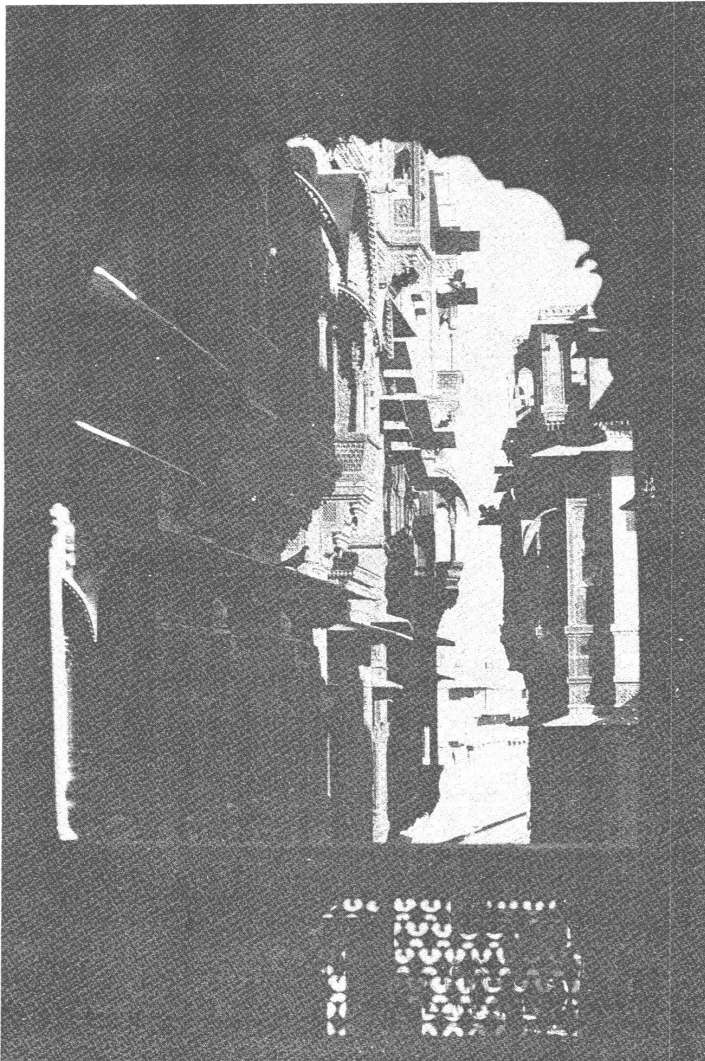


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"The word 'genocide' must be used with care. Our world and our century have seen countless abominable massacres, and it is easy to slip into the use of the word to denote such atrocities. We should, however, restrict it to those crimes before high heaven which are truly designated by it. If we do so, and if we consider only the last sixty years, there are four such mass murders which can justifiably carry the terrible brand. They are: The Jewish Holocaust, the Stalin Terror, the bloodthirst of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, and what was done to the people and culture of Tibet during the miserable lust for death and torture unleashed by the mad Mao-Tse-tung under the name of 'The Cultural Revolution'" [Bernard Levin, *The Times*, 7.9.1990].

Stirring words. Also depressing. And not entirely unexpected. After all, all of us, irrespective of which parts of the world we inhabit, are not totally unfamiliar with the horrors that are perpetrated on people—sometimes in the name of race, religion, revolution, national unification, even progress or development. The assumption of a god-given right to civilize the erstwhile savages, heathens or natives is a sin that is shared by all of us.

It is equally true that such constructions never go uncontested. Many of us, before the Khrushchev disclosures of 1951, were unwilling to believe the accounts of Stalin's Russia. And overwhelming evidence notwithstanding, many of our Communist friends still seek to explain away those years of the Gulag. Le Pen and neo-Right in France and Germany continue to claim that the Holocaust was a mere figment of imagination. Just as Malcolm Caldwell and his associates in *The Journal of Concerned Asian Scholars* argued for years (some still do) that the killings attributed to Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge were wild exaggerations, neo-imperialist designs at disinformation.

More than any other victim people, the Tibetans have been subject to neglect, misinformation and amnesia. Residents of an inaccessible land, caught in a time warp, they have for long been nobody's concern. And while today, particularly after the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, debates on Tibet may have intensified, they still retain an air of unreality. Did Tibet ever exist as an independent nation or State? What were its boundaries—the one currently defining the Tibetan Autonomous Region, or the much larger ones incorporating the East-

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Struggle for Memory

Harsh Sethi

TEARS OF BLOOD: A CRY FOR TIBET

By Mary Craig

Indus, Delhi, 1992, pp. 374, Rs. 100.00

ern Provinces? What was the pre-1951 system and society like? Was it feudal servitude of the worst kind, with a majority of the populace destined to live as slaves? What is the notion of a 'peaceful liberation', so proudly claimed by the People's Republic of China?

One could add to the list of questions as also to the contending contestations. What however at least this reviewer finds difficult to comprehend is that irrespective of the status of Tibet and the Tibetan people prior to its 'peaceful liberation' in 1951, why is it that the charges of massive violations of human rights, of ecological and cultural genocide, of keeping the Tibetan populace in a state of colonisation etc. cannot be independently assessed. Equally, when the PRC issues a White Paper 'Tibet—Its Ownership and Human Rights Situation', why is it not laughed out of court. Just imagine the consternation in our human rights community if the Indian State claimed to 'own' Kashmir. If nothing else, just such a description should make abundantly clear the regard in which the Chinese government holds Tibet and the Tibetans.

Mary Craig's *Tears of Blood* makes for a moving, though depressing tale. Self-admittedly partisan, she makes no bones about her total support to the cause of Tibetan independence. An admirer of the Dalai Lama, she has traced the bloody trajectory of Tibet with poignancy and feeling. In doing so, she makes a powerful case not just against an authoritarian and despotic regime tinged with more than a trace of racism, but also underlines a truism that many of us tend to forget—'once a people have acquired the self-consciousness of being different, State terror can possibly wipe them out, but their memories will contribute to their

struggles, as long as they are alive.' Her story of the brutal violation of Tibet must simultaneously be read as (to paraphrase Milan Kundera) a victory of memory against forgetting.

Mary Craig's earlier Tibet is no mythological Shangri-la. She has no hesitation in describing it in modern terms, as politically and economically backward, where notions like 'human rights' and 'democracy', concepts that everyone currently swears by, had little meaning. But, she does not subscribe to a construction of Tibet as savage. She argues, and coherently, that Tibet constituted a very different society where notions of individual rights and freedoms had to be mediated by a collectivity undergirded by a religious sensibility with the Dalai Lama as a God-King.

Even on the territorial autonomy of Tibet, she, like most international observers (c.f. The Judgement of the Permanent People's Tribunal, Strasbourg, 1992) maintains an ambiguity. What she does argue, as does the PPT, that since the Tibetans fulfil all the criteria of being a distinct people with their own race, language, religion, culture, ethnicity, institutions etc. they enjoy the right to self-determination as a people.

Most of the book however traces the trajectory of a country and a people incorporated within the People's Republic of China; the various mechanisms employed to crush their resistance; the excesses committed; and her conjectures as to why the Chinese will ultimately fail. One may or not agree with her passionate denunciation of the 'Chinese rule' or on her political reading on the prospects of Tibetan autonomy/sovereignty, but it cannot be denied that *Tears of Blood* is a powerful narrative, bound to deeply disturb the reader.

It is likely that like all victim communities, the Tibetan charges are prone to exaggerations. For instance, most international human rights organisations tend to discount the horror stories associated with the family planning programmes. Also the figure of 1.2 million Tibetans, either directly killed or dead from starvation, is an over-estimate. So also may be the charges against the Chinese policy of changing the racial-ethnic mix of Tibet. What however, even those sympathetic

to the Chinese do not deny, is that the Chinese have always looked upon the Tibetans as an inferior people—savage, superstitious and unclean. The political strings remain clearly in the control of the Chinese, belying all claims of autonomy. Discrimination is rampant. Above all, vicissitudes in the Chinese polity notwithstanding, the slightest dissent has been put down with a brutal hand. Stories of torture, rape, killing—and in manners likely to turn the strongest stomach—are thus fairly believable.

Above all, the Chinese have no comprehension about the role religion plays in the lives of the ordinary Tibetans. Thus their zeal in trying to root out the monasteries, the rituals, the lamas and the unique position of the Dalai Lama, and not just during the phase of the Cultural Revolution, from the minds and hearts of the Tibetans. Also, with little comprehension of the unique eco-system of Tibet, the Chinese have wreaked havoc through their unthinking effort at agriculture, irrigation, power projects, mining and roads. Tibetan wild life has been all but exterminated; their forests cut down. Finally, the conversion of Tibet into a nuclear playground is as clear a demonstration as any about how the Chinese view Tibet—a colony of subjugated peoples. One wonders what Tibet the future generations of Tibetans will inherit—a cultural and ecological wasteland.

It is likely that the struggle for Tibetan independence may remain a chimera. International support, currently on the ascendant, is a fickle card on which to rely. For much as human rights is employed in international discourse, States are committed to their own interests. China remains, even after Tiananmen, too important for anyone to disregard, at least for the sake of Tibet. And the Chinese seem committed to holding on regardless.

But irrespective of how national governments define their policy vis-a-vis Tibet and China, at least those of us who scream at the slightest indiscretion of our State and dismiss its reactions to external criticism as merely a diversionary ploy, need to rethink our stances on this continuing tragedy. The story of modern Tibet, as related by Mary Craig, should force us to re-examine all our premises, the basis of our approvals and disapprovals. What constitutes a separate people, a nationality with a legitimate right to self-determination, may not elicit wide agreement. But the testimonies of the Tibetan victims deserve to be privileged over the official Chinese view. And their struggles to be heard should be given the greatest respect. In doing so we will be giving not just the Tibetans a chance, but help ourselves recover some of the humanity that we seem to have lost.

Harsh Sethi is at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi.

Varied Perceptions

Stephen Philip Cohen

INDIA'S STRATEGIC FUTURE: REGIONAL STATE OR GLOBAL POWER?

Edited by Ross Babbage and Sandy Gordon

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992 pp. xi+183, Rs. 250.00

When India's military power increased substantially in the late 1970s and 1980s, its neighbors responded in different ways. Some, such as Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, pursued policies of accommodation. Pakistan revived a dormant strategic relationship with the United States (after 1981) and bought long-term insurance of a sort by moving its nuclear weapons programme forward. China seemed to take no notice, although its support to Pakistan could be construed as an indirect policy of balancing India's growing might.

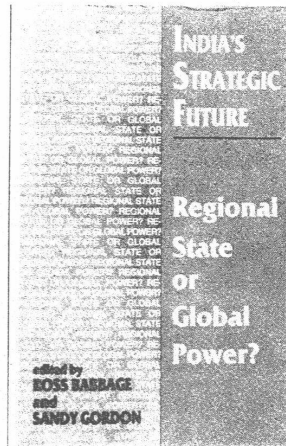
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Further to the east (and southeast), in Singapore, Malaysia, and Australia, the response was more speculative. Was Indian power real? What were India's regional or global ambitions? What role did the Soviets play in Delhi's plans—other than providing massive amounts of military equipment at cut-rate prices? Now, a few years later, these concerns seem misplaced. India faces a grave inter-

national security threat, the economy is in shambles, the Soviet tie is snapped, Indian political leadership seems to have lost its moorings, and there is even talk of the fragmentation of the Indian state.

Thus, it is not surprising that one of the major attempts of the 1980s to assess Indian power—the edited volume under review, whose chapters were written for a 1989 conference sponsored by the Australian National University—has a certain archaic quality. Perhaps the two most durable essays are those by Sandy Gordon (“Domestic Foundations of India's Security Policy”) and Lt. Gen. (ret.) A. Habib (“An Indonesian View of India's Strategic Development”). Gordon offers a lucid summary of the interplay between nationalism, identity, and defense policy. The view that “India had once been a nation of great wealth and high technology which had rivaled and even surpassed Europe,” but that this great state was conquered, paradoxically, because of its technological backwardness is at

General Habib's essay may come as a shock to Indian readers. He dismisses Indian claims to have historically dominated Southeast Asia—the region's rulers were influenced by Hinduism, but “were not at the receiving end playing a passive role” (p. 110). Habib approvingly quotes others to the effect that India has good relations with none of its neighbors and that its reputation is one of high-handedness. As far as the Southeast Asians are concerned, India is “just another developing country with a host of problems” (p. 108). Habib is not entirely dismissive of India, but sees no threat to Southeast Asia as long as Delhi regards Pakistan and China as its main threats. Nor does he hold out much prospect for inter-regional cooperation between SAARC and ASEAN.



the core of the BJP's vision of India, but it was shared by almost all nationalists (p.9). It is a view that can be used to justify the acquisition of any weapon, it is the intellectual and historical base for what passes for “threat” analysis in India. As Manoj Joshi argues in his chapter, the Indian defense policy process is not characterized by a balanced assessment of threats and opportunities, liabilities and assets. (This point was emphatically made in a recent RAND Corporation study by George Tanham.) Gordon concludes, correctly, that India's view of its place in the world has been a vacillating one; we are likely to see a continued movement between expansion and contraction, self-confidence and insecurity, because these competing patterns flow from a very complex self-image, and a very diverse state.

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Of the remaining essays, those by Manoj K. Joshi and Raju Thomas are balanced explications of India's strategic build-up, but will have to be read with caution, since much has changed in the past few years. Thomas in particular may have overestimated Indian strategic capabilities and underestimated the moral and material calamity of the Sri Lankan

operation in which India lost more men than in the victory over Pakistan in 1971. I do not think many Indian defense planners are likely to talk much about fighting two and a half wars, let alone a nuclear war, for a number of years. The chapter by Gregory Austin, “Soviet Perspectives of India's Developing Security Posture,” is perfunctory, and now irrelevant. Regrettably, the chapter by another Australian, Gary Klintworth (“Chinese Perspectives on India as a Great Power”) is of little value; while Klintworth notes that China is not threatened by any other great power for the first time in two centuries, he does not seem to have any meaningful model of explaining Chinese behaviour, especially towards a less-than-great power such as India. Klintworth asserts that the PLA has a “realistic assessment” of India's military capabilities as “a major Asian power,” but then seems to argue that Beijing's need for domestic economic reform makes conflict with India unlikely. If this is the case, then why is China embarking upon a massive arms build-up in 1992-93? Domestic political compulsions? The role of the military? Lingering paranoia? Hegemonic ambitions? Amin Saikal, also based at ANU, discusses possible Indian policies in the Gulf and West Asia; since this was written the war in the Gulf, the establishment of full diplomatic ties with Israel, and the growing linkage between the Middle East and terrorism in India has led to some fundamental changes in Indian attitudes, and perhaps policies.

The two editors' concluding contributions can be briefly summarized. Babbage surveys the interests of the western powers in India's (then) growing power, noting the usual concerns about sea access, ballistic and nuclear proliferation, and, managing relations with India in a multi-polar world. Gordon, anticipating events that were to dramatically reduce India's status and capabilities, cautions that “while India's emerging role is fully acknowledged in the papers collected in this volume, another theme which runs through a number of contributions is that there are clear limitations both upon the current extent of India's power and upon the rate at which that power will accrue” (p. 171). Difficulties in managing its own defense establishment, the continued conflicts with China and Pakistan, and Indian caution about moving closer to the industrialized West were only three factors likely to temper India's growth; we now know of the near-collapse of the Indian economy, and the traumatic domestic political events of late 1992. Gordon's cautionary conclusions about predictions of India as a true “Indian Ocean-wide great power” seem to be on target: we should look to the twenty-first rather than the late twentieth century for this to happen.

Professor Stephen Philip Cohen is currently scholar-in-residence at the Ford Foundation, New Delhi.

Exploring A Water Planet

Mihir K. Roy

THE INDIAN OCEAN AND ITS ISLANDS: STRATEGIC, SCIENTIFIC AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Edited by Satish Chandra, B. Arunachalam, V. Suryanarayan

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 221, Rs. 235.00

Professor S. Nurul Hassan, President of the Society for Indian Ocean Studies (SIOS) which has brought out this volume on the basis of papers presented at various seminars in 1989 points out in his foreword that this ocean has not only played a vital part in the history of this region but also on human civilisation.

Professor Zahoor Qasim, the well known oceanographer opens the innings by highlighting the importance of living and non-living resources of the seas and seabed particularly because of the rapid depletion of the mineral reserves on land which in turn will compel mankind to look more and more to the oceans. He therefore emphasises the necessity for according priority to the 'frontier areas of ocean development'.

Professor Qasim, who was also the first leader of the Indian Expedition to the Antarctica in 1981, enumerates the protein richness of the Krill (similar to a small prawn) and the mineral reserves of this serene, pure and most inspiring ice continent.

Admiral Nadkarni in his overview of India's foreign and defence policies in the 1990's contends that primarily due to the superiority of India's Defence Forces, there has been no war between India and Pakistan for the longest period since partition. This is reminiscent of NATO's boast of peace. Through deterrence, Admiral Nadkarni's thesis of the growing need to bring diplomacy and military power in step with each other requires no further elucidation. He rightly concludes by stating that in spite of the high costs, the presence of a strong Navy to defend India's strategic and economic interests are in the long run more cost effective than shooting wars.

B.M. Mehrish views the Indian Ocean as a single geo-strategic region. In addition, he resurrects the age-old rivalry between 'continental' and 'rimland' powers. However, owing to global communications, rapid modes of transport and increasing interdependence between

countries, this competition can be safely confined to the archives of political geography.

Vice Admiral Kohli divides the Indian Ocean into three geo-strategic regions—Southern, North Eastern (Malacca Straits) and North-Western region (Suez, Babel Mandab and Hormuz) which is roughly the responsibilities of the present three Indian naval commands. He further pointedly observes that while the major military threats to India emanate from the Continental North, the bulk of the oceanic coercion springs from the South. But nonetheless peninsular India in spite of her dominant geo-strategic location in the Indian Ocean has still not understood the collateral benefits of sea power and neither has she gained adequate operational expertise in the diplomatic use of military power. By hindsight, this is perhaps true even today as the Indian Navy was not directed to escort Indian tankers to the Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War when nine vessels were hit by missiles. Nor were naval ships utilised to evacuate Indian nationals from Kuwait and Jordan during the Gulf conflict when the operation could have been completed in a single sealfit. Only recently, Indian warships were used cautiously if not reluctantly in peace-keeping activities to distribute food and medicines to Somalia. It is pertinent to state that U.S., France, Britain and the erstwhile Soviet Union used their navies on 63 occasions during the previous decades for non-provocative defence by successfully combating international bush fires. One should realise that the navy is but a tool of the nation and like the hammer of a carpenter should be used deliberately and purposefully.

Vice Admiral Awati surveys the strategic political environment in the Southern Indian Ocean region encompassing the Comoros, Seychelles, Mauritius, Reunion, Chagos and other islands and observes that 'many small Indian States were driven to seek assistance and shelter from super powers'. Admiral Awati, who was in charge of the Western Naval

Command, concludes by advocating the westward naval expansion in order to boost the image of India. This recommendation has since been overtaken by unforeseen world events such as the ending of super power rivalry, the reunification of Europe, the economic emergence of Asia-Pacific region and China's strident posture towards super power status which also makes the Eastern region a critical area for both development and conflict.

Vice Admiral Chopra, after a brief survey of India's maritime heritage and the emergence of the 1982 Convention of the Seas, rightly underlines the need for the country to have a coherent maritime policy encompassing the ingredients of seapower which includes shipping, ship-building, fishing, off shore oil and sea force.

Narmada Khodie further expands the 1982 Laws of the Seas Convention with particular emphasis on marine pollution due to sea transportation, off shore drilling, dredging, ocean mining and disposal of industrial effluents into the seas.

Professor Suryanarayan, who has done considerable studies of the Maldives and Lakshadweep region highlights 'Operation Cactus' when India snuffed out the coup against President Abdul Gayoom of the Maldives in November, 1988. He draws attention to the geo-strategic importance of GAN which was formerly a British airstaging post in the Maldives. Further, while supporting India's actions, he articulates the need for a Rapid Deployment Force and a National Security Council in order to implement a 'Munroe Doctrine' for the Island nations of the region. This is indeed a tall order for the Indian Navy which continues to be allotted only 12 percent of the Defence Budget. At the same time, Professor Suryanarayan introduces a teaser by quarrying the parameters of intervention even if it be by invitation.

The next three papers are by B. Arunachalam on Socotra, Alex George on traditional navigation and trade in Lakshadweep and Professor Arunachalam and Karani on traditions of boat-building in Lakshadweep and Minicoy focussing attention on local island traditions.

Professor Arunachalam, the well known geographer highlights the importance of Socotra which straddled the sailing routes between Africa and the Ports of the Red Sea and the Gujarat coast. In the days of sailing ships, the Arab and Gujarati master mariners readily recognised Mami Socotra which was located at five degree Polestar. Traders, pirates and corsairs from Kutch called Bawarij visited these islands for the disposal of their plunder. The author with old charts, tables and ancient nautical terms reveals the continuity of the navigational methods developed by Indian navigators during their extended voyages to the African coast. It is however surprising that Professor Arunachalam has not mentioned the voyages of the Chinese Admiral Zheng

He to the Indian Ocean during the early 15th century with their highly developed art of navigation which had a close parallel to that being practised by Indians.

Alex George describes the sea-faring traditions and trading patterns of Lakshadweep, Minicoy and the Amindivi group of Islands. He analyses their social cadres and traditions and brings out the economic coercion exercised by the mainlanders by exploiting the cheap island labour as also for extracting high costs for transportation from the dependent island societies.

The boat-building traditions of Minicoy and Lakshadweep where particularly the edge-to-edge coir-sewing technique of boat construction has survived for centuries have been highlighted by Rohini Karani and Professor Arunachalam.

The island's narrow economic base, the migrations from Kerala and the conflict between the socio-economic demands of the inhabitants and the environmental and sociological imperatives of carving out new facilities are some of the developmental problems in Lakshadweep. The authors Sudha Srivastava, Rohini Karani and Professor Arunachalam are of the view that tuna fishing, coconut industry and tourism offer the least controversial areas for development in the island.

Dr. Abidi describes the fishing resources of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands of which he has considerable knowledge particularly of the pelagic varieties of fish such as sardine, mackerel anchov and tuna. The oceanographic profile of the Andaman Seas has been since extensively researched by the newly acquired research vessels—Gaveshani, Sagar Kanya and Sagar Sampada. Nonetheless, he concludes that fishing in this area is still confined to small boats operating in local waters as without the establishment of processing and storage facilities, deep-sea fishing will continue to be the preserve of poachers from as far as Taiwan, Korea and Thailand.

This book on the Indian Ocean and its islands has been attractively got up with hardly any errors but published almost four years after the papers were presented. In the interval, there have been new milestones in the emerging world disorder with the break up of the Soviet Union, the interpretation of human rights, the trauma of ethnic cleansing and the effects of environmental degradation. With this backdrop, the strategic perceptions of yesterday will perforce recede to the backwaters of today.

The historical and scientific observations are however still valid but more as a reference book than as an original contribution to maritime affairs. However readers who are new to ocean studies will find this book a facile entry into the multi-disciplinary realm of this water planet particularly the lucid introduction by Professor Satish Chandra.

Vice Admiral Mihir K. Roy PVSM, AVSM, is a Nehru Fellow.

The Bimaru Factor

T.C.A. Srinivasa Raghavan

THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE: A STUDY OF FOUR LARGE INDIAN STATES

Edited by J.K. Satia and Shireen J. Jejeebhoy

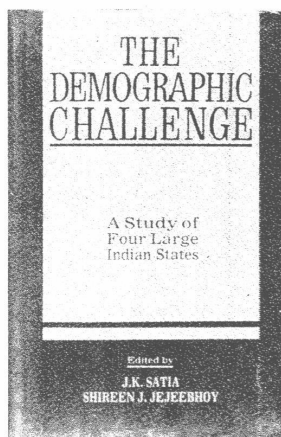
Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1991, pp. 268, Rs. 325.00

India's population is already close to a billion, and by the year 2030, would have touched 1.3 billion. Contrast this to the 350 million of 1950, and what you get is a virtual tripling in a hundred years. Such an explosive increase has never occurred before in the South Asian region or anywhere else for that matter. The socio-economic and political strains of this are already visible.

So who is most responsible? Without a shred of doubt, the four large Hindi-speaking states of UP, Bihar, MP and Rajasthan. The figures tell the story. In 1991, 508 million Indians lived in the rest of India and 335 million in these 4 states. That is almost a third of the population.

Not just that. In 1988 the rest of India had a crude birth rate of 27.9, as against the all-India figure of 31.3. And the reason why the figure got pulled up so sharply? No prizes for guessing: the crude birth rate of the four Hindi states. It was a shocking 36.5.

And not just that either. The crude fertility rates were also higher, naturally.



The all-India rate for 1986 was 4.2, the rest of India rate was 3.6 and the aryaavarta rate was 5.2. India has a problem, and the demographers know what it is: the four Hindi-speaking states of UP, Bihar, MP and Rajasthan.

This book provides a detailed study of these states and comes to the broad conclusion that it is backwardness—social, economic and educational—which makes these states such tigers. Or, perhaps, one should say rabbits, because after all, we are talking of breeding.

The volume consists of seven chapters, with an overview by the editors. It contains a wealth of statistical detail and analytical information. Pity, though, that it is in English. The objects of the studies, blissful in their belief that theirs is the language of the Gods, are likely to use it more for steadying a wobbly table rather than for drawing the appropriate conclusions for policy. Someone, perhaps the Government of India, ought to consider a Hindi translation.

Alaka Malwade Basu, in her contribution, has tried to develop the concept of a 'demand for children' and after much huffing and puffing about definitions, says that it has more than one aspect to it: ideal family size, achieved fertility and contraceptive use.

Her studies indicate that the demand for children is higher in these four states than in the rest of India. The ideal family size, for instance, is seen as being anything between 3.5 and 4 children, which is a far cry from the two children norm which the government wishes to pro-

mote. The corresponding figure for the rest of India is substantially lower, though even there it is not two. The government, therefore, has a socio-cultural problem on its hands about which it is doing precious little.

A part of the reason why the demand for children is so high all over India and even higher in these four states is because of the higher demand for sons. Ms Basu gives a number of explanations for this, most of which are alright as far as they go. But one must disagree with her on the religio-cultural motives. She discounts them more than is warranted on the ground that even when there is no son to perform to funeral rites of a Hindu, the scriptures provide for a large number of substitutes to do so. This conclusion only suggests that people have not revealed their innermost preferences to her, rather than that the religio-cultural motives are not very powerful as commonly believed.

The rest of the chapters are on predictable lines, such as the role of women, determinants of fertility, the experience of NGOs and so on. Interestingly, there is no discussion of disincentives, though there is a great deal on incentives. There is a hint of the bleeding-heart-liberal syndrome here, the compulsions for being politically correct. But as they say, there is no point in being kind to those who will regard it as weakness.

T.C.A. Srinivasa Raghavan is Associate Editor, *The Economic Times*, New Delhi.

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DR SOBHAN has been a Member of the UN Committee of Development Planning, a Member of the Governing Council of the UN University, Tokyo and is a member of the Board of UNRISD, Geneva and of the Executive of the International Economic Association.

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1913 to 1993 The British Press on an Indian Writer

The press today is regarded as less generous with praise than before. But are British newspapers an exception?

Tagore visited Britain in 1913 when Yeats led a major celebration of the poet and his works, *Gitanjali* and *The Post Office* in particular. The British Press of the time was cautiously warm in its appreciation of Tagore. Newspaper notices of Tagore's meetings and comments on his work were like the appreciative noises of aquarium-lovers watching an exotic goldfish.

Vikram Seth visited Britain in March 1993 to be present when *A Suitable Boy* splashed into the British book distribution system. British newspapers for almost a whole week sounded like residents in a hotel delighted by a dolphin from the Indian Ocean swimming in their pool.

Here are some excerpts from the two press coverages in Britain, eighty years apart.

THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE, 10 May 1913

The Indian Art, Dramatic and Friendly Society is little more than twelve months old; but during its short career it has already made several serious efforts to fulfil its professed intention of bringing the East and West into closer touch and of giving each a better understanding of the other. The latest of these efforts took the form of a meeting yesterday afternoon, at which Mr Rabindra Nath Tagore, who is described as India's "world poet" a man of great accomplishments, whose claim to the title of poet is undeniable and who by his works, has established an influence that is altogether remarkable over his fellow-countrymen of every class read his own translation of one of his own plays.

Before a large and deeply interested gathering that included many Anglo-Indians and many well known men of letters, Mr Tagore leant over his reading-desk—a tall, slim, figure dressed in tight fitting garments of black; and a strangely thin, but musical, voice. In the dust of late afternoon the shaded light that was directed upon his manuscript was reflected in a copper glow upon his face; but he read with hardly a gesture, without a break, and in the accents of a refined Englishman from the beginning of his short prose-poem to the end . . .

The reading was received with enthusiasm by the audience and the poet—a quiet almost a shy man—was overwhelmed with compliments by the many admirers who crowded round him before he could escape from the room.

THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH, 28 March 1993

East met West within the neo-classical splendour of the Nehru Centre, Mayfair, with the style of a literary darbar last seen when Rudyard Kipling was lionised by the capital. This was the launch of *A Suitable Boy* by Vikram Seth, a diminutive Indian writer whose weighty, 1,349 page

saga of Delhi matchmaking has been compared to the works of Dickens and Tolstoy.

They came not just to praise but to bury the pocket genius with adulation. So sought-after was the ticket that not all could be accommodated within the presence itself but had to make do with a seat on the stairs. A reading was relayed to the faithful on closed-circuit television.

Getting close to Seth himself was as difficult as having words with a diva after a first night. "I am close to collapse" he complained. "My next work will be a play. Probably in England, perhaps in the East coast of the United States. I think we have had enough of India."

THE TIMES, 11 July 1913

In Mr Tagore's dreamy, symbolical, spiritual play, The Post Office, which was presented last night at The Court Theatre for the first time in London, there are two scenes. . . . It is a curious play, leaving to a certain extent a sense of incompleteness since it ends before its climax, rich in poetical imagery, as well as in a kind of symbolism that must not be pressed too closely.

THE SUNDAY TIMES, 21 March 1993

This book puts a sub-continent between hard covers. Under a vast sky, across huge plains and from every quarter of teeming cities—temples and mosques, courtrooms and courtyards, factories, fields, lecture halls, political debating chambers, nightclubs, hovels, palaces, hospitals, jails, bookshops, bedrooms, purdah and pologrounds—hundreds of people stream into view and are illuminated by the brilliant warm lucidity of Vikram Seth's regard.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, 14 November 1913

In his preference of this volume of lyrics The

Gardener Mr Rabindra Nath Tagore informs us that they were written at a much earlier period than that of his religious work, the Gitanjali, which has been widely hailed as notable alike in spiritual power and poetic value. We may suppose, therefore, that the present collection of poems represents a less mature phase of the author's artistic development. As translated by him from the original Bengali into a prose rhythm, not distantly resembling that of the English version of Psalms, they have a charm of surface which scarcely compensates for essential alightness. They seem to be of the material of poetry rather than poetry itself. The moments, the floating thoughts, impressions and emotions that they envisage are not, for the most part, of any separate and inevitable significance. Of that flowery and extravagantly felicitous imagery known as Eastern, there is, indeed, abundance, but mere wealth for metaphor without the central jewel of an inspired thought is no more than decorate prettiness. It is in the part rather than the whole, in the verse rather than in the song, that are to be found shapes of poetic art.

THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH, 21 March 1993

If you study a map of India you will not find the city of Brahmputr, but if you travel to India you will find it almost everywhere. Vikram Seth has sited it beside the holy Ganges, mother-river of India, giver of life. The river itself runs through his saga, a character and a force, playing its role in love and death; and in its massivity, power and relentless flow, this is a novel invested with a truly Gangetic quality, fiction on the grand scale.

THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, 15 November 1913

The choice of the receipt of the Nobel Prize for Literature has furnished more than one surprise, but so far no selection has been quite as startling and significant as just announced. Mr. Rabindranath Tagore, the most eminent of living Indian men of letters, has an immense reputation among his countrymen, especially in his own province of Bengal. But his fame in the West is entirely of yesterday. Until his visit to Europe last year hardly a line of his writing was known in the English-speaking world, and although at this moment

The exuberant British reviews of Seth's novel may contrast with the guarded compliments paid to Tagore eighty years ago. But there are two comments that both the novelists have shared. "Rabindra Nath", wrote *The Manchester Guardian* on 14 July, 1913, "is plainly mysticism speaking out of life itself." And John Lanchester writing in the *London Review of Books* of 22 April 1993 concludes his review with these words: "*A Suitable Boy* breathes . . . the unfakable, unmistakable breath of life."

Compiled by Gopal Gandhi, Director, The Nehru Centre, London.

Excerpts of the Tagore reviews are a compilation from *Rabindranath Tagore and the British Press*, The Tagore Centre, U.K.

a number of other volumes of poems, dramas and essays—are appearing in translation, the audience he addresses in Britain and America has been gained entirely through the little collection of mystical religious lyrics done by the poet himself into English prose and published twelve months ago under the title of Gitanjali (song-offerings). Now, surely that is an extraordinary thing.

LONDON REVIEW OF BOOKS, 22 April 1993

Forests have been slain, not only in the manufacture of *A Suitable Boy*, but in the production of its review coverage. An unusual amount of the publicity has been statistical, with journalists dwelling on the size of the book (1,349 pages), its weight (an uncompromising 1.5 kgs), the size of the advances received (2.6 crore rupees), and its status as the longest one-volume novel in the English language.

THE OBSERVER, 14 December 1913

The Biblical maxim: "A man is not without honour save in his own country" cannot be applied to Mr. Rabindranath Tagore, the famous Bengali poet, who has just been awarded the Nobel prize for literature. His countrymen in the East are as enthusiastic as his admirers in the West in doing honour to him and congratulating him upon the way in which his work has been recognized. Mr Tagore's voice is sweet and musical. He had never, he said, longed for fame. His claim was to the heart.

THE OBSERVER, 21 March 1993

If in form and spirit *A Suitable Boy* belongs squarely in the great European tradition of the novel—as a force for tolerance, forgiveness and pity through imagination—it owes more to India than just its vocabulary (the eccentricities of Indian music, the exotic lexicon of flowers, fruit, music, deities and the devotions owed them.)

For the novel celebrates a culture that still prizes the art of the poet and the storyteller to give us joy, make us weep, to relax the mind and body and exercise the soul. If it carries an unspoken admonition, it is that we need such art; what's happened to our lives, it makes us ask, if we no longer have time for such things?

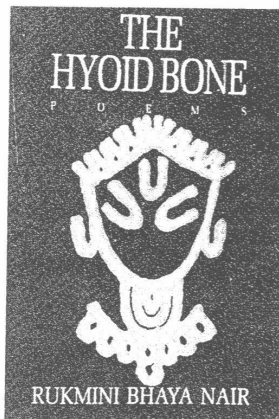
The Poetry of the Language Tree

H.K. Kaul

THE HYOID BONE

By Rukmini Bhaya Nair

Viking, Penguin Books, New Delhi,
1992, pp. 94, Rs 100.00



Poetic sensibilities, when groomed in the environs of solid images and subtle music draw the poet into a misty world of conflicting emotions. The poem grows then word by word, and line by line to represent this scenario, with or without a message the poet may be wishing to pen down. Neither all poets visualise such a scenario perfectly nor can they transform it well into poetic language. Sometimes the emotions limit their vision, sometimes musical qualities, and sometimes they get lost entirely in the world of images. Few poets bring all these three facets in line with their method and metaphor.

Rukmini Bhaya Nair emerged on the Indian poetic scene when she won the first prize in the All-India Poetry Competition organised by the Poetry Society (India) and the British Council Division, British High Commission for her poem "Kali". It is indeed commendable for a poet when his or her poem gets chosen out of thousands of poems for the award. But it is equally difficult for the judges to select one poem for the prize. Ms Nair not only used vivid images in this poem, she also composed it in a metre to induce musical features, without overshadowing the message of the poem with unnecessary detail. "Kali" is one of the strongest poems in her collection. The poem portrays the plight of an Indian woman in a man's world. Ms Nair describes the last phase of this plight in the two concluding stanzas of her poem:

Staid Ganesha knows this wildness
Must be curbed, Shiva, peripatetic
Agrees, and across the wilderness

Both gift Kali a companion eagle, hurt
By no arrow, fed on nothing, it returns
Each night to its eyrie in her heart.

Rukmini Bhaya Nair has now come out with her first collection of poems. An impressive one. The collection is divided into two sections: Wor(L)d and (W)omen. In the first section she is most concerned with the scenarios that emerge out of the frustrations of daily life. In the second section she voices her concern about the predicament of the modern woman.

The Hyoid bone, used for the title, is a small bone at the base of the throat, not attached to any other bone, but to the muscles of the tongue. It represents the concerns of the poet as feminist poet and the role of women in society. She remarks:

I was the scholar who discovered
a miracle in the anatomy text,
the only bone in the entire body
not tied to any other, unannexed.

Ms Nair reacts as a poet to something which she doesn't like. And, this reaction is instantaneous. This is what she portrays in the opening lines of 'Hundru Falls, Ranchi':

More people than water. Voices
Litter the air. Great outcrop
Of rock, tethered at one end
To the sun, at the other: to none.

Many of Ms Nair's poems are based on her experiences in several countries including Singapore, Thailand, England, Bangladesh and the US.

Her poems are neatly woven with strings of rhythm flowing through the hard and soft sounds of her chosen words. Being a specialist in linguistics, she looks at life both as a linguist and a poet at the same time, using important lines of well-known authors.

And, in 'Perchance to Dream', we get:

There are dreams you enter as you would
Historic monuments, with a tickle at the gate
Proof of valid entry, and, as you anticipate,
Just hours before the stub you've pocketed
Flutters to a bin by the sign marked 'Exit'.

Many of Ms Nair's poems are based on her experiences in several countries including Singapore, Thailand, England, Bangladesh and the US.

Her poems are neatly woven with strings of rhythm flowing through the hard and soft sounds of her chosen words. Being a specialist in linguistics, she looks at life both as a linguist and a poet at the same time, using important lines of well-known authors. Here are the two examples from 'Language Lessons * Related Reading':

| | |
|---|---|
| Syntax is brittle | Chomsky (1965, 1972, 1984, 1991 etc.) |
| Made of frangible bone, | Plato (5th c.B.C.) |
| Earth moves | Aristotle (4th c.B.C.) |
| When sentence flicks its tail. | Thrax (1st c.B.C.) |
| Too didactic? Not to say, plain wrong | Saussure (1916) He's important for this course. |
| Rhetoric is superficial, what counts | Blomfield (1933) |
| You argue, is deep, arbitrary structure | Fillmore (1975) |
| Buttressing, yet | |
| Entirely distinct from visionary zeal. | |

Through this experiment one wonders how reader can get access to the messages Ms. Nair wants to communicate. Each line represents a rendezvous of thoughts and through related readings new contexts will drag the reader into entirely new worlds. Although Ms Nair warns us that the dates and references in this poem are not to be taken too seriously, the reader may not readily absorb the poetic messages.

In 'Genderole' Ms Nayar does an experiment using the run-on form of old Sanskrit verses with no breaks between words. Here are a few *shlokas*:

Comingtogetherisnoverbalmatter
Howeveroursagespraisepatiivrata

Theworlddoesnotseemsostrangeasseen
Throughgentlereyesnorwomensoalien

I don't think, this experiment, though interesting, can help the person reading English to know where pauses and stresses are. Thus, if the rhythm in the poem is lost, the experiment may not prove to be as helpful as it was thought to be. Nevertheless, Ms Nair is bold in making different experiments such as the use of Indian words, patterns, breaking of lines with spaces etc. The book is an excellent example of different experiments that are generally attempted in modern Indian English poetry. In doing so Ms. Nair has developed the style which is distinctly her own. Alongside she has been able to highlight the important role women can play in a male-dominated society. She is more concerned about women who live under the shadows of men. Her concerns become important when the shadows just don't provide shades in the scorching sun but consume life out of lively environs. This book will remain as an important example of feminist poetry in Indian English.

H.K. Kaul, a poet-critic, is currently Chief Librarian, India International Centre, New Delhi.

Photographs

By Shama Futehally

Half brown, half leucoderma-pink, her fingers scabbled and pulled at the edge of the paper. The two thick black sheets refused to part. Revengefully, during the years when they lay on the bare floor of the cupboard, they had secreted from themselves dark thick runnels of photograph-gum, and now they clung obstinately, edge to edge. Inside there could be precious photographs, the best photographs, photographs which held the key to some blissful day otherwise sealed from her memory forever. . . her fingers began to press jerkily all over the paper, trying to find a spot where the two pages had separated.

Beside her on the thick bedspread lay three or four albums in maroon and brown leather covers, their pages held by ancient thread. Two days ago she had taken one out, without hope. And slowly, incredulously, she had become like one possessed. She found herself going to the photographs as to a love-letter. When she got out of bed at six in the morning, and again at four in the afternoon, she reached mechanically for the albums on the bureau. When not looking at the pictures she was rocking her chair or walking to the window, over-excited. It went on till the last strained efforts to see properly under the weak bulb at night.

Now her fingers moved back to the edge of the sheet and prepared to tear, come what might. There was a crackle, then a desperate ripping. Part of a photo was torn too. But there they were, seven or eight small sepia squares, little brown jewels. She closed the album quickly, trembling with relief.

The rocking-chair had to be placed by the window. Several times that afternoon she had pulled at it, but a curved leg was caught between the two trunks that jutted out from under her bed. Now she prepared to go the whole way. With deliberate slowness she dragged her large metal spittoon to the wall. She prepared to bend, to counter the faintness and nausea that came from bending. She bent, and resignedly, without effort, pushed at a trunk. The chair was freed, and she rested her head in her hands.

It was not that she had never seen the photos before. They had, after all, always been there. But all at once they had done something new; suddenly, without warning, they had set her little dark room aflame. She was aflame, and in some underground way this new flaming self joined her young self, as if the intervening years had never existed.

She used always to start with the one

in the top left-hand corner, trying to resist the temptation to glance rapidly at them all. Only when she had stayed long and still with it, allowed it to return as it wanted, allowed its memories to lap about her, did she move on to the next. There it was, the little thing, loyal as a child. Without asking for reward it lifted up to her her young self and her young sister. They stood on their verandah, and not a hair had changed.

The balustrades had always been thick. You could spread your palm flat on them, or you could fold your parasol, clasp the neat roll of delicious papery silk, and place it on the broad wood. At once it seemed absurd to her that she no longer expected to see a wooden balustrade. Her fingers had become used to hollow-sounding iron railings. The thought made her head swim a little, and to escape it she went on to the next photo.

He was dressed for the office. They were on a stone bench. The old Ford must be waiting somewhere. They must have just finished, all of them, their wonderful breakfast. And they must have moved out to the garden before their magnificent peon carried all the files to the Ford. What a peon he was, she thought, feeling the tears appear. This was the stone bench under the lichee trees (she could not have told why she was sure.) At once the smell of it came to her, the cold early morning smell of that bench. She raised her head, bewildered, and gazed uncertainly across her little cramped room. When it became hot they would move to the verandah which looked across the flowerbeds. Those North Indian flower-beds. Soft droopy pansies of pink and pinky-white and purple. Little snowy-white sparks of daisies, tufts of carnations, little bobbing bunches of phlox all together—huge unbelievable beds! She would watch and watch, not knowing whether she felt pleasure or pain. Abdul would bring coffee in a silver service. Sometimes her sister poured. She would sit on the horse-hair sofa. Hard, prickly it was, with the stuffing coming out. You could feel the prickly horsehair, as you poked your finger into a hole at one end. Particular though she was, she felt a loyalty to that hole, and had never mended it. As the morning grew heavier and lazier; she would put her feet up and rest her head on. . .

Thuddum! Her door was flung open. The servant-boy was bringing her tea. A large plastic cup and two biscuits reposed on his tin tray. She stared at him, wounded.



Tears of anger began to gather in her eyes. She picked up a biscuit and leaned back, chewing laboriously. A biscuit-coloured liquid began to dribble down her chin. If it hadn't been for his banging how much she would have enjoyed her tea. It was years since she had forgotten her tea-time and had the pleasure of being suddenly reminded. From beneath the cushion of her rocking-chair she drew out a large grey handkerchief, man-sized, and, fingers shaking violently now, wiped her mouth. Tea in dirty cups. Doors banged. Her clock not repaired. Rude servants. She knew what her daughter-in-law would say if she complained. "I'll try and explain to him nicely," she would say, implying—ever so gently! that in this generation they were not cruel to servants.

"Don't bang the door!" she cried out.

The boy looked at her wondering, his bony knees showing below his khaki shorts. Then his mouth set in a sulky line. With a defiant gesture he moved the cane stool forward and set the tray down on it. As it was this was Sunday evening and he was missing the T.V. film because of this old woman. Then she shouted at him for nothing. He would tell his memsaab, he thought for the twentieth time. Never had he worked for such people.

The old lady was glaring at him furi-

ously. "Don't spill the tea," she said viciously. "And don't bang the door when you go out."

He went. She stared after him, unwilling to let him go. Her mouth trembled as she bent down to pick up her cup. A sticky film had formed on the surface.

She would tell her daughter-in-law. It had begun, again it begun churning inside her, all that she would tell her daughter-in-law. You keep this bony boy for me and he doesn't even know how to serve tea. If you go out all the time, if I'm left

alone day in and day out with only him, I beg of you one favour. Just one favour. Teach him at least how to serve tea.

Tears of anger began to gather in her eyes. She picked up a biscuit and leaned back, chewing laboriously. A biscuit-coloured liquid began to dribble down her chin. If it hadn't been for his banging how much she would have enjoyed her tea. It was years since she had forgotten her teatime and had the pleasure of being suddenly reminded. From beneath the cushion of her rocking-chair she drew out a large grey handkerchief, man-sized, and, fingers shaking violently now, wiped her mouth. Tea in dirty cups. Doors banged. Her clock not repaired. Rude servants. She knew what her daughter-in-law would say if she complained. "I'll try and explain to him nicely," she would say, implying—ever so gently! that in this generation they were not cruel to servants.

Not cruel to servants. Hadn't Abdul stayed with her for nearly thirty years? How he stood at the door, smart and white-clad, when they came back from tour. There was a photograph. Never would he serve the bread without delicately, lovingly, picking open the napkin. Cruel to servants. When his wife was dying she herself had gone all the way to his village to see her, sitting conscious of her responsibility in the bullock-cart, holding an envelope of money and a newspaper parcel of fruit. All Abdul's relatives said they had never seen such a Collector's wife. He had fallen at her feet and said, "Memsaab, you are my father and mother. By your grace we are alive." Beautiful his face was, shining with love and faith. She had wanted to stroke his middle-aged head. The photograph had brought the moment back to her like a phrase of music which now stuck in her head. Abdul's unshaven face and the feel of the dried cowdung under her feet. The little hut crowded with his embarrassed relatives, momentarily forgetting the dying woman in the excitement of seeing the Collector's wife. When she saw the photograph the memory had given her something like a brief happiness. But almost immediately it was spoilt, because never, after all, could all this be seen by her daughter-in-law. Never could she brandish this before Urmila. (For Rafiq had married a Hindu girl, not that she had said a word about it. She had behaved as her husband would have wished, and said not a word.)

It was one thing to be a Hindu girl. It was another to be always wearing a tika which was so much larger and redder than necessary. And then flinging a jute bag over one shoulder and rushing to the college, as if it were the only college in the world. Nothing she did, nothing she said, could shake the confidence of Urmila and her tika and her jute bag. Would Urmila ever know—would she care to know—what it was to be a Collector's wife, one who was praised by all her staff? To have the Ford waiting punctually in the porch

at ten, and a thousand things to attend to? And then, she had never liked to mention it, but so many dinners with the District Commissioner. Such friendly dinners. Would Urmila ever know, she thought helplessly, how Mr. Butterworth used to ask her husband's advice?

There was the Ford, with luggage tied at the back with ropes. Her husband was at the wheel, part of his head torn off. Perhaps they were going on tour. In her present mood it seemed to her that such a Ford was the only kind of car which should exist. It was large, it was gracious, there was always a sense of spaces beyond it waiting to be driven through. That was one thing which terrified her about these photographs—the memory of the spaces. From a picture of a wide verandah, a huge colonnade, an endless lawn, she would deliberately jerk her head up and stare around her crowded little room, as if to make sure she could bear it.

Her trunks, her cane stool, her dusty bureau, the pile of newspapers collected in case they were ever needed, were now silhouettes in the deepening light. She looked with exhaustion at the lamp on the bureau, its dusty shade hanging askew. She would have to switch it on. It was all of ten feet from her rocking-chair. Beside the lamp stood her clock, the hands eternally at 5.45.

There came a little knock on the door. Urmila's knock. She felt a faint relief, thinking of the light. Now Urmila could switch it on. Urmila came in with her visiting face, which was like that of someone testing the water before taking a plunge. But today she was ready for it. With the memory of Abdul fresh in her mind, with the memory of the Commissioner's dinners, she was ready. Her daughter-in-law went mechanically to the lamp and switched it on. The old lady saw that she was wearing another one of those villagery saris which, as she had once mentioned without proffering an opinion, used to be worn in the old days only by cleaning women. Urmila sat down at the edge of the bed and did not pick up the paper.

"Well?" she said in her Bombay Hindi, it was no use trying to call it Urdu, "how are you?"

There were so many answers. How do you expect me to be, alone for so many hours.

I'm feeling ill because the tea was cold again.

I am trying to recover my senses, after your boy banged the door.

But today she felt no need for all this. Because of Abdul and the Commissioner's dinner, she felt like making an effort.

"Today I had a bonus," she said, using the English word "bonus" to indicate good humour. "I found some photographs of the days when your father-in-law was Collector of Lucknow."

The younger woman leaned forward, her face softening.

"Do you want to see them?"

"Of course."

"Look then. There is the verandah of the Collector's house. Can you tell which one is me?"

"This one, of course," Urmila smiled.

"What beautiful old houses they were, Amma. And are these embroidered skirts like the ones you have in your cupboard?"

"The same. This one was embroidered for me by my sister. In those days we used to work on a single skirt for months."

Urmila was clearly determined to be impressed. Not only that, she was haltingly using Urdu words. "I know," she said. "We just don't have that kind of patience nowadays."

The old lady was uncomfortable with happiness. This was better than anything that had happened for days. And the unaccustomed pleasure, the triumph of it, caused her to make a too rapid mistake.

"We had a lot of qualities which you don't have today," she said, in a voice which proclaimed it a joke.

And then all was over. Now she heard her own remark, how it pointed back to so much which had gone before. Appalled, she saw Urmila's face changing. Her daughter-in-law was still staring at the photographs but not in the same way. Her hand came under her chin in a familiar patient gesture. Her back was a little bowed, it seemed to be loaded, with the unsaid.

Now she would go away, wiping her forehead with her sari and asking a little abruptly what her mother-in-law wanted to have cooked the next day. Very likely Rafiq would not pay her an evening visit. It seemed to her, although she never allowed herself to think it clearly, that when Urmila was angry with her he did not. Otherwise he would barge in without knocking, throw himself on to the bed, fling his feet unabashed into her lap, and say, "Badi-bee! How is my badi-bee?" These visits were becoming rare, because there was hardly a day now when Urmila was not angry with her. Before she found the photographs her main occupation was to wonder whether Rafiq would come.

Now Urmila was pushing the album away and getting up to go. "Amma," she said, strained and edgy, "Is it all right if we cook tomato curry for you tomorrow?"

The old lady nodded meekly.

"And about your clock," Urmila went on mercilessly, "I reminded Rafiq again this morning but he forgot."

She dared not feel resentment. She was nervous on the subject of the clock anyway, remembering the scene she had made about it. She tried not to make scenes, she tried. But she hadn't been able to bear it when Urmila asked why it mattered to her if the clock was out of order. How does it make a difference to you, said the busy lecturer's voice, not unkindly, what the time is?

What could she answer? It didn't matter but it was the only thing that mattered. If she need never know the time she may as well be... At eleven she gave herself a stick of toffee from the tin in

the cupboard. At two she would lie down for her rest. At four she would get up, however hard it was. She would manage to wash her face and hands, try to smooth the creases in her sari, and sit in the rocking-chair to wait for her tea. If she never knew the time what would she do all day?

Nor Urmila was at the door. She said something which she always said only from the door.

"We have to go out today, Amma. But of course the boy will be here. Keep him as long as you like. Bye-bye."

The door clicked gently. She was left in the dusky room with the shapes of her cane stool, her newspapers, her bureau, looming around her in the dark. She no longer wanted to see the photographs. Rafiq would not poke his head in the door to say good-bye. She remained in her rocking-chair and took refuge in the rocking.

She rocked and rocked. The thought of having to stop, of having to get off the chair and to undress, to face life again, loomed before her like one of the dark shapes in her room. She stopped rocking only when she was too exhausted to push her feet against the floor any more. As the rocking became gentler, and stopped, she was completely still. Slowly, she pushed herself off the chair, trying to pretend it was no movement at all. Then the unending business of getting herself to the bathroom, removing and cleaning her false teeth, dabbing at her face with water and a little soap. But it was something to do, it was a little protection, and when she was finally on her bed the misery was naked all around her in the dark.

At two in the morning she was still restless. It was churning away, Urmila and the clock. Urmila came to her in the Collector's house and said, here is your clock, Amma. You can't do without it. Behind her Abdul waited respectfully. And her husband, her husband was smiling at her over the newspaper. She was in her four-poster bed, staring at the beams high on the ceiling. She wanted to see them properly. She propelled herself out of bed and moved jerkily to the light switch. As the dusty yellow light filled the room she recoiled in terror. Familiar and yet unknown, the trunks, the dirty bureau, the pile of newspapers seemed like a nightmare. Where was her room? Was it 5.45? What was the time, for God's sake where was she and what was the time?

The photographs would solve everything. She moved blindly towards the albums. Her foot caught against the curved leg of her rocking-chair. She tottered, she was falling. Abdul came running. He was holding her. He was shouting, Memsaab, memsaab. What has happened? O what pain. Was Rafiq being born? Please, she would die. Her husband was stroking her forehead. If she whimpered her husband would come. A knife was going through her, Abdul's meat-knife. Then it ended.

The Crisis of Language

By G.N. Devy

At the end of the seventh century of its existence, the Gujarati literary tradition is showing signs of a soul-tiredness. Gujarati came into being as a distinct dialect of the Indo-Aryan tree of languages about the same time as Marathi, Bangla, Assamiya did, some time in the twelfth century. As did the other modern Indo-Aryan languages, Gujarati too developed during the first five centuries of its advent varied forms of narratives and lyricism. Together with the other Indian languages, Gujarati was revitalised through its contact with the western literatures and languages. During the present century, Gujarati literature has acquired the character of a modern literature, continuously enriched in quality and output through a range of novel aesthetic concerns and social inter-textuality. However, at present Gujarati language and literature seem to be passing through a phase of arrested growth.

The two most important influences on Gujarati literature during this century have been Mahatma Gandhi and Suresh Joshi. Gandhi brought to it a sense of purpose and social involvement. Joshi gave it an acute aesthetic self-awareness. Joshi, often and simplistically called the arch-formalist of Gujarati prose fiction, was active as a literary crusader till the very end of his life. He died in 1986, but not before he had created a sense of a false start towards post-modernism in Gujarati literary circles. He was a literary phenomenon; and because of his compelling intellectual leadership, Gujarati had missed some of the debates related to the nature of literary mimesis which must preface the on-set of any brand of post-modernism.

Since Suresh Joshi's death, Gujarati literature has been agitating to find new directions. Gujarati society and culture are eclectic in the extreme. Probably, Gujarati is one Indian language in which literary translation is seen as an activity which is as important as creative writing itself. But it is thanks to this eclecticism that western values and life-styles are more easily assimilated in Gujarati society than elsewhere in India. One inevitable expression of this rush for westernisation is seen in the changing patterns of primary and secondary education. During the last fifteen years, parents in Gujarat have started sending their children to English medium schools with an enthusiasm which has no parallel. The result of this shift is that the readership for Gujarati literature is almost non-existent today. In fact, most speakers of Gujarati find it difficult to express in the language even

the ordinary communications necessary for day-to-day life. It is this climate of neglect of the language that the new generation of Gujarati writers have been trying to revive and enrich the expressive content of the Gujarati language.

With the decline in the intimacy of relationship with the mother-tongue, drama and theatre have suffered serious reversals. Theatre-going is almost absent from the cultural agenda of modern Gujaratis. Bhupen Khakkar's *Maujila Majjal*, ostensibly written for commercial production of the play, has folded up after the first seven shows. Four of these took place in Bombay where the theatre in Marathi, Hindi and English is an active movement. The remaining three were shown in Gujarat! The tradition of *natak* company has come to be a thing of the past; and Gujarati theatre is content with presenting adaptations of Marathi plays, particularly those that are linguistically least challenging.

Shrinking of readership has resulted in an inevitable emaciation of the quality of fiction, particularly the novel form. At one time, practically every literate Gujarati read Pannalal Patel and K.M. Munshi. Govardhanram's work almost shaped the consciousness of the Gujarati middle classes. Today, the novel is written in two patent ways: either it is cheap pulp, or it is an abstract academic exercise. Works that contribute to the thinking processes in the society, works that generate new modes of progressive resistance, and those that activate the hidden potentials of language are hard to come by in the Gujarati novel during the last fifteen years. The Gujarati novel lacks the depth and variety of the novel in Marathi, Malayalam and Bangla.

The failures in drama and novel are, to

an extent, compensated by the achievements in the area of short-fiction and poetry. The short-story has been the special strength of Gujarati literature. This form of writing was given an amazing poignancy and lustre by Suresh Joshi. Two significant literary movements have focussed their attention on this form. The first of these is centred around the literary magazine *Gadyaparva*. Edited by Bharat Naik and Geeta Naik, it has encouraged over the last six years a range of younger writers from remote areas of Gujarat to attempt daring linguistic adventures. The emphasis of *Gadyaparva* is on releasing the power of the dialects and linguistic registers that have been kept away from the grooves of established literature. If the inclusiveness of language varieties has helped *Gadyaparva* to break the idea of a single canon, its occasional special issues featuring new authors have started defining the new canon. Kanji Patel's *Dahela*, a novel, Bhupen Khakkar's play *Maujila Manilal*, and Bharat Naik's volume of poems *Avataran* came out as occasional publications from *Gadyaparva*.

Another attempt to challenge and change the Gujarati canon has come from a group of writers and scholars working in the backwaters of Vidyanagar. Through their own writings, through a literary journal called *Vi*, and mainly through a special number of *Vi* entitled *Parishkriti Varta* (the canonised story), they have opened the possibility of combining social concerns of protest-literature with the aesthetic and formal discipline of *sh-istha* writings. Dalit writing in Gujarati is making only a beginning as yet. Its progress is made difficult by the relative weakness of the tradition of progressive thinking in Gujarat as well as by the intimidating influence of the Dalit writings

in Marathi. *Parishkriti Varta* has cut short the distance of the journey that Dalit writing has to make in Gujarati by legislating the minimum artistic standards of excellence. That this movement has shown a high degree of involvement in the question of literary grace at the very initial stage of its development is a good omen for Gujarati dalit writing. But for this very reason, it needs to be seen as a movement very distinct from Dalit literary movements in Marathi and Telugu. The stories put together in the *Parishkriti* volume indicate that the younger writers are seriously interested in social realism.

In the area of Gujarati poetry several anachronistic tendencies continue to thrive. First, the *ghazal* is still rampant. Then there is the kind of romantic poetry that gets written in plenty under the formal garb of modernity. Besides, the poetry exploiting all and sundry fashions from the haiku to surrealism keeps coming one's way. And, finally, the kind of lyrical and disturbingly original poetry that Ravji Patel wrote in the sixties has some following. Dilip Jhaveri's *Pandu* poems and Bharat Naik's *Avataran* show two versions of the modern Gujarati sensibility as reflected in poetry. The one regales by wringing language dry of its symbolic content, at once creating puns on myth and the sentiment, the other brings in a nostalgic touch of the pastoral to fight the brutality of modern metropolitan life. However, both Jhaveri and Naik are very different from the other poets writing in Gujarati today. Most of these others are still caught in the tradition of symbolist and imagistic poetry. Sitanshu Yashaschandra, Gulam Mohammed Sheikh and Ravji Patel have been like mountain eminences in a field where the rich and varied middle range of hills has been missing. In comparison to Kannada and Hindi poetry, Gujarati poetry has been less fortunate in its ideological power to hurt.

Literary culture in any given period and society is necessarily a minority culture. But, in contemporary Gujarat the literary culture is not only minority culture but almost a minor culture. It suffers from the lack of the supporting structure of ideas generated in other fields such as sociology, economics and philosophy. Literary criticism too has been highly derivative, and worse still, very personal. The rich experience of diaspora that Gujaratis have, thanks to the talent for enterprise in trade and business, has not brought back to the Gujarati language and literature any significant contribution. It is indeed an interesting problem for sociologists and literary historians to compare Gujarati culture and literature with the other cultures and literatures shaped by a common historic heritage and to see why one language lags behind the rest.

Ganesh N. Devy teaches at the M.S. University, Baroda. He is the author of *After Amnesia*.

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Literature as an Art Language, Medium and Purpose

Sudarshan Desai

SURESH JOSHI SANCHAY

Edited by Shirish Panchal and Jayant Parekh

Kshitij Sanshodhan Prakashan Trust, Baroda, Bombay, 1992, pp. 282, Rs. 100.00

Suresh Joshi is a unique personality and performer in Gujarati literature. In a creative span of thirty years, starting with the mid-50's, he wrote poems, short stories, novels, essays and criticism, apart from his exemplary translations of Rabindranath Tagore's work into Gujarati. This selective compendium gives us a fair and substantial sample of his writings. It is comprehensive enough for one to realise the range and depth of his vision and erudition, the quality and characteristics of his literary expression and the flavour of his individual style.

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From this collection it is easy to see the innovative and original approach and idiom which Joshi demonstrated in Gujarati through his writing. Through his familiarity with the writing in the West, he infused exotic elements—Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Mallarmé, Eliot, Spender, Rilke, Kafka, Camus—which opened up new doors of perception and introduced new modes of expression to the Gujarati literary scene. To literary criticism, also, he brought standards of judgement which are international rather than parochial, and objective rather than individual and subjective. He was not interested in leading a literary movement; he was a loner, ploughing his own literary furrow, remaining creative and productive to the end. Always looking out for new modes of literary expression and new methods to project the beauty and cruelty of nature, the grace and degradation of human relationships as well as the predicament and triumph of human existence. No medium was alien to Joshi to put literary sensibility across and to ex-

plore and delineate the outer and inner worlds of man. Just before his last illness, he had made plans to jointly translate the crime novels of Simenon into Gujarati.

What are the main characteristics which mark his work out as original and hopefully, germinal in Gujarati? One can, for convenience, sum it up along two themes: expression and observation.

In expression, he developed his own approach and style in writing. Although considerably influenced by his vast reading through English, he had his roots sufficiently deep in spoken Gujarati and Gujarati literature. He knew Sanskrit quite well. The result is a language which has the wide range, tightness and word-per-

fection of good English, often taking recourse to Sanskrit to verbalise concepts and images and blending the two in his writing which is distinctly Gujarati. As he says in one of his interviews:

If you look at the manuscript of my short stories, you will observe that I have not scratched a single word. They are developed in my mind just that way. This would mean that I smell the words, pick them up in my hand and weigh them, feel their contours. However, all this goes on in my mind and that exercise must take place (Interview, p. 260).

In Gujarati literature, Joshi is unequalled in his observation and recall. It is demonstrated best in the personal essays, a literary form to which he gave new life and capacity to communicate. This heightened perception and appropriate expression also come through from time to time in his poems and stories, as in,

Perhaps I may not be there tomorrow,
Tomorrow, if the sun rises please tell
him
That in my closed eyes,
He has left one tear undried.
Tomorrow, if the wind blows, please
tell him
That the ripened fruit of a smile
pilfered from a girl in my boyhood
Has yet to be blown off.
(*Kadach* [Perhaps], p. 143)

The keenness of the outer and inner eye and its transmutation into words come through best in the essays. Joshi has an uncanny capacity to get under the skin of whatever he is writing about. For example,

I try and open the pages of an old notebook. A few sentences I wrote in my childhood with nimble fingers come in view. Then, of course, one's raids on the alphabet had newly started. Not many adjectives had yet

come to hand. There was little familiarity with the relationship of nouns and pronouns. Commas and full-stops had not gained much weight till then either. So the words, like one's breath when impatient, tripped over these stops and just ran along. Behind all that, I suddenly saw the picture of an innocent child, looking at the world, with eyes wide open with wonder and I became uneasy with some unfamiliar twinge of pain.

(*Te Hi No* [Yes, Those Indeed.], p. 65)

I caught a glimpse of God, by seeing a child—looking with his eyes wide open with wonder, forgetting what it wanted to say in the rush of words even while talking about something. I felt the fingertips of God in the arrangement of the petals of a rose. No, this Creation is not such as to let me become an atheist.

(*Ishwamo Angulisparsh* [The Touch of God's Fingertips], p. 67)

The selection covers Joshi's articles on poetry, the novel, the short story as well as his views on general issues. It can be seen how he related literature with other forms of art and the unique sensibility of the artist. One can easily understand how he differed from the literary establishment in Gujarat in his ideas about literary appreciation and standards of judgement and criticism. Perhaps the best part of this section is his appreciation and criticism of poetry; it is remarkable how he gets us to look at just one line of a poem by B.K. Thakor and reach down to its beauties and niceties. So also in the leisurely but highly evocative discussion of a poem by Venibhai Purohit and of the story "The Village Doctor" by Kafka, not forgetting a gem of an article on the poetry of Rabindranath.

Out of the short stories, fourteen are picked out for publication here. One can honestly differ from the editors on the selection but there is enough to show how Joshi gave a new content and dimension to the Gujarati short story and broke it free from rigid categorisation about what a "proper" short story should be. An early work, *Thigdam* (The Patch) is happily included, for this is the one which Joshi chose as particularly reflective of the style, content and import of his work in this medium.

There are excerpts from the novels *Chhinna-patra* (The Tattered Letter) and *Maranottar* (After Death). Rather unsatisfactory, being too brief and not quite demonstrative of the way Joshi's novel differs from the other forms.

There are two pieces of translation—a short story by Kawabata Yasumari and an essay by Rabindranath. One wishes there was more of this as the suppleness and expressiveness of Joshi's Gujarati is often best seen in the quality of his translation from Bengali and English. This could have been done even by sacrificing

The selection covers Joshi's articles on poetry, the novel, the short story as well as his views on general issues. It can be seen how he related literature with other forms of art and the unique sensibility of the artist. One can easily understand how he differed from the literary establishment in Gujarat in his ideas about literary appreciation and standards of judgement and criticism. Perhaps the best part of this section is his appreciation and criticism of poetry; it is remarkable how he gets us to look at just one line of a poem by B.K. Thakor and reach down to its beauties and niceties. So also in the leisurely but highly evocative discussion of a poem by Venibhai Purohit and of the story "The Village Doctor" by Kafka, not forgetting a gem of an article on the poetry of Rabindranath.

some pages in other sections.

What were the objectives or goals which Suresh Joshi wanted to achieve through writing? The writer tries to capture some significant experience of an individual—which is a unique moment—through the medium of words—be it the wordless wonderment of a child or the first fine careless rapture of love or thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears. The difficulties are obvious. To quote,

The moment words have to carry a little more weight, they bend over and break up. The fine dust rising from them blurs my eyesight. One is no longer so enamoured of preserving words. Even so, one cannot go on seeing them in such a sorry plight. . . .
(*Te Hi No* . . . [Yes, Those Indeed]. p. 65)

The quest of literary art is outlined by Joshi in the Introduction to his translation of Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*:

Longing and yearning to reach one's own self—that is a major theme of our literature . . . An unillusioned clarity about oneself and the melancholy inevitably generated by this clarity. It is this *tristesse* which marks the human being with dignity. He who suffers pain, accepts the challenge. The flood of his suffering drains out the impermanence of the moment . . . The motive force behind the modern machine, too, is pain . . . As a cog in these machines, the face of the human being is blurred and erased. But man is not merely a vehicle of suffering, only a link in this relationship. He is also the man throbbing with pulsating emotions, a human being with a face and a name. We have created a wide gulf between the two. We have set up a very elaborate organisation so that there is no meeting between the two. In literature, in art, the two come together. That is why we turn to literature to be able to see our own picture.

The selection can be faulted for a certain imbalance of weightage to different sections given by the editors. The absence of an index, essential in a literary publication of this type, is something that can be corrected by attaching a loose supplement even with this edition. These are minor grudges. The editors are to be congratulated for this overview of Suresh Joshi's writings, an appropriate and lasting tribute. It is a collection which will stimulate the interest of readers and induce them to read other books by this consummate literary artist, according to their preferences.

Sudharshan Desai retired as Adviser (Corporate Communication), Indian petrochemicals Ltd., Baroda. He has translated writings by Gandhi, Umashankar Joshi, Vadilal Dagi, Rajaji Patel and Suresh Joshi into English.

The Landscape of Memory

Digish Mehta

DEVO NI GHATI

By Bholabhai Patel

R.R. Sheth & Co., Bombay, Ahmedabad, 1989, pp. 203, Rs. 35.00

Bholabhai Patel's *Devo ni Ghati*, the book selected for the Sahitya Akademi award for this year in Gujarati, is a cheerful book. It is not marked by agonized self-searching or by any very subtle strategic devices or by a clever play of ironies. *Devo ni Ghati* is an account of the travels of the author to places in India—to Kulu Manali in the north and to Kerala right upto Kanyakumari in the south. The author calls it a *bhraman-trutta*, which should belong to the literature of travel, and to a genre like the travelogue in particular. And if the book offers you a pleasant read, it is not simply because of its generic classification. For a travelogue can at times have its complexities; take, for instance, Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*. Bholabhai, the author of *Devo ni ghati* and of a number of other books of accounts of his travels, is, in fact, at the other end—from Sterne in personality and temperament. An academician who is also a keen seminarist and an effective speaker, well-versed in more than one regional language—Bengali, Assamee, Oriya—he is a specialist in Agneya studies in Hindi. Eminently loved and respected in literary circles, he is so very uncomplicated as a person and so much of this quality has communicated itself to his writings.

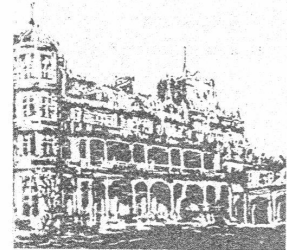
The extensive piece, "Devo ni Ghati", from which the volume under review takes its title, is about the writer's visit to spots in the Himalayas, to Simla, and to Kulu Manali. This is by no means a jour-

ney into the interior of the mountain ranges. Even if that was the case, it would not have been of unusual interest for the Gujarati reader who has an access to the classics on this subject written earlier, during the days of the nationalist movement, by such masters of prose as Kakasaheb Kalelkar and Swami Anand. Compared to these earlier writers, Bholabhai belongs distinctly to the next generation. Perhaps, this very fact lends a special significance to his writings in what is virtually the same genre. To try to place Bholabhai's *Devo ni Ghati* in the tradition of travel writing beginning with Kalelkar's *Himalay no Pravasi* is to see the difference that the end of the whole colonial set-up has meant for the Gujarati, and in a large sense, Indian literary sensibility. Bholabhai's books and the whole event surrounding the fine reception his writings in this vein have got, goes beyond the literary and has distinctly social and cultural significance. And this is where his prose, though quite cheerful and uncomplicated on the surface, has yet its own problematic, though staying strictly inside the tradition of specifically Gujarati writing. I do not know if any other area of Indian literature—Bengali or Marathi literature, for example—has seen the emergence of this kind of writing of late. If not, why?

To speak of travel writings published in recent times in Gujarati, Bholabhai's are not an exception. Preeti Sengupta is an avid traveller and this form is her forte,

Devo ni Ghati is mainly a meditation—on history, and on time and on race. What enlivens this meditation is its apparent effortlessness. The writer has a keen, inquiring turn of mind, is interested in words and meanings. Kulu or Thiruvananthapuram, Suchindram or 'back waters' are not just empty sounds, but have a resonance and a richness which he finds worth staying with before moving on.

દેવોની
ઘાટી
ભોલાભાઈ પટેલ



The 'author' is no longer a viable counter in critical terminology, we are all agreed, and yet in our experience as readers we perhaps all remember having the experience of making contact with a 'presence', a person having a voice and a vital physical being, as it were: this is 'the author' of ill repute in modern literary theory. Reading the pages of this book, and of much Gujarati writing, you have the feeling that the author does permeate everything that he writes. This is the one element which is so very refreshing when it comes to discussing recent Gujarati literary writings at least.

and there are numerous others. But while these other writers have an initial advantage in the sense that they are writing mainly about their travels abroad, on the European Continent and in America, Bholabhai describes his experiences, or rather the feel, of places in India; I would have said, of people and places, but it is one of Bholabhai's characteristics that he has more to say about places than about people. He has a stronger sense of geography, and of history and—beyond it—of myth, than of the dramatic present. He has a finesense of the experience of heights and of space, an eye for the shifting lights on the landscape, whether at the Rohtang Pass or on the undulating surfaces of the coastal stretches of Kerala. People figure in his account but only occasionally. There is, for instance, the old man who materializes from nowhere to intrude on the

It all depends on what you are implying when you use terms like 'simplicity' or 'complexity' or 'obscurity'. The style of Devo ni Ghati, or perhaps any other work of this range in Gujarati, is simple to the point of being trite, if you have its English counterparts in mind. But taken in itself, as you find it, it is marked by a whole set of nuances. In the course of the writing of his journals—and some pages are like entries in a journal—the author records his experiences of loneliness, of sadness, of boredom even.

author's solitude precisely at the point where he is pining to have a moment of silent communion with the Beas, the river he celebrates as the Vipasha of hallowed, mythical memory. Or there is the girl who boards the bus at a certain stop with a charming face whose ear-lobes not yet bored make one think of the unperforated jewel, *anaviddham Ratham* of Kalidas. But these human figures are but passing entrances.

Devo ni ghati is mainly a meditation—on history, and on time and on race. What enlivens this meditation is its apparent effortlessness. The writer has a keen, inquiring turn of mind, is interested in words and meanings. Kulu or Thiruvananthapuram, Suchindram or 'back waters' are not just empty sounds, but have a resonance and a richness which he finds worth staying with before moving on. He has as great patience with the physical detail of the inside of a temple in the south as with that of local history. The ease with which the writer takes to a new language also adds to the sense of effortlessness, especially in the descriptions of the south. And more, these descriptions have an engaging veneer of culture in the right sense. The author's mind is stored with literary impressions: Kalidasa, Tagore, and stretching from these peaks, a capacity to respond to Basavanna, to Mahadevi Akka, and so to a modern poet like A.K. Ramanujan.

Connecting all these is a consistent narrative thread which is provided by what may be called the author's *sva-tva*, or a sense of self, to use the phrase so steeped in the Anglo-American critical usage. The 'author' is no longer a viable counter in critical terminology, we are all agreed, and yet in our experience as readers we perhaps all remember having the experience of making contact with a 'presence', a person having a voice and a vital physical being, as it were: this is 'the author' of ill repute in modern literary theory. Reading the pages of this book, and of much Gujarati writing, you have the feeling that the author does permeate everything that he writes. This is the one element which is so very refreshing when it comes to discussing recent Gujarati literary writings at least.

Though Bholabhai's mind is stored with literary impressions, his style may

be called 'literary' only in the primary sense of the term. There is little of self-reflexivity here. The travel writings of Kaka Kalelkar and Swami Anand have specific features: austerity, intellect, a large-hearted anti-colonial urge, a broad humanistic faith, a touch of religiosity. Compared to the style of these writings, Bholabhai's style is even simpler, a little too simple for the taste of a modernist, or now a post-modernist. And Gujarati had its crop of modernist writing during the sixties and the seventies, some of which was of a genuine lasting quality. In this perspective, a book like *Devo ni Ghati* may appear archaic. But this is precisely the point. Schematic models adopted for purposes of charting the currents of literary history borrowed from the West, categories like 'the modern' and 'the post-modern', quickly give way and lose their relevance when applied to regional writing like Gujarati.

It all depends on what you are implying when you use terms like 'simplicity' or 'complexity' or 'obscurity'. The style of *Devo ni Ghati*, or perhaps any other work of this range in Gujarati, is simple to the point of being trite, if you have its English counterparts in mind. But taken in itself, as you find it, it is marked by a whole set of nuances. In the course of the writing of his journals—and some pages are like entries in a journal—the author records his experiences of loneliness, of sadness, of boredom even. There is a passage in the *Keralpatram* section where there is a reference to the temple at Kanyakumari, where as you step inside the inner shrine the smell of the burning wick of the oil lamp at the door, the heavily charged fragrance of flowers, of incense, of the offerings, mix with the salt air of the sea. . . The description is rich and suggestive of the experience of being inside an old temple, which you would say is essentially Indian. Bholabhai's book, in a wider cultural context, is an assertion of the essential continuities which underlie the otherwise hypothetical construct which is Indian Literature.

Digish Mehta is Professor of English at Gujarat University, Ahmedabad. The medium for his creative writing is Gujarati, that for his critical writing has been English.

Re-forming the Canon: New Short Story in Gujarati

Arvind Macwan

PARISHKRUT GUJARATI VARTA:
A COLLECTION OF POST MODERN GUJARATI SHORT STORIES

Edited by Ajit Thakor, Manilal Patel and Adam Tankarvi

Parishkruti Prakashan, S.P. University, Vallabh Vidyanagar, 1992, pp. 136, Rs. 30.00

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The term 'post-modern' as it is understood in Gujarati literary circle refers to the Gujarati short story within the broader framework of Gujarati literature. The

Joshi who has been called "the mantra purush of post-modern short story with a possibly ironical statement 'you made it possible'". Suresh Joshi, who was not only a very important creative writer but also a great critic-theorist, has always been a controversial figure. Some critics today hold him responsible for the present state of the Gujarati short story which is dying a premature death, according to them.

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The collection is dedicated to Suresh Joshi who has been called "the mantra purush of post-modern short story with a possibly ironical statement 'you made it possible'". Suresh Joshi, who was not only a very important creative writer but also a great critic-theorist, has always been a controversial figure. Some critics today hold him responsible for the present state of the Gujarati short story which is dying a premature death, according to them.

short story as well as its criticism and theory has always occupied a very important position in Gujarati literature.

The collection is dedicated to Suresh

Ghatana Hras, the 'dissolution of the incident' in order to realise the inherent value of the incident or episode in a short story. The plot should not take precedence over

the sentiments, the themes and for this, it was necessary to ensure that it was the only skeletal. There were strong reactions to this theory both in favour of and against it.

Many of the stories in this collection do have a clear plot, a definite story-line but this does not in any way overshadow or come in the way of the other concerns of the writer.

Interestingly, some of the most powerful stories included in this collection, at least five of them can be classified as Dalit writing. The dalit literature in Gujarati is different from Marathi Dalit literature which is a socio-political movement in itself deriving its inspiration from Ambedkar, Marx and Phule.

Gujarati Dalit literature lacks the vehemence and bitterness generally associated with Dalit writing; however (and, this is particularly true of the short story) it shows a tremendous depth, maturity and sincerity.

Even of the eighteen stories anthologized, have a rural setting. Nine stories have made use of some dialect or other of the Gujarati language and in four of these

the characters etched in the reader's memory.

"Doosro Christ" by Joseph Macwan is the story of sexual exploitation of woman by man.

Kasni, frustrated in love and married to an impotent husband, takes to prostitution. The hero who has refused to have sexual relations with her due to his religiosity, comes in the last burial scene as a 'second christ' and defies the men around her grave who had all condemned her as a sinner. "Let him, who never took advantage of this woman, place his fistful of earth on her body" and declares, "Kasni, I always considered you pure, holy". The author looks upon religiosity and sexuality in a new perspective.

"Mata Meli" by Chatur Patel begins with Shanbhai Patel mercilessly beating up Bhado Vaghari who has cast an evil spell on him. The story is told in two dialects spoken by the Patel and Vaghari communities. The sanctions and curfew imposed by the Patel reach a tense point and the reader begins to wonder how all this will end. The author too seems to have faced the same problem but he has

sucking her blood and Chhaya's inability to get rid of the leech become an occasion of fulfillment of Jigna whose passion for Chhaya has received at best only a lukewarm response.

The modern educated husband in "Dhwaj" by Ravindra Parekh almost forces down his tradition-bound wife's throat the modern feminist ideals of feminine identity, emancipation of women, man-woman equality. The story fittingly ends with the pet bird being made to 'fly' in a new and a bigger cage.

"Balatara na Beej" (Seeds of Pain) by Himanshi Shelat deals with a girl's discovery that she was an unwanted child and her relationship with her mother, a woman who had borne the burden of three pregnancies, knowing full well that these were not the result of love, that her husband loved and wanted to marry another woman. The characters of the daughter and the mother reveal complex feminine sentiments contrasted with the

self-centred, matter of fact male characters.

"Felfitur" by Sumar Shah is an example of an insignificant incident being exploited to reveal man's inner desires. Jenti's wife Hansa leaves him for the first time after their marriage on the occasion of her uncle's death. This newly-found, short-lived freedom leaves Jenti imagining himself in the dead man's place and vacillating between the desire to invite Madhumita over and the fear of what such a step would lead to.

Though there is not much in the name of experimentation in technique, the rich idiom of the various dialects, the variety of human emotions depicted, the originality and sincerity of the expression make these stories effective and interesting. These are truly stories of the people.

Arvind Macwan teaches in the Department of English, M.S. University, Baroda.

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stories, the language of the narrator is also the dialect spoken by the characters. The uneducated, the village folk, the marginalised communities and their lives are the subject matter of many of the stories. Most of the stories deal with human relationships, love, friendship, sexual fantasies, perversions, frustrations including homo-sexual tendencies.

"Kharajvu" (Scabies) by Ajit Thakor is a comment on friendship, a friendship that brings pain just as the scabies that have become an inseparable part of the narrator's own self, also bring pain. Small incidents such as the unseasonal rain, the passing luna splashing muddy water, the black ant falling into the puddle, and the description of the barren fields, the temple patched up with cement, the withered flowers, the bucket with a cracked bottom, all attain symbolic significance.

"Dhol" (Slap) by Ashokpuri Goswami is based on a single incident of the labourer woman Ratni slapping the son of her employer Parsottamadas Patel. Through the picture of Parsottamadas standing 'neither inside nor outside the field' at the end of the story, the author suggests the Patel's sexual exploitation of Ratni and the daughter born out of this relationship at whom his son had made a pass. The powerful characterization of both Ratni and Parsottamadas leaves both

solved it by exposing another side of the Patel's character.

"Vado" (Backyard) by Mohan Parmar makes use of the image of the mongoose objectifying Khema's suspicion of another man having sexual relations with his wife. Khema's fear of the mongoose slowly eating away into Puni's flesh and the meaningful laughter of both Puni and the other woman from the neighbourhood point at common universal human fears and tendencies. Here is an example of a very effective use of the dialect as well as the technique of 'dissolution of the incident for the realization of its 'inherent value'.

"Ubhro" by Deepak Raval depicts the decadence, the hardships of a rich man who had lived in luxury and power and who now faces abject poverty. The author succeeds in making the reader empathize with rather than pity the lonely old man.

"Lil" by Kirit Dudhat is a record of a girl reminiscing her love episodes with a dead man. The author makes a very interesting use of the folk custom of marrying a dead man (who dies before marriage) to a female calf. At the end of the ceremony there is a significant flutter in the girl's stomach.

"Jalo" (Leech) by Harshad Trivedi is a story with an unusual theme. It portrays the lesbian relationship between two girls. The leech sticking to Chhaya's body and

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A Hilarious Carnival of Love

Dilip Rajeshirke

MAUJILA MANILAL

By Bhupen Khakhar

Gadyaparva: 23-24, Bombay, January-March 1992, pp. 62, Rs. 12.00

Gujarati theatre is fairly free from too much "anxiety of influence". That is, a new hand fiddling at play-writing in Gujarati, unlike in Marathi or Bengali, is much less woefully constrained to carry on any formidable theatre tradition or nervously emulate the celebrated masterpieces thrown up at a regulated pace before the dotting audience.

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That is why, it is a rare delight to chance upon a fresh, funny but original play like Khakhar's *Maujila Manilal*.

Bhupen Khakhar launched his career as a professional chartered accountant and then, with a great swing and bang came to establish himself as a highly talented, experimental painter of enormous repute. And, now, suddenly bringing out *Maujila Manilal*, his only dramatic venture so far, he has dared to tap altogether new creative resources. In view of such surprises, one may hardly wonder at the crack freshness and deep frivolity of this post-modern play.

It is a hilarious carnival of love in which a bunch of funny and fun-loving characters are suffering as well as enacting different passions, along with delusions and subversions of their respective super-erotic personae. But, as these one-dimensional, jerry-built characters and their make-believe tinsel world get ironically structured and deconstructed in this slow-motion black burlesque, it evokes many profound meanings of this carnival of love.

The characters scandalously live out the eventful contradictions between reality and fantasy, running down all the rationale of age, mindset or social situation. Savita (40) and Sharmishtha (35) are stable, middle-class housewives. But,

both are going cuckoo over Manilal (55). Interestingly, the two are tantalized by Manilal for his ability to express his love in English and his perennial promise of a tour to Kashmir. The fun-loving 'maujila' Manilal, characteristically clad in middle-class attire, donning an old-fashioned, black cap over his gray hair, is an eternal and prosperous lover. Savita's husband, Ranchod (45) is a lover of the idea of universal love who philanthropically encourages his wife's affair with Manilal, whereas Navnit (45) is a terribly disturbed spouse over his wife's tangle with Manilal as it has emotionally violated his socially given ownership of his wife. There is also a hint that the two symptomatic husbands have a homosexual connection. Then, there is Jagdeep (24), an incorrigible, Oedipal lover of Savita who ecstatically kills himself for his unrequited calf-love. This fantastic crisis of cupidity is further complicated by the preposterous flying visit of the God Vishnu to these mortals. Curiously, when the gambling god must take away someone back with him, it is the 'maujila' Manilal, of all persons, who offers to join him on the final

Of course, the most ingenious feature of the play which advances it very efficaciously is the theatrical dynamics inscribed in its verbal, dramatic text. In the notes attached to the published play, Khakhar describes how the script had all along developed in fits and starts through the discussions and arguments he had with the director and the artistes of the theatre group during rehearsals. This has obviously determined the open-ended, multiple structure of the play aptly called for by the force and philosophy of fun perceived as a mode of man's being that the play thrives upon.

departure to the other world.

Indeed, at one level, the characters are psychologically and socially quite realistic. Khakhar is reported to have said that he had got the germ of the episode when he had actually observed a Manilal being wooed by two married women in his house. But, manifesting that no realism ever agrees with reality as such, these characters are at once rendered as 'eternal' (i.e., ephemeral + eternal—Alfred Jarry's coinage) beings, as metaphoric configurations of the criss-cross concepts of or attitudes to the self-created bogey of love. Thus, Savita sets out to impersonate the amoral, physical passion as a version of love. And, if Ranchod delineates the idealistic representation of imaginary, universal love, Jagdeep depicts a morbid universalization of personal infatuation. Of course, the extremely metaphoric personification is achieved in the figure of 'maujila' Manilal who thematically dominates this entire erotic extravaganza and functions as a neutral pole in the charged field that surrounds him—a field which as a figure in farce, he discharges in the play. But, simultaneously, these metaphors too are sabotaged by inherent twists of satire in the characterology of the play. That's how Savita's nymphomaniac passion seems to be roused by Manilal's reciting to her nursery rhymes in bad English. Or, Ranchod's divine idea of love flourishes rejecting the incarnate god himself when the god fails to conform to the idea. Satire strips the metaphors of their metaphysical trappings. It is true that one may feel a nagging dissatisfaction at some of the issues chosen to be mocked at, as they appear to be rather dull, trite and cliché-ridden, e.g., the love-making in English, the Oedipal ramblings of Jagdeep or the god's indulgence in gambling. But, these are easily absorbed in the overall scheme of metamorphosis in which the characters exquisitely rotate through the zones of reality, metaphor and satire.

However, the play develops far more effectively through the polyphonic manipulation of language. Generally, the dialogues between characters subtly glide along in a very sensitively imbibed, common, colloquial Gujarati prevalent among the urbanites. Then, suddenly, spurred by a given difference in identity, a character bursts out into a highly stylized idiom or register. Savita explodes

into a pretty extravagant and poetic farago. Manilal begins rapping out English verses meticulously with bad pronunciation. Jagdeep gabbles in a maudlin, hackneyed Hindi of the Hindi films. Ranchod rants in the archaic and stilted parlance of the *Puranas*. The multi-vocal range of the deliberately disjointed and affected speeches reveals the voids within the communicative fabric of language. And, the play plays across these voids in terms of the characters.

Of course, the most ingenious feature of the play which advances it very efficaciously is the theatrical dynamics inscribed in its verbal, dramatic text. In the notes attached to the published play, Khakhar describes how the script had all along developed in fits and starts through the discussions and arguments he had with the director and the artistes of the theatre group during rehearsals. This has obviously determined the open-ended, multiple structure of the play aptly called for by the force and philosophy of fun perceived as a mode of man's being that the play thrives upon. The amorphous composition spreads over two acts, respectively consisting of eleven and ten scenes rapidly emerging as vignettes. In the process, the play absorbs a great variety of western theatrical styles such as avant garde, fringe, parallel, expressionistic, surrealist, vaudeville, prop etc., and builds up through their kaleidoscopic blending. But, two dominant stylistic adaptations are discernible: There is a strain of the farcical Gujarati folk theatre like "Bhawai", particularly in the generic action as well as satire and humour in the play. Then, it is combined with Khakhar's peculiar painterly composition of the scenes which appear like unconnected, mobile collages. They account for such suggestive tableaux as: Ranchod's monotonous reading from a religious book ringing out of the darkness at the opening of the play; the passionate love-acts of Savita and Manilal illuminated in the flash-lights of Jagdeep's camera. Or, the common Gujarati household of Savita turned into a painted, artificial scenery of Kashmir. Or, the queerly constructed upper-floor loft on the stage depicting the gates of hell, etc. The thrilling farce has been staged, so far, as an event of the Little Theatre, drawing a small audience. But Khakhar, it is said, intends the play to be presented for a much larger audience. This may not be very ambitious.

As this bizarre fantasia unfolds, it conjures some deep sexual, emotional, ethical, social and even metaphysical meanings of the phenomenon of love—by showing their ultimate meaninglessness. Indeed, the average audience in the Gujarati theatre today deserves to be treated to this rare spectacle of the grand meaningfulness of the grand meanings in the land of Eros.

Dilip Rajeshirke teaches at the Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya of the M.S. University, Baroda.

In Baroda we formed a human chain in protest against the post-Ayodhya communal violence. During these protests I asked Bhupen Khakhar if he would speak to me about his play *Maujila Manilal*. When we met subsequently in his house, he spoke with his characteristic simplicity and detachment, both of which have an intriguing touch of mysticism. I asked him about the experimental value of his play.

Khakhar promptly denied that it was written and produced as an experimental play. *Maujila Manilal*, which has been presented but seven times (five in Bombay, one in Baroda and one in Ahmedabad) was professionally produced as a 'commercial play'.

I was curious to know if the play has been based on any real events. "Portions of it get related to social life. The whole relationship that exists in a chawl is reflected in it. For instance, the attitude to gods and goddesses, as if they live next door. That is why the sets show heaven in the play by using the upstairs part of the house. Then, there are the comments made by the characters about Gujarati writers. I knew a person called Manilal whom I met at Ahmedabad. I went with him to a place where two women were busy making *mirch* powder. The encounter was brief, about fifteen to twenty minutes; but

EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH BHUPEN KHAKHAR

By G.N. Devy

it gave me the basic idea of the play."

I asked if he had plans for writing another play.

"I have already completed a story which can become a play. It is about transvestites."

I did not force him to say anything more about his plans, but rather chose to ask him about his reading habits and his response to contemporary Gujarati writings.

"I used to write till the age of twenty, twenty-one. I read most of the good novelists—Dhumketu, Khandekar, Ramanlal Vasantlal Desai, Kanhayalal Munshi. At present some good short fiction gets written, but it is difficult to find a good novel in Gujarati. In the name of modernity the novelists have become uninteresting."

"One is not making an attempt at making language interesting. Literature should draw from language as it is used and spoken. We have not touched the popular writing—one can gather so much from it. I like fiction like *Gulbakawali*. One needs to take so much from the peripheries and create from them great art as Picasso did. I would like to use, for instance, the *desi natak samaj* tradition and the *Parsi* writings in Gujarati."

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My concluding question was about the place of literature in the society.

To this question Khakhar replied,

"Literary figures like Bachhubhai

and Ravishankar Raval made an effort at reaching out. In the past

literature had a meaning for the

society. Today, the alternative such

as TV and cinema have taken that

place. The speed of life has in-

creased. Writers have become

money-minded. Writing itself is

not seen as interesting. Very few

people read today!"

I asked him his reasons for unhappiness with modern Gujarati fiction.

"One is not making an attempt at making language interesting. Literature should draw from language as it is used and spoken. We have not touched the popular writing—one can gather so much from it. I like fiction like *Gulbakawali*. One needs to take so much from the peripheries and create from them great art as Picasso did. I would like to use, for instance, the *desi natak samaj* tradition and the *Parsi* writings in Gujarati."

Are you happy with the publishing scene, was my next question.

"The enthusiasm for the visual that Suresh Joshi had in his journals like *Kshiti*, Umashankar Joshi's *Sanskriti* and such others have created a certain aesthetic dimension for Gujarati publishing. *Gadyaparva* looks pleasing."

My concluding question was about the place of literature in the society. To this question Khakhar replied, "Literary figures like Bachhubhai and Ravishankar Raval made an effort at reaching out. In the past literature had a meaning for the society. Today, the alternatives such as TV and cinema have taken that place. The speed of life has increased. Writers have become money-minded. Writing itself is not seen as interesting. Very few people read today!"

I left Khakhar's house wondering if that is why he had decided to write his play for a commercial production?

Imaging The Self

Arvind Macwan

PANDU KAVYO ANE ITAR

By Dileep Jhaveri

Gujarat Sahitya Parishad, Ahmedabad, 1989, pp. 89, Rs. 20.00

AVATARAN

By Bharat Nayak

Sahacharya Prakashan, Bombay, 1991, pp. 76, Rs. 40.00



A medical doctor by profession, Dileep Jhaveri has been publishing poems in literary journals since 1958. His poems have also been included in many anthologies. However, it was only after a silence of about twelve years that he began to write the *Pandu* poems, poems mainly about Bombay using the character of *Pandu* in the mystical mode (with a difference) from the *Mahabharata* who visits the city of Bombay.

The modernity and urbanity of Bombay is a very complex phenomenon entirely different from that of other metropolitan cities of the world like London or Paris. The Bombay experience is hard to be related or expressed. It has to be felt rather than understood. Jhaveri's poems too defy paraphrasing or analysis; but they do create the experience, an experience that is difficult to narrate.

Jhaveri mainly employs the rhythmic pattern and the juxtaposition of dialects to recreate the experience. He manages to create a rhythm which seems cacophonous at first but is quite captivating, much like the city. He juxtaposes rural dialect with Bombay Hindi, raw Gujarati expressions with English words and phrases and even sentences at times. Colloquial words like *Sarag* (Swarg = heaven) and *vanrajan* (van = forest) are used along with English words like siren, signal. This is his way of reflecting the Bombay reality. This is not a lament on the loss of rural simplicity and a nostalgia for it but rather the juxtaposition of rural simplicity with urban



In both the Pandu poems and Itar (other poems), there seems to be a preference for grammatical sentences. Though the syntactic conventions are violated at times, the lines read together make grammatical sense. There is a great deal of experimentation with the rhythm pattern and rhyme scheme. There is an amazing variety of form ranging from a nearly perfect folk form to absolute irregularity in rhythm and metre. There are also instances of a take off on popular folk songs with judiciously made changes which reminds one of T.S. Eliot's use of the popular ballad in The Waste Land (the song of Mrs Porter and her daughter). Among others, the technique of 'leit motif' is also used.

Jhaveri's struggle and frustration gain a different perspective when compared with the poetic process in Bharat Nayak. Unlike Jhaveri, Bharat Nayak's poems reflect the peculiar character, cadence, rhythm and music of the Gujarati language. His poetry is absolutely untouched, uncorrupted by any urban expression, or a single word of any other language, the Gujarati language is here at its best in all its beauty. Reading his poetry, one immediately feels that here is the poet's self, his experience and view of the world, his response to the rhythm of life and the rhythm of the language.

complexity, both of which find a curious blend in this city. The modern urban Indian is at the same time a rustic, a person struggling to remain deep-rooted in the ancient culture. The metropolis is a city and a village at the same time.

The first few poems from *Itar* beginning with "Nimantran" (Invitation) project a 'heap of images' to borrow T.S. Eliot's term, but not really broken images. Looking at the list of images, one would take these poems to be nature poems—grass, flowers, stones, pond, neem, mynah, squirrel, sparrow, buffaloes, koel, crow, bakul, butterflies, crick-

ets, the smiling sky and a dreamy song on a sleepy afternoon. Read the poems and these images will take on a very different significance. They present his comment on life, certain inexplicable aspects of life which are experienced, felt but not defined or described.

A poem like "Ek Var" (Once) employs a nearly perfect folk rhythm and "Thor Van" (Cactus Forest) has a regular rhyme scheme, indicating the harmony of nature in a past experience whereas the description of nature of the present times lacks this rhythmic regularity.

A good example of the way in which

Jhaveri uses 'nature' is the poem "Ghuvad" (The Owl) which portrays the metamorphosis of the Sun's feather into an owl.

Flying about over the forest
A feather of the sun
Lost its way and roaming here and there,
its form changed.
The buzzing crickets gave it their wings
feathers and the body of a bird.
A frog from a god-forsaken well
bestowed upon it a rough green-voiced throat.

A yellow witch on a Babul tree
blew life into its eyes;
The night, her locks dishevelled
gave it a passionate inhibited kiss.
Every trave of the sun's lost feather
was lost forever.

In both the Pandu poems and *Itar* (other poems), there seems to be a preference for grammatical sentences. Though the syntactic conventions are violated at times, the lines read together make grammatical sense. There is a great deal of experimentation with the rhythm pattern and rhyme scheme. There is an amazing variety of form ranging from a nearly perfect folk form to absolute irregularity in rhythm and metre. There are also instances of a take off on popular folk songs with judiciously made changes which reminds one of T.S. Eliot's use of the popular ballad in *The Waste Land* (the song of Mrs Porter and her daughter). Among others, the technique of 'leit motif' is also used.

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Nayak too uses innumerable images from nature, the familiar flora and fauna, with unusual similes at times such as 'air like sour tamarind' and, 'the village, cold as nira'. A maturity of expression is the mark of these poems.

Sthiti (The state of Being), *Gati* (Momentum), *Chakra* (the wheel) and *Pratibimb* (Reflection) are the four collections through which the poet tries to give expression to his philosophy of existence, being, the self and the universe. There is a wide variety in technique which includes the collage and object painting.

The metre is free from the obsession to follow a fixed form. Comments on subjects such as mortality and immortality are made using images from nature. The

Nayak too has composed songs based on the folk traditions of the past. The Song of Goghabavji is based on similar songs sung by tribal women who went from house to house carrying brass pots on their heads singing songs to propitiate the rain god. In his poems the abstract and the inanimate seem to come to life and take on nearly human proportions. We discover new inexplicable meanings into seemingly ordinary situations, objects, their movements and their 'reflections'.

mythical turtle and the mythical boar which are powerful images of lifelessness echoing 'a pair of ragged claws' from Eliot's "Prufrock" and reminding us of Dilip Jhaveri's wish to be turned into a snail or a worm. Nayak prefers to use incomplete sentence and there is a considerable syntactic flexibility.

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Glass, on cullet of paper
fine and fair like air,
a verse carved on the glass
Its reflection on the cullet:
Earth engulfed in dark,
The glass-round
On a table,
The table-right at the window,
The window without bars,
Floating on blue light
Glass at the window
Creases in the glass
In the creases, reflection of the sun
like mercury.
In the glass, on the table
Earth enveloped in dark
Awakened by a million reflections,
Rises, springs out of the glass
Out through the window
goes, wandering
At the bottom, its reflection
In the blue light—in our eyes.

Arvind Macwan teaches English at the M.S. University Polytechnic, Baroda, and is a versatile musician.

The Postmodern Patel

Babu Suthar

DAHELU: A NOVEL

By Kanji Patel

Sahcharya Prakashan, Bombay, 1989, pp. 64, Rs. 25.00

Nostalgia, going back to the roots (nativism) and ethnocentricism are some of the characteristics of one version of postmodernism. Kanji Patel's novel *Dahelu* (The Gate), first published as a special issue of *Gadyaparna*—a journal of creative writing committed to its own version of nativistic poetics and subsequently published in book form—is an attempt in the direction of asserting this version of postmodernism. It is a novel which attempts to assert nostalgia as a powerful means of re-(dis)covering meaningful reality from the past in reaction to the meaningless reality of the present. In one sense, the novel also asserts the significance of history and tradition, not only literary but also non-liter-

Dahelu rejects both of these theories. It is neither predominantly form-oriented, nor content-oriented. It is more inclined towards ethnic narrative. The events in *Dahelu* are not described in such a manner that they reach the level of *vyanjana*; at the same time they are not described in such a manner that the mimetic relationship between the fictional can be established. They do not stand for anything else, they stand for themselves. They are embedded in the grand narrative of the culture itself.

The temporal setting of the novel is not mentioned directly or indirectly. So far as the locale of the novel is concerned it is mentioned indirectly, through the language of the novel. The novel is writ-

Modern Gujarati fiction is dominated by two theories of literature: the form-oriented theory, and the content-oriented theory. The chief spokesman of the former is Suresh Joshi, one of the great writers, who is responsible for many changes in literary theory as well as in creative writing. And, the chief spokesman for the latter is Raguvir Chaudhary, who has hardly ever stated his theory in the form of critical writing. He has written novels which fall outside the theory propounded by Suresh Joshi and support his content-oriented realism. The form-oriented theory, committed to assumptions of American New Criticism, argued that events in novel should reach the level of vyanjana and that there should not be any identifiable one to one corresponding relationship between the fictional and the factual world.

ten, in defining reality through the means of literature. It is also a novel which attempts to assert nativism in reaction to 'foreignism' and ethnocentricism in reaction to so called universalism.

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novel should reach the level of *vyanjana* and that there should not be any identifiable one to one corresponding relationship between the fictional and the factual world. It also argued that social reality need not be represented in fiction but should be refracted through the linguistic and aesthetic structure of a novel. It also emphasised the role of technique and said that technique is a part of the organic form of the novel which should grow not in isolation but in coordination with the other components. The content-oriented theory was committed to all the assumptions of sociological realism. It argued that there should be correspondence between fictional and the factual world. It also argued that social reality must be represented in fiction by such techniques which bring society and literature face to face.

Dahelu also represents the period of creative tension between modernism and postmodernism. The period is marked by the logic of binary choice between modernism and postmodernism, foreignism and nativism, present and past, universalism and ethnocentricism, formalism and narrativism, standard and dialect, internationalism and nationalism and Sanskritism and Prakritism. *Dahelu* is more inclined towards the second member of these antitheses generally considered as marginal, irrational, illogical, unworthy of literary treatment. Though the novel does not reach to the level of a major statement on the brand of postmodernism mentioned earlier, it marks the beginning of the end of modernisms.

ten in the dialect spoken in the region of Lunavada, a tribal taluka town of the Panchamahals district in Gujarat. The area is closely surrounded by north of Kaira and the south of Sabarkantha. As a result there are many easily identifiable sociolects. Kanji Patel has used the sociolect of the Patel community which is considered lower to that of the Brahmin community and higher than those of the Kshatriya and Harijans. In this sense, the novel is set against two domains of reality, the geographical and the social.

Dahelu is a story of a Patel family which earns its bread through farming. The story revolves around a fourteen year old Ravji who belongs to a group of children suffering nostalgia for their childhood and adventurism of the adulthood. He has a powerful desire to play like mongoose and he is fond of adventures. The author has narrated a number of adventures in episodic form. To mention a few: an attempt to seduce a girl by using the black magic of *moyani*, walking behind the horse of the bridegroom as if he were himself the bridegroom and getting slapped by the horse's tail, stealing ears of corn from a farm and being punished severely by the father. Ravji is afraid of his father Moti, who thrashes him for trivial reasons. Ravji wants to live like a child but his fear of his father holds him back. He weights all of his desires in terms of the possible punishments from his father. Ravji's father wants him to help him with farming and other household works, which Ravji does not like. Kanji Patel has described the tension between the son and the father in terms of events which are peculiar to the milieu of this region. The other members of Ravji's family include his mother, grandmother and grandfather. The grandmother has a strong affection for Ravji, and wants to remain alive at least till Ravji becomes a father but dies before her wish is fulfilled. The author has described the last rites of the old woman in full ethnic colours. Here the 'emotional' is not the focus, which shows the author's preference for ethnic rather than the logical or sociological.

The author has described many quarrels between Moti and his father. This creates a number of questions about the nature of the father-son relationship in

Ravji's mind. In the description of these events too, the author is more interested in capturing the ethno-colours of the human mind than in the psychological complexities. The author is also not interested in the relationship as a social problem. After his marriage, Ravji's wife becomes pregnant and the 'neither a child nor an adult' Ravji realizes that he is going to be a father. This leads him to think about the relationship between him and his unborn child. The novel begins with a dream in which Ravji asks for *Moti-Danda* to play, which his grandmother gives him and it ends with an illusion in which he is in the role of his grandfather.

The third person narrative employs informal language with idioms and proverbs. The narration is transparent, with innocent humour. One of the important aspects of the culture of this area is that people understand complex things through simple analogies. This stylistic device is freely exploited by the author. There is a long tradition of rural writing in Gujarati. Pannalal Patel, and Raguvir Chaudhary belong to that tradition. The former is romantic, the latter realistic. Kanji is ethnic. The only problem with *Dahelu* is that the life it depicts has nothing to do with the political reality which is a part of the Indian experience.

Dahelu also represents the period of creative tension between modernism and postmodernism. The period is marked by the logic of binary choice between modernism and postmodernism, foreignism and nativism, present and past, universalism and ethnocentricism, formalism and narrativism, standard and dialect, internationalism and nationalism and Sanskritism and Prakritism. *Dahelu* is more inclined towards the second member of these antitheses generally considered as marginal, irrational, illogical, unworthy of literary treatment. Though the novel does not reach to the level of a major statement on the brand of postmodernism mentioned earlier, it marks the beginning of the end of modernisms.

Babu Suthar, lecturer in linguistics at the M.S. University, is a creative writer and critic. His experimental novel, Sachchando Ane Darpan has made a mark on the literary scene in Gujarati.

The Mirror and the Chameleon: A bilingual Experiment

Upendra Nanavati

KACHANDO ANE DARPAN

By Babu Suthar

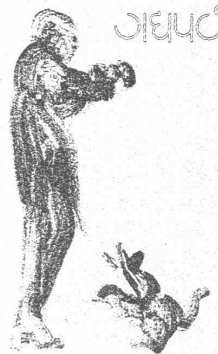
Gadyaparva, 19-20, Bombay, May-July 1991, p. 63, Rs. 20.00

Gadyaparva, the Gujarati bi-monthly, edited by Bharat Nayak, deserves to be complimented for 'daring' to publish Babu Suthar's *Kachando Ane Darpan*, (The Chameleon and The Mirror) in their special novel issue, May-July 1991. The work has escaped critical attention because of two reasons: (1) it has not been published by any established publishing house, and (2) Gujarati literary practice has never witnessed such a bi-lingual experiment.

But, first a few words about Babu Suthar. He is a literateur, a bibliophile, a fund of information, has been a journalist and is a full time linguist. On his own admission, he is more at home with philosophical complexities in writings. No wonder therefore that his text refuses to be categorised as a novel, and abounds in variability (Chameleon) and reflexivity (Mirror).

Suthar begins with a letter to the reader which sets the tone and the style, if any, of the text. He says: "*Kachando Ane Darpan* is a different kind of novel (the word novel has been crossed). It has two characters or it can be said that it has two human beings, one Man, one woman. The reader has to 'imagine' their appearance, age etc. on his own". He further says "This novel (?) has neither a beginning nor an end. The Man is in the centre, the chameleon and the mirror are on his left and right. There is some organisation in them. The rest is scattered. The organised is also a part of the scattered. The reader will have to find

his own organisation." The text which follows the letter is in two languages: Gujarati and English. The text in Gujarati is original, but the one in English is a series of quotations from various sources. (The model for this text was *Vasant Vilas*—14th or 15th century—an anonymous work, written in both Prakrit and Sanskrit.) Both man and woman in the text 'talk' about themselves. The woman's narrative abounds in direct and indirect physical and hence Freudian references. She says, "I agree to your kissing me, feeling my hair, softly caressing my thighs . . . but I will never let you have sex with me . . . I will play with your organ, arouse it, hold it tight in my hand . . . when you ejaculate a shudder will pass through my hands, I will live by that shudder" (p. 25). The quotations in English on page 9 and 24 are meant to enhance the text in Gujarati on page 25. The man in the text has his flights into thoughts about the chameleon and the mirror. He finds: "the chameleon changing colours, now blue, now red, now yellow . . . the grass in the mirror . . . was like the feathers of a dead peacock (p. 19). . . . he began to feel the touch of the grass in the Mirror (p. 28) . . . the left side of his body was turning into a chameleon . . . he could not decide what he had become . . . (p. 48). (The 'enhancing' quotations are found on pages 26, 28, and 29). He also indulges in activities like "pushing a blade of grass in the vagina of the sleeping lioness" (p. 17) and "pressing the freshly cut tail of a lizard



between the thighs" (p. 22), some passages in the text remind one of early Chandrakant Baxi, and Madhu Ray. To a very large extent, Suthar's pedagogic concerns have been transferred to *Kachando Ane Darpan*. The text has a bi-lingual and hence double existence. It is possible to read just the Gujarati text and avoid the English one altogether. The English 'text' demands a supplementary reading. Through two separate readings of the two different texts, the reader is expected to arrive at some aesthetic experience. It is a tall order, especially from common readers. Literary texts have been problematised in Gujarati in a variety of ways. Gujarati literary prose has had its share of surrealism, symbolism etc. But Suthar's *Kachando Ane Darpan* is without precedence. He does not view the text as a finished final product. He is hopeful of yet another version of it and can suggest many extensions to it even to day! He maintains that in writing *Kachando Ane Darpan*, his attempt was to destroy the hegemony of form and linearity. But the Gujarati readership is probably not yet ready for R.D. Liang like experimentation with language. Western literary tradition may be capable of producing literary texts which generate their own criticism from within themselves. It would be folly to expect the same of Gujarati literary tradition.

Kachando Ane Darpan, though very innovative, remains experimental. It would probably be interesting for readers who are at home with complex ideas in English. Readers who may not have such competence will probably shy away from it. Those who have seen Suthar's earlier work, as this writer has, in the printed or manuscript form, would have found a monolingual *Kachando Ane Darpan* more palatable rather than a bi-lingual one.

Dr. Upendra Nanavati teaches at the M.S. University, where he is Reader in English.

Pandit In a Global Village

Prabodh Parikh

BHAVAN-VIBHAVAN: COLLECTION OF PAPERS AND ARTICLES ON LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM

By Harivallabh Bhayani

Parshva Prakashan, Ahmedabad, 1991, pp. 239, Rs. 60.00

What is it like to come across a collection of essays on Poetics, Discourse and Literary Theory which is at once at home with Gadamer, Anandvardhan, Derrida and Bhoj? Which is simultaneously rooted in the ethos of the Sant Parampara and the debates in postmodernism, embracing both and making it accessible to the contemporary reader in Gujarati and in turn critically intervening in the nature of literary practices of today? Harivallabh Bhayani, the grand old man of letters of Gujarat, the rasik bhavak, punditizing always on a swing, at peace

Harivallabh Bhayani, the grand old man of letters of Gujarat, the rasik bhavak, punditizing always on a swing, at peace with himself in all seasons—is universally respected for his work in linguistics, oral traditions, the theory of narrative and medieval studies. He is 73 and going strong. There is not a year, not a day when he is not excited by a book of Barth, Abhinavagupta, Poulet or Pandit Jagannath. Either he is translating the Gathasaptasati or Heidegger or both! All these projects carry the lightness of his being. Enviably youthful, always in immaculate khadi dhoti-kiṛta and ready to burst out laughing at any excuse, he has been, for more than 5 decades at the heart of the Gujarati literary scene. Today he is the most respected vada-vivadi Pandit and sahriday (friend) for the whole of Gujarat.

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Most of the key essays in the first part of this collection are a kind of significant summarisation of various well-known studies in Indian poetics. More than the originality of ideas, one is struck with the project of situating certain key concepts and theories in the heart of recent critical debates. What emerges in the process is the renewed possibility of recovering a sense of confidence in a tradition that had carried on a sustained dialogue for more than seventeen centuries.

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Bhavan-Vibhavan is a collection of thirty essays put together from the earlier books published between 1967–1992. The volume is a collage of writings, notes, commentary, sketches and reflections. The first section has sixteen essays devoted to issues in Indian poetics, which are further divided into questions and reflections on specific concepts with an extensive discussion on types of Alankars.

The second section has fourteen essays that address themselves to the questions of aesthetics that are central to structuralist and poststructuralist discourse. These essays deliberately confront the contemporary western theory by situating them in the tradition of classical Indian poetics.

Most of the key essays in the first part of this collection are a kind of significant summarisation of various well-known studies in Indian poetics. More than the originality of ideas, one is struck with the project of situating certain key concepts and theories in the heart of recent critical debates. What emerges in the process is the renewed possibility of recovering a sense of confidence in a tradition that had carried on a sustained dialogue for more than seventeen centuries. This is clear from the manner in which Bhayani Saheb takes upon himself the task of constantly juxtaposing the main concepts from Indian poetics with the structuralist and poststructuralist theories. The entire volume is guided by the conviction that the Indian *Kavya Shastra* has the inherent strength of being universally valid and relevant to the fundamental issues in poetics.

The first essay "Indian theory of literature, its universality and present day relevance" is representative of Bhayani Saheb's preoccupations. It systematically brings together the writing of the major theoreticians from India along with the

contemporary thinkers of the west in order to show the soundness of the former. The aim is not just to do a comparative study but to recover a tradition that has the power of addressing itself to an understanding of the creative act.

Another essay written in 1977 describes in some detail Abhinavagupta's theory of the experience of literature, which is nothing less than a manifesto for the autonomy of aesthetics. A discussion regarding the close relationship between philosophy and literary theory takes up the question of the intimate connection that has always been present in the writings of aestheticians of India.

Most other essays in the first section are in-depth studies of classical as well as modernist Gujarati poetry within the specific conceptual framework of the *Kavya Shastra*. It is an outstanding example of the ability of Indian poetics to meaningfully respond to literature cutting across *desh-kala* (space and time). Bhayani Saheb's poetic sensibility and brilliance illuminates the poetry under discussion with ease.

Bhayani Saheb's admiration for the quality and rigour of the current debates in the west on critical theory is evident from the number of passages, text, and essays that he has translated and responded to in this volume. We have in section II, two long essays that clearly put forward the arguments of structuralist poetics. One of the essays begins with a critique of structuralism in general and then freely moves on to take up the theory of Chomsky, Jonathan Culler, Charles Morris, Roland Barth and others. In another essay, "The Literary text and Examination of Critical Methods", he summarises the essay by P.M. Wetheril to present a clear picture of the concern of the contemporary western critical theory.

In "Nature and Purpose of Art" he translates and juxtaposes passages from Suzanne Langer, Gadamer and Rudolph Aronheim. This Benjaminian project of making a statement through statements from others achieves its purpose and impact thanks to Bhayani Saheb's fundamental project of bringing in Indian poetics for the purpose of discussing literature. Most often these essays are footnoted with appropriate passages from the Indian *Kavya Shastra* text.

A number of essays in this section confidently move from journal to journal in which Bhayani Saheb takes up the challenge of providing entry into the most recent debates. The entire section II car-

ries a unique stamp of his spirit of selfless carrying-on-a-dialogue-with-Pandits-from-all-over-the-world. The virtue of this effortless Gujaratisation of western debates is not merely a fact of its lucidity but also the readiness to test convictions in the light of new articulations.

In "The question of Form" Bhayani Saheb's explorations to arrive at a correct concept which can retain the rich and complex phenomena that is "Art", leads him to suggest the notion of "Swarupa" as an equivalent to the notion of Form. This form of subtle analysis of concepts characterises most of the essays in this volume.

Having said this, I would like to point out that in this volume Bhayani Saheb does not find it necessary to focus on theories that challenge the very assumptions of classical aesthetics. The two most prominent of these are a) The metaphysics of Presence and b) The acceptance of the category of Transcendence—along with the world view that these two offer, are simply accepted as true. The entire Marxist perspective, with its emphasis on the role of ideology and materiality of language and its notion of the historical subject, as well as the charged formulations of the polemics found in the writings of feminist and the post colonial theories are absent in these essays. These are some of the more powerful adversaries that classical Indian poetics should confront in order to test the strength of its *Kavya Shastra*.

I am tempted to think that the continuity of the debate on literary theory should respond both to Walter Benjamin-like theorising (explorative, critical, anguished and responsive to the dark side of history and ontology at once) as well as to the very mood of the modernist works that perhaps demand a furthering of the given *Kavya Shastra*. For example, it would be interesting to see Bhayani Saheb taking up the theory of Bakhtin—in particular, Bakhtin's thesis about the inadequacy of classical poetics to do justice to the newly emerged genre of the novel. His own extensive study of *lok katha* and Bakhtin's theories would be a meeting point of an emerging *Kavya Shastra* of our own times.

There is no doubt that the *Bharatiya Siddhanta* needs to be rejuvenated in the sense that it is possible to extend, correct, improvise, radicalise, reject, challenge and resituate its conceptual framework in the light of experience of life. This project has Bhayani Saheb's own approval when he writes that no poetics can grow without taking into account the changing horizons of human experiences. *Bhavan-Vibhavan* is itself an outstanding example of the dialogic imagination working in the direction of arriving at a poetics that is at once traditional and contemporary.

Prabodh Parikh, Professor of Philosophy, painter, poet and critic, is a leading intellectual in Gujarati literary circles. He is based in Bombay.

Gujarat: A Society without Mediation?

Tridip Suhrud

SWATANTRYOTTAR GUJARAT

Edited by Shirish Panchal

Parshva Prakashan, Ahmedabad, pp. 12+252, Rs. 125.00

Prompted by a sense of discontent about the state of Gujarati Society, Dr. Shirish Panchal has brought together this volume with three clear aims of providing a comprehensive document of various aspects of post-independence Gujarat: analysis of these process; to start a process of reflection and dialogue. To this end he brings together eighteen essays by eminent contributors which examine such diverse areas as art, literature, music, journalism, social and political issues, women's issues and technology.

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The State of Gujarat came into being on 1st May 1960. Since then Gujarat has witnessed unprecedented urbanisation and industrialisation, which got an impetus from the surplus generated by the economy of the 'Green and White Revolutions' and 'Money-Transfer Economy' created through western alliances. These in turn have enabled the agricultural elites, mainly comprising the *Patidars* and *Kshatriya* castes, to forge strong linkages

Untold pain and misery have been inflicted upon Advasis who have been uprooted by four major irrigation projects (Ukai, Kadana, Dharoi and Narmada) conceived to provide irrigation water and electricity to the cash-crops of agricultural elites. For many years Dalits have remained the target of savarna brutality. The crime against women and female infanticide have continued unchecked.

Television and films—Ketan Mehta's *Bhavni Bhavai* being an exception—have sought to immunize themselves against the vital issues. While the ever-expanding print-media has endeavoured to provide the media-addicted, excitement-starved, accultured, desensitized middle-class with grand spectacles of rape and violence.

between the agricultural and industrial sectors and thereby, between rural and urban Gujarat. These groups made serious attempts to translate their economic power and new-found social status into political power and become a 'hegemonic class'. They succeeded in strengthening their hold over institutions of civil society, but failed to provide 'moral and intellectual leadership to the society. Instead, they have unashamedly sought to further oppress the already marginalised sections, i.e., dalits, adivasis and women.

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The first significant challenge to this order came in the form of the *Navnirman* movement. Despite the initial euphoria, the power elites have succeeded in co-opting much of the *Navnirman* leadership during the subsequent years. Another attempt to weaken the savarna domination acquired the form of an electoral alliance among the KHAM (Kshatriya-Harijan-Adivasi-Muslim) communities. The apparent success of this formula in the assembly elections of 1980 failed to deliver actual power or benefits to the marginalised groups. The savarna responded to KHAM with the anti-reservation agitations of 1981 and 1985, during which Gandhi's Gujarat witnessed orgies of caste violence directed against the dalits. Since 1985 the two antagonists, i.e., the savarnas and the dalits have embraced the theocratic ideology of *Hindutva* promulgated by the *sangh parivar*.

One would expect to find a reflection of this *dance macabre* in literature, art and media of Gujarat. But unfortunately, that has not been so. The 'natural' linkage between the society and the *sarjan sarjak* has been disrupted because majority of literateurs and academics have completely alienated themselves from the

social dynamics. They have failed not only in shaping human subjectivity and providing alternative visions of civil society, but also in just holding a mirror in front of this schimatized society. Instead the self-obsessed *sarjak* has sought to speak in *atmanepadi* (the first person). An excellent illustration of this alienation is provided by the August 1992 issue of *Parab* (a literary monthly published for the last thirty-three years by the *Gujarati Sahitya Parishad*). This issue is an anthology of the 'poetry of the eighth decade'. The editor has thought it appropriate not to include a single poet born after 1960. Out of the fifty poets only two women have the honour of being included while no dalit or adivasi *sarjak* has such good fortune!!

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In such a scenario, the expectations from a collection such as the one under review are naturally high. But, barring five essays—the introduction by the editor, and the essays by Ghanshyam Shah, Sonal Shukla, P.G. Mavlankar and Raju Purohit—other essays fail to take cognizance of the ground reality. One fails to appreciate the preeminence given to *Kala and Sahitya—Time and Literature*—(170 out of 252 pages are devoted to it). Would it not have been appropriate to start the anthology with the four essays which examine the 'base' rather than with the analysis of 'superstructure' which has become opaque? Nevertheless, one has to appreciate the significant attempt to provide a forum of a dialogue and mediation in this society of ours.

Tridip Suvrud belongs to the young generation of activist-intellectuals. Among other publications, he has to his credit the Gujarati translation of Ashis Nandy's *The Intimate Enemy*.

Re-reading Editorials

Prakash Trivedi

NIRAKH NE

By Manju Jhaveri

Published by the author, Bombay, 1993, pp. 263, Rs. 85.00

Nirakh Ne is a collection of Manju Jhaveri's essays written as editorials over the last twelve years. 'Nirakh ne', meaning 'watch that', taken from a well-known poem, is an excellent pointer to a wealth of ideas dealing with commitment, communication, education, profligacy of words, feminism, creativity and so on. She writes about Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore, Levi Strauss, Sri Aurobindo, Rajnish, Shaw, Umashankar and Suresh Joshi. These editorials are inspired by books, events or causal conversations and personalities.

Jhaveri's dominant mode of discourse is philosophical. Thus out of nearly fifty essays, only three or four deal with novels and none with poetry. While criticism in various forms, biographical works, philosophical works regale her and start and chain in of thoughts that, happily, compels her to share it with her readers.

She also delights in unusual juxtapositions. Thus, Kundera comes in because of his essay on Kafka, Aurobindo with a comment on Shaw's plays, contemporary obsession with wasteful verbosity with apt comment by Mahatma Gandhi:

enough and that the value of a literary product must be judged by literary standards. This makes Jhaveri sympathetic yet skeptical towards feminist and dalit literatures. When the novelist Joseph Macwan gives her an impression that without direct experience one cannot create good literature, she regrets not having answered that many great writers, who were men, created so many memorable women characters.

Here one sees Jean Genet as watched by Sartre and Sartre through the eyes of Simone de Beauvoir, Tagore as revered by Maitreyi Devi and Gandhi analysed by Bhikhu Parikh. One reads about Kafka, Krishnamurti, Marx and Trotsky, Herbert Read and Ivan Illich. The list is long and impressive. And equally impressive is the method of analysis of their thought.

A short interview of Jhaveri by editors of *Pratyaksh* is also included here, which gives an insight into her editorship. All her essays are preceeded with apt quotations. Though the editorials are not more than a few pages each they raise many thought-provoking questions.

A magazine-editor has time on her

A magazine-editor has time on her side as she does not have to rush with a daily or weekly column. It is no wonder then that many readers of her magazine turn to her editorials first. One does miss her analysis of more contemporary Gurus like Allan Bloom or Fukuyama and one would like to know her views about such contemporary concerns of science as nuclear winter, Gaia, Chaos. One would like to read her critique of contemporary masters of literature also.

"I can give myself this certification that hardly a word slips out from my pen or mouth without thinking or analysing it". She gets attracted to Ram Manohar Lohia's comparison of Vonoba Bhavne and Milovan Djilas, the Yugoslav Marxist. One is struck by the underlying similarities between apparent contradictions.

Manju Jhaveri has an iron fist inside a silk mitten. Her comments are entirely impersonal, objective and without any desire for self assertion. But she does not mince words when denouncing arts without commitment or intellectual dishonesty. One of her hard hitting editorials deals with commitment in literature. This is more important for her than art for the sake of art. Yet she feels that mere commitment—good intentions—is not

side as she does not have to rush with a daily or weekly column. It is no wonder then that many readers of her magazine turn to her editorials first. One does miss her analysis of more contemporary Gurus like Allan Bloom or Fukuyama and one would like to know her views about such contemporary concerns of science as nuclear winter, Gaja, Chaos. One would like to read her critique of contemporary masters of literature also. Maybe like Emerson, Jhaveri feels that a book is not worth reading till it is several years old. Nevertheless, all in all, *Nirakh Ne* satisfies a sympathetic reader. •

Prakash Trivedi, a Bombay based chemist, is equally at ease in the realms of industry and literature.

A few years ago Meenakshi Mukherjee and Nissim Ezekiel brought out a book called *Another India* (a title supplied by V.S. Naipaul). The assumption is that there is one India we elite receive and project and that there is another which is represented in the various literatures in Indian languages. This underscores the necessity, politically and culturally for translation activity in this country. Apart from the political space which this creates for the different voices to be heard, it is also necessary for promoting mutual understanding and respect in this deeply divided and linguistically chauvinistic (among other things) country of ours. Hence, ideally then translation should be from various Indian languages into each other as well as into English and other world languages and vice versa. The danger is of course in one or two languages, because of their political advantage, imposing a one-way traffic into them.

Hence, this is a crucial moment at the threshold of the golden period of translation activity in India where more and more people are aware of the need for translations. It is therefore the appropriate moment to take stock of the Indian situation—what has been done, what needs to be done and how best to do it. This was precisely the aim of the *Symposium on Literary Translation—Indian Perspectives*, held under the auspices of the British Council, at New Delhi, from 29th March to 2nd April '93.

This symposium brought together eminent practitioners of the craft from all around the country as well as authors, academics, publishers and students of translation studies. Amongst the various sessions devoted to pre-colonial and colonial translations, nature of literary translation across cultures, theories of translation, fiction, poetry and drama in translation, publishers' views, aims and objectives of translation studies as part of academic curriculum and evaluation of translations, some common interwoven strands were the question of the relevance of theory to practice; definition of a 'good translation' which raised the age-old question of 'fidelity' to the original source-language (known as SL) or being more readable in the target language (TL); who is the best judge of a translation, translatability or untranslatability of culture specificity.

What was remarkable in pre-colonial translation was the equation of a language to a religion. The various stages were when holy texts were first translated into Persian and later when Sikh texts and Sufi poetry were translated into Indian languages. The translation enterprise in colonial times differed, according to Dr. Sisir Kumar Das, in that Sanskrit and Persian texts were first translated into English as part of an exercise into an Indian past. Later English was the SL for translation activity forming part of a larger political agenda. In terms of practice pre-colonial translation was a liberal one

The Importance of Literary Translation in India

By N. Kamala

which enjoyed a lot of freedom whereas in colonial times, translation was closer to the original and also came to belong to the lowest strata of literary activity.

In discussing the nature of literary translation, Dr. Leon Burnett, University of Essex, likened it to a pre-packed solution as opposed to a DIY method of learning the SL to have access to the source! While presenting views from Goethe to Keats, he stressed that there were 'favourable moments' when a country was ready to receive another's literature and hence the onus was on the receiving culture. Each nation took turns at being the receiving or transmitting culture over a long historical period corresponding to various stages of reception. And hence, as Andre Lefèvre has said, translation is not just of language, but also of discourse, poetics and ideology in ascending value. Thus, translation is a political activity wherein the choice of text itself, who translates for whom is a conscious political option!

Coming back to the main bugbear which dominated almost all sessions was the problem of 'fidelity'. In poetry, it was felt that a lot of freedom could be had in translation, maybe underlining the nature of 'untranslatability' of poetry. In fact Stephen Romer, poet and lecturer at the University of Tours, felt that Robert Lowell's free translation of Baudelaire's *La Cloche Fêlée* was closest in excellence whereas a more 'faithful' one was academic and pedestrian. It was even expressed that a dual-text version with the original on one page and a paraphrase or prose version on the other was a possible, viable solution! According to Professor S. Chaudhry, Jadavpur University, 'freedom' was more possible with comic verse while serious poetry like that of Rabindranath Tagore had to be adhered to more faithfully. It was also suggested that at most there could be only generic equivalence.

But translation could be done through collaboration with someone who doesn't even know the SL was proved by the poet Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, who has translated verse from languages unknown to him! In such a case the very notion of 'fidelity' doesn't even rise and the result is one of transcreation. What did not come up for serious discussion was the question of rhyme and the translation of the same. As Paul Valéry has said "A poem.

... should create the illusion of an indissoluble compound of sound and sense." If we accept that logic, can the proposed prose solutions still be called "poetry"?

In the animated session on the translation of *Raag Darbari* at which were present Shri Lal Shukla, the author and Gillian Wright, the translator, two readers commented on this very aspect of 'fidelity' and 'deviation'. Though precedence was given to TL structures, metaphors and songs of the SL had been translated literally, conveying effectively the resonance of the original. If mistranslation was rare, substitutions, additions and deletions were abundant. For example a reference to a 'U.S. educated scholar' was translated as one educated 'abroad'. It was strongly felt that a political reference had been defused to a non-political one and that the neo-imperialism thrust was lost. If culture specific names had been explained through additions but did not deter the narrative, other additions to explicate certain ambiguities had been detrimental. Deletions of some linguistic and cultural elements, reflecting 'untranslatability', like songs, comments, reflected a loss in intertextual reflexivity, wherein portrayal of characters is diminished.

To the charge of deletions, the translator replied that it was done at the publisher's insistence, in order to respect the price-ceiling! Hence episodes which didn't add to the plot were left out. In this politics of deletion, wherein author, translator and publisher are implicated, Dr. Harish Trivedi rightly pointed out that

deletions equalled neutralising and de-politicising a text, as in any case as Faulkner had remarked that in the various aspects of the novel, the lowest is the plot! Therefore seemingly innocuous deletions can actually add up to a political statement.

Which brings us back to the problematic of what is a good translation and who is best qualified to judge it. Are there ways of defining a good translation ideologically and/or aesthetically? Should the final judgement be left to the 'unlearned', monolingual reader of TL, or should the bi-lingual reader be privileged? Any translation is justified only if it aims at the monolingual reader, for the bi-lingual reader has access to the source text itself. Bilingual readers may miss one text for the other whereas the monolingual reader has the autonomy of the translation to depend on. This foregrounds the question of the 'dependability' of a translation. According to Dr. Sisir Kumar Das translation between close, neighbouring languages was more dependable than that between distant ones. In Dr. H. Trivedi's view an author-translator was not as dependable as a separate translator and that two translators were better than a single one, especially if one was from the SL, and a dual text was best as it showed the translator's courage. However all the above again brings to play the SL/TL relationship with which the monolingual reader is not acquainted with nor cares about.

When the focus shifts to the reader, and in this context the English reader, it is fit to pose the question—What English to use? Indian English for an Indian audience or "standard English" (whatever that may be) for an international audience? Ms Mini Krishnan of Macmillan India, felt that translations should target the Indian audience first but they had to keep in mind the larger foreign public as well. The reality is of course that most translations in English of modern Indian literature are hardly sold abroad as even Indian English fiction published in India is yet to carve out a market there. Therefore translation into English even if done for a "potential" foreign audience is in

The panel discussion with the publishers highlighted some problems of a practical nature. As Ms. Mini Krishnan pointed out bi-lingual texts meant a hefty rise in pricing, therefore a non-viable consumable product! There was also the issue of finding enough in-house experts in the various Indian languages, as cited by Mr. Arvind Kumar of the National Book Trust. It was just plain difficult to find people knowing two Indian language without recourse to English! It was only in India we translated from our mother tongue or first languages into others rather than into it—which raised the question whether a new discourse in translation had to be elaborated suitable to our Indian context.

One of the points resolved through consensus after debate was the issue of the desirability or otherwise of a pure, smooth TL text. It was agreed that the alterity, the 'otherness' of the SL should be visible and to this end a certain 'roughness' should be maintained. The SL should seem to influence the TL both in terms of lexique and syntax (words and word order). This interliterarity and intercultural presence would create the desirable palimpsestic effect.

fact for an Indian one. Though this might somewhat reduce the readership in terms of numbers, the powerful place occupied by English in India does still privilege this target audience.

More poignant hence in the realm of theater G.P. Deshpande's statement that he would like to be translated into English as it might ensure a few more inches of column space in newspapers—but there were very few plays performed in English in India, even less in Indian English and almost none at all of Indian languages into English translations! So there's very little scope or chance of a translation for performance being done. Mr. Deshpande reiterated that this resulted from a relationship of Great Power Small State wherein it is far easier for a small state to familiarise itself with the great power's tradition and its texts. In India we are the small power though with a longer tradition. But the Indian reader/viewer already knows and understands western traditions and forms whereas the reverse is not true. As a consequence, curiously enough, as Dr. K. Ayappa Panicker pointed out, there was a lot of translation activity in theater from Western languages into Indian languages, but almost none between geographically contiguous Indian languages say like Tamil and Malayalam. Accordingly, does this drama become a translation or an adaptation, or altogether new plays sharing the narrative with the author? I wonder why it was felt that the first two were mutually exclusive terms. If a play was translated, it was not adapted and vice versa. To call upon the famous comparatists, Vinay and Darbelnet, adaptation is just one technique of the process of translation wherein translation was the generic term englobing the more specific one of adaptation.

The panel discussion with the publishers highlighted some problems of a practical nature. As Ms. Mini Krishnan pointed out bi-lingual texts meant a hefty rise in pricing, therefore a non-viable consumable product! There was also the issue of finding enough in-house experts in the various Indian languages, as cited by Mr. Arvind Kumar of the National Book Trust. It was just plain difficult to find people knowing two Indian language without recourse to English! It was only in India we translated from our mother tongue or first languages into others rather than into it—which raised the question whether a new discourse in translation

had to be elaborated suitable to our Indian context.

What this discussion did throw up of great interest and far-reaching consequences was the use of translations of Indian language literature as part of the English class-room syllabi. If we could read A. Dumas in translation, why not someone closer home? This educational privilege given to English should make us aware of the looming threat, perception of which in international terms was given by Dr. Stephen Romer, who spoke of the homogenisation of English as TL where literatures belonging to various cultures start seeming to look alike, and also people writing in different languages keep in mind the English market and hence the 'easy translatability' of their works. Thus the very process of translation which gives them the potential to be heard in the Centre has the potential to destroy the periphery. This threat is present in India too, though incipient, because of the role played by English—and possibly Hindi.

Translations have to be thus aware of the double-edged weapon and constantly strive to translate the 'untranslatable' and not confine themselves to the 'easily accessible' and 'translatable' texts. But many of the translators present at the symposium resisted the reading of a political statement in their work.

One of the points resolved through consensus after debate was the issue of the desirability or otherwise of a pure, smooth TL text. It was agreed that the alterity, the 'otherness' of the SL should be visible and to this end a certain 'roughness' should be maintained. The SL should seem to influence the TL both in terms of lexique and syntax (words and word order). This interliterarity and intercultural presence would create the desirable palimpsestic effect.

Though there were more questions raised than solutions found in this symposium there was a distinct air of optimism about the nature and value of this activity and its future. Not only is it important in the Indian context in itself, translation is also important internationally for as everyone knows the sum total of human wisdom cannot be contained in any one language alone.

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COMMUNICATIONS

May I respond, though somewhat belatedly, to A.R. Venkatachalapathy's comment in the February issue on my piece "Splintered Sensibility", intended as a curtain raiser for the survey of contemporary Tamil literature that appeared in the November/December '92 issue of *The Book Review*?

Venkatachalapathy (ARV) says that the "crux" of my article is that "Tamil Society suffers from a serious disability of a fragmented sensibility which is the end result of the Dravidian movement's repudiation of a historical continuity in literature and the world of ideas." I have no quarrel with this summation, except to say that was not the crux of my argument. It was one of the many—I had discussed at length three—of the cruxes, if there can be more than one crux in an argument! Discontinuity in a historical literary memory is, I had said, one of the splinter factors that have enfeebled modern Tamil sensibility.

It is with the subsequent assertions of ARV that my difficulties begin. He accuses me of indulging in a "deft sleight of hand". It would seem that "for long intellectuals of my ilk have denied the antiquity of Tamil language and literature—a position that was reflected even in the recent debate in the pages of *Dinamani* and *Kanaiyazhi*. (Jagannathan contributes regularly to the latter. In fact, the article in question . . . was published in it well before *The Book Review* hit the stands) But now without batting an eyelid, he grants antiquity to Tamil. . . . All this only to underline the so-called impoverishment that the modern Tamil writer supposedly suffers due to what Jagannathan represents as 'the snapping of the vital links with an unbroken cultural and literary tradition'."

How does one deal with a string of non-sequiturs based on a non-existent fact? I can't speak for others of my ilk, but I would like ARV to produce a single piece of evidence to show that I have ever denied the antiquity of Tamil literature and language. Take away this vital misrepresentation, and everything else he says is shown up to be, at least as far I am concerned, a string of irrelevant innuendoes.

I write regularly for *Kanaiyazhi* (In fact this very article has appeared in its pages and ahead of *The Book Review*.) So what? Is it also legerdemain? As it happens, I used to write regularly for *Dinamani* till a year ago. Is it illegal? Articles have appeared in the pages of these journals in which, according to ARV, the "antiquity of Tamil" was challenged. So? Can ARV cite a single line I have written anywhere, in Tamil or English or Esperanto in which I have challenged the antiquity of Tamil? Not that antiquity is a guarantee of quality of modern writing in a language but that is beside the point, which is that I have too much respect for facts to make any such silly assertion.

I am flattered that ARV is keeping tabs on my journalistic indiscretions. But if he had been as diligent in reading what I write in *Kanaiyazhi* as he has been in finding out that I sometimes say in its pages what I also say elsewhere in English in a journal intended for a very different audience, he would have found that far from denying Tamil's antiquity, I have in fact in my own way asserted it. In the very debate in the pages of *Dinamani* and *Kanaiyazhi* he refers to, I have contested some of the bizarre assertions on the other side—comparable in their obtuseness to those made by ARV in his letter. For example, I had cited evidence and authority to show that, contrary to the widespread impression, *Sanskrit* had extensively borrowed words from Dravidian languages including Tamil even from the Vedic times; and that many words like *Mayura* for peacock, for example was borrowed by Sanskrit from Tamil rather than the other way about. ARV has fallen into the vulgar error that just because one writes for a journal, one necessarily agrees with its editorial views or every opinion that appears in its pages. Obversely, just because *The Book Review* prints ARV's views, it would be rash on my part to conclude that its editor thinks like him. Obviously, in the circles in which ARV moves, they have not heard of the journalistic practice of providing room for dissent in their journals.

ARV does concede that the Dravidian movement did marginalise "a certain part of the Tamil heritage" (I had said it had "expunged it." "No matter. I won't enter into a semantic argument about the *mot juste*). What I am accused of "conveniently concealing" is the fact that the Dravidian movement has rescued an even earlier body of Tamil literature. This after I have specifically referred to the *Sangam* literature as part of the Tamil heritage, but also lost to the modern Tamil. Incidentally, the implied claim that it was the Dravidian movement that rescued the *Sangam* literature from oblivion is preposterous. The Dravidian movement was not even properly born when in the late

nineteenth century U.V. Swaminatha Iyer, belonging to the "hegemony-prone" Brahmin caste, laboured prodigiously to build bit by bit from stray references in commentaries the whole corpus of the magnificent literature, practically wiped out of Tamil consciousness. To suggest that I have expunged from my memory Sangam literature and *Tirukural* just as ARV concedes he and his ilk have "marginalised"—to put it mildly—the latter day Tamil literature (including Kambar) is the height of ignorance and impertinence. How does he know? Has he inspected my library? If he had, he would have found that the Sangam classics are very much a part of it, and that I have half a dozen commentaries on the *Kural*. As for "my squirming" at Karunanidhi's *Kuraloviyum* pieces in *Kumudam*, it has less to do with my attitude to the *Kural* than to the "multicolour posters"—the most tasteless examples of kitsch you can think of—that ARV boasts heralded their arrival and the quality of Karunanidhi's exegesis.

In his desperation to prove that I have no use for "reverberations and resonances" from Sangam Literature but only for those from the latter day heritage of the *Prabandhams* and so on—which is factually incorrect, for I lament the absence of reverberations from Sangam literature too in modern Tamil writing; ARV drags in A.K. Ramanujan. He is quoted for the proposition that one's tradition wouldn't be handed on a platter to one. It has to be "earned and repossessed". Precisely. That is what I have also said. My complaint is that modern Tamil writers, with some exceptions, have not earned or repossessed their tradition. Only, my tradition includes both the Sangam literature and the latter day classics between which, incidentally, there is a vital continuity. Andal's *Tiruppavai*, for example, is very much in the Sangam traditions of *Paavai Nombu*. It is my lament that ARV and his ilk have gratuitously impoverished themselves by jettisoning for trumpety reasons the later classics. Ironically, Ramanujan would be more comfortable in the company of my ilk rather than that of ARV and his friends. For besides translating the Sangam classics, he has rendered into English *Thiruvaymozhi* of Nammalwar, who would have found no place in the selective tradition that ARV permits for the modern Tamil, writer or no writer.

This rejoinder is already too long but permit me to make one final point. By his incoherent and factually incorrect statements, at least as far as they concern me, ARV has unwittingly proved my thesis of a *splinter*. The heritage he permits for the modern Tamil writer is, for whatever reason, not the whole of the past of Tamil civilization. By saying that the Dravidian movement opted for an earlier tradition in preference to a later one, reversing the supposed error of the likes of me, he concedes the *splinter*. And that, as I said, is the tragic predicament of the modern Tamil writer.

N.S. Jagannathan,
New Delhi.

My dear Jagannathan,

I have been wanting to write this ever since I saw your most interesting survey of contemporary Tamil literature in *The Book Review*.

What prompts me to write to you is another thought: how modern Kannada has by and large remained uninfluenced by modern Tamil even though in so many other branches of life southern Karnataka has borne a deep imprint of Madras. I recall how in my student days in the late thirties and early forties we were a virtual intellectual colony of Madras. I believe it was even more so a generation earlier. In science, philosophy, history, oriental learning, the law and jurisprudence, and medicine, the big men were in Madras and we lionized them. Until 1916 our colleges had been affiliated to the Madras University. We had no political life worth the name and no newspapers. We all read *The Hindu*. (By all, I mean the small educated layer.) Our political ideas came from Madras—except that North Karnataka, which was part of the Bombay Presidency, drew inspiration from Bombay and Poona. As far as Bangalore and Mysore were concerned, we looked up to Madras and Madras had a corresponding condescension towards us.

It is one of the enigmas of our national life how some cities have swiftly declined in their intellectual dominance—Poona, Allahabad, Nagpur and even Calcutta. I shall provoke you by including Madras in the category. Where is Madras, except perhaps in music and medical science? Certainly Bangalore today does not feel it has much to learn from Madras.

This apart, my main point is that even in the days of our apprenticeship to Madras, modern Kannada was so little influenced by Tamil. The impact was not a fraction of that of Marathi, for example, or of Bengali. Some scholars familiar with both literatures must find out why. The Modern Movement (or Renaissance) began in Marathi and

Tamil and Telugu a few decades earlier than in Kannada. (In Bengali much earlier.) There was a feeling in Karnataka's neighbours that this late starter was something of a retarded child. I remember the resentment Rajaji evoked by referring to Kannada as after all Tamil written in Telugu script! Rajaji personally knew Kannada, had taken his degree from Bangalore, and was conversant with Masti Venkatesa Iyengar's writings. The two paid a mutual compliment by translating each other's stories. Even so there was not much general acquaintance between the two literatures (despite the fact that the heralds of Modern Kannada like B.M. Srikantia and D.V. Gundappa were good students of old Tamil and a paper in old Tamil was compulsory for Kannada M.A. students.) The only explanation I can come up with is that we did not find any towering creative figures in Tamil like Bankim, Rabindranath Tagore and Sarat Chandra Chatterjee in Bengali and Hari Narayan Apte and Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Marathi. The poetry of Bharati, emotionally intense though it was seemed to lack intellectual ballast.

Having come thus far, I feel tempted to embark upon a quick assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of Kannada literature and list a few outstanding names—imperfectly following your example. A Delhi friend once asked me how it was that Kannada had more winners of the Jnanpith Award than any other language. (Hindi has since drawn level, I think.) One reason could be that we had an impressive number of major authors who have lived long and continued to be productive for half a century and more. The brilliant pioneers B.M. Srikantia, D.V. Gundappa and Masti Venkatesa Iyengar, who were themselves long lived, were followed by an astonishingly creative and long-lived quintet—D.R. Bendre, K. Shivrama Karanth, K.V. Puttappa, Jagirdar and V.K. Gokak. Karanth and Puttappa are still alive and into their nineties. The other three lived to be octogenarians. They produced a body of work in fiction and poetry and drama which not only was massive in quantity but sturdy and solid in quantity, setting high standards of literary taste and judgement in regard to life's deeper values—something like what had happened in English, French and Russian in the second half of the nineteenth century. Virtually all of them (with the exception of Karanth, a self-taught maverick) were profoundly learned in both English and Sanskrit. Most of them were also university men. They exemplified middle class morality and an outlook on social obligation which could be said to be an amalgam of Valmiki and Victorian earnestness (and later, Mahatma Gandhi). Politically they were passive. (D.V. Gundappa was in fact a moderate with a capital M) There seemed too little place in Kannada literature for rakes, rouses and revolutionaries (though we had T.P. Kailasam). Literature was high seriousness.

The quintet of Bendre, Karanth, Puttappa, Jagirdar and Gokak were not the only bright lights. There were many more of only lesser brilliance—again many of them long-lived, like P.T. Narasimhaiah, R.S. Mugali, Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar, T.N. Srikantia, G.B. Joshi, A.N. Murthy Rao—all of whom concentrated on literary values and values of life—rather than allowing their talent to subservise political causes and credos. It is surprising how few Marxists there have been in Kannada literature or even Gandhian activists, or those who were professional prison-goers or escapees into the underground—compared to Hindi, Bengali, Urdu and Marathi.

A little more of political commitment came in with the next generation—but there were also many who wore no political buttons. The big names among people who are between fifty and seventy years of age today are U.R. Anantha Murthy, A.K. Ramanujan, Girish Karnad, L.S. Bhyrappa, Yeshwant Chittal, Kirtinath Kurtukoli, K.P. Tejasvi and so on.... (Gopalkrishna Adiga, who was a little older and was one of the most powerful poets in the country died recently). It is only the innate modesty of the Kannada temperament that withholds the epithet great from them. This lot has also been greatly influenced by the newer European experimentalists—by Joyce, Eliot, Sartre and Brecht. Karnad certainly is one of the most significant playwrights in the country. How is it that in your survey of Tamil there is so little mention of Tamil drama? To complete my self appointed task of listing names of creative writers, I must mention Chandrashekhara Kambar, P Lankesh and Devanoor Mahadeva. The last two are professed iconoclasts. Mahadeva is a flag-waving Dalit.

You referred in your article to the import (mostly for the worse) of journals like *Ananda Vikatan*, *Kalki* and *Kumudam* on the quality of Tamil writing. We have had few such magazines in Kannada. Films and big magazines represent a lethal combination of big money and bad taste. The film industry is not as dominant in Kannada culture as it is in Tamil culture. The countervailing attempt to convert some fine books into art films seems to have petered out.

How I wish we could have serious studies in comparative literature which would enable people of one language to know something about the work in others.

H.Y. Sharada Prasad,
New Delhi.

■ AGRICULTURE

Biodiversity: Implications for Global Food Security

Edited by M.S. Swaminathan and S. Jana

The theme of this book is that agricultural research thrusts for the nineties and beyond will have to stress harnessing the best in science and technology, both old and new, for increasing food production, as well as, for generating more jobs and income.

Macmillan India Ltd., 1992, pp. 326, Rs 400.00

■ ECONOMY

Liberalisation: Its Impact on the Indian Economy

Edited by S.P. Gupta

This book brings together for the first time impact analyses on various aspects of the economic reform process initiated in 1991.

Macmillan India Ltd. and ICRIER, 1993, pp. 240, Rs 195.00

Planning Employment for Educated Youths: A study of post-graduates on the Registers of Employment Exchanges—in Gujarat

B.B. Patel

This book contains the results of a sample study on the incidence of unemployment and the nature of employment and earnings of the post-graduate degree holders in Ahmedabad, Vadodara and Surat regions of Gujarat.

Oxford and IBH, 1992, pp. 92, Rs. 125.00

EDUCATION

Education in Values: A Source Book

Edited by C. Seshadri, M.A. Khader and G.L. Adhya

This book is conceived primarily as an instructional resource support material for would-be and working teachers and teacher-educators at the elementary and secondary education levels. It seeks to provide a theoretical base for understanding value education.

NCERT, 1992, pp. 213, Rs 54.00

■ ENVIRONMENT

Endangered Animals of India and Their Conservation

S.M. Nair

This book attempts to create public awareness about the rich wildlife heritage of our country, the factors affecting survival of species and an understanding of how we can contribute to conservation.

National Book Trust, 1992, pp. 104, Rs 28.00

■ HISTORY AND POLITICS

A Star Shall Fall : India 1957

P.J.O. Taylor

The tales of heroism, misery, loyalty, depravity, hatred and love that accompanied the great rebellion of 1857 have been recreated, diligently and truthfully by an old India hand and author of *Chronicles of*

the Mutiny and Other Historical Sketches.

Indus Books, Harper Collins India, 1993, pp. 269, Rs 95.00

Nehru Memorial Lectures 1966-1991

Edited by John Grigg

This book comprises fifteen distinguished lectures on Nehru and Modern India delivered under the auspices of the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Trust set up in the U.K. by Lord Mountbatten.

Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 262, Rs 100.00

■ LAW

Indian Law of Marriage and Divorce

Kumud Desai

This is the most authoritative commentary on the subject and the new edition, appearing a decade after the last one, incorporates the substantial changes in the law, both statutory and judge-made.

N.M. Tripathi Pvt. Ltd., 1993, 5th Edition, pp. 579, Rs 320.00

■ LITERATURE

Indian Tales and Legends

J.E.B. Gray

Around the two great stories of *Nala and Damayanti* and the *Ramayana* which form the heart of the book, are gathered a collection of shorter tales, all of them chosen by the translator from the ancient literature and folklore of India.

Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 230, Rs 130.00

Tales From a Small Town

Dr Asoke K. Bagchi

Largely biographical in nature, this collection of short stories is based on the events and characters that filled the author's boyhood and adolescent years in his hometown of Pabna, now in Bangladesh.

Konark Publishers, 1993, pp. 124, Rs. 50.00

■ MEDIA

Sholay: A Cultural Reading

Vimal Dissanayake and Malti Sahai

The objective of this monograph is to examine this highly popular film in relation to three themes: the place of 'Sholay' in the evolution of popular Indian cinema, the concept of evil that is central to the form and the diverse ways in which viewers derived pleasure and significance from the filmic text.

Wiley Eastern, 1992, pp. 132, Rs 70.00

Awara

Gayatri Chatterjee

The author conducts and teaches film courses in many universities and institutions and has been consistently using this Raj Kapoor film as an example of the films created in the fifties—the golden age of popular Indian cinema.

Wiley Eastern, 1992, pp. 116, Rs 95.00

L.V. Prasad: A Monograph

K.N.T. Sastry

This eminent personality of Indian cinema rose from a mere errand boy to become a well known producer—director, studio owner and laboratory pioneer.

National Film Archives of India, Pune in association with Wiley Eastern, 1993, pp. 123, Rs 110.00

Master Vinayak

M.W. Kelkar

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National Film Archives of India, Pune, in association with Wiley Eastern, 1991, pp. 93, Rs 90.00

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AMIYA P. SEN is currently lecturer in History at Deshbandhu College, University of Delhi.

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MICHAEL H. FISHER is Professor of History at Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio.

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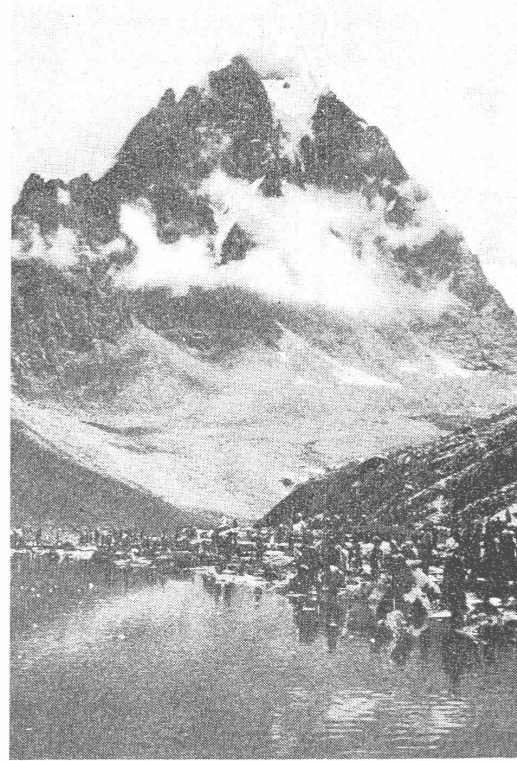


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