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PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

“Come to the edge,

We might fall.

Come to the edge,

It’s too high!

COME TO THE EDGE!

And they came

And they pushed

And they flew...”

— Christopher Logue

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The Head Behind the Tales

It is a very gratifying moment for me and the Faculty Members, Dr. Mantosh Kumar Pandey, Dr. Himanshu Shekhar Choudhary, Dr. Indrajit Kumar and Dr. Krishna Murari Singh and students of the P. G. Dept. of English, B.B.M. Koyalanchal University to present the special International English issue, "PALASHIKHA" of the journal "Sahitya Angan". This is the inaugural issue of the journal, "PALASHIKHA" with the kind assistance of Dr. Jai Gopal Mandal, Dept. of Bengali, who is the founder editor of "**Sahitya Angan**".

The focus of this issue is an individual and humorous interpretation of some classical and some contemporary literature. The aim is to encourage independent thinking and new perspectives, not necessarily critical text book analysis. There should be no curbs on imagination and interpretation. There can be different points of view and insights. As for creative expression and imagination in writing, whether in poetry, short story or the Novel; Oscar Wilde, has said famously, "The good ended happily, and the bad ended unhappily. That is what fiction means."

Such witticisms aside, the aim is to present fresh and original and sometimes an irreverent take on the immortals of literature. A mock serious and humorous look which still has grains of truth, and at the same time, lightens the mood. After all, even the Gods have feet of clay. It is entertaining to pick holes, question and see the imperfection in the perceived perfection of the immortal classics.

Often the idea of reading a classic is intimidating and the conception that a classic has a serious moral tone makes the element of enjoying fiction or a literary work almost sacrilegious. We need to shake off that seriousness of intent, and enjoy, judge and understand a masterpiece keeping it in sync with our own perceptions. In this context, Joseph Heller seems to have hit the nail on the head when he says, "He knew everything about literature except how to enjoy it."

This statement more or less sets the tone for the thrust of this issue. Even Henry James, the perfectionist, the aesthete, has commented in a lighter vein, "The story is just a spoiled child of art." So, with the approval of these great master story tellers of literature, the various creative reviews here present an un self-conscious, confident and fresh statement on some literary masterpieces. There is no intellectual posturing but a simplicity in the articles.

It is an honour to have two voices from across the borders. The first one is Mohsin Maqbool Elahi, who is a Pakistani. Born and brought up in India; Kolkata of the sixties, nostalgia plays a huge part in his prose work. The three pieces he has contributed here do not have any personal elements. He is an authority on wide ranging subjects so he writes on the memoirs of Jahanara (along with recounting the almost unreal discovery of her book). It virtually dropped in the hands of Andrea Butenschon from behind a wall at Agra Fort. She was visiting the Jasmine Tower at Agra Fort. This unique handwritten copy in Persian had waited for this opportune moment, hidden behind a marble slab for three hundred years! Talk of truth being stranger than fiction.

In a stark turnaround from the aesthetics of the Mughal era to the existential angst of post modernism, his next work is an analysis of Albert Camus "The Stranger." He has also written a poem with a brilliant technical innovation.

The next contribution from Pakistan is from Nikhat Mahmood. Coincidentally she is also an Indian by birth, Pakistani by marriage. Another loss to Pakistan, this time of the literary kind. On a serious note, in spite of the hostility on the borders, the sensibility of the Indian subcontinent is a shared heritage.

Nikhat has taken a brilliant and mocking take on the celebrity author, Mrs. Funnybones a.k.a. Twinkle Khanna. These star kids have stardom for the asking, whether it is movies, or if they want, they become readymade bestselling authors. Their starry status ensures them huge advances from publishing houses like Penguin. The publicity comes for free, which overlooks the absence of any substance or literary merit in the forgettable wisdom which they inflict on the unsuspecting or in the case of Nikhat, suspecting reading public. She feels this kind of writing is pulp at its worst. Nikhat is ironical and sarcastic both, in her style.

We also have a short and mocking piece by Olivia Hidlebaugh, an American writer who spoofs the infamous ability of men to feel incapacitated at a common cold. Hilariously dubbing it "Man Cold", Olivia writes a hilarious take. These three writers are our guests for this issue.

The next piece, "Fables Revisited in Vikram Seth: A Tale Retold, 'The Monkey and the Crocodile' And the Sense of Nonsense, Ogden Nash, The Truth in Absurdity" is a study of one poem," The Monkey and the Crocodile" from "Beastly Tales...", which is reviewed. A brief look is taken at the celebrated Ogden Nash's individual quirky style of writing, which almost falls in the category of limericks. There are points of similarities, and a

comparison and a contrast always highlight these differences as well as parallels. A longer poem, “The Adventures of Isabel”, can be read as a fairy tale fantasy, with a darker underbelly. They can be categorized in the same genre with Vikram Seth’s “Beastly Tales from Here and There.” As the author Vikram Seth says, the stories are from the land of “gup”. This word, a synonym for tall tales, can be applied to Ogden Nash, the beloved American poet known for his epigrammatic poems.

The Post Graduate Department of English has the faculty members with their contribution on diverse topics— free ranging from Shakespeare to critique of a new poetic voice from Jharkhand. Dr. Mantosh Pandey talks about ecocriticism in a brilliant essay. Considering the climatic change, natural disasters and the changing weather patterns, this is an insightful work.

Dr. Indrajit Kumar explores the development of Literature even in a universal crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic. Very contemporary, it is a thoughtful exploration of an unexpected and crucial period in the history of modern civilization. Dr. Indrajit connects the past, present and future to understand how literature has evolved during the times of crises.

While Dr. Himanshu Shekhar Choudhary analyses an analysis on Shakespeare in a pure academic manner.

Dr. Krishna Murari Singh takes a look at a contemporary and fresh poet, Dr. Rajesh Kumar from within our academic circles.

We also have two brilliant write-ups from our home-grown talent. Ritika Ojha, a JRF scholar, has tried to understand and comprehend the reasons for Heathcliff’s magnificent obsession with Catherine Earnshaw in Emily Bronte’s “Wuthering Heights.” To any millennial that love which transcends lifetimes seems unnatural and unreasonable. Living in an age of quick fixes and instant solutions, she feels that such love is just an abnormal fixation. She also analyses Heathcliff’s capacity for an obsessive love and hatred as a reaction of being an unloved person himself. No one loves him except Catherine and even she betrays him by marrying Edgar Linton. No doubt, Ritika has a point.

Md. Rustam Ansari, a B.B.M. Koyalanchal University Scholar, has cleared NET and JRF, and passed M.A. with a first class and distinction. He tries to reconcile with the loneliness of J. Alfred Prufrock, the signature protagonist of T. S. Eliot in the twentieth century, with the postmodern citizen of the twenty-first century cyber world. Has the isolation of the twentieth century man led to a greater mental malady of the twenty-first century individual

who is constantly connected to the net, but is alienated in the physical reality? He is a netizen, no longer a citizen of the world. Rustam writes on the mental sickness of the smart phone addict.

In a heartening display at creativity Rustam Ansari has fused science and literature together in a short poem on gnomes.

Some pass-out students of Post Graduate, English, Session 2018-2020, have also analysed some literary classics, trying to come to a conclusion. They are: Anamika Banerjee who writes on the poignant “A Thousand Splendid Suns”. Nidhi Sharma tries to understand the intensity of “Great Expectations”, and Priya Jha, the tragedy of the Holocaust in reading the Diary of Anne Frank. Rashid Alam dares to question Jane Austen’s choice of words and thematic concerns in “Emma”. Though one may agree or disagree with him, but the point is his ability to think independently. Rudra Goswami who feels that “Godan” is about a world which he can identify with, comparing it to what he describes in his poem, “My Grandma’s World.” Sujit has presented two write ups on two completely diverse topics. It is in keeping with the fact that the scope of literature is unlimited. He explores the pessimism in “In Memoriam”, and mythical reality in “Nagamandala.”

This scintillating collection of essays in this edition, intends to underline the fact that “What literature can do and should do is change the people who teach the people who don’t read the books.” A. S. Byatt.

The P. G. English Dept of English would not presume so much, but let me remind you that it is important to laugh at oneself. This issue emphasises the fact that literature has the quality of entertainment too, and not only a seriousness of intent.

After all, what is a novel but “A beginning, a muddle, and an end.” (Philip Larkin)

With that I leave the readers to laugh and enjoy because,” Yes, oh dear yes – the novel tells a story.” (E. M. Forster)

Dr. Seema Sinha

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Echoes from across the Physical Divide: Two Voices from Pakistan

- Mohsin Maqbool Elahi
- Nikhat Mahmood

The Jeremiad of Jahanara

By Mohsin Maqbool Elahi

THE story behind the book, *The Life of a Mogul Princess: Jahanara Begum* (daughter of Shahjahan), is in itself interesting. Andrea Butenschon found a unique handwritten copy in Persian of Jahanara's book by accident. While she was visiting the Jasmine Tower of the Agra Fort, the manuscript fell into her hands from behind a marble slab which was on the verge of breaking. She translated the manuscript into English and the book was finally published in 1931, almost 300 years after Jahanara had written it.

The Jasmine Tower must have been the favourite haunt of Jahanara for writing the book, as it is mentioned in the second chapter: "The dark was coming on and I left Anguri Bagh for the Jasmine Tower with its lamps. Here I can write undisturbed, no steps patter about, no voices, reminding of the present, penetrate into the past, into my real life."

Leafing through the pages of the book you can well understand that it is a jeremiad which Jahanara suffered at the hands of her stone-hearted brother, Aurangzeb Alamgir. However, she is not the only one who suffered because of him. He imprisoned his father in Agra Fort for eight long years and he was personally responsible for the murder of his brothers, Dara Shikoh and Murad Shah.

The Mughal princess calls Aurangzeb "the white serpent" several times in the book but points out that it was a sobriquet given to Aurangzeb by her father. She also refers to him as a "tiger" and a "panther" which just goes to show how cat-like he was in his Machiavellian moves.

Though Aurangzeb is the dominant figure in Jahanara's book, it consists of a lot more. Both Dara Shikoh and Jahanara, like many of their ancestors, were greatly interested in art and culture. She is a great lover of books as she has not only read Baburnama, but also Akbarnama and Ayn-i-Akbari, both of which were written by the Persian Abul Fazl as Akbar was illiterate, and Sar-i-Israr.

She loves visiting Akbar's library in the palace in Fatehpur Sikri which she describes in detail. "And now I saw the library — shelf upon shelf of

manuscripts in beautifully worked coverings — all the scattered treasures of the Timurides, which the emperor Babur brought from Iran; all that Akbar himself gathered together of poetry and wisdom from Hindustan and Persia, Arabia, Greece and Palestine — more than any of his predecessors or successors in Hind collected.”

Jahanara had aspirations of becoming a magnificent builder like her father, Shahjahan, as she wanted to build a “Hazar Minar, a palace holding a thousand minarets”. And the princess, like all great Mughal kings and queens, is greatly enamoured by gardens which she often visits to muse. Anguri Bagh, Shalamar Bagh, Hayat Baksh Bagh, and Mahtab Bagh are some of the gardens she mentions in the book.

It must be mentioned here that Babur, the first Mughal king, proclaimed himself emperor in 1508 in a garden. Soon after his enthronement he ordered the building of a chahar bagh called the Bagh-i-Jahanara at Herat. Little would he have known then that one day a great great great granddaughter of his would be called Jahanara.

The Mughal queens were not far behind their male counterparts where building tombs and laying out gardens were concerned. Humayun’s widow, Hamida Begum, supervised the construction of his tomb in Delhi, which was to be the first of a series of magnificent garden tombs built by the Mughals. Nur Jahan laid out the huge garden of Dilkusha at Shahdara, Lahore, where Jahangir was eventually buried in a tomb of his wife’s design. Another garden said to be the work of Nur Jahan was Achabal in Kashmir and was originally called Begumabad.

John Brookes writes in the Gardens of Paradise — The History and Design of the Great Islamic Gardens: “It was thanks to travellers such as Bernier, Tavernier and Manucci that details of gardens remain. Bernier especially left the most complete descriptions of the gardens of Kashmir.”

Jahanara writes about Anguri Bagh, which contains the Khas Mahal, in vivid detail. She states that it was here that her two eldest brothers were married. Writing about Anguri Bagh, Mr Brookes says: “...they contain niches in which were placed flowers by day and lights by night, to be seen through the falling water. There is a deserted sadness about this garden when one remembers that in happier times Shahjehan celebrated the marriage feast of his two sons, Dara Shikoh and Sultan Shuja, here.”

The Mughal princess has done such a marvellous job while describing the architecture, the paintings, the flowers, etc., that you are actually transported to that era like you were travelling in a time machine.

Andrea Butenschon too deserves credit for keeping the Mughal milieu alive. The best part about the book is that though you are reading history it seems like a thriller and makes you turn page after page until you have reached the final page.

***“A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases;
it will never Pass into nothingness”***
(John Keats)

The Strangeness of the Stranger

By Mohsin Maqbool Elahi

I FOUND Albert Camus's book "The Stranger" to be a lot more different than anything else that I have ever read. Its opening line -- "Mother died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don't know." -- is often mentioned in the most famous opening lines of literary works. Then Albert Camus goes on to describe Mersault's feelings regarding his mother's death. But surprisingly he has none. One is shocked at reading this and finds Camus's hero or rather anti-hero to be absolutely strange or rather a "stranger", which the book's name alludes to. Here is an extract on how Mersault feels about his Mother.

"When we lived together, Mother was always watching me, but we hardly ever talked. During her first few weeks at the Home she used to cry a good deal. But that was only because she hadn't settled down. After a month or two she'd have cried if she'd been told to leave the Home. Because this, too, would have been a wrench. That was why, during the last year, I seldom went to see her. Also, it would have meant losing my Sunday—not to mention the trouble of going to the bus, getting my ticket, and spending two hours on the journey each way."

There is a big difference between people who live in the West and those who live in the East. People like Mersault, who belong to the West, can be extremely insensitive when it comes to aging parents. They prefer sending them to an Old People's Home rather than taking care of them themselves. Here in the East it is exactly the opposite: we take care of parents until death snatches them from us. Visiting parents in Homes once a month or even once a week compares nowhere to having them almost 24/7 in front of our eyes.

I wrote this several years back. I am sorry to say that I have to change my perception now regarding children living in the East. We love emulating the West in everything, especially when it happens to be something bad. Sadly, quite a few grown-up children living from Calcutta to Karachi have started putting up their aged parents or the only surviving one in Old People's Homes where they hardly ever visit them. Here the single parent lives a torturous life and dies a lonely death.

Camus brings out the melancholia of loneliness and a departed friend (not his) so beautifully in the following extract:

"A few minutes later one of the women started weeping. She was in the second row and I couldn't see her face because of another woman in front. At regular intervals she emitted a little choking sob; one had a feeling she would

never stop. The others didn't seem to notice. They sat in silence, slumped in their chairs, staring at the coffin or at their walking sticks or any object just in front of them, and never took their eyes off it. And still the woman sobbed. I was rather surprised, as I didn't know who she was. I wanted her to stop crying, but dared not speak to her. After a while the keeper bent toward her and whispered in her ear; but she merely shook her head, mumbled something I couldn't catch, and went on sobbing as steadily as before. The keeper got up and moved his chair beside mine. At first, he kept silent; then, without looking at me, he explained. 'She was devoted to your mother. She says your mother was her only friend in the world, and now she's all alone.'

"I had nothing to say, and the silence lasted quite a while. Presently the woman's sighs and sobs became less frequent, and, after blowing her nose and snuffling for some minutes, she, too, fell silent."

Like many of us, Mersault loved looking at the world from his bedroom balcony. That gave him enough reason not to mix with people; that was the best way to remain an introvert.

"My bedroom overlooks the main street of our district. Though it was a fine afternoon, the paving blocks were black and glistening. What few people were about seemed in an absurd hurry? First of all, there came a family, going for their Sunday-afternoon walk; two small boys in sailor suits, with short trousers hardly down to their knees, and looking rather uneasy in their Sunday best; then a little girl with a big pink bow and black patent-leather shoes. Behind them was their mother, an enormously fat woman in a brown silk dress, and their father, a dapper little man, whom I knew by sight. He had a straw hat, a walking stick, and a butterfly tie. Seeing him beside his wife, I understood why people said he came of a good family and had married beneath him.

"Next came a group of young fellows, the local "bloods," with sleek oiled hair, red ties, coats cut very tight at the waist, braided pockets, and square-toed shoes. I guessed they were going to one of the big theatres in the centre of the town. That was why they had started out so early and were hurrying to the streetcar stop, laughing and talking at the top of their voices."

Mersault kills an Arab without having a valid reason to do so. Nobody in his right mind does that. But then is Mersault really in his right mind? He seems to be totally out of focus. In fact, he does not seem to care about anything; be it an office promotion or reciprocating a woman's love or even his existence.

The strangeness of "The Stranger" (also known as "The Outsider") is what attracts readers to the book and keeps them glued right till the very end. By

the way, Camus or his book often gets mentioned in American or British films like "The Prize" (1963) and "An Education" (2009), both classics in their own right.

The French-Algerian writer Albert Camus would definitely have written more novels on "absurdism" had his life not been cut short at the age of 46 in an automobile accident on January 4, 1960, in Burgundy, France. Both his novels "The Stranger" (1942) and "The Plague" (1947) are considered exemplars of absurdism.

*"And nothing to look backward to with pride,
And nothing to look forward to with hope"*
(Robert Frost)

Jealousy Takes its Toll

By Mohsin Maqbool Elahi

Envy turns you into a beast;
All the good in you flies away.
You keep on gathering the worst;
The devil on you holds strong sway.

Her face keeps on disturbing you;
You seethe, you sulk, you fume, you foam.
You now want to give her her due;
She was the wrecker of your home.

Only one thought is on your mind:
“My heart-breaker I want to flay.”
Full of faults you always her find:
“How can I her instantly slay?”

Othello could reason no more;
A green-eyed monster he was now.
She certainly was a cheap whore;
To murder his wife he did vow.

To all her pleas he had turned blind;
He throttled her with his bare hands.
Now nothing could perturb his mind;
By all means, it was good riddance.

Too late he perceived his folly;
The Moor could no more make amends.
He cried over his lunacy;
With suicide his life he ends.

***“Now hatred is by far the longest pleasure;
Men love in haste but they detest at leisure.”***

(Lord Byron)

Author's notes:

This six-stanza poem contains alternate-line rhyming with each line containing exactly eight syllables

Laughing off Twinkle Khanna's Mrs Funnybones

By Nikhat Mahmood

"Did perpetual happiness in the Garden of Eden maybe get so boring that eating the apple was justified?" is a rhetorical question by Chuck Palahniuk. In his novel 'Survivor' Well, it's unreasonable to blame a woman for being silly when she is in love or in a state of boredom. So, in boredom, not love, silliness overtook me, and I strayed or rather surfed the internet. First, I looked around from a vantage point, to decide which wave to pick, then paddled around a few that soon lost their hold on me. It went on until I spotted one, supported by a favourable gust of strong wind, and I boarded it. The wave was a star; twinkling and big. I impulsively wanted to buy it and did a Kindle purchase. It called itself Mrs Funnybones, it surely was a Mrs, that of another big star (together they throw their astral light around wherever they go) but did not have one limb, rib, cartilage that you might find funny; if you have zero acceptance for WhatsApp forwarded memes and jokes to pass off as humour in writings that are considered creative. And I have zero tolerance for them, besides clichés.

Let me brush aside the vagueness and come straight to the point; I read and felt remorse for it, the book of Twinkle Khanna, 'Mrs Funnybones'. There is a phrase in Urdu called 'Tahmeed Bandhna,' roughly translated it can be a preamble, a preface or a preliminary introduction. All that the writer writes in this phase has to eventually and effortlessly lead to the topic idea of the written work. Mindless meandering of words gathered to forcefully evoke laughter neither help a book to be classified as a brilliantly comic piece nor bring home any point for which it may have been written for in the first place. Unrelated to each other the chapters in the book are flooded with forced humour and astute observations of the author with facile analysis of contemporary society through her expensive rose-tinted sunglasses. Moreover, the beginning and the ending of the chapters are very abrupt. The

characters came out of nowhere, sound very unreal and are of no significance or relevance.

Twinkle is known for her quick and so-called witty talks that she tried to incorporate in a book but I think it did not come out well. Despite the fact that it contains lots of sarcasm and humour which could have been well capitalised by a better writer, this one fails to impress the readers. It's just a general book with the sequence of actions any educated and rich housewife would encounter in her life, impressing people who are unaware of this lifestyle. Twinkle's travelling to meet her family at an exotic holiday destination, her exuberance at being able to spend some quality time with the family after much sitting on the desk, her motherly duties fulfilled in guilt-ridden sentiments make no sense to me as far as the unity and coherence in her writing goes, the lady needs a lesson in writing well-developed chapters apart of course from the rules of punctuation.

Akshay Kumar was/is the man in many hearts, but as far as a house is concerned, only that of Twinkle's, an acknowledged truth that she doesn't need to stress by addressing him as 'the man of the house' several times in each of her chapters. When it appeared for the third time, in the one I was reading, I felt an intense need to bang the 'Mudgal' of Akshay Khanna, that she was carrying for him, on her head. 'Women are meant to balance it all — careers, family and friends while also having perfectly coiffed hair and toned bodies, she wrote. 'No, they are not expected to be perfect in everything, don't reiterate a cliché,' I wanted to shriek, but reminded myself that perhaps it must be so amongst her acquaintance, they being from a profession where looking good and flaunting perfect life are like assignments. Also, 'cellulite on my thighs' celebrity confession is an old trend, and Twinkle must find something new to make her readers relate with her. Modern Indian women are certainly not the kind that has been portrayed in the book. Ironically in some stories, she says how hard it is to be rich, to be followed by the paparazzi, how she is just too cool, indirectly portraying her lavish lifestyle. Finally, after much zigzagging in the Khanna labyrinth, I could find the three

to four sentences on why each of her stories is titled as it is. For instance, in one of her chapters, it was a chance meeting with a woman of white racial supremacy that made Twinkle portray her in manifold shades of bigotry, the only good thing in it before she goes into gratuitous prattling again.

Mrs Funnybones, I came to know had sold more than 1 lakh copies in 2015 making the author the highest selling woman writer in India, and that roused the curiosity cat in me. I pondered over my reads on brilliant and classy to all intents and purposes Indian women writers, Kiran Desai, and Jhumpa Lahiri to name a few and felt slighted for them. After reading this book I reflected on my understanding of what it takes for a book to become a national bestseller as written on the cover page of the book. It lacks substance and is disparaging for magnificent blockbusters that it should be in league with them. If not for being Akshay Kumar's wife and getting a huge platform and simply promoted by Penguin, anyone would hardly cast a second glance on it, let alone buy or read it. My belief that star kids, spouses have it easy is reinforced by the saleability success of this book. Simply, a much affluent woman's affluence is being further enhanced by selling unrecycled trash! To say the least, I was a bit disappointed with this book. My opinion about it might sound harsh, but people who are hooked up to the celeb lifestyle, crazy for celeb insights and want a light reading might in all probability like it.

I sat for a while after reading this profanity of humour (coupled with an attempt to deliver some morals which actually got lost in the whole rigmarole) then I sent my thousand apologies for such a blasphemy to Nadeem F. Paracha, the king of humour and satire, also to Moni Mohsin, the writer of 'The Diary of a Social Butterfly' by whom Twinkle seems to be too highly inspired, subconsciously I guess. I instantly felt better, for hasn't God said, "If you ask for forgiveness, I will grant it, and it would be as if you haven't sinned at all."

***"I always pass on good advice. It is the only thing to do with it.
It is never of any use to oneself."***
(Oscar Wilde)

2 |

A Dose of American Humour: A Take from the West

- **A Spoof: Olivia Hidlebaugh**

Colds for Older Men

By Barbara Binland

Wifey flings open the bedroom door,
Not gazing kindly, a picture she draws,
Wife blows her nose, her cheeks a'rose,
Her husband lies there, full of moans,
Her husband begs,
Wifey takes a breath,
“Yes, dear, I know you have a man-cold,
But, dear, I too, have a man-cold,
But women are not allowed to groan,
or nag, says men, you are alone,
I, too, have a cold,
But, well, this washing's getting old,
I'm cooking tea, and minding the grandkids,
No, I shan't make soup like your mother did,
Yes, dear, the undertakers are near,
Here's your last will for your man-cold,
Your whinging, is like, well, old!
I have to iron your shirts now,
Yes, dear, I know I am a fat old cow,
But, dear, I have your balls in my purse,
I do hope our man-colds don't get any worse!

“I never married because there was no need. I have three pets at home which answer the same purpose as a husband. I have a dog which growls every morning, a parrot which swears all afternoon, and a cat that come late at night.”
(Marie Corelli)

“He fell in love with himself at first sight and it is a passion to which he has always remained faithful.”
(Anthony Powell)

Menu: Hot Mess Memoir

By Olivia Hidlebaugh

A humorous, honest, hot mess approach to life!

10 Symptoms of the 'Man Cold' by Hotness

This post is dedicated to my husband. I love you and you are the King of man colds!

My husband has caught a cold, not just any cold, BUT **'the man cold'**. If you are unaware of this disease, it is on par with SARS, AIDS, stage 4 Cancer and lastly the Bubonic plague.

Despite thinking that everyone has seen, heard and experienced the symptoms of man cold, I realised that some haven't. So here is the definition, courtesy the urban dictionary.

In an effort to bring an awareness of this life-threatening disease, I want to help you in identifying the signs of man cold, and seek treatment immediately.

10 Symptoms of the Man Cold

Somehow by the grace of God he still has an appetite. It is not uncommon for him to ask for chicken wings, pizza or something equally consuming and delicious 'like his mom made' that would 'make him feel better'!

He will text you from upstairs to get his medicine because thanks to the debilitating disease his legs have mysteriously stopped working.

He will sneeze louder than usual so that everyone notices. Covering the mouth is optional. There will be series of groans from him to remind everyone that he is very sick. His need for sympathy and pampering will exceed the normal limits. Unlike women who cook and clean even when they are ill; the entire world has to come to a stop for **The Man Cold**.

Childlike behaviour is to be expected. Like temper tantrums, a complete refusal to give up the t. v. remote, sulking, and demand for special food for the King Baby.

During recuperation plans are on for tales around the family hearth, of how he faded in and out of consciousness and barely survived. Exaggeration and melodrama are the key words.

Did I miss any? I would love to hear how you survived the Man Cold? I would love to hear your comeback story, you brave fighter, you!

'Ye can call it influenza if ye like,'said Mrs. Machin.'

There was no influenza in my young days. We called a cold a cold.'

(Arnold Bennet)

Man Cold

by Olivia Hidlebaugh

When men stand strong and act like they're tough

I can see through their macho man stuff

Can't make it through the day

On their death bed they lay

A simple cold seems to kick their butt

What does my little fighter want now?

Rub your back or a kiss on the brow?

Alright it's nappy time

No it's not time to whine

Quit complaining or get a timeout

It's like he's dying in front of me

It's not me, it's his mamma he needs

Oh this is pathetic

Why doesn't man get it?

We don't want a super-size baby.

***“Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever”***

(William Shakespeare)

3 |

The Head Tells Tales

▪ **Dr. Seema Sinha**

Fables Revisited in Vikram Seth: A Tale Re told:
"The Monkey and the Crocodile" and The Sense of Nonsense, Ogden
Nash, The Truth in Absurdity.

By Dr. Seema Sinha

Vikram Seth is the *wunderkid* of the international litmart, and apart from his mega novels like "A Suitable Boy" and the brilliantly experimental "The Golden Gate", his most endearing work is the collection of poems, "Beastly Tales from Here and There." In a self-effacing way the author /poet confesses that they were all written on a summer afternoon..."¹ Meant to be spoofs, the elegance, humour and the sheer eccentricity elevates them to a level of art. The effortless wit and the nonchalance are captivating as the animal fables from Panchatantra and Aesop are retold in rhyme. The humanizing of the animal world creates a surrealistic effect which somehow corresponds with the simplicity of style. That simplicity is the strength of the world of folklores. There is an element of understated statement in them without any complexity of emotions. They are timeless.

Vikram Seth creates the same black and white world in "Beastly Tales..." The story of the gullible and happy go lucky monkey who made an unlikely friend in the crocodile, and almost lost his life, is a story which is familiar to all of us .The monkey's presence of mind saves him at the last moment, and also teaches him an invaluable lesson, to never dance with the wolves .It is a loss of innocence in the end. The opening lines are almost sonorous, in keeping with the mythical nature of the animal fables in 'Panchatantra', where this story is among the most popular.

On the Ganges greenest isle,
Lived Kuroop the Crocodile:"²

Vikram Seth gives the mythical world a setting and his animal protagonists recognizable human characteristics. This device creates an added dimension to the theme, as we identify the visible human qualities. It creates a complex reality which corresponds with the ambivalence of the real world.

"A thing well said will be wit in all languages."
(John Dryden)

The monkey is playful and trusting, and chooses for his friend the crocodile, who hides his devious intentions behind an ever present beatific smile. He is the smiling villain, the veritable Satan with the apple. The malevolence of the crocodile is disguised under a “gentle grin”¹and harmless inscrutable “tepid eyes.”² The dangerous stealth is almost impossible to detect and the ruthlessness apparent, when smirk intact;

“Then he’d lunge with a smiling head,
Grab, and snap, and rip it dead.”³

All great literature is universal, and we can find corresponding points. A bold comparison perhaps, but the deviousness and duplicity of the supposedly harmless exterior of the Crocodile, hiding ruthlessness; reminds me of the immortal villain Uriah Heep, in Charles Dickens ‘s “David Copperfield.” Heep’s continuous bodily contortions, slimy cold hands, and assertions of being ‘*umble*, are as nerve wracking as the menace of the Crocodile lying in wait for his unsuspecting prey, with a ‘Pollywog’, like immobility.

What is amusing is the character of his wife, the Lady Crocodile who is lazy, indolent and twists her husband; the formidable crocodile around her manicured scaly claws. Her evil nature is masked under an air of benevolence, and she is the veritable Serpent in the grass. Utterly immoral and avaricious, she is pampered by the crocodile who fawns over her with all the beastly offerings of his prey, and is besotted with her feminine wiles. The power equation between them is one sided and comical, and it is certainly the Lady Crocodile who rules the infatuated Crocodile with a cold blooded (pun) and a slimy reptilian determination. The crocodile is her adoring slave, and she is the goddess of their watery universe. The eccentricities of the human like characteristics in a perfect mocking tone, highlights the absurdities of the situation. Perhaps it is due to the fact that the ambivalence and contradictions are a part of human behaviour.

Animals are driven by instincts, and to translate human oddities, peculiarities and duplicities and sly intentions through animal kingdom is like looking into a mirror which reflects an unflattering image. Though totally different in setting , intention and genre to George Orwell’s “Animal Farm”, written in 1945, certain disconcerting truths about human world are undeniable .The allegory of animals talking and behaving like mankind creates a dark humour .It acts as both, ‘a mirror’ and ‘a lamp’, throwing light and highlighting the imperfections and distorted images .

“Animals, whom we have made our slaves, we do not like to consider our equal.”

(Charles Darwin)

Albeit Vikram Seth as he says himself, wrote these poems in a light hearted vein and they are all stories from the land of 'Gup', (a Hindi word for tall tales), the sheer lyricism and elegance of his poetic style and the element of fabulism and magic realism creates a feeling of joy while reading the poems.

The avaricious and manipulative Lady Crocodile to kill (pun intended) boredom and add variety, wants to eat the monkey ,whose gifts of sweet mangoes have titillated her taste buds and created an evil desire in her dark heart .Her husband is bullied by her affectations , "Oh, my breath grows faint , I fear..."⁴ and is ready to do what she says . Her calculated melodrama has the desired effect and the Crocodile persuades the monkey to accept his invitation to dinner. As the lines move forward, we see the unsuspecting monkey virtually being taken on a ride, pun intended, on the back of the crocodile down the river. The crocodile reveals to the monkey mid river, that his wife wishes to eat him for dinner. The monkey realizes he has walked into a trap. With little hope of escape, he relies on his wit, and the Crocodile's glaring lack of reasoning power. The callous absence of a moral sense in the Crocodile is obvious when he patronizingly tells the monkey,

"I will let you choose your end.
After all, you are my friend."⁵

The sheer ridiculousness of these words creates a warped humour. One is reminded of the psychopathic Joker in the movie "The Dark Knight", the immortal villain in a twisted world, where jokers are menacing and murderous and kill with a smile. Sensing the Crocodile's weakness for Mrs. Crocodile, the monkey makes a desperate attempt to escape, and using the Lady Crocodile's own weapon, her vain and vile sense of entitlement; hurriedly says:

'Noble Lady! How she'll freeze,
Dumb with sorrow, when she sees,
Having prised my ribs apart,
That my breast contains no heart."⁶

With the egotism of the villain and vanity of the Fool, it is incomprehensible to the Crocodile that anybody could refuse to be a prey of his beloved. The smiling villain readily believes the monkey when he says,

“If you had not rushed me so,
I’d have found the time to go
To the hollow where I keep
Heart and liver when I sleep,
Half my brain, and fingernail,
Cufflinks, chutney and spare tail.”⁷

Though the tongue and cheek humour of the farcical list of things mentioned by the monkey is hilarious, we virtually have our hearts in our mouths like the monkey; till he escapes and is safe on the branches of the tree.

Like all great pieces of literature, allegories like the animal fables in any language can be interpreted on many levels. They can be enjoyed for their own sake, or be read as children’s literature. The simplicity of the style is the highlight of the allegorical stories. In the modern context, these animal fables can be retold with fresh insights and a generous dose of humour as in Vikram Seth’s “Beastly Tales.... “Allegories like Panchtantra or Aesop’s fables are familiar and the end comes with a moral lesson. Allegories are present in almost all the cultures and languages. Almost all indigenous and native cultures like the African, Red Indian, Aboriginal etc. Have mythical heritage in their folk tales, where usually the time setting is an archaic past where animals speak and behave like human beings. These stories are often passed down the generations through an oral storytelling, and the authorship is usually unknown.

In Hindi in the recent past, when Hindi was emerging out of the shadows of Urdu and Avadhi, we have the “Kissa Tota Maina”, which is a series of stories by the ‘Tota’ and the ‘Maina’, told to each other about the shenanigans of the human beings. The Panchtantra is written in Sanskrit. In these animal fables, the animals speak and act like human beings and in the process, become caricatures of men and women. The absurdity becomes a powerful commentary on life, mankind and the human society.

Vikram Seth certainly excels as a master story teller, and this is a brilliant parody of men and manners and an incisive character study. All the tales in ‘The Beastly Tales...’ are tales par excellence, this is *kissagoi*, in at its best. Who can deny the power of a story, as Scherezade in “Arabian Nights” proves?

Replete with all the sights and sounds of the East, there is an element of exotica about “Beastly Tales...”, as well as a moral truth, told with a gentle satire.

Subtle satire or irony creates immortal literature, which illuminates any written piece and also adds a depth of meaning. In this context the absurdist poems, limericks of the American poet Ogden Nash invite a closer look. Hugely popular as a children's poet, because of the nonsensical catchy rhymes, his verse can be enjoyed for its own sake. Yet like in the nursery rhymes, the simplicity is only superficial, as there seems to be an undercurrent of deeper allusion. Nash writes light hearted poems which are quirky and depict an upside down world like in "Alice in Wonderland." The truth is not what is visible, but perhaps something surreal. The situation is distorted and you get an inverted image in a crazy world of small girls who kill giants and cuckoos who are cocky and unfaithful.

Ogden Nash is very readable and takes artistic liberties with a flourish in his poetic verse, misspelling words to fit in with the lines. Sometimes with a biting satire, often playful. The tongue in cheek irreverence is apparent in these lines:

"God in his wisdom made a fly,
And then forgot to tell us why."⁸

The simple two liner cannot be dismissed as just wordplay. There is an insight masked under the playfulness. Often there is an appealing pun and the device of humanizing animals creates a rich diversity. His poem simply titled: **'The Pig'**

"The Pig, if I am not mistaken;
Supplies us sausage, ham and bacon
Let other say his heart is big –
I call it stupid of the pig."⁹

The irony and sarcasm are unmistakable and yet it can also be read as a simple rhyme. The childlike and nonsensical tone is a deliberate device. All his short poems are entertaining and are also social satires. For example, his take on marriage:

'The Cuckoo'

"Cuckoos lead Bohemian lives,
They fail as husbands and as wives ,
Therefore they cynically disparage
Everybody else's marriage ."¹⁰

Among the famous writers of one liners, Oscar Wilde has this to say of marriage, "In married life three is company and two none ."¹¹

Roald Dahl, the Englishman with Norwegian origins is a famous children's poet . His poems also have a parallel sinister meaning under the apparent innocence . He takes the familiar fairy tale characters and humanises them , albeit with a twist . This is in keeping with the trend of the violence and malevolence inherent in the nursery rhymes and the fairy tales . The comic poems assume a different meaning . For example ;

3 Little Pigs

“The animal I really dig
Above all others is the pig ,
Pigs are noble , pigs are clever
Pigs are courteous . However.
Now and then , to break this rule ,
One meets a pig who is a fool.

.....
.....

Ah, Piglet, you must never trust
Young ladies from the upper crust .
For now, Miss Riding Hood , one notes
Not only has two wolf skin coats .
And when she goes from place to place
She has a PIGSKIN TRAVELLING CASE.”¹²

Roald Dahl.

His other poems are in the same vein, where fairy tales are given a new and a sarcastic touch are ‘Cinderella’, ‘Goldilocks’, ‘Hansel and Gretel’ etc. Delightful, comic but with an obvious darkness.

The poems of Ogden Nash are like epigrams in verse , biting , and full of an undeniable truth disguised as humour .At the same time they bring a sense of joy because of the sheer unpretentiousness of the theme and light hearted and catchy rhyme . The fertility of their imagination in creating a fantastic world is unparalleled and a welcome departure from the contemporary serious and pessimistic literature .

A long poem “ Adventures of Isabel”, is about the small and brave girl who vanquishes giants and witches and kills bears with ease .

“Isabel met an enormous bear ,
Isabel , Isabel didn't care.....

.....

She washed her hands, and straightened her hair up,
Then Isabel quietly ate the bear up....”¹³And so it goes on till the end , Isabel calmly annihilates a giant and a witch, and finally punishes every child’s worst nightmare , a doctor . We can imagine the thrill in the young mind at reading about the brave Isabel. There is an element of fantasy told in a dead pan serious voice . Putting on the looking glasses of the adults , we can read a different meaning ,and are reminded of the strength of the vulnerable . The different perceptions add to different levels of meaning . They create an illusion of innocence , which can be enjoyed as a literature for children or read with an understanding of a deeper meaning masked as a comic word picture .

“I’m not over fond of animals. am merely astounded by them.”

(David Attenborough)

Lewis Carroll ,Ogden Nash , Vikram Seth , Roald Dahl , J. K. Rowling have created masterpieces in prose and verse , which provide a world of '*instruction and delight*' both .Blake's "Songs of Innocence" and "Songs of Experience" have the same child like imagery in some poems , and can be read as children' s poems .Blake also created immortal artwork to define his theme .Ogden Nash and Roald Dahl's poems have a visual pictorial quality , akin to comic books . They are accompanied by sketches and drawings. 'Beastly Tales ...' also has drawings. They fall into the genre of illustrated work , much like 'The Sketches by Boz ' , which came out as illustrated stories in the nineteenth century , and were Charles Dickens's stepping stone to success. Oscar Wilde's play 'Salome' has an illustration by the great artist Aubrey Beardsley. No doubt these sketches were the forerunners of comic book art of the twentieth century, the many versions as comic strips , graphic novels and metamorphosing in animated films, cartoons etc . They are an inescapable part of popular culture . They are a mixture of satire and buffoonery, and teach the world to laugh at themselves . They range from irreverence ,political and social criticism , dark humour, comedy and also pure fun .

In the modern writers, there are elements of exaggeration, absurdism ,spoon , satire , caricature and parody in the characterisation written in a captivating literary style. Vikram Seth's lines have a smooth lyricism, Ogden Nash is deliberately ungrammatical and rustic at times .Their work cannot be dismissed as banality as they are verbal mavericks and raise satire and lampooning to a level of art reminding us of the great satirists of the eighteenth century. Ogden Nash's work has similarities with the Conceptual Art movement of the nineteen sixties' which is based on the idea that the concept behind a work of art was more important than the work itself . Art and literature influence each other as the first exhibition of Post Impressionist Art in 1910 in London had a huge impact on the English Literature , the discarding of Naturalism, the shift in emphasis from the social and historical to the individual and the growth of psychoanalysis and the psychological novel. Surrealism ,Dadaism ,Expressionism, Absurdism were all literary movements as well. These elements are present in the Modern art of Picasso , Matisse , Salvador Dali, Munch, Frida Kahlo etc. in the twentieth century.

The modern day limericks of Ogden Nash have a comic book and cartoonish quality , and also pop culture . But then that is also definitely a form of popular art of the twentieth century . We need to put on the lenses of fantasy and view this magic realism and fabulism .

What is really important is the marvellous Never Never Land they take us to , where the straightforward stories from the Panchtantra are given a dose of spice which adds to the flavour , and both children and grown ups can shiver with excitement at Hogwarts, and believe in magic because it seems real, or look at the endearing and familiar cow who is so sweet .

“The cow is of the bovine ilk ;
One end is moo, the other, milk .”¹⁴

“For me , an aim I never fash; I rhyme for fun .”

(Robert Burns)

I am sure these lines have brought a huge smile , to all those who are reading it , and no doubt that was the aim in the minds of the great geniuses who created this world for us and in their vision which they share with us the fundamental truth of imagination is exemplified . In keeping with Wordsworth’s views on poetry, imagination and emotion transform reality and the *ordinary becomes the extraordinary* .

Dr. Seema Sinha

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Dhanbad .

**“What is an Epigram? a dwarfish whole,
It’s body brevity, and wit it’s soul.”**

(Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

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3 |

The P.G. Department of English Speaks

Ecocriticism: A Brief Introduction

by Dr. Mantosh Kumar Pandey

Ecocriticism, a term coined by W. Rueckert in 1978 in his essay “Literature and Ecology”, is an endeavour towards the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment. This term received a healthy definition at the hand of Cheryll Glotfetty, an American theorist, who emphasized on the role of literature in the holy service of nature and environment. Miss Glotfetty’s efforts made this field of criticism gain recognition and popularity as a theory, as a multidisciplinary academic and platform where the researchers of various disciplines can venture out for palliatives to save the environment, which is on the brink of virtual annihilation. Nature emerges as an important phenomenon and provides a base for ecocriticism. The ecocritics believe that the forces of nature facilitated the evolution of life. Hence, nature is like mother, and the humans must feel the danger of the extinction of nature under the threat of rising commercialization and consumerism. Ecocriticism, or green literature, investigate various roles that nature plays in human lives. The development of human history and the ongoing flux called humanity. Ecocriticism assumes a multi-disciplinary face by analyzing the text of the authors and Researchers relating to environmental issues and nature. Ecocriticism renders literature highly practical bringing it at par with science crossing over mere theorizing and entering practical sphere. Some ecocritics brainstorm possible solutions for correction of contemporary environment crisis. One of the implicit objectives of ecocriticism is to recoup professional dignity for what Glotfetty calls “the undervalued genre of nature writing”.¹ According to Simon Estok “ecocriticism has distinguished itself, firstly by the ethical stand it takes, it’s commitment to the natural world as an important thing rather than simply as an object of thematic study, and secondly by its commitment to making connections:”² Estok further says that “ecocriticism is committed to effective change by analyzing the function-thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological or otherwise of the natural

environment, or aspects of it.” This echoes the functional approach of the 'cultural ecology' branch of ecocriticism which analyzes the analogies between ecosystem and imaginative texts.

Leaving aside the romanticist of the early nineteenth century, England and the transcendentalist of America like Thoreau and Emerson, the world literature has a number of eco critic authors and it becomes obvious when one makes a survey of the same in the content of Indian subcontinent during 20th and 21st century. The most significant name in Indian eco-critical writing is that of Ruskin Bond, Mahasweta Devi, Amitav Ghosh, Bibhuti bhusan Bandopadhyay and in 20th century Bhabhani Bhattacharya who in his 'So Many Hungers' describes, man's dependence on nature and it's backlash threatening human habitation at the time of gross violation of nature sanctity by humans. Even Kiran Desai in her “The Inheritance of Loss” shows how Kanchenjunga is paid for the brutality of Nepali insurgency. The beauty, serenity, calm and quiet atmosphere stands totally destroyed. Arundhati Roy's “The God of Small Things” abounds in portrayal of exploitation of nature by human being in the name of progress and modernization.

Researchers and scholars of Ecocriticism tend to query and question about 'anthropocentrism' with the assumption that the natural world be seen primarily as a source for human being.

Ecocriticism as a literary theory grabbed limelight in 1990's. But this doesn't mean that there was no discussion of Ecocriticism in the early period. The epic texts of Kalidaas such as “Kumarshambhavam”, “Shakuntalam” are replete with the beauty and bounty of nature where the characters grow and shine like gods and deities. One notices the beauty of environment in Chaucer's “Prologue to the Canterbury Tales” which triggers with the liveliness of the month of April, harbinger of spring facilitating the mood congenial for pilgrimage. Even many modern English authors can be researched as ecologically inclined in their texts. Spenser in his “Faerie Queen”, Shakespeare in his romances, “The Tempest”, “The Winter's Tale”, Emily Bronte in her “Wuthering Heights” have enough to owe to this sphere of Ecocriticism for their beautiful setting.

Nature and literature have always shared a close relationship. Right from the days of epic writers of antiquity down to the post modern days, the authors has felt the gravitation towards nature and have also shown beautifully how the humans have benefited even unconsciously in touch with nature. How nicely Wordsworth expresses mood of bearing and ethics in association with nature in the following lines:

*“One impulse from a verbal wood
Will teach you more of man
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the safer can.”*

The day has come when the worrying issue like deforestation, displacement under man's irrepresive urge for pelf, power and position seems to highlight the paramount importance and relevance of Ecocriticism as an inevitable sphere of study and research in academic Jones.

“Mankind has probably done more damage to the earth in the twentieth century than in all the previous human history. “
(Jacques Coustecau)

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Shakespeare on Tyranny and Tyrants
Reading Stephen Greenblatt's
*Tyrant: Shakespeare on Power*ⁱ

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Stephen Greenblatt is arguably one of the greatest authorities on Shakespeare in contemporary times. Greenblatt's latest book is *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Power*. The acknowledgments (printed after the main body of the text) transport us to a moment of political resolution experienced "in a verdant garden in Sardinia" and to dinner table talk of Shakespeare's "uncanny relevance to the political world in which we now find ourselves." But there is no opening anecdote. Instead, we are offered the *ex-cathedra* assertion that Shakespeare, from the beginning to the end of his career, "grappled again and again with a deeply unsettling question: how is it possible for a whole country to fall into the hands of a tyrant?"

Greenblatt deploys George Buchanan's distinction between monarchs -who rule over willing populaces and tyrants - who rule over unwilling ones to suggest that this question can only be answered through an awareness of mass "complicity": Shakespeare's plays "probe the psychological mechanisms that lead a nation to abandon its ideals and even its self-interest." I struggle with the notion that mechanisms can have agency enough to lead anything, but Greenblatt's drift is easy enough to catch.

It sketches Shakespeare's place within the currents of British political life in the 1580s and '90s. In this England, the threat of Roman Catholic invasion or insurrection meant that free speech was impossible. Like many in "modern totalitarian regimes," Shakespeare therefore only considered his political circumstances indirectly. What makes Shakespeare different, Greenblatt urges, is that he so radically transcends prudence and necessity:

Uncharacteristically, though by no means for the only time in this short book, Greenblatt labours the point. He presents in details two well-known occasions on which Shakespeare broke his rule of historical or fictional distance: once with an allusion to the Earl of Essex at the end of *Henry V*, once with a performance of *Richard II* undertaken at the behest of those involved in the Earl of Essex's failed 1601 coup d'état against Elizabeth's regime.

In the case of *Richard II*, confirmation that “Shakespeare’s theatre” offers “the key to understanding the crisis of the present.” In the case of *Henry V*, the claim that Shakespeare’s allusion to Essex draws “attention to searching political reflections throughout his plays that were safer left in the shadows. The remaining nine chapters take us on a tour of tyranny and complicity in Shakespeare’s plays. The three parts of *Henry VI*, often overlooked, are treated in two chapters. The first proposes that Shakespeare’s depiction of the Houses of York and Lancaster “invites us, in effect, to watch the invention of political parties,” with the attendant apparatus of party political distortion, deception, demonization of opposition, and willingness to manipulate the populace at large. The second proposes that the Duke of York (a would-be tyrant) is an exemplary “populist”: one who, by encouraging the rabble-rousing fantasies of Jack Cade, weaponizes the grievances of the have-nots in order to cause disorder that he can then exploit to advance the interests of himself and his party. York fails, but his son ascends the throne as Edward IV.

We are quickly ushered along to the next chapter, the subject of which is that byword for megalomaniacal villainy: Edward IV’s younger brother, the artist eventually known as Richard III. It is in discussing Richard that *Tyrant* finds its voice. This voice is angry:

He is pathologically narcissistic and supremely arrogant. He has a grotesque sense of entitlement, never doubting that he can do whatever he chooses. He loves to bark orders and to watch underlings scurry to carry them out. He expects absolute loyalty, but he is incapable of gratitude. The feelings of others mean nothing to him. He has no natural grace, no sense of shared humanity, no decency.

His possession of power includes the domination of women, but he despises them far more than desires them. Sexual conquest excites him, but only for the endlessly reiterated proof that he can have anything he likes. He knows that those he grabs hate him.

There are two more chapters on Richard. First, one on his “enablers” — on those whose self-deceit, ambition, complacency, and moral-political blindness enable Richard to rise. Most of this elaborates an op-ed piece that Greenblatt published in *The New York Times* in October 2016. Second, one titled “Tyranny Triumphant,” taking Richard’s story forward to the point at which he achieves his goal and seizes, with feigned reluctance, the throne that eluded his father. It turns out that Richard’s scheming ruthlessness transforms

into incompetence when faced with the task of good and efficient government; unloved and eventually overthrown, his adventure comes to an end.

Chapter seven (“The Instigator”) reminds us that Lady Macbeth is the gin in her husband’s tonic; chapter eight (“Madness in Great Ones”) juxtaposes Lear and Leontes as rulers beset with mental incapacity; chapter nine (“Downfall and Resurgence”) contrasts attempts to resist tyranny in *King Lear* and *Julius Caesar*; chapter 10 (“Resistible Rise”) sees in *Coriolanus* a parable of how a would-be tyrant can be stopped by the masses. In his discussion of *Macbeth*, Greenblatt proposes that Lady Macbeth’s role in her husband’s bloody ascent is illustrative of a larger truth: “The tyrant [...] is driven by a range of sexual anxieties: a compulsive need to prove his manhood, dread of impotence, a nagging apprehension that he will not be found sufficiently attractive or powerful, a fear of failure.” Furthermore, the play instructs us that tyrants can have no friends, that they often feign political respectability, that they are preoccupied with a “sense of personal defilement,” that they are pathologically narcissistic, that they are “enemies of the future,” that they lack the “internal and external censors that keep most ordinary mortals, let alone rulers of nations, from sending irrational messages in the middle of the night or acting on every crazed impulse.”

Turning to *The Winter’s Tale*, even Greenblatt acknowledges that Leontes only behaves “like a tyrant” (emphasis mine). No matter. He can be put to work exemplifying the tyrant’s refusal to “traffic in facts or supply evidence.” Instead, the tyrant demands personal loyalty to his own whims and misapprehensions. So it is that when “an autocratic, paranoid, narcissistic, ruler sits down with a civil servant and asks for his loyalty, the state is in danger.”

Greenblatt’s discussion of *King Lear* alongside *Julius Caesar* aims to elucidate Shakespeare’s ideas on how we might overcome the threat of tyranny. In *Lear*, tyranny is now identified with Goneril, Regan, Cornwall, and Edmund. These tyrannizers are resisted by Cordelia, France, Edgar, Kent, the nameless servant who stabs Cornwall as he gouges out Gloucester’s eyes, and — eventually — Albany. At great cost, the resistance prevails. Pass over in silence the continued unsuitability of tyranny as a category through which to interpret the play (it may be that all tyrants abuse their power cruelly; it does not follow that all acts of cruelty or abuses of power are tyrannical). The real stumbling block is the suggestion that *King Lear* offers us more than a simulacrum of moral or political

resolution. The future is in the hands of Edgar, whom Greenblatt describes as “the most plausible candidate to pick up the broken pieces.” This is the same character who has suggested that his father’s eye-gouging was a well-deserved comeuppance for his sexual dalliances, and whose preeningly sententious rectitude has just forestalled the possibility of Cordelia’s hanging being aborted in

time to save her life. Shakespeare’s point is not that order tentatively reasserts itself in the aftermath of political catastrophe, but that no matter how bad things get, someone will appear to mouth the platitudes required to keep things moving forward without overmuch thought or analysis.

The eight pages devoted to *Julius Caesar* are overwhelmingly the best part of *Tyrant*. In them, Greenblatt dwells in compelling detail on the moral, personal, and political contortions into which Brutus and his fellow conspirators are driven by their decision to assassinate Caesar before he and the Roman mob could make him into a monarch. Ostensibly, their motives are to save the republic from what they think of as the tyranny of one-man rule. In reality, things are more complicated: “[B]ehind the screen of public rhetoric in Rome there were troubled, vulnerable, conflicted people uncertain of the right course to take and only half aware of what was driving them to act.”

As Greenblatt puts it, “the problem is not only that everyone’s motives are inevitably more mixed than shouted slogans suggest” but also that “real-world actions grounded on noble ideals may have unforeseen and ironic consequences.” This is careful and morally intelligent literary criticism.

In tackling *Coriolanus*, Greenblatt returns to his polemic. After being informed that tyrants are “sociopaths” and given a potted social history of the 1607 Midland Revolt, we are introduced to the play’s eponymous protagonist. He disdains the concerns of the populace. So do his fellow patricians, but unlike them Coriolanus sees no point in appeasing or treating with the masses in order to preserve the social and political hierarchy. He is only diverted from turning his arms on his social inferiors by the chance to use them against Rome’s external foes. His successes in the Volscian wars nevertheless elevate him to a new degree of popularity and prominence, and he expects to be elected consul in due course — thereafter to implement his hard-line version of political reform.

In a coda to the ten main chapters of the text, Greenblatt returns to scene-setting — to the dangers of speaking truth to power in Elizabethan England, and to the ways in which Shakespeare negotiated these and related challenges. Finally, we are assured of Shakespeare’s belief that “tyrants and their minions would ultimately fail, brought down by their own viciousness and by a popular spirit of humanity that could be suppressed but never completely extinguished.” It is of course heartening to have it confirmed that Greenblatt takes Shakespeare to be on the side of the angels.

***“When I read Shakespeare, I am struck with wonder
that such trivial people should move and thunder
In such lovely language.”
(D. H. Lawrence)***

¹ Greenblatt, Stephen. *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Power*. London, The Bodley Head, 2018.

Literature of Crisis: The Terror of COVID-19

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LITERATURE grows out of life, reacts upon life, shapes life and is fed by life. It is the expression of the society with its various shades, and colours. The scope of literature is so vast that it is impossible to reduce it to a formula. Generally, we can say that everything in print is literature. It is an expression of life and life is a social reality. So, life becomes the subject of literary imitation. It is a social institution which uses the medium of language. It is also an expression of society. It mirrors society and its people in totality. Covid-19 appeared as a global pandemic rampaging and smashing man-made geographical boundaries, social distinctions, economic disparity, military superiority and political positions. Originated and spread from Wuhan, China, it encompassed entire world with equal amount of threat, havoc and results. As per the nature and trend of a pandemic, it made the world standstill. Complete shutdown of transport facilities, educational institutions, business centers, seminars/conferences and all types of free activities made people helpless, inactive, lethargic and weak. Impending danger has encroached, and grabbed the entire might, power and strength of the world. Life was sinking day by day. Social media, print media and electronic media were there to update mankind. People were forced to lock, isolate and distance themselves. Human being was a threat for another human being. It was rare, unique and incredible in human history. During the terror of COVID-19, literature was searching new paths, dimensions and styles of creativity. Literature has witnessed devastating world wars, natural calamities, huge demolitions, Coup d'état, upheavals, and drastic changes. Literature has the strength to sustain and this sustainability of literature makes it unique among all schools of learning. It grows during

industrialization, wars, pandemics, natural calamities, political upheavals, hunger, threat, drought, floods etc. This flexibility and adjustable status of literature makes it superior to science. William Wordsworth applauds, *“Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge”*.¹ It is a well-acknowledged fact. Literature becomes proactive. In my opinion, this is the compensating balancing power of literature. Lovers of literature know it better: John Milton was blind; Alexander Pope was a hunchback and Byron was a clubfoot. Such physical deformities could not deter the fierce and forceful creativity of those writers.

Post-Revolution Poetry

William Wordsworth was the first poet who acknowledged the real strength of literature. He was worried about the throat-cutting competition in the realms of industrialization, economic development and military superiority. He advocated strongly protecting nature, environment and the planet - the mother earth. He warned people against the devastating deeds of the people empowered by science. He was against over ambition and over confidence. Nature balances itself and controls the universe in its own ways. During and after French Revolution, Europe was trying its best to gear up its pace of development. William Wordsworth was not against the development. He was against the destruction of nature for the sake of development. According to him, *“Life is divided into three terms - that which was, which is, and which will be. Let us learn from the past to profit by the present, and from the present, to live better in the future.”*² This message of the poet is the ultimate one. He was against the materialistic approaches of the mankind. Robert Graves also endorses his views, *“There's no money in poetry, but then there's no poetry in money, either”*.³ Wordsworth is very sincere regarding circumstantial issues and reacts upon seriously, *“The education of*

¹ <https://quotes.thefamouspeople.com/william-wordsworth-37.php>

² <https://quotes.thefamouspeople.com/william-wordsworth-37.php>

³ <https://quotes.thefamouspeople.com/william-wordsworth-37.php>

circumstances is superior to that of tuition".⁴ This appears as real power of literature that it grows even in adverse circumstances. Leonard Cohen kept similar views and commented, *"Poetry is just the evidence of life. If your life is burning well, poetry is just the ash."*⁵

Like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron, Keats and Tennyson were to maintain the pace of literary activities during tough times. Scientific advancements were great challenges for literary exercises. Writings of Darwin, Mill, and Bentham appeared to review the very traditional and conventional ideologies and concepts of human beings. It was difficult to survive and create room for literary activities. Alfred Lord Tennyson, the poet Laureate, gave clarion call through following lines:

*Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.*

*Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more,
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.*⁶

Post-War Poetry

The world has witnessed two devastating world wars taking the life and property of the billions. Many died; many wounded; and many destroyed. Mental and physical trauma left none to survive peacefully. Mighty people and countries were praying for survival. I agree with the words of Charles

⁴ <https://quotes.thefamouspeople.com/william-wordsworth-37.php>

⁵ <https://quotes.thefamouspeople.com/william-wordsworth-37.php>

⁶ <https://owlcation.com/humanities/Ring-Out-Wild-Bells-by-Alfred-Lord-Tennyson>

Simic, *“Poetry is an orphan of silence. The words never quite equal the experience behind them”*. The loss was irreparable. The soul reason can be traced in the words of William Wordsworth:

*“The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!”⁷*

Literature kept on growing during, between and after wars. It was there to bring out the world from evils of power. It held it tightly. In results, it produced great works out of war experiences. Among great war poets, Wilfred Owen, Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon, David Jones, Ivor Gurney, Rupert Brooke, Edward Thomas, Isaac Rosenberg etc. are praiseworthy. Wilfred Owen interprets his works in following terms, *“This book is not about heroes. English poetry is not yet fit to speak of them. Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War. Above all I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity.”⁸*

It requires huge creative potential to carry on literary traditions during wars. During stormy circumstances, poets carry out their expressions which are highly touchy, sensitive and suggestive. Words from warfare were included with equal enthusiasm. Following lines are written to tell the truth and reality of life.

*“Sweet was the bomb
That Killed my Son
Now No More Bombs
Now No more Guns”⁹*

⁷ <https://quotes.thefamouspeople.com/william-wordsworth-37.php>

⁸ <https://www.quotemaster.org/war+poetry>

⁹ <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/68686/>

According to W.B. Yeats, centre fails to hold the world tightly. Even during this failed /reversed circumstances, Yeats writes and keep on writing. W.B. Yeats' popular poem "The Second Coming" admits the fact and writes:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,¹⁰*

COVID Literature

Corona virus has revealed civilization gaps among countries. Western people were hoarding toilet papers while Indians were storing masks, hand sanitizers and food materials. Almost a year back, the echo of COVID-19 was heard across the globe. Country after country were acknowledging and declaring the devastating effects of the global pandemic. Entire world was astonished and scared. Western Countries prepared themselves as approaching hurricanes. Even countries like India prepared herself to face the pandemic strongly. The whole world was stuck except literary creativity. Literature creates room for its growth. Initially people were scared but after a few weeks, they started polishing their hidden creativity and talents. Dead and dormant relationships were revived. Inner-self and intimate relationships were valued. It dragged people out from throat-cutting competitive atmosphere. Havoc of pandemic generated '*powerful feelings*', loss of closer ones made it '*spontaneous*' and lock-down periods proved '*tranquility*' of William Wordsworth. A large number of poems were composed. Seminars turned Webinars, Off-Line Classes turned On-Line and Physical interactions were hijacked by Virtual interactions. Even Indian Universities prepared themselves for platforms like Zoom Meeting, Google Classroom, Edmodo etc. Newly established universities like Binod Bihari Mahto

¹⁰ <https://poets.org/poem/second-coming>

Koyalanchal University, Dhanbad, Jharkhand handled the situation successfully and made itself gadgets-friendly in few days.

I do acknowledge the fact uttered by William Wordsworth regarding poetry *“Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—t is as immortal as the heart of man.”*¹¹ A large number of youngsters tried their hands in the field of literary creativity. Keeping realistic view, I want to share personal experiences that I gained during COVID-19. The students of the University Department of English, BBMKU, Dhanbad emerged as creators and makers of literature. Poetry of the period deals with the thematic aspects such as isolation, loss of life, lack of services, poverty, hunger, troubles, courage, dedication, love, affection, sacrifice etc.

Frankly speaking, creativity was accelerated and geared up worldwide during COVID-19. I want to cite a few line from a poem entitled *‘Will the Door Ever Open ?’* narrating the whole scenario:

*The roads are empty, the crowds too small,
And no trace of life outside, none at all.
Every human is locked up in their house,
And the sunny play ground now looks bleak.
Why does our wide world look so desolate now?*¹²

Another poem is taken from a blog entitled *‘Voices of Youth’*

*Our fingers are all crossed
As we all hope for a cure
A cure to end the pandemic of Covid-19...
We are now united by sympathies but still divided by entities
Our compassions cannot travel beyond the walls of our rooms
We are now left to succumb to the limitations set by W.H.O....*¹³

¹¹

¹² <https://www.thehindu.com/children/covid-19-poem-will-the-door-ever-open/article31549219.ece>

¹³ <https://www.voicesofyouth.org/blog/poemcovid-19>

It is true that creativity is not the monopoly of the artist. Creativity needs crisis. During crisis it becomes proactive.

In the light of the above facts, it appears crystal clear that literature keeps on growing in all circumstances. Let it be favorable circumstances or adverse, literature paves its paths to win the heart of the people. It can be called the might of pen or power of brain but, the absolute fact is the journey of literature that moves on uninterrupted. This is the sole reason, that literature has remained the well-acknowledged crown of learning.

“The writer’s only responsibility is to his art.”
(William Faulkner)

Dr Rajesh Kumar: Two Poems — A Critique
Who Are These Men and Women: A Lament
By Dr. Krishna Murari Singh

WHO ARE THESE MEN AND WOMEN

Who are these men and women -
That inhabited the city suddenly
While I read a book
Or listened to a song
Or soaked the canvas with maudlin dyes?

Who are these men, friend?

Arms hirsute,
Whiskers medieval,
Necks bejewelled
And sunglasses brash,
Loutish swank
Of finger snap deals
Of the plot that was a lily pond
In a quaint, besieged, little village wood.

Who are these women, mate?

Bloated derrieres
In ersatz Versace
Necklines plunging
To breast-braced bling;
Bleached masks peddling
Parvenu daughters
And trimmed bearded scions
Chewing gutkha grub.

When did they take over the hill,
The temple and folktale streets?

Was it while I whittled
A sun-kissed noon,
Or sipped tea from chattering clay cups
Or strummed the sitar to the shadow of a face,
A face perchance in a shimmering veil?

Was my love too lingering a tale, dear?

That they raided and grabbed
The fence and the door,
That they sullied and stabbed
The river and the shore,
That they slayed and strapped
The swan and the boar

While I skipped a dance of rainbows adrift
And held hands in a séance of dreamy florets,
Warbling and cheering and revelling and whooping
Closing the lids to give in to the bubble
For a quiet that haunts, but often taunts -

Who are these men, and women, honey?

EYES

Dear medic,
My eyes, yes, my eyes, that's why I'm here;
But I have no idea who I need to consult

An optician, an ophthalmologist or an optometrist.

What are you, boy?

You, who peer into a biscope, asking

Me to look at a screen which eventually

Turns clear,

Stirring back and forth

When sudden a puff of wind hits my eyeball

And you note down numbers

With a glib 'Thank you, ma'am'.

They all look the same to me -

Phantoms of 'H', 'A', 'G', 'L' and pea-soupy 'C's;

In this darkened room,

Wearing the trinket of these metal spectacles,

I wobble timidly through your belittling drill of

Ranking my eyes,

'Is this better, lady, or this?'

I wait a half hour,

Fiddling with the end of my saree,

Jumpy that a nurse will now lead me

By the hand into a chamber where doc-superior

Presides,

Over a mob of winking gadgets,

And points me into a chair, murmuring,

'Look very up and very down and very left and very right',

While a celestial light shines white and sometimes pale,

Seeking testimonies arrogantly

Of wilting veins and muddy orbs.

'Yes, it is forming, mild yet, obviously, it is cataract.'

See, doc, the word is full of phonic ruses;
Is it a bonny brook bouncing blithely – the cataract?
A grin steals in my idling heart,
For I know what it really means,
This and other icky colloquy like
Myopia, glaucoma and phaco.
What a waggish word - ‘phaco’!
In my language it means ‘chucking’,
In yours, a cure.

See you, doc (although not that well!).
Floundering out of your clinic door
Now I will squint in the sun,
Waiting for a rickshaw,
Drop-dilated pupils inundated
By dazzles, blurs and shimmers
And promises of vision sharp
Past a scalpel future.

(Dr. Rajesh Kumar)

Spoken from the vantage point of a spectator, the poet is in the role of an outsider. The idea presented in the title of the poem is carried forward from the opening line itself and presented with an element of contrast. The poem is one dimensional and expresses a feeling of disinheritance and a sense of not belonging. These are the two motifs in the poem. The poet is a dreamer, lost in his private Eden, happy while he “read a book...listened to a song.....soaked the canvas with maudlin dyes...” Shaken out of his idyllic stupor he realizes that his world has changed and is now peopled with strangers. The sense of loss and the alienation overwhelm him. Waking up to reality, he finds that there are serpents in the Paradise. They are everywhere, to his shocked disbelief, their offensive masculinity displayed in *hirsute* bare arms and *whiskers medieval* and thick necks swelling with gaudy jewelry and with the flashiness of sunglasses and obscene swagger. They have destroyed the serene loveliness of nature with the snap of their fingers, sealing the

death of beauty and innocence. While the *lily pond* and the sylvan woods have become victims of their lust, the poet laments that everything was destroyed while he had longed and chased dreams of his own and was oblivious to the devastation and the tragedy which was being played around him. And now jolted out of his slumber, like Shelley in "Ode to the West Wind", but unlike Shelley, this modern day protagonist has no comfort or solace to offer to the world. It is like living in the doomed aridity of T. S. Eliot's "The Wasteland", only these *men and women* are not the shadowy hooded figures in an "Unreal city", moving in circles; they have faces which are vulgar and gestures which are lewd. The ageing women with sagging bodies and painted faces and their spoilt progeny with outrageous mannerisms shatter the poet's dream world completely. It is a rude awakening.

There are sharp contrasts in the poem and no complexities or undercurrents. The poetic narrative is simple and straight forward and the idea is crystal clear. The first two stanzas express the men and women who like marauders have invaded the landscape, and sabotaged the young dreams. There is a note of bewilderment in the poet's questions. It is a place which he does not recognize, "the hill, The temple and the folktale streets", are now hostile and victim of these hordes of destroyers.

There is a tone of regret too, the poet wonders if his dreams of love and romance were "too lingering a tale" "...while everything crumbled around him, and innocence was robbed and wounded. This transition around him from the natural to the urban, from serenity and peace to chaos and vulgarity, has bred a sense of discontent in him and he feels betrayed. But who has betrayed whom? There is a sense of self mockery too, a discontent and self deprecation. After all he had been oblivious to the world around him because he had preferred to lose himself in idyllic pursuits and "strummed the sitar", while the world rocked to a different beat. He discovers that his search for beauty is as irrelevant and unreal as the romance of the rainbows and stars sing, and what remains is only a silent scream which laments in a soundless dirge which "haunts, but often taunts."

Eyes

(Dr. Krishna Murari Singh)

“ Illness is the night side of life , a more onerous citizenship . Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick. Although we prefer to use only the good passport , sooner or later each of us is obliged , at least for a spell , to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place . “

Susan Sontag [The Emperor of Maladies –Dr Siddhartha Mukherjee]

This poem is again a silent conversation which goes on in the mind of the protagonist. This time in the persona of a woman . One gets a feeling of déjà vu or of being a rebel without a cause . The sense of exasperation , resignation , perplexity , bemusement and irritation are the different stops of this journey in the doctor’s clinic , ending with a diagnosis and a resignation .

The poem begins on a note of defensiveness , and irritation --a visit to a doctor is not an experience to be relished but driven by necessity. The emphasis on the words , “my eyes , yes, my eyes , that is why I am here. “ is eloquent with displeasure ,while the cool professionalism of the technician seems to emphasise the division between the patient and the doctor and the obvious indifference and lack of emotion in the “glib , thank you , ma’am . “ The absence of sympathy and the detachment seem to be callous to the protagonist who expects a personal touch , but the technician is impersonal and is just doing a job . The poet feels like an object , humiliated , going automatically through the “belittling drill”, of her eyes being examined and given a label. This feeling of being dehumanized robs her of her dignity and composure as she “wobbles timidly , “ following the instructions from one room and one table to another .

Nervous because nothing emphasizes one’s mortality more than doctors and examination rooms where there is a overwhelming consciousness of the ageing , illness coupled with an envy of youth and health personified by the young technicians who mechanically probe , inspect and pronounce ,
“Seeking testimonies arrogantly , “on “wilting veins and muddy orbs . “
The angst is palpable and real, the humiliation complete . The feeling of being disembodied , dehumanized is reminiscent of the lines from , “The Cocktail Party “:

“Take a surgical operation.
In consultation with the doctor and the surgeon,
In going to bed in the nursing home ,
In talking to the matron , you are still the subject,
The centre of reality . But stretched on the table ,
You are apiece of furniture in a repair shop
For those who surround you , the masked actors ;
All there is of you is your body
And the ‘you’ is withdrawn . “
[Act I, Sc i]

Finally, gathering the remnants of a tattered dignity, and handed a diagnosis there is an attempt to find a release in a reluctant humour in the words , “See you doc, [although not that well]”. The pun does not really carry a punch . Instead of making a dignified exit ; the poet “flounders “ out , feeling sorry for herself , armed with a prescription, eyes swimming with medicine drops, playing havoc with her sight in the blinding light of the sun while she waits for a rickshaw, ruminating unhappily the prospect of her “scalpel future “ , looming ahead.

Both the poems have a single train of thought and are subjectively expressing the inner chaos corresponding with the chaos of the world they inhabit.

***“And nothing to look backward to with pride,
And nothing to look forward with hope. “***
(Robert Frost)

4 |

Voices from the Wilderness

- **Ritika Ojha**
- **Md. Rustam Ansari**

'Dating' Millennials: Eyeing Heathcliff

By Ritika Ojha

What stuff is love made up of? What ingredients go into the making of a perfect lover? Getting answers to *these not-so-important questions* was not necessary, but I thought of giving it a try anyway. Having decided upon the nature of my questions, I found myself caught up in another dilemma: who could possibly answer these questions of mine? Movies, elders, books? We don't find love gurus among elders in our family, or do we? And I am not a big fan of movies, so books were quick to come to my rescue, like always! Running an undecided hand through the books lying comfortably on my shelf, I got hold of a book with a black cover, perhaps symbolizing the 'dark' story it harbours: 'Wuthering Heights'.

'Wuthering Heights' is not as much a tale of love as it is of hatred; but it would still be handed down to generations of readers as a love story, the reason being its (anti)hero, Heathcliff. He is too much for me, a young reader who is well acquainted with what love comprises of in modern times. We live in a world where the word 'love' has successfully been replaced by 'dating', and 'relationships'. Here, couples call it quits after one or the other fails to reply to a Whats App message! Do we deserve to read this novel, the one where the lover, long after his sweetheart passes away, pines for her, and wants to be buried in the same grave where she lies. This unfortunate lover goes through everything from losing his beloved to another man to being a subject of every character's hatred in the novel, but this doesn't kill his love for Catherine Earnshaw. He definitely gets his moment to celebrate: when he returns from exile after a long time, he finds Cathy running into his arms with Linton eyeing them with jealousy. The reconciliation, however, doesn't age well as Cathy goes through spells of sickness and nervous breakdowns and eventually passes away.

This loss brings out the unforgiving beast in him, and he becomes an epitome of brutality. From being the reason behind the death of his own wife,

to keeping Catherine (the junior) and Nelly as captives until the death of Edgar Linton - he does everything he shouldn't have. He brutalises the innocent second generation, the junior Catherine, his own son Linton Heathcliff, and Hindley's son Hareton Earnshaw. We, the readers, start hating him, even connecting him to those one-sided lovers who won't take no for an answer. Heathcliff, however, wins back our sympathy towards the end of the story, where we find him losing his normalcy and calm, and he dies perhaps happily dreaming of a reunion with Cathy in a world to which mortals do not belong. His death throws us into a sea of disappointments and questions. Does such a lover exist? Heathcliff is not only a passionate lover, but an equally strange human being; he is a queer mixture of love and hatred. He loves Cathy so passionately, but it doesn't allow us to overlook the evil in him. Why would Miss Bronte create Heathcliff? What did she mean by making him pull in the ghost of Cathy through window saying, "Come in, Cathy." We read through such scenes in shock and amazement, thinking about the short-lived love affairs surrounding us, affairs which are dictated by the whims of the two people involved in them.

Another question comes to mind, and leaves me disappointed: Did Heathcliff get enough love? Catherine Earnshaw was loved by Heathcliff, and also by Linton. Nelly also loved her dearly. Heathcliff was loved only by Catherine Earnshaw and hated by all the others. Catherine Earnshaw in spite of declaring passionately, "I *am* Heathcliff," betrays Heathcliff and that love--- by marrying Edgar Linton, whom Heathcliff hates. The novelist appears to have served injustice to Heathcliff. He deserved to be loved more. The readers certainly become sympathetic towards him, but it happens only after his death. He should have been loved more, when he was alive.

Heathcliff, with his dramatic 'I shall have my revenge' determination and inhuman capacity for love and hatred; and also due to his indulgence in gambling, something that he uses as a weapon to destroy his ex-owner's son, may remind us of anti-heroes of Bollywood blockbusters. There are so many of

them, 'Kabir Singh' being the recent one. Feminists hated the movie and its protagonist, and legitimately so because it normalizes use of violence in love. There is one more reason to cast an angry eye at Kabir Singh; and here we find him close enough to Heathcliff: both of them are in love, passionately and devotedly, with their respective heroines. It borders on the fanatical . Both of them have an, ' I can't and won't move on' attitude. Also, both of them try to get another woman into their lives.

Kabir Singh makes an honest attempt at forgetting Preeti, whereas with Heathcliff it was a calculated move to stay close to Cathy and her family just for the sake of keeping them away from any happiness that might knock on their doors! Anti- heroes, thus, have been an important part of literature and movies. While many people prefer to hurl (silent) abuses at such characters, there are many others who can see beyond the evils in these characters and dare to sympathize with them, for they realize that their flaws are nothing but a result of the wrongs they have suffered at some point in their lives.

Looking at Heathcliff from the psychoanalytical point of view perhaps makes him believable . His complexities , neuroses , obsessive compulsive fixation with Catherine Earnshaw can be explained as psychological disorders . Certainly it would be interesting to read the ebb and flow of his emotions if 'Wuthering Heights ' was a stream of consciousness Novel.!!

Critical opinion might analyse Heathcliff as a personification of hatred, or romanticise him as a force of nature, he is definitely an extraordinary character . What is certain that even in his monstrosity, the brooding Heathcliff is unforgettable in comparison to the violent and alcoholic Hindley Earnshaw and the gentlemanly but insipid Edgar Linton .

***“Is it prickly to touch as a hedge is,
Or soft as eirdown fluff?
Is it sharp or quite smooth at the edges ?
O tell me the truth about love.”***
(W. H. Auden)

***“Any kiddie in school can love like a fool,
But hating my boy, is an art .”***
(Ogden Nash)

A Spoof on Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

by Md. Rustam Ansari

The beginning of the modern age is marked by T. S. Eliot's modern-day "epic", *The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock*. The theme of this poem is the loneliness and isolation of the modern man. The twentieth century man is completely isolated in his own world and there is almost no real-world social communication. I was just wondering, if T. S. Eliot would have been alive in our age, how he would have described the present situation. These lines present the psychology of a *smombie* (someone who is so busy looking at their phone that they do something stupid like stepping out into traffic) and his obsession with his phone and social media. Our smartphones and social media are not enriching our experience of life, rather, they are limiting it. Eliot, in his poem, presented the psychological isolation of modern man. The advent of smartphones and social media have added another dimension to this emotional vacuum. We know that we are addicted to them and this addiction is mushrooming day-by-day. The irony is that we have lost the ability or desire to personal interaction in real world, but are constantly connected to faceless strangers in the cyber world. We are no longer citizens of the real world, but citizens of the cyber world. I have taken a few stanzas from the original poem which is a bit longer. The lines quoted below read like this:

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

*Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,*

*The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.*

*In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.*

*The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.*

*And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,*

Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go

Talking of Michelangelo..."

(T. S. Eliot)

Following are my lines: a spoof of this poem. The internet has created an alternate universe and the modern-day individual is the citizen of this parallel world, where he is a prisoner of the cyber space. Ironically, this wireless world, without any borders has tied him up in invisible wires which are all connected to his smartphone, the gadget which is now like an extended body part. Just like there are phantom pains at the loss of a limb, similarly the absence of the smartphone creates a panic attack in the smartphone addict. O Brave New World!

Smartphone Slaves

Let us go then, you and I
Where the tower is strong, clear is the sky
Besides the half-deserted Café Coffee Day.
Where Wi-Fi signal is very high.

Let us go, and look for a buddy
With a hotspot, without a password.
For my Internet data is running out.
And my chat is half complete.

In the notifications, messages come and go,
Reminding me, my data is low.

I had posted my latest pics
Seventy-eight, seventy-nine, eighty
The 'likes' are raising my heart beat.

An excitement, a trance, a magic is it
My mom says, I am addicted to it
Oh, neglect it, and just forget it.
I am desperate to see the hundredth like.

Should I ask the overwhelming question?
Bhai! What's the password of your Wi-Fi?
In the notification, alerts come and go,
My data is low, my data is low!

Do I dare,
Disturb the universe?
I fear what he'll think
How should I begin to converse?

Oh, my God! The likes have reached eighty-four
And now another message flashed
Of insidious intent.
My device says, "Battery low".
In a minute, is there time?
To get into the ritual of discharge and recharge.

Why does he look flummoxed?
Why is his forehead sweating?
Is his mobile discharging
Or if he is out of data?

I fear what he'll think,
This boy has no Jio-fi?
How is he living without Jio data?
Why? Does he not get bored?
Lonely like the moon in a starless sky?

He ought to know, data is the must,
Even more than a decent shoe and a tie.

In the popups, alerts come and go,
Reminding me, my data is low.

How should I presume?
Will he understand?
How should I tell him?
Bhai! I had Jio-fi.
But last night I watched
The trending videos till late.
Now, I think, why did not I wait?

Ninety-six, ninety-seven, ninety-eight.
Beep! Beep! Beep! Your battery is low.
I must get my mobile's charger
I can't tell it to wait.

Aha! wonderful, I got the ninety-ninth

In the notification, messages come and go
Telling me, my data is low.

Beep! Beep! Beep! battery is low.
The device is shutting down.
No, not now, I beg you, not now
Battery down, data low, I too feeling low
It's late now, I should sleep.
Yes, I must go.

—Md Rustam Ansari.

Just like Prufrock, the modern twentieth century protagonist who was a misfit and a stranger among strangers, similarly the 21st century *smombie* is alienated from his real surroundings and lives in an alternate universe. This is the irony, the mental malady of the modern world, where the concept of freedom has made us slaves instead. We are not mastering but victims of technology.

Digital disorders.....digital disorders.....digital disorders.... digital disorders.....

Switches

by Md. Rustam Ansari

This poem was written as a part of the *Introduction* to a research background by my friend, Kashif Nawaz, who is pursuing his Postdoc from King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, KSA. He studied Biology and Mathematics in Bachelor and Masters and did his Ph.D. in analysing the genome dynamics in plants under heat stress from Max Planck Institute for Plant Breeding and Research, Germany in 2018.

His primary concern is to investigate the role of epigenetics in helping corals to adapt in the rapidly increasing global temperature. He wishes to use his findings from the corals to devise techniques which would enable humans to develop the capability to adapt in the rapidly warming world. This would help to solve one of the most alarming issues of the human beings in the contemporary scenario, i.e. global warming.

The poem introduces the concept of genome, which is formed by two strings that circumvolve like a spiral. We know, by now, that the functioning of the genes is controlled by proteins. However, Kashif has found evidences that there is a kind of “switch” that decides how the genes would react to a particular stimulus. He wants to append his knowledge about these switches from the corals to other species, including humans. This understanding would enable us to adapt to the high temperatures as easily as corals do. Here is the poem:

Two strands form a genome by circumvolution,
It's hard to fathom its nucleotide-concatenation.
Digging deep into its terrain, we find the genes,
Whose transcriptome is controlled by myriad proteins.

We're confounded by an unresolved mystery,
Although, we know much about its history—
Whether genes are controlled by proteins,
Or 'Proteomics' is governed by the genes?

Evidences suggest, proteins act as a switch,
The study of which is called 'Epigenetics'.

I am fascinated to imagine the possibilities,
For this revelation can unlock numerous abilities.
Made possible, now, with the help of 'Applied Science',
Which helps us to visualize and aids our conscience.

—Md. Rustam Ansari.

***“The aim of science is not to open the door to infinite wisdom,
but to set a limit to human error.”***

(Brecht)

6 |

A Fresh Look: Daring to Think

- **Anamika Banerjee**
- **Nidhi Sharma**
- **Priya Jha**
- **Rashid Alam**
- **Rudra Goswami**
- **Sujit**

Khaleed Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns

by Anamika Banerjee

A Thousand Splendid Suns is a novel written by Khaleed Hosseini, the title of which has been taken from a seventeenth century poem, named "Kabul", written by 'Saib-e-Tabrizi' and was translated by Josephine Davis. The lines read as such:

"One could not count the moons that shimmer on her roofs

Or the thousands splendid suns that hide behind her walls."

The metaphorical meaning of the moons and the suns can be elucidated as the citizens of Kabul i.e the moons are deciphered as the male ruling heads of the Afgan families whereas the suns can be unfolded as the beautiful women ,bounded and cloistered within the four walls of their houses, totally hidden from the outside world ,yet providing a warmth and life to the Afghan households.

Hosseini's first novel ,'The Kite Runner' was also his best seller, that unfolds the story of a young boy named Amir, and his best friend Hassan from Kabul. It is set against the background of The Fall of The Afgan Monarchy, The Soviet Invasion and the Rise of The Taliban Regime.

'The Thousand Splendid Suns' the second novel of Hosseini, is also set against the same background as 'The Kite Runner' ,It is a heart wrenching novel dealing with the unfortunate lives of two women who belonged to two different generations, who are brought together to suffer the same fate under belligerent circumstances .The novel covers the last three decades of the twentieth century dysfunctional Afghan society and is presented in the form of dual narratives.

The first phase of the novel narrates the story of a five year old girl named Mariam, who is addressed as '*harami*' by her bitter mother, called Nana. Mariam is the illegitimate daughter of Jalil, a rich man and Nana , who worked as a maid in his house . Despite Nana's strict warning against Jalil's pretentious love, Mariam still waits impatiently for her father's once-a-week visit to the '*kol ba*' and has a deep urge to go and live with Jalil in Herat, where he lives with his legitimate wives and children . She idolises Jalil. Despite her mother's warnings, in her urgency and crazy desire to see Jalil , she decides to visit Jalil at his house and on approaching, she too realizes the truths of Nana's warnings and is heartbroken to realize Jalil's

fake love and empty promises. She is forcibly sent back to the kolba and on returning, she finds her mother has hanged herself to death, for she viewed this as Mariam's betrayal towards her motherhood.

Soon Mariam's fate proves faithless to her and within a few days of Nana's death, Jalil gets her married off against her wishes to a man named Rasheed, who is twenty years older to her. She realises that he wants to get rid of her and she never forgives her father for this. But however, after the marriage her life turns out to be a brief cascade of happiness, until she suffers a miscarriage, which in turn breaks Rasheed's dream of having a boy child. Thereafter, her sufferance from a number of miscarriages turns Rashid into an abusive devil, who starts beating, complaining and torturing Mariam on a regular basis without a reason. There is no consideration in his brutal mind for Mariam for whom the grief is heartbreaking in her sorrow for her unborn children.

The second phase begins with the tale of Laila who belongs to an educated family and is studying. She has a boy best friend named Tariq, who is a year older to her. Slowly with their growing age, their friendship turns into a love relationship and with the war at the background, Tariq is forced to leave Kabul along with his family.

Soon Laila's life too takes a drastic change and she is orphaned by the attacks of the war. Surviving, all alone, from among her other family members, she is given shelter by Rasheed at his house, under Mariam's care. Here Rashid develops a fascination for Laila and proposes to her. Laila, being impregnated by Tariq, agrees to the marriage without giving it a second thought, Rasheed is sixty and she is only fourteen. Rasheed's initial behaviour towards Laila is loving and caring, but within few years of their marriage, he turns violent and abusive towards Laila too and this is how their being the wives of the same man (Rasheed), they are doomed to bear upon the same miserable fate under a common, suffocating roof.

From here, the narration of the novel takes a turn towards the developing bond of love and friendship between Mariam and Laila. Soon a mother-daughter relationship is found to evolve, as they start sharing time, secrets and their early life stories with each other. Along with Laila's two children Aziza and Zalmai, both these women find peace and solace in each other's company.

The story of these two wives make the readers gaze all through the pages of the book unblinkingly with awe, amazement and shock. Through their voices, Hosseini presents the picture of the tragic situation that the Afghan women like Mariam and Laila are forced to live under. He very profoundly

highlights the gender gap that prevailed in Mariam's and Laila's pathetic world. He has been successful in emphasising the theme of female subjugation in a male dominated society.

The book outstandingly deals with, and explores the courage and strength of the Afghan women, who stand strong against the unfair world. Through their unfailing will-power, we get to learn how love, compassion and hope keep a person the will to live . The novel is full of dramatic events and beautifully presents the complexities that turn a woman into a revolutionary, in search of joy, peace and happiness for life. Hosseini's depiction of a rebellious woman personifies rich warmth, the dark truth, the tough situation and the fearless step that a woman takes to free herself up from the shackles of dominance and tyranny. The novel, 'A Thousand Splendid Suns' is indeed the story of all those women who stood bold and fearless against the continued torture and treachery of their fate. This novel keeps every reader wandering through the black paths of dominance and its effects on a woman and no reader can escape a tear while and after reading the journey made by Mariam and Laila.

The bonding between the two women is like a mother daughter relationship . Their relationship evolves from distrust and resentment on Mariam's part , and Laila's pity for her ; to one of deep love . The cementing factor is the innocence of Aziza and their shared love for her , and they are also united in their hatred for the abusive Rashid . Aziza fulfils the deep emotional void and the craving for motherhood in Mariam . Mariam's capacity for unconditional love is extraordinary but she has never received that love . She has been betrayed even by her father , whom she loved with devotion . She has been betrayed by her own body , when all her pregnancies turn into miscarriages . Finally in Aziza she experiences the love she had longed for all her life . Mariam repays the gift of that love with the sacrifice of her life , to the monstrous Taliban who shoot her in a public execution, sentenced for the murder of Rashid . Mariam had killed him to save Laila , who the brutal Rashid was on the point of strangling to death .

Though written in a different age , time and society , the intensity of the theme of the relationship between two strong women , is similar to Alberto Moravia's magnificent novel, 'Two Women'. The background of both the books is the war ravaged history of the country they are living in . 'Two Women' is about a mother daughter's relationship during the World War II in Europe . 'A Thousand Splendid Suns', is the history of our contemporary times in war torn Afghanistan. In Moravia's novel ,the real life mother and daughter are very close, but their experience during the war estranges them emotionally. In a contrast the reverse happens in 'A Thousand Splendid Suns', when

Mariam and Laila ,distrustful of each other in the beginning , gradually become inseparable . Mariam becomes the metaphorical mother of Laila in the end because it is she who saves Laila from certain death . It is a second birth or a rebirth for Laila and it is because of the great courage of Mariam , who gifts her this second chance at life and happiness.

The theme of Alberto Moravia’s “Two Women” is intense and disturbing and the poignancy of the story of Mariam in ‘A Thousand Splendid Suns’ is emotionally searing. Against the backdrop of the Taliban and the brutality of a male dominated society set in the history of our contemporary times, the time frame is relatable . I feel that Mariam even in her death, lives on and gives Laila hope. It is the triumph of love over hatred.

“A novel is mirror which passes over a highway. Sometimes, it reflects to your eyes the blue of the skies, at others the churned up mud of the road .”

(Stendhal)

Charles Dickens's Great Expectations

by Nidhi Sharma

People have been reviewing *Great Expectations* for more than 150 years. It's the essence of a classic to survive such a long time and still being read. It is also a writer's name that adds to a classic's character, but that is not always a case. However, with Charles Dickens it is the former case and readers have expectations. I do, whenever I start reading a Dickens novel, I expect it to be long, and contain all the elements of a story telling. Certainly, Dickens is one of the masters of the art of storytelling.

The story of an orphan, Pip, who from the beginning of the novel is not an ideal protagonist, who has to be heroes or emotionally and physically strong. The story is a tale written in first person narrative about a person and his great expectations. It is the tale of self-understanding and perception. As a young boy Pip, lives with sister and her husband, kind soul, of whom he is fond of in his childhood. One day his presence at demand in front of a strange woman who lives in a grand house with her niece. This is the beginning of Pip's *great expectations* if we read this novel for the first time, but if it is not our Dickens's first novel. We will be able to predict the plot and that will be a bit uninteresting. I did predict a few moves in my mind and they did seem as shocking as same do believe. The plot has a tendency to drive itself forward as most of the Dickens's novels do.

The pace of the book depends on the timeline which was something new to me. It is the best book I have read till date. The plot is filled with suspense unfurling in every chapter and giving me goose bumps simultaneously.

I also ask myself the question, what are the things I expect from life? An ambition for money and success are fine as long as we are not obsessed by them, as undoubtedly Pip was. When the truth comes out, his dream turns to a nightmare.

We are materialists in a materialistic world, but in the end love, peace and a happiness of mind are the most important things. I wonder if realization comes too late. At least, Pip and Estella got a second chance and learnt from their mistakes.

Life does not imitate art always. In reality, we often lose, forever, the chance for happiness in chasing empty dreams.

"The love of money is the root of all evils ."

(Bible)

The Diary of a Young Girl (Anne Frank)

The Undying Human Spirit

by Priya Jha

Books have always been a magical gateway for me to a place far removed from today's harsh world. I am truly amazed by the maturity and deep understanding of life which Anne Frank had developed in the age of 13, in her famous "Diary of A Young Girl".

Every person should go through this diary at least once at some point of time in his or her life. It reveals the truth about the mankind. It shows both the sides of man's character. I believe that every person has good and evil in him. What matters is which side is he or her permitting to blossom. In this diary, we interact with both sides.

While reading this book, I often closed the book and stared at the photo of Anne Frank printed on the front cover.

*"Is this the same girl with a smiling face and
Sparkling eyes who had so much to say."*

Before I started reading the book, I knew that Anne Frank was killed in the concentration camp. She could not make it through. Anne Frank while writing her diary was so hopeful and optimistic. It just made me feel sad and many times I felt my chest hurt while reading. Also, I noticed that as we grow up, we mould into reality and lose the optimistic attitude.

It is an amazing book in itself given that it is a vivid personalized description of people living through the Horrors of Holocaust.

There are some instances that really amazed me. The book throws light on the lives of people in the Secret Annex although they were hiding. They took huge risk to educate the children through distance courses. Studies were not at all compromised in such a life-threatening situation. The "Diary of a young Girl" is not a book but another experience. It is a life lived through the character Anne and her surroundings.... It moves me to misery when the end comes steadily. The diary discovers and goes through each aspect from hiding to crushing. From the collapsing relations to the new bonding.

Anne Frank surprises me as an individual. She was an intelligent teenager and quite mature for her age. Her perspective of people and the world were fuller. Her internal struggles with herself are quite relatable. The shining armour of hope that Anne wear all throughout. She hopes, dreams and fantasizes. She still believed that people are good at heart. This diary is a classic on another level too. It happened that during the two years that marked the most extraordinary changes in a girl's life, Anne Frank lived in astonishing circumstances: she was hidden with seven other people in a secret nest of room behind her father's place of business.

Anne Frank's diary is a great affirmative answer to the life question of today, for she shows how ordinary people, within this ordeal, consistently hold to the greater human values. It is this unfolding psychological drama of girl's growth, mingled with the physical danger of the group. There is anguish in the thought of how much creative power, how much beauty of living, was cut off. . She wished strongly to live even after her death. And this she did, for sure. Her legacy is a legacy of the undying human spirit.

"My God, my God, look upon me, why hast thou forsaken me."
(Bible, Psalm 22)

Jane Austen's 'Emma'

by Rashid Alam

'Emma', a novel by Jane Austen, depicts the issues of marriage, gender, age, social mobility, and social gathering. In this novel, Jane Austen presented a particular class of people. A society of aristocrats or well off people or nouveau riche, who were proud, extravagant, liked large dinner parties, visiting each other and had an active social life. Women characters like Emma, the protagonist, Miss Churchill, Jane Fairfax and Mrs. Weston were empowered in their limited genteel world; independent, dominating and took decisions on important affairs in their circles, which show the spirit of the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century. The women in privileged positions often controlled the society they moved in, a *genteel* society, a world of peace and comfort.

A novel with very little complication in its wonderful language, themes and full of lively characters. Though, the characters are well fitted in the novel, and the art of characterization of Jane Austen is worth-noticing. Jane Austen gives a description of each character as they appear or are introduced to us one by one and which is very good for an unsophisticated and unskilled reader like me. She also describes the nature and relation of the characters which is a sort of spoiler. It makes the plot very simple. There is usually no suspense in the characters. 'Emma' has two enigmatic characters though; Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill. Their secret understanding adds an element of unexpected complexity in the novel. However, it is quite good that her characters are open and the plot is easily comprehensible, but it makes the plot predictable. There is no excitement in reading as there are no dramatic events and complexity. In comparison her contemporary, Sir Walter Scott was writing his huge sweeping novels with the huge canvas of history and characters leading to a greater popularity of his novels in their lifetimes.

Another important thing to be noted is that her characters are introduced or described many times. Once by Jane Austen herself and other times by the characters themselves when they talk to each other. So, a great deal of the novel is about describing the characters and to do so she has ample use of adjectives. She has used some adjectives interestingly, for example, she used

the adjective “handsome” for both men and women and for objects, like she wrote “a handsome letter”. They sound strange in the modern times.

I know, ‘Emma’ is one of the most popular novels of Jane Austen. It is read as “marriage novel” or “gossip novel” or as a “social novel”. She talks about people, their nature and relation and the work they do. She does not talk about everyday affairs or routine matters like ‘One has taken tea or not’, or ‘What dress one is wearing?’ There is a lot of discussion in her novels. She reveals the characters through their conversation and interaction with each other. The novel does not seem to satisfy the interest of all people. Since every person has different taste of genre in literature. We can read ‘Emma’ as a novel about loveliness and liveliness of people and society. It will equip you with the society and people and their cultures of the period. But, if you want some suspense and excitement, this is not the right novel you should pick.

The novel is full of humour, satire and minute observation. The novel deals mostly with the upper class or the high class who dominate the society of Highbury. In this novel, Emma, the protagonist, is described as ‘rich, handsome and clever’ in the very opening paragraph. She does match – making. She manipulates her friends and her relatives and makes them decide what they need to do or whom should they marry. She feels very proud of herself. She is over confident. But honestly, none of the matches she fixed actually seem to be steady and successful. This is one of the ways of Austen’s depicting rich girls who had nothing sensible or important things to do, rather than involved in ridiculous and unimportant activities. This is a satire on Emma, even could not decide her own choice. The originality of ‘Emma’ lies in the heroine. She is far from perfect and very different from the ideal heroines like Richardson’s ‘Pamela.’

Emma and Mr. Knightley are the two most important characters. Emma brings unbalanced situations and turmoil in the life of others by her ridiculous, childish and insensible actions that is, her so-called self appointed job of match-making. But Mr Knightley, a handsome, clever, sensible, independent and thoughtful man, brings stability in the novel. He is bold and frank and does not bother to interfere with Emma on her decisions. He is the only character who confronts Emma in the end when things go too far, and makes her realize that she is not always right.

One can find Jane Austen’s mastery as a novelist in the novel. She is very accomplished in the art of observation and using diction, humour and satire. Most importantly her women characters are very interesting. Her craft as a novelist is visible in the novel. The social issues of the time or the black and white image of the time i.e. the society or people beyond her own

social class do not interest her . Love and marriage are her only concerns and the fact that she can create wonderful classics around these predictable themes with all the nuances

and complexities of story, drama, emotion, romance, satire and create heroines like Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse is a testimony to her greatness.

***“Love and marriage, love and marriage,
Go together like a horse and carriage,
This I tell ya, brother,
You can’t have one without the other.”
(Sammy Cahn)***

Premchand's 'Godan'

By Rudra Goswami

'Godan' is a work which basically throws light on the rural people of India in the era of the British Rule. The mesmerizing scenes of the novel make the novel a standard one and unique too. The scenes leave the readers with conflicting feelings of both pleasure and depression. 'Godan' was translated into English as 'The Gift of a Cow' & the creator of this very novel is none other than Munshi Premchand.

Dhanpat Rai Srivastava (1880--1936) popularly known as Munshi Premchand wrote many novels in his literary career and 'Godan' is one of them. 'Godan' is a novel which needs no introduction. It was and remains one of the best novels of the age in which it was written and the novel has its greatness and relevance till the present. The popularity of this novel has remained constant since its publication. The novel portrayed many ideas about life and nature of people, and focused on the exploitation of peasants, class differences, the vanity of upper class people and their condescending attitude towards the lower classes, inter caste relationships and the complexities of love. Some of the scenes lift the novel to the height of greatness.

1st scene: Reunion of Mr. Khanna and Mrs. Khanna

This scene reveals Mr. Khanna's helpless attitude and feelings which move from moral darkness to a self realisation and enlightenment. After the destruction of his sugar mill; he realised the true meaning of life and true love of Govindi for him. His jaded senses were revived by discovering an understanding and compassion in his heart. He realised the greatness of his wife when she forgave him and the words said by Mrs. Khanna are that:

"Sufferer is far better than oppressor"

The simple truth and acceptance of his wife shook him to the depth of his soul and finally destroyed the foundation of his lust and immorality. His earlier attitude towards Dr. Malti had made him a debauch and he wasn't able to differentiate the necessities and luxuries of his life. Actually it was not his sugar mill which was burnt but rather symbolically it was the sinfulness and perversity of Mr. Khanna which was consumed by a spiritual catharsis and he emerged as a true man and he was reunited with his wife.

2nd Scene: Malti discovers her inner power

It is one of the most beautiful scenes of the novel which makes it memorable for the readers. The scene describes the conversation between Dr. Malti and Prof. B. Mehta on a boat on a river, at night time. The parlance between them discloses the concept of love and marriage. They have different ideas regarding love. Whereas Mr. Mehta's definition of love is contradictory and ambivalent, Dr. Malti is a strong woman with convictions. Malti's ideology of love says that:

"In the temple of love one can get boon as a worshipper not as an invigilator." This defines her as a person who has definite moral views and beliefs.

3rd Scene: The death scene of Hori

Poverty, insult, sorrow, pain, disappointments, defeat and constant surrender are the lifelong companions of Hori and his wife. The miserable condition of Hori in the novel and his death and the poignancy of the scene described by Premchand are immortal. His death produces powerful current of emotion among readers and describes the social conflicts and the extreme poverty of the age. Premchand in almost all his novels and short stories has depicted the social inequalities, the abject poverty and the heartbreak of the village people. At the centre of his narrative is the poor, simple, uneducated and poverty stricken peasant, gullible, often oppressed and victimised by a harsh social system based on caste and social class. Even his most simple desires remain unfulfilled. Dhaniya gives 20 pice to Matadin as 'Godan' which exhibit the tragedy of a poor person with a deep longing and desire for a cow. His life centred around this heartfelt wish and with that desire he spent his entire life and finally died with the unfulfilled dream for a cow.

The novel is a masterpiece of Premchand. He is a humanist and his novels and short stories depict the human condition of the Indian villages in the pre independence era. The stories of their simple desires, longings, helplessness and an inherent nobility in their deprivation are told with a simplicity, in an ironical detached style but the silent sympathy is underlined in the themes.

This novel is about a period in Indian history when village life was simple. It reveals a society which I would describe as "My Grandma's World" as I have written in the following lines:

My grandma's world was black and white.

My grandma's world was male dominated.

My grandma's world was filled with fairy tales.

My grandma's world was captured inside four walls.

My grandma's world was of rich culture and devotion.

My Grandma's world was of festivals and celebration.

My grandma's world was of a fertile imagination.

My grandma's world contained pure air.

My grandma's world knew how to share.

My grandma's world was of Lori and Jatra.

My grandma's world was of Ramayana and Mahabharata.

“The greatest of evils and the worst of crimes is poverty.”
(George Bernard Shaw)

Karnad's 'Nagamandala'

By Sujit

'Nagamandala' is a play which was written by the great writer Girish Karnad. He was a well-known actor, playwright and director. He worked in South Indian cinema as well as in Bollywood. His plays are very famous among the readers. He was a great writer in Kannada. Kannada is his language of choice and also his mother tongue. Most of his writings have been translated into English by him. Among all of his creations, 'Nagamandala' is considered the best one and it is a play based on an Indian folk-tale.

What I have found best in this play of Girish Karnad is the relationship between a man and woman. Girish Karnad has tried to represent the condition of a woman in ancient days, The play is based on a couple called 'Rani' and 'Apanna'. Rani is a *sati savitri*, loyal to her husband but Apanna is a very arrogant husband who does not care for her at all. Apanna is callous and uncaring towards his wife and treats her with contempt. He isolates her from everyone and she is miserable and lonely. She pines for his love but he is infatuated with his mistress. Women were thought to be inferior to men and this patriarchy is prevalent today as well. It is visible in the urban as well as life in rural areas. It is present in all the classes of the society, whether affluent or working class or lower class. In the past women were exploited and treated as commodities by their husbands. It did not matter that a wife was faithful, loyal or devoted to her husband. The men were not expected to be any of these things .

The relationship between a man and woman was based on inequality. Traditionally man considers himself as a superior being in almost all the Eastern cultures and civilisations . In spite of worshipping the Woman as a Goddess , the reality is very different . The relationship between a husband and a wife is taken as a symbol of love and it is also said that the marriage is a holy union. Though this is the social and moral ethos , the human nature has a tendency to discard the traditional wisdom and live life in a very immoral and self indulgent manner . There is a natural inclination towards sinful behaviour .

The relationship in the play, 'Nagamandala', exhibits how a woman is suffering and going through a pathetic condition after her marriage. Apanna is oblivious towards his wife and ignores the sanctity of his married life with his wife. Their marriage is a farce, and Rani suffers due her husband's indifference and infidelity . Rani is portrayed as a good wife but her luck is not in favour. She tries her best to attract her husband but her efforts are in

vain . Appanna visits a prostitute every day, keeping the hedonistic tradition of indulging in extra marital affairs by men very much alive . In a male dominated patriarchal society the women had no rights , choices or position.

The unequal relationship between a husband and wife in this play, serves as the best example of women's lack of power and voice in the early days. Man was the oppressor and the woman was the victim , who was always exploited . In the world of myths , sometimes destiny is transformed by divine intervention. In the fairy tales also usually a kind fairy Godmother waves a magic wand and sets things right . In a mythical situation there is a timely incarnation of God , an *avatar* to do help the righteous . In 'Nagamandala' the suffering wife is helped by the Divine Snake or Naga who is ultimately the reason which unites the husband and wife. The Naga or the Snake is the *deus ex machina* utilised to fulfil Rani's dreams of her husband's love . The incarnation of the Naga is a plot device to remove the complications from the story and to bring it to a happy conclusion. The Naga has to assume the shape of Appanna to be accepted by Rani and she finds to her delight that her husband has changed into a sensual lover. He visits her at night and fulfils all her physical and emotional desires. She thinks that it is her husband who has fallen in love with her . This however a mistaken impression as it is the Naga who assumes Appanna's shape after falling in love with her due to the spell of the root with magic powers. The situation in the story is a commentary on the unequal relationship between a husband and wife . The man can be a philanderer but a woman has to maintain her chastity at all costs . Rani allows the Naga to be her lover thinking him to be Appanna . She is still faithful to her despite the fact that he openly commits adultery.

Finally ,Appanna, realizing his mistake accepts his wife with love. He becomes a faithful and loving husband and their marriage is destined for a happy ending. Rani accepts him unquestioningly and there is no judgement on his philandering by the society, but she has to go through an *agni pariksha* like Sita to prove her purity. It seems chastity is required only for women .Moreover, she achieves a cult like status and is revered as a mystical and virtuous woman when she is able to prove her fidelity.

The play is a powerful narration of the absence gender equality in the society. This is apparent in the relationship between Rani and Appanna . He breaks the sacred vows of marriage deliberately and is not answerable to anyone , not even his wife . Rani accepts the Naga as her husband under an illusion and is happy to get the attention from who she thinks is her husband . The greatest irony is the compliance of the society to the double standards in a marriage and the unequal balance of power between a husband and wife .

The idea of a woman making such huge sacrifices to prove her innocence is unacceptable from the feminist perspective . A wife tolerating her husband's philandering and still loving him is outrageous . The idea is against a woman's dignity and self respect . The theme is based on folk lore and myths , with the element of magic realism .This lesson is perhaps significant in the modern-day scenario of instant love and zero tolerance. We need to re-visit the ancient world of myths to understand the sublime quality of love. That it is one sided points out to the greater capacity of women to love, adjust and compromise , the ideal of an Indian womanhood in the frame of a Devi. These archaic ideas need to be questioned now .

"We need metaphors of magic and monsters in order to understand the human condition."

(Stephen R. Donaldson)

Tennyson's In Memoriam A.H.H.

By Sujit

"In Memoriam A.H.H" or "In Memoriam" by Alfred Lord Tennyson is regarded as one of the great poems during the Victorian era . It is a long poem consisting of a prologue, 131 cantos/stanzas, and an epilogue. It was published in 1850, but Tennyson took a very long span of time of about 17 years to complete it. "In Memoriam" is written in the memory of his beloved friend, the young Cambridge poet Arthur Henry Hallam, who suddenly died at the age 22 due to Cerebral haemorrhage.

The original title for the poem was "The Way of Soul" at the time of production. 'In Memoriam' is written in four-line abba stanzas of iambic tetrameter also known as 'Memoriam stanzas'. The poem represents/highlights various themes including grief, search of faith and the presence of doubt etc.

The most important theme of the poem is, 'Grief'. The loss of a beloved friend, feeling of loss and abandonment. The poet loses all hope and faith when he heard the news of Hallam's death. Now questions and doubts are emerging in the poet's mind. Hence, the poet begins to find a proper way to convey his emotions and on the other hand he is not sure whether he will succeed to do so even through his poems.

However, as the poem proceeds, the poet begins to find a way to move beyond grief. As we can see that it is difficult to deal with past experiences, and memories, the poet found it challenging to comprehend his emotions . There are numbers of situations where we can see the poet wants to surrender to the grief. The poem is a testament of the ability of a person to accept the reality of death and identify sentiments related to loss. The poet learned to love better and embrace his sorrow. Grief allows him to emerge a stronger person .

The poem presents as major themes; a conflict between religion and science, faith and skepticism. The poet is dealing with his sorrow over Hallam's death as well as a doubt about his religious faith. He wonders and started questioning the point of life if a man's individual soul is not immortal after death. His emotions suffer between faith and doubt and at last he reached the conclusion that Hallam may be gone bodily but his soul is free and now rests in God's lap and the poet believes that after his death they shall meet once again. Ultimately, the fact that love prevails and persists in the vastness of the universe ,gives Tennyson the belief that he needs to place his faith in transcendence and salvation once more.

A loss of faith or belief in God can create a spiritual vacuum in the human mind . In the Victorian Age it began with the development of reason and science , particularly Darwin's 'Origin of the Species.' It shook the foundations of Christianity. It created a feeling of pessimism . However poets like Tennyson are able to reconcile themselves to some kind of hope in the nineteenth century . In the twentieth century after the Holocaust and the trauma of the two World Wars , Europe has been unable to recover that faith . It has created a spiritual crisis , an existential dilemma and a mental sickness which has been translated into the great modern day epic 'The Wasteland'.

Overall, Tennyson's 'In Memoriam' enables his readers to analyse and understand. By dividing the poem in different sections, each one offers reader a deeper sense of how the speaker transforms with adverse situations and at last finds hope and renewed faith. Through themes related to suffering, death, and despair. Tennyson is able to convey his universal message of actual life. The emotional struggles enable people to learn and appreciate the importance of life.

The disillusionment and emptiness one feels at the loss of faith leads to a spiritual vacuum. Though, Tennyson recovers his belief in spirituality in "In Memoriam" in the twentieth century the West was unable to reconcile itself to a belief in God after Holocaust. This is the reason the reason of the Post War trauma reflected in English literature.

Though the Victorian Poetry was pessimistic in tone, there was not a complete loss of faith. Sadly, the twentieth century English Literature does not express any hope, but only a bitterness and existential crisis.

May be TS Eliot can foresee a future beyond that despair in "The Wasteland" with the invocation of "Shantih, Shantih, Shantih."

"There is no greater pain than to remember a happy time when one is in misery."
(Dante)

ABOUT THE WRITERS

Echoes from Across the Physical Divide: Two Voices from Pakistan

- **Mohsin Maqbool Elahi**

Mohsin Maqbool Elahi was born, bred and raised in Calcutta. He later moved to Karachi with his parents and two elder siblings. He has been schooled in Calcutta, Karachi and Dallas. He did his MA in International Relations from Karachi. He has loved reading books ever since his childhood, starting off with comic-books, a habit which he caught from his elder brother, who now lives in Hanau, Germany, which is the birthplace of the Brothers Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm.

Reading comic-books, story books and novels, turned Mohsin into a creative writer. Some of his biggest fans turned out to be some of his teachers, his elder brother – Ahsan Maqbool, and a Professor called Seema Sinha.

His friend in Dallas begged him to write essays and a short story for his Literature class which he did. The friend's American teacher – Jim Lambert – went absolutely ga-ga over the Bangladeshi's creative writing skills, awarding him an A.

He has worked as a journalist for Karachi newspapers like The News and Dawn, and has written many articles and book reviews for the latter. He also writes book reviews for good reads and poetry for All Poetry.

- **Nikhat Mahmood**

Nikhat Mahmood is an English Lecturer, a poetess and a short story writer in English. Her short stories have been published in anthologies and a children's magazine. She has a special attachment to both, the Classical English literature and its lexicon and the sensitivity of Urdu Poetry. She has also been chosen by destiny to be an Autism Activist, supporting in her own way the rights of autistics and their acceptance to society. Presently, she is working on her book of short stories, "The Scent of Bitter Almonds", which should be released in 2020. She lives in Karachi with her two children and husband.

A Take from the West: A Spoof

- **Olivia Hidlebaugh**

Olivia Hidlebaugh is a poet from Virginia USA. She has written over 5000 poems and many were chosen as Featured poem which have been published in many anthologies. She has conducted and judged poetry as well as written with many collaboration partners. Olivia is in the process of self-publishing her first book expected to be launched soon.

The Head Behind the Tales

- **Dr. Seema Sinha**

Dr. Seema Sinha is presently the Head, PG, Department of English at BBM Koyalanchal University. She is also the Dean, Humanities and a member of the University Syndicate and the University Senate.

An avid blogger, a literary critic and an animal lover, she wishes to inspire creativity and original thinking. This is an effort which will inspire the readers to think, write and be irreverent and look at the world with humour.

The P.G. Department of English

Dr. Mantosh Pandey is a dedicated teacher. Dr. Himanshu Shekhar Choudhary, Dr. Indrajit Kumar and Dr. Krishna Murari Singh—all join hands together in giving their best to the students. They are brilliant teachers, motivators and role models for the students.

Voices from the Wilderness

- **Ritika Ojha**

Ritika Ojha likes to call herself a not-so-angry feminist. She earned her Masters degree in English Literature from PK Roy Memorial College, Dhanbad in 2018 and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. from Ranchi University. She has four published poems to her credit, one in an

international anthology and three in a monthly online poetry and prose magazine.

- **Md. Rustam Ansari**

Muhammad Rustam Ansari is currently working as a Teaching Assistant (under Inspired Fellowship) in BBM Koyalanchal University, Dhanbad, Jharkhand, from where he completed his Masters of Arts in English. He loves 'colour' and 'design' which he sees in everything around him. He likes photography and sometimes he also writes poems.

He finds understanding human psychology and philosophy very interesting as well as useful. He has deep faith in the goodness of Humanity and wants to be a source of goodness and positivity to the world as he believes in what George Bernard Shaw said, "*my life belongs to the community*". He firmly believes that honesty is the best policy and that's what can lead us to peace, tranquillity and "real" success in life. As Shakespeare said in *Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 3, "*This above all: to thine own self be true.*"

A Fresh Look: Daring to Think

- **Anamika Banerjee**

Anamika is an English graduate and she has completed her Masters in English from BBMKU. She loves reading novels, poetry and all kinds of inspirational write-ups. She writes poems too.

- **Nidhi Sharma**

Nidhi has graduated from VBU, Hazaribagh. She has completed her Masters in Arts (English) from BBM Koyalanchal University. Her voice is her strength. She is loyal to her duties and people. She practices truth and honesty in her daily life. She has often realized about herself that at the end of the day she is peaceful at heart because her intentions are good and her heart is pure.

- **Priya Jha**

Priya has done her graduation from S.S.L.N.T. College, Dhanbad and MA in English from BBM Koyalanchal University. She is the kind of person who knows how to execute difficult tasks with precision. She has an unshakable faith. Faith is the only currency that can buy possibilities from impossibilities. She loves gardening and writing poems.

- **Md. Rashid Alam**

Rashid has completed his P.G. in English at B.B.M. Koyalanchal University, Dhanbad. He is a voracious reader of novels, poems, stories and biographies and he also writes poems. Watching movies is his favourite pastime and the only philosophy of his life is, "Work and love, love and work. That's all there is".

- **Rudra Goswami**

Rudra has completed Masters in English. Writing poems and novels is his hobby. He loves listening to music and art in any form interests him. He likes people with good nature and behaviour. He cannot go with people with double standards.

- **Sujit**

Sujit is an independent thinker. He loves to analyse the world and literature. He always has a fresh and original insight and perspectives on everything he reads. He has completed his PG from BBM Koyalanchal University.

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