him out to be a true feminist: 'Marriage can wait, education cannot....You can be anything you want Laila. I know this about you. And I also know that when this war

is over, Afghanistan is going to need you as much as its men, maybe even more. Because a society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated, Laila. No chance(p.103)'Hakim's words challenge the popular perception that Afghan men do not have respect for women's rights. Povey notes that 'contrary to popular views in the West, many Afghan men oppose traditional ideologies of male superiority and dominance. Therefore, I contest the common assumption that patriarchal ideologies are embedded much more strongly for Afghan men than they are for 'liberated' western men.'[7] Sima Wali, another observer on Afghan life, voices the same opinion: 'It may surprise Westerners that the stereotype of Afghan men as women-haters and oppressors is incorrect. Most Afghan men are committed to the cause of better conditions and freedom for Afghan women... The Afghan women I interviewed repeatedly requested that their men be supported to advance the cause of Afghan women. They want these men to be regarded as part of the solution, not part of the problem.'[8] In the novel, ironically, it is Hakim's wife Fariba who is indifferent to Laila's world and is more interested in her sons' lives. The difference in Hakim and Fariba's attitudes can be explained by their focus on individual and communal identity. Hakim's concern for Laila's education results from his Westernized outlook and his emphasis on individual identity. Fariba's decision to permit her sons to join the forces of Mujahideen, led by Massoud, emanates from the emphasis on communal identity in Afghanistan.

A Thousand Splendid Suns may clear many popular misconceptions about Afghanistan. A reading of it brings home the point that it is not a country marked by homogeneity. Despite people following one religion there are divisions on the basis of ethnicity and language. The languages and the dialects spoken by people define their identity. Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbecks are the most important ethnic groups in Afghanistan. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* hints at this heterogeneity of Afghan society. Whenever a reference is made to different warlords their ethnic identity is also mentioned. Thus Rasheed, a Pashtun, hypocritically praises Massoud, a Tajik warlord, in his effort to win the affection of Laila who is a Tajik. His extremely conservative views about women's role are a result of his Pashtun background. Compared to Pashtun women Tajik and Hazara women enjoyed some liberty. The difference between Mariam and Laila's orientation is explained by so many factors, their social background, their education or lack of it and not least by their belonging to two different ethnic communities, Pashtun and Tajik. Then there is a very important kind of difference presented by the city and the countryside, not to mention the difference between cities themselves, say between Herat and Kabul. It is because of her rural background that Mariam is quite impressed by the city of Herat. Kabul she finds an altogether different world with educated women swinging handbags, rustling skirts, some smoking and some typing and making telephone calls. It is the same difference that one discovers between a small town and a metropolis.

Another misconception concerns notions about veil. Veil is considered an important marker of the identity of Muslim women, for that matter many women belonging to certain regional groups in India. Interestingly the image of an Afghan woman clad in burqa can be regularly seen on the television screen, the covers of magazines, and even scholarly books. It is true that burqa, its form and shape always changing under different regimes (hijab covering the face, chadri, the head- to- toe pleated garment, covering the entire frame), has always been an important part of the dress of Afghan women .What is often not remembered is that 'Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud, who served from 1953 to 1963 under King Zahir, led a movement in 1959 to unveil women.'[9] Veiling or unveiling remained voluntary depending upon the wish of the family concerned until the period of Mujahideen.It is also to be noted that veiling has been more widespread in small cities as compared to Kabul.

It is interesting to know that though in the Western perception veil is considered a symbol of oppression of women, it is not quite the opinion of a large number of Afghan women. Rosemarie Skaine quotes Angela E.V. King, special advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement in Women in the United Nations, in this regard:

External observers and interlocutors often mistake symptoms and causes: the burqa, for example is not considered a major problem for most Afghan women with whom the mission spoke, but is treated as such by many assistance workers in the country, agency personnel at

headquarters and sometimes, opinion-makers outside the country.[10]

It is to Khaled Hosseini's credit that he does not offer a simplistic perspective on veiling, his ideas guided by his concern for verisimilitude. Mariam is shown wearing a hijab in Herat before her marriage. In fact, she does not feel restricted or bothered by Hijab at all. It rather becomes a fashion statement for her in that she agonizes over it for not matching her dress and not for wearing it in the first place (p.27).Later after her marriage to her very conservative husband she is made to wear a burqa which with its 'padded headpiece felt tight and heavy on her skull, and it was strange seeing the world through a mesh screen (p.64).'Though it was a bit uncomfortable to wear burqa, it also gives her comfort of a different kind. "It was like a one-way window. Inside it, she was an observer, buffered from the scrutinizing eyes of strangers. She no longer worried that people knew, with a single glance, all the shameful secrets of her past (p.66).'Ironically Laila who has had the privilege of good education and a very liberal upbringing, too feels some protection behind the veil. Fallen on bad times after the death of her parents and forced to become the second wife of Rasheed, now an old man, 'she found some comfort in the anonymity that the burqa provided. She wouldn't be recognized this way if she ran into an old acquaintance of hers. She wouldn't have to watch the surprise in their eyes, or the pity or the glee, at how far she had fallen, at how her lofty aspirations had been dashed (p.208).'

Despite dwelling at length on the suffering of women under different regimes *A Thousand Splendid Suns* manages to show at some places that Afghanistan has not always been a country dominated by the clergy. The liberal element has had a significant presence all through the history of the country. Apart from Hakim's views on education, some other minor details in the text obliquely hint at the rich secular character of the country. This secular character will, however, give way to the power acquired by the fanatic element largely due to the interference of foreign powers in the affairs of the country obviously because of its strategic position in world politics. When Fariba, Mariam's neighbour and Laila's mother, introduces her sons Noor and Ahmad, aged ten and thirteen, to Mariam little does she realize that the change of political context would make her send her sons to fight a war, to turn them into mujahideen. In the same way the mention of Jalil's owning a cinema hall in Herat at the beginning of the novel and its screening of Hindi movies is a reference to a way of life which would appear a distant past. Women's hamam, which even a conservative Rasheed does not mind his wife to visit, as it was an important cultural practice in Afghanistan, would also be banned during the period of Taliban. A brief section devoted to Hakim, Laila and Tariq's visit to Bamian Budhas is marked by Hakim's sense of pride in his country's cultural heritage symbolized by these cultural artifacts. This episode represents the author's nostalgia about a past which cannot be brought back but can be recreated through his fictional rendering. And this act of fictionalizing the past itself is a much needed cultural value in his country.

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The Aligarh Journal of English Studies, Vol. 29, Nos. 1& 2, 2007, pp. 87-105

Rashmi Mehta

Machiavellianism in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*

That Machiavellianism in its real or popular version is an important thematic concern in *The Jew of Malta* is evident from its Prologue, which is read by the spirit of Machiavel. Nicolo Machiavelli's political thought, as some critics have noted, was one of the principal influences on Elizabethan drama,[1] but the exact nature of this influence on *The Jew of Malta* has been a subject of heated debate. Una Ellis-Fermor, Frederick S. Boas and Philip Henderson are sure that Marlowe's play is a dramatic thesis of Machiavelli's doctrines,[2] while Paul Kocher has tried to show that Machiavelli's political doctrines do not appear in any way in *The Jew of Malta* and that Marlowe could have easily picked up his ideas on what passed as Machiavellianism from many other sources with which educated Elizabethans were familiar.[3]

Many critics, however, argue that Marlowe's Machiavel is the Machiavelli of popular tradition derived from the misrepresentations of Machiavelli's thought in *Contre N. Machiavel* by Innocent Gentillet.[4] Irving Ribner complicates the issue by suggesting that though Machiavelli's own ideas are not exactly reflected in the play Marlowe must have read Machiavelli's works as well as *Contre N. Machiavel* and made use of both. According to him, Marlowe used the real version of Machiavellianism in the two *Tamburlaine* plays

and the popular version in *The Jew of Malta*.[5] Antonio D. Andrea and Nigel W. Bawcutt have demonstrated that the influence of Machiavelli's three books, *The Prince*, *The Discourses*, and *Arts of War*, can be traced in *The Jew of Malta*, though they admit that, given the syncretistic approach of Elizabethan thinkers towards knowledge, it is difficult to pinpoint any particular influence on the political thought of the play.[6]

This being the state of Marlowe criticism, especially where it bears on the Machiavel-Machiavelli duality, a fresh reading of *The Jew of Malta*, is not out of place. The present paper proposes to focus on this duality from a deconstructionist perspective with reference to two characters, Barabas, the Jew, and Ferneze the Christian governor, both of whom are Machiavellians in one or the other sense of this word. The term *deconstruction* is used in this paper not in its pure Derridean sense, which denies the possibility of all meaning, but in the relatively positive sense in which Barbara Johnson employs it:

> *Deconstruction* is not synonymous with *destruction*... .It is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word *analysis*, which etymologically means "to undo" — a virtual synonym for "to de-construct." The de-construction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or arbitrary subversion, but by the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text itself. If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text, but the claim

to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another.[7]

In the Prologue Machiavel makes it clear that though he is physically dead, his soul has flown beyond the Alps and finally reached England *via* France. He admits that some people find his name odious and even those who love him avoid mentioning his name. But in practice his influence is widespread because those who hate him publicly admire him privately and make use of his theories in their actual practice. By following his theories, he says, some people have climbed to even Peter's chair, and when they have deviated from his theories they have been overthrown by his "climbing followers." After this polemic about his widespread influence on European politicians including the late Duke of Guise in France, who is mentioned by name, Machiavel outlines three of his theories for the benefit of the audience:

I count religion but a childish toy,
And hold there is no sin but ignorance.
Birds of the air will tell of murders past?
I am ashamed to hear such fooleries.
Many will talk of title to a crown.
What right had Caesar to the empery?
Might first made kings, and laws were then most sure
When like the Draco's they were writ in blood.
Hence comes it, that a strong built citadel
Commands much more than letters can import:
Which maxim had but Phalaris observed,

H'had never bellowed in a brazen bull . . . . (Prol. II.14-26)[8]

In brief, these theories are that (1) a prince need not follow the dictates of religion if they stand in the way of his cause; (2) it was by the use of might that the institution of kingship was first established and then sustained; and (3) the survival of a king depends on the building of strong forts rather than on his love of learning. There is no denying the fact that all of these theories figure in one way or the other in *The Prince*,[9] though each of them is prefaced by Machiavelli with some "ifs" and "buts" and not expressed so brazenly and cynically as Machiavel does. Even two of the examples that Machiavel gives, those of Caesar Borgia and Phalaris, appear in Machiavelli's works.

The problem, however, comes to the surface as soon as Machiavel says that he has come to present "the tragedy" (I. 30) of a Jew who "favours me" (I.35). If the play is indeed the "tragedy" of the Jew with whom Machiavel expresses a spiritual kinship, the implication is the failure rather than the success of the Machiavellian hero at the end. And if one were to go back a little, it would not be difficult to imagine that the tragedy would be caused by one of Machiavelli's "climbing followers" (I.13), one of those who carefully "guard me from their tongues" (I. 6) and yet unscrupulously practise his maxims in secret. To put it differently, the prologue deconstructs Machiavel's claim about his protégé and sets the pattern of simultaneous affirmation and denial. The play, which follows as an extended *exemplum* of

Machiavel's sermon, preserves the pattern of this doublespeak until the very end.

Let us begin with the Jew who is not only Machiavel's protégé but also, like Shakespeare's Richard III, a self-professed Machiavellian. In the prologue Machiavel says that the Jew's money was not got "without my means"; and Barabas' wealth, his "infinite riches in a little room" (I.i.37), which dazzles the audience in the opening scene, supports Machiavel's claim because such large wealth is not earned by honest means. Later Barabas himself tells his newly-bought Turk slave, Ithamore, how he was once "an usurer" and how he filled the jails with "bankrupts" (II. iii. 194-205) by charging "a hundred for a hundred" (IV.i.54). In the polemical, querulous tone used by Machiavel, Barabas says that he would rather be envied for his wealth than be pitied for poverty; for "Who is now honoured but for his wealth?" (I.i.115). He also echoes the beginning of the first chapter of Machiavelli's *The Prince* by recognizing that "crowns come either by succession/ Or urged by force" (133-34). Thus his kinship with Machiavel is reiterated by Barabas himself. But recognizing that the Jews are small in number, he cannot aspire for kingship and must therefore be resigned to the fact of making Christians kings who "thirst so much for principality" (136-37).

In the very next scene (I.ii) the Jew learns to his disadvantage that the power of wealth without the political power to protect it is simply an illusion. As the Turks have come to demand the tribute-money long overdue from the

Maltese, the Christian Governor, Ferneze, summons all the Jews and tells them to part with half of their wealth. Barabas' temerity to question the justness of the Governor's action makes him lose all his wealth. And his calculation that the hidden money in his house will somehow remain his own proves wrong when his house is confiscated and converted into a nunnery. Barabas' struggle to retrieve his hidden wealth and his desire for revenge against the Christian Governor force him to adopt the methods which Elizabethan audiences usually associated with Machiavelli. Ever confident of his "Machiavellian" schemes, Barabas embarks on a series of actions which are, in fact, reactions forced on him by his initial failure to prefer political power to wealth. But none of his subsequent actions is without some loopholes in them, though it is not for want of cunning and treachery on his part.

By acting out a wronged man before his own daughter, Abigail, he persuades her to undergo a fake conversion to Christianity so that he can retrieve the hidden wealth lying buried in his house. When he has achieved success in this venture, he furthers his revenge against the Governor by enticing and then getting his son, Lodowick, killed in a typically Machiavellian manner. From this moment onwards, Barabas has to embark upon a series of murders, all cunningly executed but each of them necessitating a subsequent murder till he betrays the Christians of Malta by siding with the Turk and becomes the Governor of Malta as a reward for his treachery. And when he is at the pinnacle

of his Machiavellian success, Barabas commits some un-Machiavellian blunders. Realizing the precariousness of his newly-acquired position, Barabas says in a soliloquy:

> I now am Governor of Malta; true,
> But Malta hates me, and in hating me
> My life is in danger, and what boots it thee,
> Poor Barabas, to be the Governor,
> When as thy life will be at their command? (V.ii.30-34)

But this situation is entirely of his own making. He has consistently invited hatred of the Maltese Christians by inflicting cruelties on them. In the opening scene, he declares rather boastfully that he is "hated for his happiness" (I.i.114). His subsequent actions, when exposed, cannot but earn him the contempt of the people. In addition, as he tells Ithamore in II.iii, he has been deriving since long a sadistic pleasure from his needless and senseless ruining and killing of innocent people:

> As for myself, I walk abroad a-nights,
> And kill sick people groaning under walls;
> Sometimes I go about and poison wells;
> And now and then, to cherish Christian thieves,
> I am content to lose some of my crowns;
> that I may, walking in my gallery,
> See'em go pinioned along by my door. (II.iii. 178-84)

In both these respects, Barabas has acted in a totally un-Machiavellian manner; for, though not averse to

unavoidable cruelty, Machiavelli warns in Chapter VIII of *The Prince* against its frequent use:

> We can say that cruelty is used well (if it is permissible to talk in this way of what is evil) when it is employed once for all, and one's safety depends on it, and then it is not persisted in but as far as possible turned to the good of one's subjects. (pp.65-66)

As for inviting the hatred of the people, Machiavelli repeatedly warns the prince to "determine to avoid anything which will make him hated and despised" (p.102; also, pp. 94-95).

The most un-Machiavellian blunder that Barabas commits, however, is his decision to betray the Turk, who is known for keeping his word, and join hands with his former enemy, the hypocritical Ferneze, who is now a prisoner in his custody. Having killed his son in the past and betrayed him to the Turk, and having been a victim of exploitation at his hands, Barabas decides, nonetheless, to trust Ferneze. He offers to kill Selim Calymath and his army and make Ferneze the Governor of Malta once again in return for a hundred thousand pounds. This self-professed Machiavellian seems to have forgotten what his master wrote in chapter VII of *The Prince*: "Whoever believes that with great men new services wipe out old injuries deceives himself" (p. 61). It comes as no surprise to the audience at the end when the wily and hypocritical Ferneze takes advantage of Barabas' stratagem to kill the Turk's soldiers in the monastery, makes Selim Calymath his captive, and

sends Barabas into the boiling cauldron prepared for Selim Calymath. Barabas' death in the boiling cauldron appears to be a re-enactment of the death of Phalaris in the brazen bull (Prologue, l. 26) and shows the defeat of this self-styled Machiavellian.

It is obvious that Barabas fails at the most crucial moment, not because he lacks cunning and deceit or the capacity to commit evil, but simply because he ignores his master's teachings and acts in an un-Machiavellian way. As Harry Levin has pointed out, the Jew is betrayed not by his cunning but by his compulsion to trust someone.[10] He trusts Abigail and she betrays him to the rapacious friars before her death. Then he trusts Ithamore, and this Turk slave exposes all his deeds before the Governor and causes him to be thrown over the city walls. And finally, Barabas trusts his inveterate enemy, the Governor, who ensures his death in the boiling cauldron. One of the greatest blunders of the Jew is that he hopes to benefit by putting into practice a political theory which Machiavelli had recommended for ruling a state. The pursuit of Machiavellianism for purely personal aggrandizement and without the might of the state and the support of the common people is doomed to failure. So despite Machiavel's assertion in the Prologue, the Jew turns out to be a fake or pseudo-Machiavellian, the kind of villain that the vulgarized English myth had made Machiavelli to be. Many in the audience must have clapped their hands when the first stage Jew fell into the boiling cauldron, thinking that the ghost of Machiavelli had been

exorcized for ever. But can this ghost be exorcized so easily, as long as there are other people to follow Machiavelli?

The Machiavel of the Prologue, it would seem, has played a practical joke with the audience by presenting Barabas as a reincarnation of himself. This becomes clear when we scrutinize the words and actions of Ferneze, who turns the tables on the Jew by his superiority in hypocrisy, deceit, and betrayal, and yet carefully "guards" Machiavelli's name and maxims from his lips. As the occasion requires, he puts into practice the relevant doctrines of Machiavelli for ruling and sustaining his state and, despite all the odds against him, he not only manages to regain his lost state but also continues to enjoy the support of his people. The reason is that he seems to have read *The Prince* much more carefully than Barabas in order to benefit from Machiavelli's realistic political advice. He always seems to act in the name of religion and justice even when he commits the greatest atrocities or breaks faith. When, for example, he robs Barabas and the other Jews of their money in I.ii, he quotes the Bible to support his action. This explains why his hypocrisy is not seen by his followers. He seems to remember what Machiavelli has written in Chapter XVIII of *The Prince*:

> To those seeing and hearing him, he [the prince] should appear a man of compassion, a man of good faith, a man of integrity, a kind and a religious man. And there is nothing so important as to seem to have this last quality. . . . Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are. And those

few dare not gainsay the many who are backed by the majesty of the state. (p. 101)

When Ferneze deals with the Turks, he alternates his role between that of a lion and that of a fox. Having already learnt in I.i about the arrival of the Turks to demand tribute money and summoned the Jews to collect the money from among them, Ferneze at first behaves imperiously when Calymath and the bassoës arrive in his court.

GOVERNOR: Now Bassoes, what demand you at our hands?

BASSO: Know Knights of Malta, that we came from Rhodes, From Cyprus, Candy, and those other isles That lie betwixt the Mediterranean seas—

GOVERNOR: What's Cyprus, Candy, and those other isles To us, or Malta? What at our hands demand ye?

CALYMATH: The ten years' tribute that remains unpaid.

GOVERNOR: Alas, my lord, the sum is over-great; I hope you will consider us. (I. ii. 1-9)

The first-person royal plural immediately changes into the singular and the majestic Ferneze of the first speech begins to cringe before Calymath, seeking a one-month grace period to collect the amount from among his subjects. Later, however, he decides to play the lion and to fight for his "honour" when he is sure that the Spanish Vice Admiral, Del Bosco, is there to stand by him:

So we will fight it out; come, let's away:

Proud-daring Calymath, instead of gold,
We'll send thee bullets wrapt in smoke and fire:
Claim tribute where thou wilt, we are resolved,
Honour is bought with blood and not with gold.
(II. ii. 52-56)

There is no mention, though, that the money collected from the Jews will be returned to them. And it is in fact never returned. When the Turks come again to meet him at the end of the one-month grace period, Ferneze strikes the same heroic pose:

Basso, in brief, shalt have no tribute here,
Nor shall the heathens live upon our spoil. (III.v.11-12)

Ferneze's actions and words in his dealings with the Turk are consistent with Machiavelli's advice in Chapter XVIII of *The Prince*:

So, as a prince is forced to know how to act like a beast, he should learn from the fox and the lion; because the lion is defenceless against traps and the fox is defenceless against wolves. Therefore one must be a fox in order to recognize traps and a lion to frighten off wolves. (p. 99)

This is no less true of his breach of faith, first with the Turks and then with Barabas. He seems to remember what Machiavelli has written in *The Prince*: ". . . a prudent ruler cannot, and should not, honour his word when it places him at a disadvantage and when the reasons for which he made his promise no longer exist." (pp.99-100).

What makes Ferneze an apparently consistent and a thoroughgoing Machiavellian is his careful avoidance of Machiavelli's name. Antonio Gramsci's remark about the behaviour of great politicians is quite true about Ferneze: "It is usually said that Machiavelli's standards for political behaviour 'are applied but not spoken about'; the great politicians—it is said—begin by cursing Machiavelli, declaring themselves anti-Machiavellians, just in order to apply his standards 'sanctimoniously.'"[11] So consistent with his character as a practical Machiavellian politician, Ferneze sanctimoniously declares at the end of the play.

> So march away, and let due praise be given
> Neither to fate nor fortune, but to heaven. (V.v.126-27)

This is nothing but a deliberate denial of the role of his own cunning or that of fortune in his final triumph because Machiavelli had recognized that Fortune did play a role in human affairs (*The Prince*, p. 130). The apparently thoroughgoing Machiavellian that Ferneze is, he continues to don his mask of virtue and piety, justifying Machiavel's remark in the Prologue: "But such as love me, guard me from their tongues" (1.6). J. B. Steane has a point when he says, "Finally, we have the conventional pious flourish, offering the last irony as the whole foxy business is ascribed unto the Lord. But Machiavelli's is the kingdom, the power and the true glory, and in the play's end is its beginning."[12]

Though its ending has consistently shocked sensitive critics like Steane and Douglas Cole,[13] the play does not end

exactly where it begins. Were it so, it would simply be a celebration of Machiavellianism. But despite Ferneze's pious claims, the ending contains the seeds of a new beginning. Indeed, there have been several proverbial chinks in Ferneze's armour, and this apparently perfect Machiavellian has not been so perfect after all. Even though he follows most of Machiavelli's maxims and plays the game much better than the pseudo-Machiavellian Barabas, he too deviates from his master on several occasions. While he robs Barabas, he ignores Machiavelli's advice that "a prince should abstain from the property of others, because men sooner forget the death of their father than the loss of their patrimony" (*The Prince*, p. 97). It is no wonder, then, that he not only loses his only son but also provokes the hostility and revenge of Barabas. Then, in order to break faith with the Turk, he joins hands with the Spaniards ignoring Machiavelli's warning that a prince should not enter into an alliance "with someone more powerful than himself.... This is because if you are the victors, you emerge as his prisoner" (*The Prince*, pp. 122-23). Finally, his decision to keep Selim Calymath prisoner may ultimately prove his undoing. Imagine, for a moment, a small state like Cypress or Maldives keeping the son or daughter of an American President hostage in order to secure its future safety! Ferneze's victory over the Turk may ultimately prove to be not only short-lived but even Pyrrhic.

The ending of the play does not thus provide an occasion for either celebrating the restoration of Christian order in Malta or lamenting the victory of a real and superior

Machiavellian over a fake one. It appears, instead, as a comment on Machiavellianism itself, which is considered by many people as a secular, rational and scientific political doctrine. Machiavelli's theories are, in fact, based on his study of the past and contemporary history of Italy and are the result of what can be called wisdom of hindsight. For this reason, they do not enjoy the status of universal truths. After all, *The Prince* itself is in some ways the expression of the fantasy of a man who had lost faith in idealism and yet, paradoxically enough, wanted to create a new ideal, the ideal of a practical, amoral and non-religious prince. As Antonio Gramsci says in a different context, Machiavelli's prince is not a creature of flesh and blood but "a purely doctrinaire abstraction, the symbol of a leader, the ideal *condoittiere*."[14] But like all ideals, the political utopia that Machiavelli envisions in *The Prince* is unrealizable, because human beings are not only wicked, as Machiavelli believes that they are, but also incapable of perfect Machiavellianism.

The Jew of Malta demonstrates this flaw by showing the failures of two Machiavellians. Barabas, the pseudo-Machiavellian, loses all his wealth, his daughter, and his own life; Ferneze, the almost real Machiavellian, is relatively successful but, as I have shown above, his victory may prove to be self-destructive. If one dismisses the examples of the Jew and Ferneze on the ground that they are, after all, characters in a drama and not real human beings, even the historical examples given by Machiavel fail at some point. Phalaris, like the Jew, may have perished for want of sufficient understanding of Machiavellianism, but Caesar

Borgia, whose name figures twice in the play and many times in *The Prince* and who is most certainly Machiavelli's ideal prince, failed all the same, at the most crucial moment of his political career, and much in the same way as Barabas does: by trusting his former enemy whom he had harmed (*The Prince*, p. 61). And, finally, since "Fortune," as Machiavelli himself concedes, "is the arbiter of half the things we do" (*The Prince*, p.130), Machiavellianism loses to that extent its viability as a political theory, even if one were to ignore its purely amoral, non-religious and inhuman aspects.

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Notes and References

1 See, for example, Edward Meyer, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama* (Weimar, 1897) and Mario Praz, "Machiavelli and the Elizabethans," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 14 (1928), 49-97.

2 Una Ellis-Fermor, *Christopher Marlowe* (1927; rpt. Hamden, Connecticut, 1967), p. 89; Frederick Boas, *Christopher Marlowe: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Oxford, 1940), p.133; and Philip Henderson, *Christopher Marlowe* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952), pp.100-108. This view has subsequently been echoed by K. L. Johar, *Christopher Marlowe: A Study in the Renaissance Concept of Heroism* (Meerut: Shalabh Prakashan, 1988), pp.85-86, and Basavaraj Naikar, "The Jew in Marlowe and Shakespeare," in his edition of *Indian Response to Shakespeare* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2002), pp. 34-36.

3 Paul H. Kocher, *Christopher Marlowe: A Study of His Thought, Learning, and Character* (1946; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, Inc. 1962), pp. 201-02.

4 See, for example, Michael Poirier, *Christopher Marlowe* (1951; rpt. Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1968), p. 156; F. P. Wilson, *Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare* (1953; rpt. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 62; and Wilbur Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea: Studies in the Plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare* (Camb. Eng.: At the University Press, 1968), p. 52.

5 Irving Ribner, "Marlowe and Machiavelli," *Comparative Literature*, 6 (1954), 353 and his "Marlowe's 'Tragicke Glasse'," in Richard Hosley, ed., *Essays on Shakespeare and*

Elizabethan Drama in Honor of Hardin Craig (Columbia: University of Missourie Press, 1962, p. 104. Ribner has subsequently found support for his view in Charles G. Masinton, *Christopher Marlowe's Tragic Vision: A Study in Damnation* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1972), p. 18 and pp. 62-63.

6 Antonio D. Andrea, "Studies on Machiavelli and His Reputation in the Sixteenth Century: Marlowe's Prologue to *The Jew of Malta*," *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, V (1964), 258-59; Nigel W. Bawcutt, "Machiavelli and Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*," *Renaissance Drama*, New Series, III (1970), 47-48.

7 Barbara Johnson, *The Critical Difference: Essays in the Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 5.

8 *The Jew of Malta*, ed. T. W. Craik (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1966). All subsequent quotations from the play refer to this edition and have been given parenthetically in the text in order to avoid excessive footnoting.

9 Nicolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. George Bull (1961; rpt. Penguin Books, 1975). Quotations from *The Prince* refer to this edition and have been given parenthetically. In the very first chapter, Machiavelli mentions two kinds of principalities, the inherited and those acquired by force (p.33). The use of fortification is discussed first in chapter X and then again in Chapter XX, though with varying degrees of emphasis. And though Machiavelli does not dismiss religion as a "toy" and, instead, says that a prince must appear as "a man of integrity, a kind and a religious man," what he means in effect comes close to Machiavel's cynical

remark; for a little earlier Machiavelli says that a prince is "often forced to act in defiance of good faith, of charity, of kindness, of religion" (p. 101). So his advice is that a prince "should not deviate from what is good, if that is possible, but he should know how to do evil, if that is necessary" (p. 101). In other words, religion, according to Machiavelli, is a tool that can be used or discarded according to the exigencies of the situation.

10 Harry Levin, *The Overreacher*, p. 99.

11 Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, translated by Dr. Louis Marks (1957; New York: 1972), p.141.

12 J. B. Steane, p. 194.

13 Douglas Cole, p. 143, writes, "Barabas may be dead but his vice lives on."

14 Antonio Gramsci, p. 135.

The Aligarh Journal of English Studies, Vol. 29, Nos. 1& 2, 2007, pp. 106-137

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Women in South Asian Novels in English

Literature is a mirror of life. Representations in literature embody the truths of society. Often literature is read as history, as informal evidence, as philosophy, and, in recent times, as a documentation of the conditions of marginalized communities such as the disabled, outcastes, tribes and women. In comparison to other communities, women have achieved a great deal in the last century. South Asian women have defined their own identity and their own feminism. Their rejection of and delinking from the Western feminist patronage has a well thought out basis. Literature in English is an important mouthpiece of this new ideology. These writers may or may not be feminists, but their works deal with women's issues and shed light on contemporary thinking.

A feminist researcher has to work *with* women as much as *on* them. Feminist research is a mutually beneficial enterprise where the two agencies, viz., the researcher and the researched learn from each other. The dominant discourse should focus also on the differences. Gender is determined more by culture than by nature. The so-called essential feminine traits have been constructed by the patriarchy. The class, social, national,

and historical differences and determinants among women have resulted in different aspects being undervalued, misunderstood and exploited by the patriarchal culture. This awareness has fostered a more inclusive global perspective. It has also created a bond that unites women over time and space. In literature, these theories are often used to define or establish a feminist literary canon or to re-interpret and re-vision literature from non-patriarchal perspectives. In this process, not only women's literary works but entire cultures of women have been recovered. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay 'In Other Worlds' has examined the great differences between feminisms.[1] She analyzes the relationship between language, women and culture in both Western and non-Western cultures. Spivak has defined an integration of contemporary methodologies and used her new approach to untangle debates in the study of literature, culture and women.

Until very recently, literature was political and, in the words of Judith Fetterly, its politics was male.[2] Feminist criticism in the twentieth century identified literary texts as models and agents of power. Classical literature, as defined by conservative literary histories, was an entirely male bastion. Women's issues, as they were called then, were seen as soft and non-serious subjects and were treated as unsuitable for books. In recent times this approach was revised as a result of the efforts of feminist critics, mass education, increasing

urbanization, women's movements and introduction of Women's Studies and Human Rights as disciplines. The dominant patriarchal image of happy daughters and happy wives was demystified. Male fears and anxieties that went into the construction of 'woman' were unraveled by Beauvoir, Millet and Friedan.

The image of women in South Asian novels in English by women writers has undergone a radical change in the last few decades. Women writers have abandoned the traditional enduring, selfless, self-sacrificing and bedecked female characters for confident and independent women searching for and attempting to define new identities. The focus of women writers has shifted with changes in South Asian society due to its relationship and interactions with the West and also because of women's education and empowerment. This new trend is visible when the images of silent and suffering women of Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* and Meera Mahadevan's *Shulamith* are contrasted with the assertive and independent heroines of Chitra Fernando, Anita Desai, Kamala Das, Sara Suleri, and Anees Jung. In contrast to the poverty stricken and constantly enduring women characters in Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* and Mahadevan's *Shulamith*, female characters in the novels produced in the second half of the twentieth century assert themselves, defy patriarchy, marriage and societal restrictions. In Markandya's novel, Rukmani, and her daughter Ira suffer throughout.

Rukmani endures poverty, famine, desertion by her childless daughter's husband, the deaths of her sons, her daughter's prostitution, and ultimately her husband's death. At a point she discovers that her husband has been associating with another woman and has fathered children other than her own. Even though she is stunned with grief and confusion, she continues to stoically endure and suffer in silence. She does not accuse or slander. This extreme of patience and fortitude was considered a highly desirable virtue by the patriarchy and was glossed through their characters by early women writers.

Chitra Fernando's collection of short stories entitled *Three Women* , like Anita Desai's *In Custody,* portrays women who want their individual space , desire to have their worth recognized and attempt to subvert the traditional image of the ideal woman. The new works explore educated and focused women's search for new identities. The more popular works include Kamala Das's *My Story*, Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days*, and Anees Jung's *Unveiling India: A Woman's Journey*.

Marriage, as a social institution in Asia, traditionally, entails severely submissive roles for women. Certain matriarchal tribes in South India, however, remained unaffected by the Aryan invasion of 1500 B.C. that brought the male trinity to India. Although a woman ideally has some significance as a daughter or sister, as a wife she submits completely to her husband

and his family. Domination of women by the patriarchy is a universal phenomenon. South Asian women caught in the dominant patriarchal tradition have started to question aspects of this role. Some have decided against marriage altogether. Earlier marriage was the only opening to the world for women, but now, with education women have equal opportunity and can mould their own lives.

The great diversity of the lives of the women of South Asia depends on where they live, their family situation, the religion they practice, their stage of life, their class, and their individual talents. This diversity may be illustrated by contrasting the schooling and life's opportunities of illiterate women of South Asia, who represent over eighty percent of the adult female population, to the small but influential group of women graduates, many with higher education degrees, who work in prominent government and professional careers.

Diversity may also be seen in the laws that concern women. Women in all South Asian countries have the right to vote. The constitutions of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex. In the case of Pakistan, however, the constitution was suspended after a military coup in 1977 and an ordinance passed in 1979 declared that the evidence of women would not be permissible in trials for the crimes of theft, murder, or rape. This Pakistani ordinance contrasts with laws of India and Sri Lanka which

guarantee full democratic rights to women. In the case of Bangladesh, the constitution exempts laws from coverage that govern personal status (marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody). These areas of the law are regulated by religious laws which generally favor men.

Meena Shirwadkar, in *Image of Woman in the Indo-Anglian Novel*, claims that, subsequent to the changes in Asian society, novels have progressed from depicting women characters simply as embodiments of suffering, virtue and forgiveness to portraying multi-dimensional characters who lead full and meaningful lives. Tradition, transition and modernity are the three phases through which the women in Asian literature evolve. The image of the traditional woman, the *Pativrata Sati Savitri* has long been appreciated and glossed. In India, with its strong inclination for tradition, women were expected mainly to live for others because "others" controlled and molded the social structure. Even women in literature voluntarily surrendered to the ideal of self-sacrifice. Modern women try to discard the burden of inhibitions and to define themselves.

Shirwadkar's thesis, published in 1979, condemns the literary tradition still haunted by the patriarchal idealism of womanhood. This ideal has persisted in cultures permeated by religious images of virtuous dolls devoted to their domineering husbands. The Hindu goddesses Sita and Savitri still exercise a powerful

control over a large section of women in South Asia. Both images tell women to devote themselves to their husbands to extremes of endurance, loyalty, and self-sacrifice. As Susan S. Wadley[3] explains, Sita represents the perfect, desirable behaviour of the proper Hindu wife by devotedly following her husband into exile for fourteen years, and eventually, after being kidnapped for a period by the evil Ravana whom Rama finally annihilates, proves her wifely virtue by undergoing a fire test. Throughout North India, women worship Savitri, a goddess whose renown emanates from her extreme devotion to her husband, through which she ultimately saves him from the god of death. The story of Savitri is held up as a prime example of the extremes to which a wife should support her husband. The good wife saves her husband from death, follows him anywhere, proves her virtue, remains under his control and gives him her body, mind and emotions to rule over.

Shirwadkar debates that "a graded change" has come about in Asian literature. The early novels show the wife in her traditional role, mainly as a house-wife and childbearer, and the writers are preoccupied with this suffering. Later novels, in contrast, show that the wife suffers more, "because of the incompatibility between her individuality and awareness of herself and the traditional views of her husband and her in-laws." [4]

The conventional image of purity, chastity and endurance fulfilling the ideal of the devoted wife-

goddess, in South Asian literature by women has been substituted by a liberated and evolved new woman. The current women authors incorporate their experience of both worlds in an attempt to create a new, empowered image for women. Anees Jung points out: "Where the two experiences meet, lies a revelation, and a story." Current writers' works do justice to the varied potentials of diverse women and also optimize individual women's potentials.

Asian cultures define self-sacrifice as a form of power. The submissive feminine role in Asia has more complexity than in the West. In fact, according to Margaret Egnor,

> A positive power comes from suffering. In Hinduism, the goddess *Sakti* embodies this power; action of this sort is considered inherently female. To begin with, *Sakti*, like our word "power" is often defined as the ability to act, to make others act, to make things happen, and as action itself. [. . .]. Inasmuch as spiritual power of *Sakti* is believed to be acquired through suffering, especially the suffering of servitude, one apparent contradiction is resolved: if women have more *Sakti* than men, this is (at least in part) because women stand in the position of servants with respect to

> men. This also helps to explain why women, rather than trying to undo the sexual hierarchy, are often its staunchest supporters.[5]

Egnor sees elements of choice and pride in women's emulation of the Sita-Savitri image. Whereas the Tamil women whose stories she presents obviously did not enjoy suffering, they did not see themselves as victims but rather women with *Sakti*:

> None of these women saw a contradiction between her possession of *sakti* and her subordinate role as female [. . .]. On the contrary, for each woman the possession of extraordinary *sakti* came as a consequence of her subordinate status, or more accurately, as a consequence of the suffering that that subordination entailed.

Belief in a complex concept of suffering and spiritual power enabled the patriarchal norms to persist in literature. Only recently have women writers, under the influence of feminism, explored alternative ideals. This construction of suffering gives a clear account of how, in *Nectar in a Sieve,* Rukmani's ideal daughter becomes a prostitute. Ira defies her father and social norms, to earn some money to feed her dying brother

during a famine. Her efforts prove futile as her brother dies despite her best efforts. As a consequence of associations, she bears an abnormal child. She cares for him but her woes never seem to end:

> The cause of her suffering springs mainly from poverty and natural calamity. The women are from the rural sections of society. They are the daughters of the soil and have inherited age-old traditions which they do not question. Their courage lies in meek or at times cheerful way [sic] of facing poverty or calamity. [6]

Rukmani works hard and is devoted to her husband. She patiently faces poverty, famine, the divorce of her barren daughter, the deaths of her sons, her daughter's prostitution, and finally her husband's death. When she finds that her husband, has fathered another woman's sons, she neither strikes out at him nor crumbles:

> Disbelief first; disillusionment; anger, reproach, pain. To find out, after so many years, in such a cruel way.[...] He had known her not once but twice; he had gone back to give her a second son. And between, how many times, I thought, bleak of spirit, while her husband in his impotence and I in my innocence did nothing.

> [. . .]At last I made an effort and roused myself [...].
> "It is as you say a long time ago," I said wearily. "That she is evil and powerful I know myself. Let it rest."

She simply moves ahead. Catastrophe strikes and her son Raja is murdered. She moves from numbness to grief, thinking, "For this I have given you birth, my son, that you should lie at the end at my feet with ashes in your face and coldness in your limbs and yourself departed without trace."

Rukmani survives. No pain or injustice can motivate her to rebel or seek revenge. Rukmani's only violent reaction is when she attacks an intruder in her own home only to discover her daughter slyly slipping out for a nocturnal tryst. Rukmani, perceives suffering as good for the spirit and endurance as a necessity. She has no ideas about changing her lot. Meena Shirwadkar, regards the sacrificing image as a mark of weakness and subjugation whereas tradition conceives of self-sacrifice as a form of power.

The goodness of Markandaya's heroines originates in their glorification of suffering, whereas Kunthi's evil emanates from her refusal to suffer. Markandaya's heroines, according to Shirwadkar, are cast in the image of Sita. By maintaining traditional values, Rukmani and Ira find the peace of the virtuous.

Shirwadkar claims that women in later novels lose even the satisfaction of this fulfillment, because they are trapped between the traditional and modern roles.

Chitra Fernando (1935-1998), a Sri Lankan writer portrays women who reject traditional modes. Fernando uses an adaptable and flowing style of writing in her novels. She spent most of her time in Australia except for a brief stay in Sri Lanka. She always infused her writings with a Sri Lankan background and rural names to enrich and uphold the Sinhalese traditions. The plots of her novels and short stories are simple, and communicate cultural and moral messages to the Sri Lankan society in particular and to the world at large.

The hypocritical female characters damage the other characters, and cover their selfishness by using tradition as a defense mechanism. "Missilin," is the portrayal of a plain, loyal, hard-working maid servant, who has no ambitions beyond doing her duty. She, unusually for a woman of her class, does not mourn her spinsterhood. "She didn't care a jot. She wanted nothing to do with men."[7] In response to the news that a man, Gomis, expressed interest in her, she says haughtily, "'Ask him to poke his face in the chilli bag." She consents to meet him after he gives her some scented soap. But when Gomis finally marries another woman, rather than being heart broken, she throws away his gift and forgets about him.

Missilin's indifference towards men for their misdeeds against women is minor in comparison to other social injustices, like class differences, which she is unable to analyze. Missilin and all the neighbours believe Mrs. Ranasingha to be a "pious woman." Fernando lifts the veil from Mrs. Ranasingha's hypocrisy. Mrs Ranasingha constantly exploits Missilin by, first promising and then not letting Missilin visit her family. Missilin , on the other hand , never expresses resentment. Mrs. Ranasingha constantly reminds Missilin of how fortunate she is to be in the employment of a generous mistress. Also, she continuously speaks of her own piety by boasting of various "meritorious deeds" like almsgiving. The ironic twist in the story surfaces when, Missilin dies of tuberculosis. In order to feel virtuous, Mrs. Ranasingha hosts an almsgiving in her memory.

The whole neighborhood is agog with tales of her goodness. Mrs Ranasingha is referred to more often than the dead girl. The priest, with his eye on the fat donation briefly expresses the hope that Missilin would be born to a better life in the cycle of births and deaths, orates on the large heartedness and goodness of Mrs Ranasingha in organizing an almsgiving for a dead servant. "And this, Mrs Ranasingha felt, was exactly how it should be."

Fernando ridicules the duplicity of traditional society. She, however, takes Missilin seriously, evoking sympathy for an honest, self-sufficient woman unaware of her employer's exploitations. "Action and Reaction"

and "Of Bread and Power," deal with women characters that are treated with sympathy because of their underdog status. In "Action and Reaction," Kusuma, a maid in the narrator's aunt's house grows from a pathetic child into a beautiful young woman. Her employer, Loku Naenda, whose personality echoes that of Mrs. Ranasingha in "Missilin," refuses to let her marry the man she loves, and society supports her in this decision. In this story, however, the exploited turns into the exploiter, because as she ages Kusuma takes over Loku Naenda's household, draining her of her money in the name of charity. As Kusuma turns into a replica of her employer, she becomes an equally evil character.

In "Of Bread and Power," the heroine Seela escapes the exploitation of her parents by remaining celibate, supporting herself financially, and living with her brother and another young man. She is the only female figure who breaks through tradition to build a happy life. She seems a noble character when she asserts her worth and dares to challenge the wishes of her family. Interestingly, Fernando does not base this positive image completely on a breaking of tradition, because Seela gains confidence enough to leave her parental house when she inherits money from her grandmother. At the end of the story, she argues with her brother's friend Somie, who wants to build society "based on justice, freedom and friendship." Seela responds: "No [. . .] I - I want to be like my grandmother. She had no

illusions. I want to be a good designer and understand myself and other people". Fernando in this story creates a woman who gets away from the patriarchy with the aid of her grandmother. Fernando does not reject the values of traditional society, but rather the greed and abuse they hide.

The author, in her attempt to portray a classical, pseudo, modern society in Sri Lanka successfully achieves her aim in exposing how some sections of the bourgeois society have fallen prey to false values and the extent to which they suffer from delusions of grandeur. During this change over even "Amitha's social group" tends to move with the times and the author takes the reader along her life's journey where her personal experiences are brought to the surface. The author projects the social and political unrest which enwrapped the entire society between the privileged and the underprivileged classes during 1972 and again in 1982 in Sri Lanka. Amitha as an Arts graduate becomes influenced by her deep feelings for the poor and becomes disgusted with the recurring social injustices. This draws her automatically into a destructive social revolution between the haves and have-nots. Although she detests violence, her sympathies go beyond her convictions.

Anita Desai's *In Custody* is a satire on traditional society. In the mid-1980s Desai started to look more

closely at the life of the unprivileged. *In Custody* (1984) is Desai's ironic story about literary traditions and academic illusions. The central characters are Nur, an Urdu poet, who has fallen on hard times, and Deven, a professor of Hindi, who realizes that the beloved poet is not the magical genius he has imagined. Most of Desai's novels are set in India and completely immersed in Indian life. Her novels are concerned with the inner life of her characters and her concern with people previously marginalized in Indian fiction, primarily women, children and the elderly. She is a novelist of the human psyche. *In Custody* discusses a pathetic, male character whose wife is contemptuous of his inability to become rich. Deven, a timid college lecturer develops ambitions that lead him to professional and financial ruin as he incurs large debts, which he finally decides to endure rather than commit suicide. His wife tries to fulfill her own ambitions by pressurizing him to provide more and more money. As the story progresses, however, Desai makes clear that just as the male characters are trapped in a world that offers no possibility for success, the female characters have even more right to feel frustrated with a sexist society that reduces them to clinging to these men who cannot provide them with what they want.

Desai's characters act out of self-preservation. In contrast to Markandaya's Rukmani and Ira who appear justified in their rebellion yet suffer endlessly, Fernando

and Desai's women survive their rejection of traditional fetters. The Urdu poet's young wife in Desai's *In Custody*, resents societal restrictions and turns to writing as a solace. In fact, she radically redefines her experiences by narrating her own story. Nur's wife's example has been followed by many modern women writers in recent years as they tell their own stories and that of other women. When women define the lives of real women, they go beyond creating sympathetic female characters to making claims for an alternative reality, an alternative truth. The illicit, self-interested qualities so condemned in earlier fiction become liberating, positive, and creative forces.

Desai provides an anti-climax at the end of her novel in the form of a letter from Nur's young wife to Deven, in which she reveals that Nur married her because of her "gifts and abilities," not because of sexual entrapment as he had been accused of throughout the novel. She challenges him to read her enclosed Urdu poems:

> Let me see if you are strong enough to face them and admit to their merit. Or if they fill you with fear and insecurity because they threaten you with danger — danger that your superiority to women may become questionable. [. . .]. Are you not guilty of assuming that because you are a male, you have a right to brains, talent,

> reputation, and achievement, while I, because I was born a female, am condemned to find what satisfaction I can in being maligned, mocked, ignored and neglected? Is it not you who has made me play the role of the loose woman in gaudy garments by refusing to take my work seriously and giving me just that much regard that you would extend to even a failure in the arts as long as the artist was male? [8]

Deven's intervention prevents her defiant letter from circulating in the world of Urdu poetry. Too frightened to "enter that world on a mission of mercy or rescue," he tears up her poems. But her angry statements make readers reevaluate what they previously had only seen through the eyes of a male character. By making women's frustration understandable, Desai subverts her book's primarily unsympathetic portrayals of women which were Deven's biased perceptions.

Desai achieves more than simply subverting the patriarchal society's attitude towards women since she infuses a flawed Sita-like image in her main male character, not her female ones, who are too disillusioned and angry to want to fulfill self-sacrificing ideals. Deven suffers throughout *In Custody* because he was too weak to refuse the burdens others forcibly placed upon him.

Nur's wife gains respect by asserting her rights and abilities, Deven is not capable of a fiery reaction. He develops fortitude and raises himself in the esteem of the readers: "He had accepted the gift of Nur's poetry and that meant he was custodian of Nur's very soul and spirit. It was a great distinction. He could not deny or abandon that under any pressure." Deven decides to accept and endure whatever destiny has in store for him. "Soon the sun would be up and blazing. The day would begin, with its calamities. They would flash out of the sky and cut him down like swords. He would run to meet them."

Anees Jung, the author of *Unveiling India: A Woman's Journey*, (1986) has redefined women's identities. Her work serves as a political, social and literary consciousness-raising. She explains the change that has taken place in Indian society and exhorts women to tell their own stories:

> Not long ago a woman who spoke about herself was considered a loose woman. To voice a pain, to divulge a secret, was considered sacrilege, a breach of family trust. Today, voices are raised without fear, and are heard outside the walls of homes that once kept a woman protected, also isolated. Some of the women who speak here have stepped out. Others, who have not, are beginning to be aware, eager to

> find expression. But let them speak for themselves.[9]

Jung quotes the desperate, angry and hopeful stories of women from all over India. Her chapter "Women Find a Name" explores the positive consequences of Indian women renaming self and experience:

> There are more women working today than there were a generation ago, more girls going to school and more women seen protesting in the streets, squares and homes. Their looks have not changed, their manner has. Individually they have gained a name, collectively an identity. Their new power was not imposed upon them but already existed, enclosed within walls. Now that power has stirred out into the open. Their new strength stems from personalities defining their own terms, lending grace to living.

Jung's thesis is a positive one. In spite of extensive difficulties and restrictions, women of India have come a long way. She glorifies the power of womanhood. In 1985, she went on a journey that formed the basis of the book *Unveiling India*. In the course of the journey, she found herself discovering a country labeled as exotic because of its women. India, she recognized, was

essentially a country female in spirit. The same feminine spirit pervades the entire subcontinent. When she traveled, once again, some years later collecting material for *Seven Sisters*, a companion volume on women in South Asia, she realized that women's communities had no borders. The arrival in each new country meant passing through troublesome formalities, the experience of interaction with women was archetypal. In each of their worlds, separate yet identical, she saw few contradictions. She sensed warmth of intensity and intimacy that shamed the conflicting geopolitical realities. Born out of a common root, the seven regions of South Asia seemed to her like seven sisters sharing through spirituality a destiny determined by geography, culture, custom and the overwhelming presence of religion. Fettered but strong, all these women shared a common destiny.

Anees Jung experienced deep empathy and sympathy with all the women she encountered – some women were from different classes, some from different educational backgrounds some were unmarried , some happily married, and others divorced or widowed or abandoned. Jung herself grew up in *purdah*, chose to remain unmarried and become a successful writer. She says about herself:

> My reality no longer has one face. I have stepped out of an enclosed reality into one that is larger, more diverse, and mobile. . .

> I continue to live out an experience for which I have yet to find a name.

She presents her book, which begins with her own story and slowly blends into the story of other women as a "journey":

> In the macrocosm of a vast land I find the microcosm of my own experience repeated and reaffirmed. [. . .]Coiled within the lives of these women I find myself transformed. The effort here is to probe the mystery of this experience and look beyond to another that is beginning to spell change and is centered in change. [. . .] It is the story of women who understand what survival is — a story with grace.

Anees Jung's literary vision steers the conservative woman out of the *zenana* into the modern competitive world. More than any of the writers discussed above she carves a realistic, usable road for the new woman.

In her autobiographical work, Sara Suleri, Professor of English, exemplifies liberating, positive, and creative forces. In *Meatless Days*, she interweaves the story of her life with that of her family and Pakistan's

political history. Suleri's intellectual feminist attempts to define things and experiences contrast with her mother's refusal to name food and her grandmother's supreme confidence in her own values and superstitions. Suleri, apart from discussing women, offers an in depth look at the violent history of Pakistan's independence. She underscores her text with her most intimate memories—of her Welsh mother, an English teacher of spare, abstracted eloquence; of her Pakistani father, a prominent and frequently jailed political journalist; of her conservative grandmother; and of the friends who accompany her to the USA.

Sara Suleri involves the reader right in her family's life in Pakistan from two perspectives. At times she has the vision of a child growing up in Pakistan, at other times she speaks from the more distanced vision of an adult living in the United States. She begins with her adult view which helps to settle the reader into her story. Later she moves into descriptions of life in Pakistan with her siblings and grandmother told from a child's point of view. It is interesting to note how Suleri develops the character of her grandmother from an adult perspective and also how her childhood memories color the picture of *Dadi*.

Suleri uses short sentences while introducing *Dadi* to provide information about *Dadi's* history; where she was born, when she married, when and why she moved to Pakistan. Much is left to the reader's

imagination, and specifics get filled in as the story progresses. The first physical description of *Dadi* is much more lyrical than the initial introduction.

> By the time I knew her, *Dadi* with her flair for drama had allowed life to sit so heavily upon her back that her spine wilted and froze into a perfect curve, and so it was in the posture of a shrimp that she went scuttling through the day. [10]

The simultaneous visions mark Suleri's own progress through life. As the narrative progresses Suleri shares some of her grandmother's little idiosyncrasies such as the walking sticks she would cut from the garden even though Suleri's father would buy her dozens of expensive ones. The reader becomes familiar with *Dadi's* traditional values through Suleri's description of her sitting in the courtyard in the late afternoon winter sun.

> With her would go her *Quran*, a metal basin in which she could wash her hands, and her ridiculously heavy spouted water pot, that was made of brass. None of us, according to *Dadi*, were quite pure enough to transport these particular items, but the rest of her paraphernalia we were allowed to carry out. These were baskets of her writing and sewing materials and her

bottle of pungent and *Dadi*-like bitter oils,
with which she'd coat the papery skin that
held her brittle bones.

Not only does Suleri convey Dadi's values and personal character but the reader also gains a sense of *Dadi* through Suleri's extremely effective physical descriptions. The truthful description of an Eastern woman's life is aimed at restoring the dignity of the much maligned and marginalized. Suleri's Western self seems to crave for the stability of her ancestral identity.

Recognized as one of India's foremost poets, Kamala Das was born in Malabar in Kerala. She started to write poetry at an early age under the influence of her great uncle, Nalapat Narayan Menon, a prominent writer. Das remembers watching him work from morning till night and thinking that he had "a blissful life." (Warrior interview). Das was also deeply affected by the poetry of her mother, Nalapat Balamani Amma, and the sacred writings kept by the matriarchal community of Nayars (IndiaWorld). She was privately educated until the age of fifteen when she was married to K. Madhava Das (IndiaWorld). She was sixteen when her first son was born. She claims that she "was mature enough to be a mother only when my third child was born." (Warrior interview). Her husband often played a fatherly role for both Das and her sons. Because of the great age difference between Kamala and her husband,

he often encouraged her to associate with people of her own age. Das says that he was always "very understanding." (Warrior interview).

When Das wished to begin writing, her husband supported her decision to augment the family's income. Because Das was a woman, however, she could not use the morning-till-night schedule enjoyed by her great uncle. She would wait until nightfall after her family had gone to sleep and would write until morning:

> There was only the kitchen table where I would cut vegetables, and after all the plates and things were cleared, I would sit there and start typing (Warrior interview).[11]

This rigorous schedule adversely affected Das' health, but she remained positive. She used the opportunity to write. As her reputation grew, her husband remained the driving force. Even when controversy engulfed Das' sexually charged poetry and her autobiography, *My Story*, her husband remained encouraging. He was bedridden for the last three years of his life. However even his invalid presence gave her solace. She claims that there "shall not be another person so proud of me and my achievements." (Warrior interview).

In *My Story*, Kamala Das, narrates intensely personal experiences including her growth into womanhood, her unsuccessful quest for love within and outside marriage, and her life in matriarchal rural South

India where she inherited her ancestral home. The influential families plotted to kill her with magic because they feared that her poetry would reveal their sins. Thus, Das created a paradigm for the way repressive societies resent women's speech, writing, and other self-defining forms of personal expression. Like European women authors, Das criticizes society's restrictive religious and cultural ideologies. She uses the terrifying image of Kali, the goddess of war and destruction, in a gesture of defiance:

> I hung a picture of Kali on the wall of my balcony and adorned it daily with long strings of red flowers, resembling the intestines of a disemboweled human being. Anyone walking along the edge of my paddy field a furlong away could see the Goddess and the macabre splash or red. This gave the villagers a fright.[12]

Das often thus uses traditional religious imagery to express herself. She claims to search for an incarnation of the god Krishna in her love affairs and worships the god when men show their human failings. Before a potentially fatal heart operation, she visualized herself as the goddess Durga. She entitled one of her chapters "I Was Carlo's Sita," and used it to narrate a love affair.

Das delves into her religious consciousness to explain her individuality.

Meera Mahadevan's *Shulamith* deals with the effects of the *Sakti* tradition upon the Jewish women of India. The novel's heroine, Shulamith, experiences a "sense of dual fidelity" between her devotion to her husband and to her choices in life. She makes her own decisions and remains in India when her husband leaves for Israel. However, she pines for him and dies when he returns. Shulamith's sister-in-law, Mezuzah, leads a modern life , dates different men but prefers to remain single. Her life moves full circle and ultimately, she suffers the consequences of violating traditional Indian-Jewish mores. Influenced by liberal Western attitudes to romance and freedom, the young woman falls in love with a non-Jewish youth and becomes pregnant. She then experiences shame, an agonizing abortion, and an undesirable marriage because her mother will neither let her marry a non-Jewish, man nor bring shame on the family by having a child out of wedlock. Shirwadkar explains the process that forces the modern young women to embrace family and tradition:

> The ideas, tastes, manners adopted from the West appear to these girls attractive till some crisis or experience in their lives holds them back to the inherent culture.[13]

Mezuzah, or Maizie as she is called by most, becomes an image of the suffering woman: her values and personality change as she transforms first into a subdued, abused, barren wife living in poverty then into a hard-working, self-sacrificing nurse.

Mahadevan portrays the young women Maizie and Naomi as victims of a patriarchal tradition. She creates Shulamith, as a highly independent character worthy of respect. Mahadevan seems to be discussing both perspectives, but the positive image of the suffering woman remains constant. Mahadevan admires strong women who endure. Mahadevan's portrayal of women is multi faceted. Her work is populated with all kinds of women. Women's experiences vary with the kind of life they lead. Mahadevan's solutions vary according to the problems.

Why do Asian women write? What inner force motivates them to voice their innermost thoughts? This question requires an analysis of the early days of women's writing. Women did not begin writing in the hope of gaining fame or recognition. Unlike male writers who wrote to earn the title of intellectualism, women harboured no such ambitions. Nor did they write because they came from learned or scholarly families, nor to transform society and bring about a revolution. These are the reasons that men give. For women, the common cause was loneliness and alienation. They had no one to share their thoughts or feelings with.

Some women were the first to be educated in their families, and they started their lives with countless visions and hopes. Some had battled family and community to achieve education. All of them found the burden of the restrictions placed on them, at home and outside, unbearable. Without any clear perception of how to fight these restrictions, unable to conceal the desire to find their rightful place in the world, many women claimed they picked up the pen as a medium of survival.

The new woman writes to define her space and herself. Asian women write to explain to the world how they earn money, make investments, look after domestic responsibilities, if needed function as the heads of the households, believe in the permanence of marriage but also break problematic marriages, send their daughters to schools, enter institutional politics, travel alone at night and yet cover their heads as per social customs.

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