

THE



CONTOUR

ISSN: 2349-6398

An International Peer-Reviewed  
Online Journal Of Studies In English



Volume 1 | Issue 4  
[thecontour.weebly.com](http://thecontour.weebly.com)



## EDITORIAL BOARD

**Dr. Terry Nadasdi**

Professor  
Dept. Of Linguistics  
University Of Alberta  
Edmonton, Alberta  
Canada

**Dr. Ms. Bhagyashree S. Varma**

Associate Professor in English  
University of Mumbai  
Mumbai - 98, India

**Jai Singh**

Department of Commonwealth Literary Studies  
The English and Foreign Languages University,  
Hyderabad, India

**Dr. Prashant Mishra**

Professor and Head  
Department of English  
Government S.V.P.G. College, Neemuch  
Madhya Pradesh - 458 411, India

**Dr. Ramesh Dhage**

School of Language and Literature  
Swami Ramanand Teerth Marthawada University  
Nanded, Maharashtra - 431 606, India

**Nabil Salem**

Assistant Professor,  
Ibb University, Yemen

**Dr. Partha Sarathi Mukhopadhyay**

Principal, Birbhum Mahavidyalay

**Dr. Mala Sharma**

Associate Prof & H, English  
Ramkrishna Nagar Colleg, Assam.

**Hemendra Chandalia**

Professor  
Janardan Rai Nagar Rajasthan Vidyapeeth,  
Udaipur Vice President of Rajasthan Association  
for Studies in English

**Dr. Binod Misra**

Associate Professor of English  
Co-ordinator, Dept. of Humanities & Social  
Sciences  
IIT Patna, Patliputra Kurji Road, Patna, Bihar-  
800013

**Dr. Sudhir Karan**

Asiatic Society, Kolkata

**Dr. Arijit Ghosh**

Department of English,  
VIT, Madras, India

**Dr. Vijay Kumar Roy**

Department of English  
Northern Border University, KSA

**Dr. Ramprasad B.V**

Department of Studies & Research in English,  
Kuvempu University, Karnataka.

**Apurba Saha**

Department of English  
Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University

**Dr. Amit Chakrabarty**

Principal, Turku Hansda Lapsa Hembram  
Mahavidyalay

**Editor-in-Chief**

**Dr. Susanta Kumar Bardhan**

Associate Professor of English  
Suri Vidyasagar College,  
Suri, Birbhum  
West Bengal - 731101, India

# ©THE CONTOUR

**Volume 1, Issue 4**

**ISSN: 2349-6398**

**Website: [thecontour.weebly.com](http://thecontour.weebly.com)**

**E-mail: [thecontour.contact@gmail.com](mailto:thecontour.contact@gmail.com)**

**Facebook: [www.facebook.com/thecontour2014](http://www.facebook.com/thecontour2014)**

**April, 2015**

**Editor-in-Chief**

*Dr. Susanta Kumar Bardhan*

**Cover Designing & Formatting**

**Samarpan Chatterjee**

**Suman Saha**

**Publisher**

**Dr. Susanta Kumar Bardhan,**

**On behalf of LOKAYATIK**

**Suri, Birbhum, 731101, W. B.**

# Contents

<b>EDITORIAL BOARD.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Editorial .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Article .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Veer Tejaji: A Deity of the Peasantry .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Dr. H. S. Chandalia .....	6
Dr. Pramila Singhvi .....	6
<b>Veiling the Mystic in the Hedonist's Gear: A Comparative Rereading of Omar Khayyam's <i>The Rubaiyat</i> and Harivansh Rai Bachchan's <i>Madhusālā</i> .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Prasun Banerjee .....	14
<b>Chaucer's Reading of <i>Somnium Scipionis</i>: 'A Certeyn Thing to Lerne' in <i>The Parliament of Fowls</i>.....</b>	<b>22</b>
Manas Ranjan Chaudhuri.....	22
<b>Susan Barton: Virginia Woolf's Judith in J. M. Coetzee's <i>Foe</i> .....</b>	<b>36</b>
Tanuja Kumar Nayak.....	36
<b>Intertextual phenomenon in Eliot's <i>Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock</i> .....</b>	<b>46</b>
Arindam Mukherjee .....	46
<b>The Relation between Word &amp; Meaning: In Western Epistemological Approach .....</b>	<b>58</b>
Rita Mukherjee.....	58
<b>Translation.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Kasai<sup>1</sup> .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Butcher .....</b>	<b>64</b>
Ramkrishna Mandal <sup>2</sup> .....	64
Translated by: Susanta Kumar Bardhan,.....	64
<b>BOOK REVIEW .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION TO STYLISTICS. Susanta Kumar Bardhan. ....</b>	<b>72</b>
Reviewed by: Soutik Sen .....	72

# Editorial

---

It gives me immense pleasure to state that with the publication of Issue 4 of Volume 1, our journal *The Contour* can be declared **ONE VOLUME OLD**. It had to undergo through ups and downs and different kinds of hurdles during this period. However, with its own inherent immunity power and strength this **child journal** has been able to survive and is expected to survive in future in the world of academic enterprise. It has, we can say unhesitatingly, become possible only because of the constant and enduring help and encouragement we received from the well-wishers and *The Contour* Fraternity. The present issue is rich with variety of issues/topics addressing several issues relating to literature, language and culture. We sincerely convey our hearty and sincere gratitude to the reviewers and advisers for their critical perspectives and suggestions much needed for upkeep of the sound health of the journal. For several reasons we have not been able to accommodate all the papers submitted for the present issue.

The readers and the well-wishers of the journal are earnestly requested to give their valuable suggestions for the improvement of its future issues.

It is also declared that the views and observations presented in the writings are solely of the respective authors, not of the editor/editorial board of the journal.

Special thanks should go to Suman Saha and Samarpan Chatterjee who with their expertise in computer have worked strenuously and sincerely for giving the shape to the journal out of sheer enthusiasm.

06.04.2015



Dr. Susanta Kumar Bardhan  
Editor-in-chief  
*The Contour*  
&

*Associate Professor of English*  
*Suri Vidyasagar College, West Bengal, India*

# Article

---

## **Veer Tejaji: A Deity of the Peasantry**

**Dr. H. S. Chandalia**

Professor, Department of English,  
JRN Rajasthan Vidyapeeth University, Udaipur

**Dr. Pramila Singhvi**

Lecturer, Government M. G. College, Udaipur

Rajasthan is rich in folk lore. There are innumerable narratives, songs, bhajans, dance-dramas, painting schools and bardic singers depicting the heroic feats of the folk – deities which form a strong tradition of an alternative faith which is rooted not as much in spiritualism as in the material and worldly aspects of the lives of the devotees. Popular among the masses these folk deities were those heroic individuals who served selflessly the cause of the people in their lives and because of their valour, virtues and sacrifice became dear to the people. These persons were then worshipped by the masses and assumed the status of Gods and Goddesses.

Tejaji is one of the major folk deities of Rajasthan. The exact date of his birth is not known but the traditional records maintained by the Bhats of their clan reveal that he was born in the village Khadnal of Nagaur Pargana in Marwar in Dholya sub-caste of the Jat community in 1073 A.D. (Bheru Bhat ki Bahi, Degana) His father was Tahadji and the name of his mother was Ramkunwari. He was married to Pemal, the daughter of Raimal Jagi of Paner village. There are references of Tejaji getting married five times before he married Pemal. There are other sources which put it slightly differently. Veer Tejaji, according to the sources, was born on Friday, maghashukla 14 samvat 1130 (29 January 1074), in the family of Dholyav Gotra Nagvanshi Jats. His mother's name was Sugna. Mother Sugna is believed to have got son Tejaji by the blessings of Naga-deity. (Wikipedia)

The life of Tejaji is known for his courage and bravery displayed in saving cows from plunderers. Also, he is known for his determination to keep his word. He would not let his promise unfulfilled. In the pursuit of these, he made the supreme sacrifice and laid down his life. The narrative of his bravery in rescuing cows appears in literary forms, especially in folk songs.

Since the literary sources about the feats of Tejaji have origin in the oral tradition, there is no author who can be identified as the source of information. The songs and folk narratives have been compiled at a very later stage by scholars, therefore a number of narratives with slight differences in the course of events, details of dates and places occur in various texts.

One of the narratives describes the story of Tejaji's feat of rescuing cows as follows. There was a tradition in that area, the chieftain had to initiate the ploughing of fields after first rains. Tejaji's father and brother were out of the village at first rains so his mother asked Tejaji to do the *halsotiya* in the fields. Tejaji went to fields and started ploughing. His sister-in-law (bhabhi) became late in fetching his food locally called Chhak, which angered Tejaji. On Tejaji's expressing his anger she taunted that his wife was in her father's home and it was shame on his part. This prompted him to go to bring his wife from in-laws. His sister-in-law (Bhabhi) asked Tejaji that before he brings his wife Pemal, he should bring his sister Rajal so that she can receive Pemal on her first arrival to Kharnal. Tejaji was married to Pemal in early childhood at Pushkar with the daughter of Rai Mal Jat of Jhanjhargotra, chieftain of village Paner . After marriage there was a dispute between two families in which *māmā* of Pemal and father of Tejaji were killed. Tejaji did not know that he was married.

When Tejaji was on way to village Tabiji to bring his sister, he was attacked by Meena Sardar. There was a war and Tejaji was victorious. He reached village Tabiji, got permission of her sister's husband Jogaji Siyag and brought Rajal to Kharnal.

Next day early in the morning he mounted his mare Līlaṇ with palāṇ and started journey to Paner to bring his wife Pemal. It was a difficult journey, but he crossed all the Rivers running full of water due to heavy rains. He reached Paner by evening. At that time his mother-in-law was milking cows. The cows got disturbed due to Tejaji's brisk entry on his mare. His mother-in-law could not recognize Tejaji and cursed him that he be bitten by a black snake as he has disturbed her cows. Tejaji got angry over this comment and decided to return without Pemal.

LachhaGujari was a friend of Pemal. Her house was about two kilometers from Rupangarh. LachhaGujari helped Pemal to meet with Teja. For this Lachha rode on camel and went to Teja facing many clashes with Meena sardars en route. Lachha reached Teja and gave Pemal's message that if Tejaji does not come she will die. Parents of Pemal had decided to gether married with some other person. At this time Pemal was attempting suicide but was saved by Lachhan. Tejaji came to Paner and saw her there. Pemal was a beautiful and attractive girl. They were talking with each other that they heard knock of Lachha Gujari. Lachha told Tejaji that thieves had taken away all her cows and there was no body to help. Tejaji mounted his mare Lilan and started alone to fight with dacoits, who had taken away Lachha's cows.

Tejaji found that dacoits who had stolen the cows of Lachha Gujari were Meena sardar's people. Tejaji, who was made for helping others, decided to bring those cows. The myth is that he encountered a snake burning in fire that was saved by Teja. That snake cursed Teja and wanted to bite Teja. In fact he had encountered with a Nagavanshi chieftain and he had a war with him. He promised to come back after bringing his wife Pemal. He was badly wounded in the process to bring Gujari's cows back from dacoits. Veer Teja was man of words. While returning he kept his words and produced himself before the snake. The snake did not find unwounded place on the body of Teja so he offered to bite on tongue. The snake bit on his tongue which caused his death on 28 August 1103.(Wikipedia)

While Tejaji was returning from Paner with his wife he was attacked jointly by Meenas, who were defeated earlier and Nagavanshi chieftains. Tejaji and his wife fought bravely. Tejaji was killed in the war and Pemal committed Sati at place called Sursura. Tejaji's sister Rajal had also committed sati. (Report *Murdumshumari* 61)

In other narratives it is stated differently. The cows of Lachha Gujari are stated to be stolen by Mers. (Swami 67) Gurjars are a community of peasants and cowherds. Their main occupation is rearing cattle. They are one of the backward communities of Rajasthan even today. When Gurjars approached Tejaji and requested him to rescue the cows driven away by the Mers, he was going to fetch his wife Pemal from her parental village back to his home. He immediately decided to rescue the cows first. In this pursuit he had to fight a tough battle with the Mers and was fatally wounded. There are a number of stories associated with this act of valour and



ultimate death of Tejaji. All these stories, however, depict an incidence of snake bite at the tongue of Tejaji finally leading to his death. These stories are narrated in a number of folksongs and hymns which are sung at the shrines and temples constructed at various places in central, western and eastern Rajasthan.

**Each of these narratives depicts his taking up of the responsibility of rescuing the cows, preferring it to his domestic responsibility and successfully accomplishing the heroic task of liberating the cows. It may be treated as a sign of his religious faith, but more than being so, it is his sense of duty towards his fellow beings. As a member of the peasantry, the economic worth of cows as a source of livelihood is equally important to him.**

Another feature that appears prominently in all the narratives is his commitment to honour his word. He returns to the snake, though wounded, to fulfil the promise that he had made to the snake. These kind of heroic characteristics are found in almost all heroes who are sung in oral literature. This can be understood as a trait of personality of those unlettered heroes who belong to a society where the script could not reach due to various socio-economic and political reasons.

According to another tale when Tejaji was going to his in-law's place, he tried to save a pair of snakes. The snake was saved but his paramour could not be saved. He grew furious and wanted to bite Tejaji. Tejaji promised the snake that he will return to him after visiting his in-laws and then the snake could bite him. After reaching his in-laws he got injured while trying to rescue the cows of Lachha Gujar. Still he did not forget his promise. He went to the snake. All parts of his body were full of wounds. The snake asked where to bite. Tejaji then offered his tongue. The snake bit him on his tongue and he passed away.

In yet another tale, it is said that as a cowherd Tejaji used to drive his cattle to the grazing grounds. In the fields, he observed that one of the cows used to get estranged and reached near a hole from where a snake used to come and drink the milk. When Tejaji came to know of this, he promised to offer milk to the snake every day. Once, somehow he forgot to do so. The snake grew furious and wanted to bite him. He said that he will return to him after visiting his in-laws and then the snake could bite him. When he returned, he was wounded so much that the only place left was the tongue where the snake bit Tejaji and as a consequence he passed away.

(Vyas6). One more tale which appears more realistic narrates the battle with the Mers and states that Tejaji was seriously wounded and he fell down at a place where a snake was present. The snake bit him on his tongue which caused his death.

Tejaji passed away at a place called Sursara near Kishangarh. A temple was built at that place and a cattle fare used to be held every year. (Jodhpur Records) But in 1734 A.D. during the reign of Maharaja Abhay Singh of Jodhpur, the chieftain of Parbatsar took the statue of Tejaji from Sursara, Kishangarh to Parbatsar and installed it there. Since then Parbatsar is the main shrine of Tejaji. Every year for ten days in rainy season (From Bhadrapad Shukla 5-15) a cattle fare is held in which traders, peasants and devotees of Tejaji gather in huge numbers. (Adams 138) Similar fares are held at his birth place Khadnal, Sursara, the place of his death, Beawer and Chittorgarh. His temples are found, besides other places, at many places in the erstwhile states of Bundi, Ajmer, Kishangarh and Chittorgarh. In fact, almost every village in Rajasthan has a small place of worship called Devra with the icon of Tejaji riding a horse, with a naked sword in his hand, his wife by his side and a snake biting at his tongue. Similar figurines carved on leaf-shaped silver plates are worn by the Jat peasants round their neck.

Folk deities of Rajasthan are worshipped by the masses across regions and religions. There are songs, hymns, plays and folk form of oral literature like “Katha”, “Khayal” and “Beawal”. Tejaji is worshipped almost all over the state. On the tenth day of the month of Bhadrapad people organize the recital of “Beawala” of Tejaji, some others organise his “Katha” and at places people play his “Khayal” depicting important events of his life. Hundreds of people gather to watch these performances. Besides these, numerous songs depicting the valour, determination and promise-keeping are sung in the peasantry. The songs describe his life-style, his love for the peasantry and cattle-rearing communities, his promise made to rescue cows, his willingness and ready acceptance to fight the Mers, his promise made to the snake and the supreme sacrifice he made to honour his word. They also depict his domestic chores.

In the rainy season when the peasants begin to plough the fields, they begin by singing the songs devoted to Tejaji called Teja-ter. They have a belief that this will be a good omen for the crops and the yield will be good. (Swami 83) **The peasants are able to identify themselves with Tejaji as their lives are also like that of Tejaji. They have to undergo situations similar to**

**those faced by Tejaji. Therefore the songs are a source of inspiration for the worldly life, the daily chores that they are involved in. They do not relate to the spiritual world, the idea of emancipation or the supernatural. Tejaji is worshipped as an icon of human virtues and even when the devotees approach him through his worship it is to gain some material accomplishment.**

Like Gogaji, another folk deity of Rajasthan, Tejaji is also worshipped as a god of snakes. There is a popular belief that if a string of Tejaji called Tejaji ki Tant is tied to the right leg of a person bit by a snake, the poison does not affect him. (Rajputana District Gazetteers 34) Such a person is, then taken to a shrine of Tejaji and after proper offerings and prayers, the string is cut. In some of the songs sung by women, Tejaji is requested to remove the effect of the poison of Black Cobra. (Choyal 5) Another song narrates that just by taking the name of Tejaji the poison of the snake in victim's body loses its effect.

Dr. Kalyan Singh Shekhawat, an expert on Rajasthani language, literature and culture talks of the folk deities of Rajasthan, "These folk gods and goddesses have never been supernatural creatures, but were a part of this human world and they devoted their lives for the welfare of the society. That is why they were also called "Peer". (Shekhawat 360) They were the ideals of their time and attained such height that they were treated as gods and goddesses. They are men as well as women like Ramdevji, Pabuji, Tejaji, Hadbuji, Mallinathji, Gogaji, Bheruji, Kesariya Kanwarji, Mehaji, among gods and Satiji, Jeen Mataji, Karniji, and Nine goddesses of the Charans. Folk deities have been described as "Peers":

Pabu, Hadbu, Ramdev, Mangaliya Meha,

Paanchu Peer Padharjyo, Gogajijeha.

The couplet welcomes the folk deities namely Pabuji, Hadbuji, Ramdevji, Mangaliyaji, Mehaji and Gogaji. They are all addressed as Peer which literally means "An old wise man".

Tejaji belonged to a Jat family which is a community primarily of peasants. In Rajasthan, agriculture is supported and supplemented by animal husbandry and therefore cattle are unconditionally regarded as important an asset as land is. Therefore Tejaji's popularity as a deity roots from his selfless sacrifice to rescue cows. Another deity Gogaji also died while rescuing

cows though in his case the cows belonged to him only and he died defending them against his own kith and kin. He is also revered by the peasantry and a string with nine knots called “Goga–Rakhdi” is tied to the plough and at the wrist of the plougher in the hope of better crops. (Report Murdumshumari 14) Like Tejaji, Gogaji is also associated with snakes and it is said that just by remembering Gogaji as a “Jahir Peer”, the poison loses its effect.

Wherever Tejaji’s temples and shrines exist, annual fares are held. At Parbatsar , the main shrine of Tejaji, a cattle-fare is held. **Fares are a very important embodiment of the cultural and economic life of a region. The fares are occasions of expressing collectively the faith, beliefs, joys and interests of people. In the case of festivals the rejoicing is more confined to individual families or communities while fares are more carnivalesce in nature. There is greater intermingling of heterogeneous populations across class, caste, religion, gender and political affiliation. The economic activity becomes primary though people gather in the name of a deity, their activities revolve round economic and social concerns.**

Tejaji’s fare at Parbatsar is a huge cattle fare. For ten days cattle– rearers from far and wide gather at Parbatsar with thousands of cows, oxen, camels, horses, donkeys and mules etc. which are bought and sold there. It is a huge trade fare for peasantry where nowadays agricultural equipments, high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides are also available. These fares underline the importance of livestock in the life of rural Rajasthan. Nagori Oxen, Sanchori cows, horses and camels from Gudha Malani are famous in the region. These days hybrid species are also available. **Dr. Kalyan Singh Shekhawat writes about these fares, “They have cultural value but their economic significance also cannot be ignored. Cattle have been described as wealth. It is also a sign of one’s prosperity.”( Shekhawat 365)**

**Tejaji and other folk deities, besides being icons of the faith of peasantry have also played a role of social reformers. There are several historical evidences that society was then divided into social strata determined by caste and there were many communities which were treated as untouchables. These folk deities adopted a very liberal and cordial attitude towards these communities and unlike the orthodox Brahminical order, allowed them all religious freedom to be a part of their faith. Most of the folk deities , thus became presiding**



deities of the toiling masses and helped the peasantry in particular to assert their identity and independence.

### References

Adams. *The Western Rajputana States*. 1900 A.D.

Bheru Bhat Ki Bahi, Degana

Choyal, Shiv Singh. "Junjhar Tejaji Ka Geet", *Rajasthani Lok Geet*, Part-2: Udaipur

Jodhpur Records. Hindi Records, Mahakma Khas Pargana Parbatsar Bag No.102 State Archives Bikaner

Pemaram. *The Religious Movements in Medieval Rajasthan*. Ajmer: Archana Prakashan, 1977.

Report Murdumshumari. Raj Marwar 1891

Rajputana District Gazeteers. Ajmer Merwara. Vol.1-A 1904

Shekawat, Dr. Kalyan Singh. *Rajasthani Bhasha, Sahitya, Sanskriti*: Jodhpur. Rajasthani Granthagar 1989

Shukla, Dinesh Chandra. *Saints and Folk Deities of Rajasthan*. Jodhpur: Rajasthani Sahitya Sansthan, 1992.

Swami, Ganpati, "Goubhakt Tejaji". *Maru Bharati* Year 1, Vol.2

Vyas, Surya Raj. *Veer Teja*. Jodhpur 1931

### Websource

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veer\\_Teja](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veer_Teja)

# Veiling the Mystic in the Hedonist's Gear: A Comparative Rereading of Omar Khayyam's *The Rubaiyat* and Harivansh Rai Bachchan's *Madhuśālā*

**Prasun Banerjee**

Assistant Professor & Head,  
Department of English  
Kabi Joydeb Mahavidyalaya, Illambazar, Birbhum

## **Abstract**

*Despite the conspicuous mystic perspectives, the recognition of the Rubaiyat to the Western literary discourse has essentially been as a hedonist poem celebrating the paganistic wine-intoxicated revelry and joys of earthly life and that of Omar Khayyam as the poet of the sharab (wine), saki (wine-girl) and peyala(wine-pot). But a careful scrutiny of the Persian and oriental tradition of poetry would reveal that the Rubaiyat is fraught with poetic devices that indicate at established Sufistic discourses in Khayyam's verses, almost akin to the poets like Rumi, Hafeez or Ferdowsi. Harivansh Rai Bachchan's Madhuśālā, one of the most original and celebrated transcreation of the Rubaiyat, identifies and recreates this trait of Omar Khayyam in the Indian context, and marks the difference of the Oriental literary discourse with the Western one. This paper attempts to go beyond the hedonistic exteriors of both Khayyam's and Bachchan's verses into their mystic consciousness.*

**Keywords:** Sufism, Chhāyāvād, Hālāvād, Mysticism

*The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* is the title that Edward FitzGerald gave to his translation of a selection of poems, originally written in Persian and numbering about a thousand, attributed to Omar Khayyam, the 12<sup>th</sup> century Persian poet, philosopher, astronomer and mathematician. The translation took the Victorian literary circuit by storm, and the poem was immediately dubbed by the stereotyping, generalizing Victorian literary discourse as an affirmation of delightful oriental paganism and Epicureanism. Quite surprisingly to the Victorian literary circuit whose interaction with the Oriental discourse has neither been long nor really intimate, the translation,

undoubtedly, seemed to be greatly improving upon the original. However, the first real interaction of *The Rubaiyat* and its maker Omar Khayyam, with the West, happened not with Edward FitzGerald's anonymous publication of the same in 1859 as the adaptation completely went unnoticed in Victorian literary circuit. It is when the celebrated Pre-Raphaelite painter-poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti discovered a copy of *The Rubaiyat* in a "penny stall" and circulated in his circle of friends which included the great Algernon Charles Swinburne, the fame of the poem as well as its translator was assured. Subsequently Edward FitzGerald produced four more translations of the quatrains (though as per popular opinion, the first version itself is the purest and the most inspired: which contains 75 verses in comparison to the later editions which contain 101 verses), and this time having accompanied with enthusiastic reactions of the who's who of the Victorian literary discourse, Omar's position got vindicated. The immediate reaction to Omar and his verses is in the expected line. The mellifluousness of the verses, the celebration of the earthly joys immediately confirmed Omar's position in the Western literary discourse as the stereotypical oriental hedonist celebrating the paganistic wine-intoxicated revelry and joys of earthly life. Though critics like J.B. Nicolas, the Frenchman who had the opportunity of knowing Khayyam through his native tradition being stationed there in the French Embassy in Persia, was referring to the conspicuous mystic sides of *The Rubaiyat*, yet the mystic Khayyam is declared only to be a passing thought. The unmistakable erotic charm of the orient in the *Rubaiyat* (the word *rubaiyat* in Arabic means a stanza of four lines complete in itself, quatrain, consisting of two *ruba'i* or two-line stanzas in Arabic) could not be missed to the ever-vigilant Western ear so practiced in indentifying and stereotyping the oriental tune:

"Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough  
A Flask of wine, a Book of verse-and Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness  
And Wilderness is Paradise now." (Verse XI, First Edition)

With verses like these, Omar was dubbed by the Western literary discourse without a tinge of doubt, the poet of the sharab (wine), saki (wine-girl) and peyala (wine-pot): wine, woman and the wilderness.

But far from the Eurocentric discourse that thrives on stereotyping the entire East as the haven of the erotica and the exotica, Omar Khayyam has always been recognized in his own land as a mystic and spiritual teacher. And his verses in *The Rubaiyat* have been revered as an inspired

scripture where his passionate praise of wine and love is emblematic of the established Sufistic<sup>i</sup> discourse of veiling the mystic in the hedonist's gear. The wine is the well-known symbol of the delirious spirit of divine frenzy and the love of the rapturous devotion to God, a state of mind which can never be conceived through the rational mind but can be felt in an intoxicated state. In the compositions of the renowned Sufi poets like Rumi, Hafeez and Ferdowsi references to the sharab, saki and peyala are recurrent to construct that frenzied state of drunkenness which is equivalent to the ecstatic moment of divine conception. The ambiguous texture of the verses achieved by the abundant use of light, double-meaning words in the *Rubaiyat* also echo the Sufistic inclination of creating a paradoxical matrix to enable the worldly man compare pleasures with the superior joys experienced in spiritual life. To the man who drinks wine in order to forget, temporarily, the unbearable sorrows and trials of his life, Omar offers a delightful alternative: the nectar of divine ecstasy, which leads to divine enlightenment, thereby obliterating human woe permanently. It is quite certain that a man of the stature of Omar Khayyam who had the backings of the extremely orthodox religious state, did not go through the labour of writing so many exquisite verses merely to "inspire people to escape sorrow by drugging their sense to alcohol." (Yogananda, Introduction, xvi)

A thorough scrutiny of the history of the Western response to the *Rubaiyat*, however quiet surprisingly, reveals that no serious attempts have been made to unveil the mystic under the hedonist's gear except two critics namely J.B. Nicolas, the French diplomat who translated 464 verses of Khayyam's critics in 1867 and Paramhansa Yogananda, the Indian spiritual guru, who attempted a mystic renderings of the verses in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both of these men, curiously enough, have initiation into the Oriental literary discourse. The reaction of Edward FitzGerald to J.B. Nicolas' observations is worth noting here:

Mr. Nicolas, whose edition has reminded me of several things, and instructed me in others, does not consider Omar to be the material epicurean that I have literally taken him for, but a mystic, shadowing the Deity under the figure of wine, wine-bearer, etc., as Hafiz is supposed to do; in short, a Sufi poet like Hafiz and the rest...As there is some traditional presumption, and certainly the opinion of some learned men, in favour of Omar's being a Sufi-even something of a saint-those who please may so interpret his wine and cup-bearer. (quoted in Yogananda, Introduction, xvi)



This stubbornness of FitzGerald and the Eurocentric discourse not to see Omar Khayyam beyond the formulated phrase of a oriental pagan can be seen in his later editions which, many opine, does not have the spontaneity and inspiration of the first. FitzGerald's difficulty lay in the fact that although some of the stanzas clearly lend themselves to a spiritual interpretation, most of the others seemed to him to defy any but a materialistic one. However, a clear insight into the Sufistic discourse would reveal that there is hardly any materialistic meaning that can be drawn from them, as for instance in quatrains Forty-four, Fifty, and Sixty-six:

The mighty Mahmud, the victorious Lord,  
That all the misbelieving and black Horde  
Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul  
Scatters and slays with his enchanted Sword.

(Quatrain 44, First Edition)

The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes,  
But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes;  
And He that toss'd Thee down into the Field,  
He knows about it all—HE knows—HE knows!

(Quatrain 50)

The spiritual discourse of these quatrains is quite conspicuous here: Quatrain 44 talks about the domination of the indwelling Self over vast territories of consciousness after having conquered the senses; whereas Quatrain 50 emphasizes that in life's game, *Karma* is the supreme and only "player." However, there are certain verses the inner structures of which are difficult to decipher, but it is there nevertheless, and stands clearly revealed, to use Yogananda's words, "in the light of inner vision." If one is prepared to wait to let the effect the verses go beyond its enchanting musicality and persevere, one may "beheld", as Yogananda, envisages, "the walls of its outer meaning crumble away." To see this happen, let us take Quatrain No. 11 which is noted for its erotic charm and the sweet musicality of the words which are the signatures of Omar and his brand of poetry:

Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,  
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse—and Thou

Beside me singing in the Wilderness—  
And Wilderness is Paradise enow.

(Quatrain 11)

Now the key to the meaning of this verse rests in the following words and phrases: “Bread”, “beneath the Bough”, “Wine”, “Book of Verse”, “Wilderness” and “Paradise”. In the tradition of poetry in general and Sufistic poetry in general, all these words go beyond their lexical connotations to have mystic reverberation. Therefore, to paraphrase the lines in the following way may not be a simplification:

Withdraw your life-force (wine) into the centre of the tree of life (Bough), the spine, and bask there in the cool shade of inner peace. As the sensory tumult dies away, drink the wine of bliss from the flask of your devotion. Communicate inwardly with your divine Beloved. And in stillness, listen: For the Singing Blessedness will satisfy your every heart’s desire and entertain you forever with melodies of perfect wisdom.

Omar Khayyam has been translated and adapted in various languages around the world but to understand Omar’s position in the Western literary discourse, I would like to refer to none of those translations, rather one transcreation done by the Hindi poet, Harivansh Rai Bachchan, who is considered a significant name of the “Chhāyāvād”<sup>ii</sup> era which refers to the era of Neo-Romanticism in Hindi Literature, more precisely Hindi Poetry (1918-1938). Having studied in Cambridge University for his Ph.D and also having served the Allahabad University for a long time, Bachchan was exposed to English poetry and Omar Khayyam’s verse enamoured him from the very beginning. He first got acquainted with the *Rubaiyat* through FitzGerald’s translation and then proceeded to read him in original in the Persian. He directly translated Omar’s *The Rubaiyat* into Hindi in 1938 but his fame in the world of poetry chiefly rests for the recreation and adaptation of the Omaresque verses in *Madhuśālā*, a collection of 135 verses in the *rubaiyat* or quatrain mode, with every quatrain complete in itself. *Madhuśālā*, which in Hindi simply means “a bar selling alcoholic drinks”, is found to be inspired by hālāvād, a school of philosophy akin to Sufism. To trace its roots the word Hālā resembles the Persian word “Hal” which means ‘ecstatic frenzy’; in Arabic again it tends to mean halo while in Sanskrit it means “wine. A hālāvādī poet also attempts to recreate in their poetry that state of frenzy or madness that leads to

perception of the divine in the soul. Like Omar Khayyam, Bachchan's verses also inspired various interpretations; sometimes leading orthodox religious bodies make charges of blasphemy against them. Like the *Rubaiyat* again, his verses are noted for their sonority, their ambiguity and flowing rhythm. Besides that, Bachchan's deliberate light-hearted reference to controversial religious issues, use of known, established metaphors in a cheeky style, clarifies his intension of denoting a mystic experience but in a new way. Verses like the following clearly manifest Bachchan's acute awareness of the *Rubaiyat* and his constant struggle to make his own statement as well:

Dharmgranth sab jalā chukee hain, jiskē antar kee jwalā,  
Mandir, masjid, girjē, sab ko torh chukā jo matwalā,  
Pundit, mowmin, pudrion kē faidon ko jo kat chukā,  
Kar saktee hain aj use kā swāgat meri madhuśālā. ( Quatrain No. 17)

Like Omar, he is drawing upon the metaphor of the wine, the woman and the wilderness but neither he is a hedonist that advocates wine-drinking, nor a reveller sucking on the crude pleasures of life:

Mridu bhābon ke anguro kī āj banā lāyā hālā,  
Priyatam, apne hi hāthō se āj pilāungā pyalā,  
Pehle bhog lagā lū terā phir prasād jag pāyega,  
Sabsē pehle terā swāgat karti meri Madhuśālā.

It is obvious from the opening line that Bachchan is not referring to any traditionally conceived *Madhuśālā*. Here the 'hālā' or 'wine' is made from the grapes of subtle feelings. The second line starts with the word 'priyatam', not 'priyatamā'. It seems that in the third line the poet is offering drinks to his deity. So, who is this deity? Bachchan reveals it in the concluding line of the fourth quatrain:

Pāthakgan hain peenēwalē, pustak mein meri madhuśālā.

The reader is his deity whom he offers the drink of his romantic poems. So, the ‘priyatam’ of the second line is the reader. That he is not advocating in favour of drinking is obvious from the first two lines of the appendix:

Swayam nahin peetā, aurō ko, kintu peelā detā hālā,

Swayam nahin chhutā, aurō ko, par pakrhā detā pyālā

His tone is more colloquial, therefore more pungent, far more removed from the simple sweet charm of Omar’s verses. But the mystic realisation is similar, which remains hidden under the gaudy apparel of the hedonist but makes sudden flashy appearance at the very moment when rationality and worldly intelligence gets submerged into the drunken debauchery. To conclude, what Bachchan’s *Madhusālā* does by making a comparative statement is to revive Omar Khayyam and his verses from the heap of Western stereotypes and to place Omar Khayyam and also himself into a domain of literary discourse and poetry, sui generis, that compel the Western canons to be restructured.

- 
- i. Sufism is a concept in Islam, defined by scholars as the inner, mystical dimension of Islam; others contend that it is a perennial philosophy of existence that pre-dates religion, the expression of which flowered within the Islamic religion. Classical Sufi scholars have defined Sufism as ‘a science whose objective is the reparation of heart and turning it away from all else but God’. (Wikipedia)
  - ii. Chhāyāvād refers to the era of Neo-romanticism in Hindi literature particularly Hindi poetry, 1922-1938, and was marked by an upsurge of romantic and humanistic content. It was marked by a renewed sense of the self and personal expression, visible in the writings of the time. It is known for its leaning towards themes of love and nature, as well as an individualistic reappropriation of the Indian tradition in a new form of mysticism, expressed through a subjective voice. (Wikipedia)

### Works Cited

A.C.Benson. *Edward Fitzgerald*. London: Macmillan, 1905.

Bachchan, Harivansh Rai. *Madhusala*. n.d. Web. 31 March 2015.

<<http://kaavyaalaya.org/mdhshla.shtml>><http://kaavyaalaya.org/mdhshla.shtml>>.



Bloom, Harold, ed. *Edward FitzGerald's The Rubiyat of Omar Khayyam*. Daryaganj, New Delhi: Viva Book Private Ltd, 2007. Book.

Davis, Dick. *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: Translated by Edward FitzGerald*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989.

Yogananda, Paramhansa. *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam Explained*. Ed. J. Donald Walters. New Delhi: UBSPD Ltd., 1996. Print.

Yohannan, John D. *Persian Poetry in England and America: A 200-Year History*. Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1977

# Chaucer's Reading of *Somnium Scipionis*: 'A Certeyn Thing to Lerne' in *The Parliament of Fowls*.

**Manas Ranjan Chaudhuri**

Assistant Professor of English, Dumkal College

## **Abstract:**

*Chaucer's The Parliament of Fowls remains enigmatic through the ages as its openness resists a central meaning. Its simplicity is deceptive as the reader is dissatisfied finishing the poem. It is a love vision structured in the medieval dream allegory. The parliament of birds is designed to surface and accommodate the multifarious voices of love. The authorial projection of the notion of ideal love as a cosmic bond and commonweal is mocked by the common folk of birds in the assembly. The author's destined target for a 'certeyn thing to lerne' remains elusive and the readers also are left with plural options. His reading of and reference to Cicero's Somnium Scipionis as an authority is a trap for the readers only to be disillusioned at the end. The beast-fable tradition followed in the parliament of birds is also presented without any hint of conventional didacticism, as Chaucer always concentrated on the art of narration than the art of moralization.*

**Key Words:** Love, certain thing, dream, Macrobius, plurality, parliament of birds.

Among Chaucer's early poems, *The Parliament of Fowls* is preserved in fourteen manuscripts – much more than his other poems. It shows that this poem, from the time of its writing, has won the favours with the readers. But this popularity owes much to its ambiguities, beside its other aesthetic qualities. Throughout the poem, not only the poet poses to achieve dissatisfaction but the reader also remains dissatisfied finishing the poem. There is a surprising diversity of interpretations which proves its openness and this inconclusiveness itself is one of the worthy virtues of the poem. The fictional nature of the poem is evident from the beginning and its seeming neatness of structure and also its transparent form are deceptive. There is so much in this little poem that one cannot comprehend it with one's full satisfaction<sup>1</sup>. Not even the best

commentary on *The Parliament of Fowls* can succeed to mark out the main theme of the poem within a sentence. We can cite Baker in this instance:

*The Parliament of Fowls* combines openness and indirection in a way that epitomizes most of the problems and pleasures that students find in Chaucer. It offers the critic, the biographer, and the philosopher what each looks for in Chaucer. As we examine the poem, it changes its form and colour - a thing so simple, yet complex; so personal yet anonymous; so philosophic, yet comic. It establishes Chaucer as having that double vision which allows the poet to see himself, his people, and his art ... <sup>2</sup>

So, it is a risky business to make any decisive comment on the central theme of this poem. Our aim will be to look through the text and the then literary conventions to catch a glimpse of the object of our search.

The critics are unanimous in at least one point that *The Parliament of Fowls* is a love vision.<sup>3</sup> It sets out to unravel the paradox of love which is the favourite subject of Chaucer's major poems. The perplexities of love are the subject announced in the first stanzas. After depicting the role of love in universal scheme as propagated by *Somnium Scipionis* ('The Dream of Scipio'), Chaucer dreams his own dream and with him we enter the garden of love. Love is the subject of the birds' debate. Through this parliament of birds Chaucer shows love from various points of view - masculine and feminine, high and low. He exhibits the unrealistic egoism and idealism of courtly love and the useful, direct and self-centered motivations of simple creatures. Naturally, from the reading of the poem it seems that it comes from the pen of a much experienced poet who has a wise comprehension of the common affairs of life. But, interestingly, in the first stanzas the poet wants to announce the motive of the poem – it is going to be a non-lover writing about love:

For al be that I knowe nat Love in dede,

Ne wot how that he quiteth folk here hyre,

Yit happeth me ful ofte in bokes reede

Of his myrakles and his crewel yre. (*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll 8-11)

Thus, Chaucer transforms the conventional pose of a love-sick poet into that of the inexperienced reader. But this mode is fictional which the real strength of the poem is. He disclaims any

practical experience. All he knows is what he has known from the books. Within the first 110 lines, he deliberately refers, at least twelve times, to his avid interest in reading (ll 10, 12, 16, 18-20, 21, 24, 27, 29, 87, 93, 107, and 110). But he is in a fix. He reads on eagerly the whole day long in search of the particular knowledge:

And therupon, a certeyn thing to lerne,

The longe day ful faste I redde and yerne. (*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll 20-21)

What is this ‘certeyn thing’? What is he searching for he refrains from saying so? In this paper we will make an attempt to uncover this mystery. He is confident of finding out this information in an antique volume:

This bok of which I make mencion

Entitled was al ther, as I shal telle:

"Tullyus of the Drem of Scipioun." (*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll 29-31)

The book of our (along with the poet’s) concern is *Tullyus of the Drem of Scipioun*, that is, the *Somnium Scipionis* in Book VI of Cicero’s *De Republica*, but better known to the medieval age as part of Macrobius’s longer commentary on it (C. 400 AD). Chaucer’s acquaintance with Macrobius came from his reading of *Roman de la Rose*<sup>4</sup> where Gulliaume de Lorris begins his poem with a reference to Macrobius. Macrobius is described as one “who did not take dreams as trifles for he wrote of the vision which came to King Scipio.”<sup>5</sup> Chaucer was fond of Macrobius very much as he refers to his name in *The Book of the Duchess*:

Ne nat skarsly Macrobeus

(He that wrot al th’ avysoun

That he mette, kyng Scipioun,

The noble man, the Affrikan (*The Book of the Duchess*, ll 284-7)

and there is a passing reference also in *The House of Fame*:



Ne the kyng, Daun Scipio,

That saw in drem, at poynt devys,

Helle and erthe and paradys; (*The House of Fame*, ll 916-918)

But here, in *The Parliament of Fowls*, the narrator reads Macrobius chapter by chapter and gives a summary of it. It describes love as the cosmic bond of the universe, and defines it as ‘commune profyt’. He extols the spiritual love of common profit which is a fundamental human good, far above the selfish love between man and woman. The adherents of this love for commonweal, as Scipio is told, will be rewarded by eternal life in heaven. There are many omissions, additions and modification of Cicero in Chaucer’s text,<sup>6</sup> as usual of him, but the shortage of space prevents us from going so far. This wide ranging, somewhat abstract and cosmic survey of Scipio’s dream has not really answered the poet’s urgent uncertainties; it gives him nothing but ‘restless sadness’:

Ne the kyng, Daun Scipio,

That saw in drem, at poynt devys,

Helle and erthe and paradys; (*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll 89-91)

Cicero is no gospel truth, or ‘something certain’, nor does it afford the answer of certain thing that Chaucer is interested in.

Thus, the given summary of *Somnium Scipionis* distracts our mind into a different channel, beginning with an expectation to find the illustrations of love’s miracles. But then comes the dream, the poem changes into a completely different form, something in which we sense again the lively touch of the first lines. In his dream the narrator’s unfulfilled desires find an outlet. There also his wide learning is reflected. When he is awake he reads the books, but in his dream he visualizes the pages of it. His dependence upon the ancient authorities to solve his unstated problem is hinted again and again in his dream. What he has not found in Macrobius, he wants to find it in other authorities. Thus, in his dream we smell his reading of *Raman de la Rose*, *De Planctu Nature*, *Fasti Teseida*, Joseph of Exeter’s *Iliad*, etc. There are also instances of acquaintance with Dante, Boethius, Claudian, Bartholomew, Grandson, and many more.<sup>7</sup> Due to

the lack of space and opportunity, we cannot and need not go through all these in details but, one thing should be mentioned that they unveil the extraordinary erudition of the author. The conflicts of his mind are well reflected in the contrasting and conflicting presentations within the garden of love and also in the different attitudes to love enacted in the parliament of birds. He awakes from the dream unsatisfied. But his search does not stop; it continues. With continued study, he might on some lucky day attain his ideal – ‘to mete somethyng’:

I wok, and othere bokes tok me to,

To reede upon, and yit I rede alwey.

I hope, ywis, to rede so som day

That I shal mete som thyng for to fare

The bet, and thus to rede I nyl nat spare. (*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll 695-699)

Thus, the poem ends with an apparent incompleteness. It results in a bewildered search for some ‘certeyn thing’. The curiosity of the reader also has not been satisfied; he/she is kept in the same area of darkness as he has been in the beginning. Again, from the latter part of the poem, it becomes clear that the narrator’s dream has nothing to do with the contents of the *Somnium Scipionis*. Now, it is natural to raise the question of the suitability of the use of Macrobius as a long introduction. The probable reasons for its inclusion are to discuss now.

But before getting into that, at this point, we should discuss another relevant issue. It would be fair and appropriate to consider Chaucer as a humanist and also as a humorist. Humanism is a gift of the Renaissance. It teaches man to be sympathetically interested in human beings as human beings and in all that is human in the world. Chaucer’s Italian travels gave him a taste of this new outlook. An ability to take joy in life and to respond smilingly to all its varieties and variegation are the most striking evidence of humanism in Chaucer’s works and this is the foundation of his sense of comedy and the mainspring behind his humour. He has faith in the glory of God’s creation which includes both wonderful and preposterous things. Tony Davies considers Chaucer as the “first modern, first English writer to see the world ... through the everyday experience of ordinary human beings, of all classes and both sexes”.<sup>8</sup> In Chaucer’s

writings, Davies suggests, one can find for the first time the authentic ( in Matthew Arnold's word 'truly human') voice of secular individuality.

The superior wisdom of 'contemptus mundi' of Cicero cannot satisfy Chaucer. He generalizes the moral principles of his source to apply to mankind in general. Whatever man, he says, 'lered other lewed' (l - 46), who loves common profit and is endowed with the virtues, will take a journey to heaven. Accordingly to Cicero heaven is especially reserved for those who preserve, assist, or enlarge the political commonwealth. The idea in Chaucer that both uneducated ('lewed') and learned ('lered') men can participate in this process is worth to note. He might have been influenced also by the notion of medieval Christianity that the poor and the uneducated also have the access to heaven. In *Piers Plowman* also, the Christian belief is asserted that even plowmen and common labourers can find the paths towards heaven through prayers. Here lies the difference between the intellectual elitism of Cicero where Scipio is told to ignore the chatter of common herd and Chaucer's humanistic approach. In fact, *The Parliament of Fowls* is full of the chatter of the common herd. In the parliament itself the different species of birds present have been projected to represent the varieties of human beings because Chaucer is not a bird watcher, he is a people watcher – he was every inch a humanist rather than being an ornithologist. The interesting point to notice in this parliament is that the only bird that refers directly to the principle of common profit is the cuckoo:

"And I for worm-foul," seyde the fol kokkow,

"For I wol of myn owene autorite,

For comune spede, take on the charge now,

For to delyvere us is gret charite." (*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll 505-8)

The motives expressed in the cuckoo's speech are utterly un-Ciceronian.

The invocation to Venus also proves Chaucer's dissatisfaction with Cicero.<sup>9</sup> In spite of all these differences, Chaucer's inclusion of Cicero has a definite purpose. It may be suggested that this very contrast makes it possible for Chaucer's brilliant art of having Africanus seize the narrator and lead him to the garden of love. Africanus does not enter the garden because *Somnium Scipionis* has nothing to say on the matters which the garden contains. We see the inexperienced

narrator again in a comical light when he confesses that he has lost his taste for love, but he can at least 'se', observe and learn.<sup>10</sup> If the previous summary of Scipio's dream had been less serious, this scene would have been less amusing. Chaucer is creating this comic effect through the extreme incongruity of a terribly sober and serious man (Africanus) doing something which is quite unexpected and rather silly:

... til Affrycan, my gide,

Me hente and shof in at the gates wide, (*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll. 153-4)

This prepares the way for the parliament and its resultant laughter which is so essential to the rest of the poem:

The laughter aros of gentil foules alle. (*The Parliament of Fowls*, l 575)

It is, as if, after the depressing and boring account of the Monk's tale we have the 'myrie' tones of the Nun's priest in *The Canterbury Tales*. Thus, the dreamer's disappointment with his reading is supported since the narrator's dream questions Macrobius's authority, and the parliament celebrates the carnality Africanus denies. These two parts of the poem are connected only through antithesis, though Chaucer gives the apparently innocent reason of its thematic relevance arguing that the reading of Macrobius causes his own dream:

Can I not seyn if that the cause were

For I hadde red of Affrican byforn

That made me to mete that he stod there; (*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll 106-8)

But he contradicts himself in the next stanza:

Cytherea, thow blysfyl lady swete,

That with thy fyrbrond dauntest whom the lest

And madest me this sweven for to mete, (*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll 113-5)

Thus, contradiction and contrast are the key words in analyzing the poem. As we have discussed earlier, the poem begins with contempt for the earth and ends with a description of the enjoyment

in the lovers' festival. Again, Africanus who once guides Scipio how to achieve the 'hevene blisse', himself leads the poet-narrator into a secular pleasure garden. The same Africanus provides Scipio with a sombre and serious philosophical dream and the narrator with a realistic and romantic dream. Again, there are contrasting inscriptions over the twin parts of the gate - one does encourage and the other discourages:

And over the gate, with lettres large iwroughte,  
There were vers iwriten, as me thoughte,  
On eyther half, of ful gret difference, (*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll 123-125)

One side announces the merry adventure promising a pleasure hunt:

"Thorgh me men gon into that blysfyl place  
Of hertes hele and dedly woundes cure;  
Thorgh me men gon unto the welle of grace,  
There grene and lusty May shal evere endure.  
This is the way to al good aventure.  
Be glad, thow redere, and thy sorwe of-caste;  
Al open am I -- passe in, and sped thee faste!"

(*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll 127-133)

The other side welcomes with an admonishing pessimism:

"Thorgh me men gon," than spak that other side,  
"Unto the mortal strokes of the spere  
Of which Disdayn and Daunger is the gyde,  
Ther nevere tre shal fruyt ne leves bere.

This strem yow ledeth to the sorweful were

There as the fish in prysoun is al drye;

Th' eschewing is only the remedye!" (*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll 133 - 140)

Even the contrasting colours of the inscriptions reflect their differing views, which the narrator is astonished to observe:

These vers of gold and blak iwritten were,

Of whiche I gan astoned to beholde. (*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll 141 -142)

This contrast is further elaborated by the conflict between Nature and Venus. Venus obviously personifies love, though here it is an illicit and corrupted kind of love. The lovers in her temple are unhappy and the wall paintings of the great classical figures show unfulfilled desires in love:

Alle these were peynted on that other syde,

And al here love, and in what plyt they dyde. (*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll 293-4)

But Nature personifies the creative, reproductive force and also represents the order and harmony manifest in God's all-inclusive scheme of creation:

Nature, the vicaire of the almyghty Lord,

That hot, cold, hevy, lyght, moyst, and dreye

Hath knyt by evenen noumbres of acord, (*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll 379-81)

The parliament itself is a symposium of love.<sup>11</sup> There are ultra-courtly approaches of the eagles and also the over simplified direct approaches of the lower classes. The formel cannot choose her partner.<sup>12</sup> So, in the poem, there is confusion everywhere; nowhere one can be conclusive or certain of anything. As the true happiness as depicted in *Somnium Scipionis* seems an ideal but empty conception and something dry to achieve, and it is natural that the narrator feels dissatisfied with it. He poses to realize at the end of the parliament that confusion and lack of



reason and order are the features of earthly love. So the search for something stable and authentic ('certeyn thing') is to be refuted naturally.

Again, Chaucer always followed the literary traditions and moulded it into his own way. In the late medieval vernacular tradition it was a popular design to foreground the main action against a sombre background to create and intensify the sense of relief and pleasure. Machaut's *Jugement dou Roy de Navarre* and Boccaccio's *Decameron* are prominent examples. In both the books the main theme of pleasurable materials is preceded by graphic accounts of the ravages of plague.<sup>13</sup> Gower's *Confessio Amantis* follows almost the same pattern starting with a long prologue depicting the decline of moral standards in England before treating the more entertaining subject. In *The Parliament of Fowls* Chaucer also moves from arid philosophy and sombre picture of the earth towards the plenty of the garden of love and the lively atmosphere of the birds' parliament.<sup>14</sup> Again, if we go through any medieval beast fable collection, we can find explicit moralities following the narrative. Though *The Parliament of Fowls* ends with a parliament of birds and their enjoyment, no morality is hinted at. Rather, Chaucer has inverted the normal beast-fable structure - because here animal 'narratio' is placed actually after the didactic 'moralizatio' of *Somnium Scipionis*. But, Chaucer always avoids any kind of moralization wherever he follows any fable tradition.<sup>15</sup> He leaves the space and scope for the readers who may take a 'moralite' or any judgement of his own because nowhere in the poem any inclination is hinted at.

Our discussion will be incomplete if we do not refer to medieval debate poetry in this context. Ambivalence, dualism, and inconclusiveness are not limited to *The Parliament of Fowls* alone, but, it is common of the medieval debate poetry in general and the beast debate poetry in particular.<sup>16</sup> Other examples are *The Owl and the Nightingale* (anonymous) and Clanvowe's *Book of Cupid* etc. In the late medieval schools of laws and theology, the method to weigh different sides of a question was cultivated and practiced by medieval educational system. In *The Parliament of Fowls* also, not only the parliament but the poem itself remains an enigma from the beginning. Here we move from condemnation to celebration, from the black/white, right/wrong view of *Somnium Scipionis* to God's plenty of the garden of love; from the ideal notion of common profit to various individual voices perusing love. The reader is left open to judge or to choose between Ciceronian ethics or amatory escapades, serious philosophy or

playful atmosphere. The reader also feels such binary thinking inadequate or limited. So, it is very confusing for a reader to conclude with any opinion as the text itself avoids any judgment.

Even in the parliament itself, Chaucer is abstaining from offering the possibility of a single definition of love. He is in favour of a pluralistic environment. The poem ends so with the open debate in the parliament which is in keeping with the tune of the poem's incompleteness. A. J. Minnis argued that, "Inconclusiveness and resistance to closure are therefore part and parcel of a textual strategy which illustrates and affirms plurality."<sup>17</sup> So, the attempt to search for a single-line meaning would be a futile exercise as it is sure to miss the poem's intellectual delicacies and its polyphonous openness.<sup>18</sup> The poet's stated hope to search for a certain thing does not find what he is looking for at the end, as it also may correlate a struggle to resolve a conflict within himself. The cacophony of the birds' voices is set against the narrator's longing for that particular thing. The reader also shares the same experience. Pearsall opines a similar note – "It is a seeking and exploring, a questioning and doubting, which begins and seems to end in bewilderment."<sup>19</sup> Thus, the poet's search for a certain thing is devised to tempt as it intensifies the curiosity of the reader. He/she is invited to take part in the act of the same quest for that particular meaning and the outcome is a sense of freedom and a note of aesthetic dissatisfaction. And this open closure poses to attract a poststructuralist analysis.

## Notes

1. Mehl argues, "the astonishing variety of conventions used within such little space prevent us from assigning it to some clearly defined genre or even from pinning it down to a precise theme with any confidence... and for this reason alone it is safe to distrust any interpretation that would tell us what the poem is all about." See Dieter Mehl, *Geoffrey Chaucer: An Introduction to his Narrative Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1986) 37.
2. Donald C. Baker, 'The Parliament of Fowls' in *Companion to Chaucer Studies*, ed. Beryl (Roland, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) 428 ff.
3. About the genre of love-vision see Derek Brewer, *Chaucer: The Poet as Story Teller* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984) 1 ff.

4. For further details see J. H. Fisher, ed., *The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer*. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977) 564 ff.
5. A. J. Minnis, *Oxford Guide to Chaucer: The Shorter Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 266.
6. Minnis (1995) 266-71. The author gives a detailed analysis on this account.
7. The detailed account of these authorities is brought well out by the edition of A. C. Baugh, ed., *Chaucer's Major Poetry* (London: Routledge, 1963) 60-73.
8. Tony Davies, *Humanism* (London and New York: Rutledge, 1997) 20-22.
9. The lines are :  

Cytherea, thow blysfyl lady swete,  
 That with thy fyrbrond dauntest whom the lest  
 And madest me this sweven for to mete, (*The Parliament of Fowls*, ll 113 – 115)
10. Mehl 43. He suggests that, “it is another of the narrator’s humorous self-portraits, a teasing combination of self-effacing modesty and uncommitted aloofness.”
11. S. S. Hussey, *Chaucer: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1981) 46.
12. Minnis (1995) 254. He suggests that the formel mirrors the narrator’s indecisive state of mind.
13. Minnis (1995) 309.
14. Compare *Troilus and Criseyde*, which ends with a note of condemnation:  

And down from thennes faste he gan avyse  
 This litel spot of erthe that with the se  
 Embraced is, and fully gan despise  
 This wrecched world, and held al vanite  
 To respect of the pleyn felicite  
 That is in hevene above; (*Troilus and Criseyde*, BK V, ll. 1814-19)

Here the method is inverted.
15. Though *Nun's Priest's Tale* ends with a hint:  

Taketh the moralite, goode men. (l 3440)

But it is a fictional tactic. See for further discussion - A. J. Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity* (Roman & Littlefield: D. S. Brewer, 1982) 13-18.
16. Minnis (1995) 290.

17. Minnis (1995) 253.
18. Mehl 51.
19. Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 122.

## Bibliography

1. Atkins, J. W. H. *English Literary Criticism: The Medieval Phase*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1952.
2. Baker, Donald C. 'The Parliament of Fowls'. *Companion to Chaucer Studies*. ed. Rowland, Beryl. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.
3. Baugh, Albert C., ed. *Chaucer's Major Poetry*. New York: Routledge, 1963.
4. Boitani, Piero. "Old Books Brought to Life in Dreams". *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*. ed. Piero Boitani and Jill Mann. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
5. Bowden, Muriel. *A Reader's Guide to Geoffrey Chaucer*. London: Thanes and Hudson, 1965.
6. Brewer, Derek. *Chaucer: The Poet as Story Teller*. London: Macmillan Press, 1984
7. Bronson, Bertrand H. "In and out of Dreams". *Critical Essays on Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde and his Major Early Poems*. ed. C. David Benson. Milton Open University Press, 1991.
8. Davenport W. A. "Bird Poems from 'The Parliament of Fowls' to 'Philip Sparrow'". *Chaucer and Fifteenth Century Poetry*. ed. Julia Boffey and Janet Cowen. London: King's College London, 1999.
9. Davies, Tony. *Humanism*. London and New York: Rutledge, 1997.
10. Fisher, John H., ed. *The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer*. New York Holt: Rinehart and Winston, 1977.
11. Hussey, S. S. *Chaucer: An Introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Methuen, 1981.
12. Lawlor, John. *Chaucer*. London: Hutchinson University Library, 1968.

13. Mehl, Dieter. *Geoffrey Chaucer: An Introduction to his Narrative Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
14. Minnis, A. J. *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Shorter Poems*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
15. Nolan, Barbara. *Chaucer and the Tradition of the Roman Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press 1992.
16. Pearsall, Derek. *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography*. Oxford: Blackwell. 1992.
17. Robinson, F. N., ed. *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1957.
18. Rooney, Anne. *Geoffrey Chaucer: A guide through Critical Maze*. Bristol: The Bristol Press, 1989.
19. Skeat Walter W., ed. *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
20. Smith, J. J. *The English of Chaucer and his Contemporaries*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988.
21. Spearing A. C. *Medieval Dream Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
22. Spearing A. C. *Readings in Medieval poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

# Susan Barton: Virginia Woolf's Judith in J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*

Tanuja Kumar Nayak

PGT English, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Dindori (MP)  
&  
Research Scholar, Ravenshaw University, Odisha

## Abstract:

*This paper tries to establish that Coetzee's works are not singularly obsessed with the political problems of his native land but as a writer he possesses an acute understanding of the human condition and through his fiction he draws the attention of his readers towards the various issues that beset the present world. As a part of this endeavor, the paper attempts to analyze J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* from a feminist perspective and prove that the issue of gender discrimination is one of the most prominent themes present in this text. By doing so, the paper attempts to posit that Susan Barton, the female protagonist of J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* is the alter ego of Shakespeare's anecdotal sister Judith as described by Virginia Woolf in her *A Room of One's Own*. Susan Barton's lack of 'money' and 'a room of her own' and her 'resistance to the appropriation of language, history and tradition' by *Foe* qualify her to be identified with Woolf's Judith.*

**Key words:** J. M. Coetzee, Virginia Woolf, *Foe*, *A Room of One's Own*, gender discrimination

“... humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded an autonomous being ... she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other.” (Beauvoir xvi)

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) comprises two lectures delivered by her at women's colleges at Cambridge University in 1928. Here she maintains that 'a woman must



have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction . . .’ (Woolf 4). Situating literature within a material (economic, social, political) context, she claims that fiction is like a spider’s web which is ‘attached to life at all four corners’ (Woolf 35). According to her, historically the female were never given a chance to learn the art of making money which led to their intellectual impoverishment. Woolf feels ‘the power to think for oneself’ depends upon one’s financial freedom and citing her own example she says that after she began to receive a fixed amount through inheritance her entire outlook changed (Woolf 33). In this context the ‘room’ of the book’s title assumes a metaphoric significance and refers to the women’s need of both financial as well as psycho-social independence to exercise their creative power. Commenting on the text M. A. R. Habib says, “The metaphor of one’s ‘room,’ as embodying the ability to think independently, takes another level of significance from its resistance to the appropriation of language, history, and tradition by men” (Habib 677).

In order to elucidate the material as well as the immaterial hurdles which beset the women writers, Woolf relates an anecdote of Shakespeare’s sister Judith. In her opinion ‘any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at’ (Woolf 41). In her anecdote she says that Shakespeare’s sister Judith was ‘wonderfully gifted’ and attempted to seek her fortune in the theatre like her brother. But being a woman she was opposed by her family. Then she left for London to seek her fortune but was mocked at by others and was sexually exploited by an actor-manager. Unable to bear such humiliation, Judith committed suicide (Woolf 39-40).

John Michael Coetzee’s *Foe* (1987) is a retelling of the classic novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe. *Foe* is the story of the female castaway Susan Barton. She is shipwrecked and swims to safety. She lands in Cruso’s island and is rescued by Friday. (It is necessary to note here that in this novel Coetzee has altered the spelling of ‘Crusoe’ to ‘Cruso’). Unlike the Friday of Defoe’s novel, here Friday has lost his tongue. About a year after Susan Barton’s stay on the island they are rescued and shipped to England. On their way to England, Cruso passes away and Susan Barton becomes Friday’s mistress.

The novel *Foe* has been subjected to numerous interpretations. Commenting on its aesthetic and philosophical aspect Ashton Nicholas opines, “In his most recent novel, *Foe*, Coetzee examines the relationship between authorship and authority. The result is an enigmatic, powerful work that

reveals the complex interplay between words and silence, and the ultimate limitation of all our attempts to linguistically transform our experience” (Nicholas 384). On the other hand Margaret Lenta interprets it as “post modern in its intertextuality and self reflexivity, and it was formally challenging. Above all it was a ‘writing back’ to the first great fiction of colonialism” (Nicholas 245). She further goes on to claim that “*Foe* is almost certainly the Coetzee novel that has attracted most critical commentary from non-South African scholars” (245).

This paper tries to establish that Coetzee’s works are not singularly obsessed with the political problems of his native land but as a writer he possesses an acute understanding of the human condition and through his fiction he draws the attention of his readers towards the various issues that beset the present world. As a part of this endeavor, the paper attempts to analyze J. M. Coetzee’s *Foe* from a feminist perspective and prove that the issue of gender discrimination is one of the most prominent themes present in this text. By doing so, the paper attempts to posit that Susan Barton, the female protagonist of J. M. Coetzee’s *Foe* is the alter ego of Shakespeare’s anecdotal sister Judith as described by Virginia Woolf in her *A Room of One’s Own*. Susan Barton’s lack of ‘money’ and ‘a room of her own’ and her ‘resistance to the appropriation of language, history and tradition’ by *Foe* qualify her to be identified with Woolf’s Judith. A thorough comparison between Judith’s condition as depicted by Woolf in her *A Room of One’s Own* and that of Susan Barton’s as described by Coetzee in *Foe* is made to drive the point home. Susan Barton, the narrator of *Foe* sets out on a ship from England to find her kidnapped daughter who has been abducted and ‘conveyed to the New World by an Englishman’ (10). Searching her daughter Susan reaches Bahia but is unable to find her there. Finally she ‘embarked for Lisbon on a merchantman’ (10). However, ten days after they embark on their voyage, there is a mutiny by the crew. They mercilessly kill the captain of the ship and put Susan on a boat along with the dead body of the captain and set both of them adrift. Before the boat is lost in the vast emptiness of the sea, Susan swims to an island. There she finds shelter with Robinson Crusoe and Friday, his tongueless slave, the only other inhabitants of this deserted island. On Crusoe’s island she is first greeted by Friday, Crusoe’s black, mute servant. She is taken to Crusoe and she narrates her plight to him. While narrating her plight Susan bursts into tears but Crusoe gazes at her as if she ‘were a fish cast up by the waves than an unfortunate fellow-creature’ (9). That reflects the traditional disdainful patriarchal attitude of Crusoe towards Susan. Laura L. Fisher in her “Colonization and Feminism in J. M. Coetzee’s in *The Heart of the Country*, *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Foe*”

claims that Susan initiates the master/slave relationship (3) when she says ‘With these words I presented myself to Robinson Cruso, in the days when he still ruled over his island, and became his second subject, the first being his manservant Friday’ (11). From the surface it may appear as if Susan voluntarily surrenders herself to Cruso. It would be too naïve on our part to assume that Susan was unaware of the hegemonic power of Cruso in particular and all the men folk in general vis-à-vis the female. Cruso represents the traditional chauvinistic male figure who always looks down on the female as the ‘inessential other.’ This becomes apparent when Susan thanks Cruso for saving her and offering her food. She is ready to tell about herself, about her stolen daughter, about the mutiny but Cruso ‘asked nothing, gazing out instead into the setting sun, nodding to himself as though a voice spoke privately inside him that he was listening to’ (13).

Cruso tries to impose her hegemony on Susan by warning her not to venture from his castle ‘for the apes would not be as wary of a woman as they were of him and Friday’ (15). Susan’s thought— ‘was a woman, to an ape, a different species from a man?’ (15) — states the obvious. What satisfies Cruso is absolute surrender of his subordinates. He does not feel the need of punishing Friday because ‘Friday has lived with me for many years. He has known no other master. He follows me in all things’ (37). But Susan is different. Unlike Friday she does not yield absolutely. We know about her free spirit when she tells the captain of the Hobart, ‘I would rather be the author of my own story than have lies told about me. If I cannot come forward, as author, and swear to the truth of my tale, what will be the worth of it?’ (40). So, when Cruso discovers that his instructions have been disobeyed by Susan, he becomes infuriated and tells her, ‘while you live under my roof you will do as I instruct!’ (20). Like Judith’s father in Virginia Woolf’s anecdote who asks his daughter to accept his proposal to marry, Cruso is happy with Susan as long as she accepts his diktat. Whenever she disobeys him, he becomes furious. The day she prepares a shoe for her, Cruso gets angry and picks up the skin from which she had cut her shoes and hurls them with all his might over the fence (25). Susan finds out the exact cause of Cruso’s behavior: ‘After years of unquestioned and solitary mastery, he sees his realm invaded and has tasks set upon him by a woman’ (25). Susan Barton’s craving for a shoe in order to explore the island reminds one of Judith’s desire to seek her fortune in the city of London. Susan becomes a puppet in the hands of men. Her helplessness is mercilessly exploited by different men in different situations. Cruso does not hesitate to colonize the body of Susan. He is

neither the first nor the last one to do so. Susan recounts, 'A hand was exploring my body. So befuddled was I that I thought myself still abroad the ship, in the Portuguese captain's bed' (29). She has been used by the Portuguese captain before and by Foe later. Susan is utterly helpless. Her material condition does not allow her to oppose Cruso: 'I pushed his hand away and made to rise, but he held me' (30). One might be tempted to term Susan as a woman of loose moral because of her surrender to the Portuguese captain, Cruso and subsequently to Foe. But a close analysis of her character points to the contrary. She is not somebody who entertains men to enjoy. She is compelled by her situation to surrender. But when her situation is a bit under her control she behaves in a different way. She refuses the invitation of the captain of the Hobart to pay him a visit in his cabin. Her condition is worse than the sparrows because they are free from man's hegemony. 'Around me in the bushes settled a flock of sparrows, cocking their heads curiously, quite unafraid, having known no harm from man since the beginning of time' (30). These circumstances ominously echo the conditions of Judith whose helplessness was exploited by Nick Greene, the actor-manager in Woolf's anecdote (40).

Susan represents the multitude of women who does not have the means to survive independently in a patriarchal society. To make matters worse, like millions of such women she has to forfeit her identity to make an honest living. Once she leaves the island and sail on the ship she needs an identity. But she can no more use her own identity for she has spent some days with a man. If she wants to save herself from the curious eyes of the crew on the ship and many a questions from the so called civilized people she has to borrow the identity of Cruso.

'Captain Smith had proposed that I call Cruso my husband and declare we had been shipwrecked together to make my path easier both on board and when we should come ashore in England. If the story of Bahia and the mutineers got about, he said, it would not easily be understood what kind of woman I was. I laughed when he said this . . . but took his advice, and so was known as Mrs Cruso to all on board' (42).

Her individuality was completely annihilated. Cruso's identity hangs like the proverbial albatross around Susan's neck. Susan's own words express it in a poignant manner: 'What life do I live but that of Cruso's widow? On Cruso's island I was washed ashore; from that all else flowed' (99). If Susan accepts the advice to be known as Mrs Cruso to the world, it is neither because of

her sincere love for Cruso nor for her desire to be identified with a person who achieved some extraordinary feat from whom she could get substantial benefits. It was done on the basis of the ground realities which a woman has to face in her daily life. She needs the identity of a man to help her sustain herself in the cruel world of men. As a female she does not have the freedom even to travel alone. In the words of Susan herself, ‘a woman alone must travel like a hare, one ear forever cocked for the hounds’ (100). There is no need to give an introduction of ‘the hounds’. Because of them she has to ‘pin my hair up under my hat and wear a coat all the times, hoping to pass for a man’ (101) later on when she travels on the Windsor road. These circumstances remind the readers about the need of money as well as social security for a woman that Woolf talks about in her *A Room of One’s Own*.

After her return to England Susan wants to tell the world about her adventure but she does not have the verbal ability to undertake the task. She has to take the help of Foe, a man to tell her own story to the world. A question that naturally crops up in our mind is if really Susan lacks appropriate verbal skills to narrate her story or she is well aware of the reality of the highly sexist patriarchal society which does not believe in the words of a female. She is caught in a quagmire. She feels like ‘a being without substance, a ghost beside the true body of Cruso’ (51). Cruso and Foe are not simply individuals but the very representative symbols of men who have crushed the hope and happiness of a million Susans. The island assumes the metaphor of the world. Susan says:

‘Yet I was as much a body as Cruso. I ate and drank, I woke and slept, I longed. The island was Cruso’s (yet by what right? by the law of islands? is there such a law?) , but I lived there too, I was no bird of passage, no gannet or albatross, to circle the island once and dip a wing and then fly on over the boundless ocean. Return to me the substance I have lost, Mr Foe: that is my entreaty’ (51).

She longs for her rightful due under the sun which she has been deprived of since ages. At the same time she fully understands the harsh realities of her life. She is well aware of her limitations, both her mundane requirements and verbal exigencies. Her conditions force her to seek the help of Mr Foe. The above circumstances justifies the necessity of one’s own ‘room’ not only to protect one from the external dangers but at the same time to offer a resistance to the appropriation of language, history, and tradition by men which Woolf tries to make her audience during her lectures understand.

Susan tries to teach Friday. But she fears that ‘after years of speechlessness the very notion of speech may be lost to him’ (57). She does this to ‘build a bridge of words over which, when one day it is grown sturdy enough, he may cross to the time before Crusoe, the time before he lost his tongue, when he lived immersed in the prattle of words as unthinking as a fish in water; from where he may by steps return as far as he is able, to the world of words . . .’ (60). The speechlessness of Friday is quite suggestive. Does Susan identify her helplessness, her inability to tell her own story (another kind of speechlessness) with the speechlessness of Friday? Does not Susan try to regain her own speech that she possessed long before it was appropriated by man (‘the time before she lost his (her) tongue’)? Is it not but her inner desire to have a world where she has all the words of the world and the men are mute when she says, ‘Who was to say there do not exist entire tribes in Africa among whom the men are mute and speech is reserved to women? Why should it not be so?’ (69)? The answer to all these questions seems to be a thumping ‘yes’ for what Susan mulls over regarding the absolute meekness and abject surrender of Friday—‘Had the cutting out of his tongue taught him eternal obedience, or at least the outward form of obedience, as gelding takes the fire out of a stallion?’ (98)—also resonates with the cause of female subjugation.

Susan like Judith also nourishes the desire ‘to be famous, to see heads turn in the street and hear folk whisper, “There goes Susan Barton the castaway” (125). But she is not able to fulfill her desire. Besides the want of verbal skills necessary for such an undertaking, she has two more problems: lack of a room and responsibility towards Friday. During her meeting with Mr Foe Susan explains the cause of her writing becoming dull: ‘You have found yourself a fine retreat,’ I said —‘a true eagle’s nest. I wrote my memoir by candlelight in a windowless room, with the paper on my knee. Is that the reason, do you think why my story was so dull—that my vision was blocked, that I could not see?’ (127). The predicament of Susan Barton is strikingly similar to Judith’s condition who lacked the protection of a ‘room’ in London which made her vulnerable to the mocking laughter as well as sexual exploitation. Susan is also bound by her responsibilities towards Friday. She cannot abandon Friday. She requests captain Smith to bring Friday from the island—‘Friday is a slave and a child, it is our duty to care for him in all things, and not abandon him to a solitude worse than death’ (39). Even in England Susan takes care of Friday as if he is a child and on account of him she has to face a lot of hardships. It is not Susan alone who faces such hardships. She can be termed as a metaphor that refers to all those women



who are bugged down by their maternal duty and lack of material prosperity and cannot dare to dream to achieve their potential.

One of the most serious issues that concerns the female is their physical safety. Coetzee very subtly raises the matter of female infanticide. When Susan and Friday are on their way to Bristol, some miles outside Marlborough, her eyes fall on a parcel lying in the ditch. She asks Friday to fetch it thinking it to be a bundle of clothes fallen from a carriage. But when she ‘unwind the wrapping-cloth I found it to be bloody . . . stillborn or perhaps stifled, all bloody with the afterbirth, of a little girl, perfectly formed, her hands clenched up by her ears, her features peaceful, barely an hour or two in this world’ (105). Susan continues, ‘I could not put from my thoughts the little sleeper who would never awake, the pinched eyes that would never see the sky, the curled fingers that would never open, who was the child but I, in another life?’ (105). The plight of the female is universal. Her existence is threatened in the womb and suppressed under the sun. Be that the island of Cruso, England, or Portuguese, everywhere the condition of the woman is the same. Susan’s words about the women in Portuguese are self explanatory: ‘But the Portuguese women are seldom to be seen abroad. For the Portuguese are a very jealous race. They have a saying: In her life a woman has but three occasions to leave the house—for her baptism, her wedding, and her burial’ (114-115).

The female is denied the power of speech and accorded a very negligible presence in the mainstream discourse. Whatever little space she is granted that is coloured by the stereotyped jaundiced approach of the male discourse. Mr Foe does not grant Susan the privilege to be the sole subject of her story. He thinks the story of Susan in the island may form a part of the proposed story. He lays down the blue print of the story before Susan: ‘We therefore have five parts in all: the loss of the daughter, the quest for the daughter in Brazil; abandonment of the quest, and the adventure of the island; assumption of the quest by the daughter; and reunion of the daughter with her mother’ (117). That gives an idea about the reluctance of the chauvinistic male psyche to accord the rightful importance due to the female voice or the female experience. This denial of the central position to the female and banishing her to the margin compels thinkers like Simon de Beauvoir to level such serious charges.

In a way, Coetzee’s *Foe* tells the story of Susan Barton who shares the predicament of Shakespeare’s imaginary sister Judith about whom Virginia Woolf talked in her 1928 lectures. Like Judith in Woolf’s anecdote Susan Barton also lacks has an ambition to tell her story and

earn literary fame. At the same time she also shares Judith's predicament in the sense that she lacks money; she does not have 'a room of her own'; she is sneered by the society; and she is also exploited by not one but many a Nick Greenes. It won't be farfetched to apply Woolf's anecdote and claim that beset with such constraints and battered to see her dreams of becoming a story teller fade away Susan Barton might also have committed suicide like Judith.

### Works Cited and Consulted

- Coetzee, J. M. *Foe*. New York: Penguin Books, 1987. Print..
- - -. *White Writing; On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1988. Print.
- . *In the Heart of the Country*. New York: Penguin Books, 1982. Print.
- Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. London: W. Taylor, 1719. Print.
- Easton, T. Kai Norris. "Text and Hinterland: J. M. Coetzee and the South African Novel." *Journal of South African Studies* 21.4 (1995): 585-99. Print.
- Fisher, Laura L. "Colonization and Feminism in J. M. Coetzee's *In The Heart of The Country*, *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Foe*" (1988). *University of Tennessee Honors Thesis projects*. Web. 25 Sept. 2014.
- Gallagher, Susan VanZanten. *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context*. Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1991.
- Habib, M. A. R. *A History of Literary Criticism and Theory: From Plato to the Present*. 2005. New Delhi: Wiley India. 2012. Print.
- Huggan, Graham, and Stephen Watson, eds. *Critical Perspectives on J. M. Coetzee*. London: Macmillan, 1996. Print.
- Lental, Margaret. "An Overview of the Life and Career of J. M. Coetzee." *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Ed. Tom Borna and Jeffrey W. Hunter. Farmington Hills, Mich.: The Gale Group, 2002. 205-256. Print.
- Nichols, Ashton. Rev. of "*Foe*," by J. M. Coetzee. *The Southern Humanities Review* 4 (1987): 384-86. Print.

Simon de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*. Trans. H. M. Parshley. New York: Bantam, 961.

Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own*, 1929. feedbooks.com. Web. 18 Dec. 2015.

Wright, Derek. "Fiction as Foe: The Novels of J. M. Coetzee." *International Fiction Review* 16.2 (1989): 113-18. Print..

# Intertextual phenomenon in Eliot's *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*

Arindam Mukherjee

Andal Mahabir High School, Burdwan, West Bengal

## Abstract

*The term 'intertextuality' has gained a wide attention in the literary circle in recent times as it liberates a literary text from the traditional approach of evaluative measure and looks at a literary text as a mosaic of other contemporary and old texts. Although the concept of 'intertextuality' has emerged in the literary theory several decades after Eliot wrote, a careful study of his poems will bring out various intertextual devices that are applied in the text both from thematic and technical point of view. This paper sheds light on the origin and meaning of 'intertextuality', along with its application and justification in Eliot's poetry in general and in Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock in particular.*

**Keywords:** Intertextuality, parody, pastiche, trope.

## Introduction:

In today's perspective, the field of literary criticism and theory is a dynamic and heterogeneous one that has radically changed the process of reading or interpreting a literary text. The age-old tradition of analysis of a literary text maintains that a thematic analysis of the text in collaboration with a few stylistic features directed towards biographical and psychological sketches of the author ascertains a towering manifesto of literary criticism. But this perception of approaching a literary text has undergone a radical change in the post modern era, and the development of various critical and literary theories in this era tend to focus on a literary text from author-centric approach to text-centric approach. The traditional belief in the god-like

superiority of the author has been marginalised, and a continuous effort is being made to conceptualize a text from multiple angles. Even the concept of a literary text is being explored from a very subtle level after Structuralism, and there is a rigorous attempt from theoreticians to explicate the necessity of establishing the fact that it is only the linkages among various texts that can be called a real text because text is like a gas. The knowledge of systems, codes and traditions of other art forms and culture are also essential in the view of the theorists for the proper understanding of a literary text. Texts, whether they are literary or non-literary, are viewed by modern theorists as lacking in any kind of independent meaning. They are what now theorists call intertextual. Hence, reading has now become a process of moving between texts, and meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates. In this sense, every text has now become an inter-text and the device of intertextuality has now become one of the best mediums to connect multiple texts into a single entity.

### **Intertextuality in Brief:**

Interpretation is shaped by a complex of relationships between the text, the reader, reading, writing, printing, publishing and history: the history that is inscribed in the language of the text and in the history that is carried in the reader's reading. Such a history has been given a name: Intertextuality (Jeanine Parisier Plottel and Hanna Kurz Charney, 1978).

Derived from the Latin word *intertexto*, meaning to intermingle while weaving, the term 'intertextuality' was coined by the French Semiotician, Julia Kristeva, in the essay 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', published in 1966, to denote the interdependence of literary texts, that is, a relation between two or more texts that has an effect upon the way in which the intertext (the text within which other texts reside or echo their presence) is read. Intertextuality is, thus, a way of accounting for the role of literary and extra-literary materials without recourse to traditional notions of authorship. Further, in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Kristeva defines a text itself as 'a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text, several utterances taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another' (36). Her argument was that a literary text is not an isolated phenomenon but is made up of a 'mosaic of quotations' so that any text is the 'absorption and transformation' of the other. It means that a text is not a self-contained structure but is differential and historical. Texts are not structures of

presence but traces and tracing of others. So intertextuality preserves a text from closure and, therefore, depends upon incompleteness for its survival. Incompleteness here actually suggests that textual autonomy is relative, not absolute, and that all texts are required to be complemented by other texts to which they are related. In a broad manner, intertextuality is an umbrella term, a sum total of all the various devices employed in it like allusion, reference, parody, pastiche and quotation. It actually functions on comparison and contrast of similarities and differences. It can also influence our understanding of the original text, causing us to reflectively re-read, or reconsider our understanding of the original text. In the opinion of Kristeva, intertextual elements significantly contribute to construct the meaning of a literary text. In this context, she refers to a “horizontal axis” and a “vertical axis” to explain her idea of how texts construct their meanings. The “horizontal axis” of a text connects the author to its readers, and the “vertical axis” connects the text to all other texts. These two axes get united to give us the reading of a text. Kristeva has also argued convincingly to turn our attention from a study of the “structure” of the text to its “structuration”, that is, the way in which the particular text develops or achieves its structure, and Kristeva suggests that the previous or “synchronic” texts play a significant role in giving the structure and meaning of a literary text.

In the essay “ The Space of Intertextuality”, Thais Morgan has pointed out that intertextuality also deliver us the psychology of the individual authors, the tracing of literary origins, and relative value of imitation or originality. Every text has a subterranean text behind it which is its ‘ghost text’. The implication of this statement is that intertextuality is not to be confused with a kind of source-hunting, and emphasis must be given on the self-consciousness of the author. Sperber and Wilson in *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* introduced the concept of ‘troping.’ Tropes actually demonstrate the inherent intertextual characteristic of deictic ‘otherness.’ Intertextuality could itself be perceived as a master-trope containing a number of sub-tropes such as quotations and allusions. Sperber and Wilson also raise the issue of optimal relevance in communication which suggests that for the complete success of an intertextual work, it is necessary that the writer and the reader trust each other over textual connections. The writer-reader relationship is dependent on the latter’s capacity to understand, and not misunderstand, the former. Riffaterre, in the essay “ Mimesis as Interpretive Discourse” perceives intertextuality as dependent upon a type of mimesis in which reference is made not so much to exterior reality as to its representation. Mimesis refers to representation through



imitation, of the world of phenomenological reality. Similarly, intertextuality also deals with the phenomenological world depicted in texts. But it rejects the realistic mode of representation by owing its inspiration to other texts rather than real life. Further, as intertextual traces are often concealed or half-concealed, Riffaterre has also stressed on the role of the reader. In “The Interpretant in Literary Semiotics”, Riffaterre writes—“ Intertextuality is the reader’s perception that a literary text’s significance is a function of a complementary or a contradictory homolog, the intertext. The intertext may be another literary work or a text-like segment of the sociolect... that share not only lexicon but also a structure with the text.”

### **Intertextuality in T.S. Eliot:**

Eliot, not only as a poet but also as a theoretician, can arguably be said to have been the great forerunner of intertextuality. One disconcerting element of Eliot’s early poetry is his elimination of connective and traditional passages, so that poetry moves not by narrative continuity, but by the ‘music of ideas’, or the juxtaposition of image and phrase to assert patterns and relationships not immediately apparent. In his early works, Eliot draws on not only the central works of a western tradition in ruins but a range of personal and esoteric sources, the public and the private mingled in a new and strange manner. The trace of intertextuality is partly evident in Eliot’s “Tradition and Individual Talent” where he has suggested that every work of art exists in relation to all the works that came before it and will come after it. For Eliot, the poet must be aware of a constant comparison to and evaluation of a past work while writing. To be modern is to know and incorporate the past. In Eliot’s words, “ No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead”. What Eliot tries to suggest here is that all true poets and artists are guided by a historical sense that make them aware of the simultaneous order of tradition—

The historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not only with his own generation in his bones, but with the feeling that the whole literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order (*T.S. Eliot: Poetry, Plays and Prose*, 224).

Moreover, Eliot also claims that poetry is impersonal by nature. The mind of the poet, in Eliot's view, is like a catalyst, it causes disparate experiences from many sources to fuse into a whole. In his words, "the poet's mind is a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together." This formulation proposed by Eliot is admittedly compatible with the idea of the text being a redistribution of the intertext. So, in Eliot's poetry, there is a plurality of consciousness, an ever-increasing series of points of view, which struggle towards an emergent unity.

One of the most original ways in which Eliot chose to integrate fragments of existing texts into his own poems is through allusions and quotations. Eliot's allusions and quotations set up an inclusive world in which all times and experiences are conflated regardless of gender, class or cultural experience. M.H. Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* defines allusion as "...a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or historical person, place or event, or to another literary work or passage." In Eliot's poetry, allusions actually function in different directions. It may work as a means of compression by which other and wider meanings can be associated with a particular scene or image or phrase. It may also involve the reader in a shared knowledge with the author. By recognising and taking account of information outside the poem, the reader collaborates with the author in creating the meaning of a character, scene or image. So far as quotations are concerned, they provide a way of depersonalising the narrator's experience and emotions. Quotations remove the concerns of the poem from a private realm of suffering and grant them the authenticity of a general truth. Quotations have an important aesthetic effect as well. It brings a wider range of expression, and also a great tonal range and flexibility.

Another important intertextual feature as envisaged in Eliot's poetry is the so-called mythical intertextuality. In his review, "Ulysses, Order, and Myth", published in 1923, Eliot introduced his well-known "mythic method" as a "continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity". One of the important functions of this method was to provide order, a way of organising the various elements of the literary work without employing the rigid rules of fixed or closed structures. Instead of isolated symbols, the mythic method introduced the mechanism of symbol networks which were significantly more powerful and contributed to the making of

meaning. Another important function of mythic method was that it provided the basis for comparison, serving to the ironic dimension to the new work.

### **Intertextuality in “Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”:**

Being acutely aware of the plight of modern civilisation, Eliot in his *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, a well-known modern poem of love, creates the moods of ironic and cynical repulsion, of unromantic disillusionment and of nervous intensity. The poem depicts the agony of inadequacy, an agony arising less from the fact of Prufrock’s inadequacy than his consciousness thereof. The title is a miniature portrait—a surname suggestive of prudes, prunes, and prisms, with a touch of prissiness as Eliot’s purpose is not to glorify the concept of love but to explore the inherent complications in man-and-woman love in modern society. The use of the phrase “Love Song” in the title of the poem is quite misleading in the sense that the poem is not an articulation of the lover’s spontaneous expression of love for his beloved but a projection of the lover’s latent anxieties and complications while making an effort to propose his beloved. The sincere commitment of Eliot as a poet and a scholar is evident in the application of multiple references and allusions in the poem that obviously make it densely intertextual. Among the plethora of intertextual traces in the poem, the most prominent ones are the echo of Henry James, Laforgue, Bradley and Dante. A link with Henry James’ short story “Crapy Cornelia” can be established in the sense that in that story there was a middle-aged bachelor like Prufrock who had fallen in love with a beautiful woman many years his junior and hesitated to make a proposal of marriage on the ground of age. Prufrock’s similarity with Laforgue, a French poet, lies in the fact that like Laforgue, Prufrock is also a split personality, his one half destroying the other. Again, like Bradley’s inseparability between the observer and the observed, there is no separateness between the external scenery and Prufrock’s consciousness, and as such, the landscape in the poem is largely psychological.

At the very outset, the use of the epigraph by Eliot, a striking example of an intertextual phenomenon which echoes Dante’s *Inferno* (xxvii, 61-66), sets the tone of the poem. These words in the epigraph were actually spoken by the most famous warrior, Count Guido da Montefeltro, who was punished in Hell for his treacherous advice to Pope Boniface on earth. The English translation of the epigraph is as follows—

If I thought that my reply would be to someone who would return to earth, this flame would remain without further movement; but, as no one has ever returned alive from this gulf, if what I hear is true, I can answer you with no fear of infamy ( *Imagery and Symbolism in T.S. Eliot's Poetry*, 27).

A serious reading of this epigraph makes it clear that as Guido, being trapped in Hell, is willing to speak because none can hear him, the condition of Prufrock's speaking also admits the truth that the poem is not so much heard as overheard. Prufrock's love-song is actually the song of a being divided between passion and timidity, it is never sung in the real world. The epigraph, in this sense, draws a close parallel between Guido and Prufrock because both of them are suffering from the torment of guilt. As both Guido and Prufrock have to withhold communication from others for fear of infamy, they have no option but to feed on their own personal memories. So, the entire texture of the poem, in this sense, tries to capture the ambiguous and complex persona of Prufrock in which one part of Prufrock (timid and thinking) is deluding another (passionate and feeling), turning him to fraudulent fantasy rather than true engagement with life. Further, apart from shedding its light upon the complexity of Prufrock's personality, the epigraph of the poem also indirectly establishes a relation between life in Hell and life in a modern city. According to Eliot, life in Hell is comparable to that of a modern metropolis in the sense that like Hell life in a metropolis is that of sterile suffering, of intense boredom and unrelieved gloom. The lack of communication in a modern city compels one to feed upon one's own painful memory as happens in the case of Prufrock. Hence, the epigraph of the poem helps us to understand that the poem is a kind of internal monologue in which the confession of the protagonist is not to an external party but to his own self.

As the poem progresses, we come to understand that Prufrock, being a lover who is devoid of any romantic perception, is making a rigorous effort for the proposal of love to his so-called beloved. But this imaginary journey of Prufrock through certain 'half-deserted streets' towards a room where 'women come and go' is not an easy one as it ultimately leads him to an 'overwhelming question.' Though the question persecutes Prufrock's mind, he is not willing to let it come out of it which shows his evasive tendency due to his over-sensitive, shy and timid nature. This 'overwhelming question' also functions as an inter-text in the sense that it may also be an ironic allusion to the medieval Grail legends in which the questioning knight can restore

the waste land and heal its impotent and aiming ruler by asking him ‘the right question’. In some versions of the legend, the right question is— “What ails thee, Uncle?” (*Warriors of the Waste Land*, page-3). The implication of this question in the context of the poem is that had Prufrock mastered the courage and asked the lady of his choice, “Will you marry me?”, he would have been cured of his problem. But the failure of Prufrock to ask the ‘overwhelming question’ anticipates that he is not one of the chosen to whom vision will be vouchsafed.

Prufrock’s mental state of morbidity and inertia is again intensified in the repetition of the expression “there will be time” which conveys the sense of indecisiveness, evasion of responsibility and avoidance of reality. This particular expression serves as an inter-text in the sense that it echoes the first line of Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress”—“Had we but world enough and time.” But whereas Marvell makes an effort to realize his beloved the urgency of the passage of time, Prufrock takes comfort in the thought that there will be enough time for him to make a decision. We can also notice that the expression “there will be time” is the echo of a passage in the Old Testament where the preacher says—

For everything there is a season, and a  
time for every matter under heaven  
a time to be born, and a time to die  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted  
a time to kill, and a time to heal... (*An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 331).

So, this intertextual reference by Eliot beautifully makes a contrast between the weighty nature of the acts mentioned in the Old Testament and the trivialities belonging to Prufrock’s world. Actually, the repetition of the expression “there will be time” points, on the one hand, to Prufrock’s state of boredom, and raises, on the other, a satiric tone at his apparent comfort in the sufficiency of time. Another important expression of contrast applied by Eliot in the poem is “Works and Days” which alludes to the title of Hesiod’s poem “Works and Days” concerned with certain maxims and instructions on agriculture and with the advocacy of honest labour for farmers. The significance of this intertextual reference in the poem lies in the fact that in contrast to the hard labour of the agriculturists, the labour of Prufrock remains confined to just preparing

the “overwhelming question” and expressing it before those who appear in social gatherings in evening.

As Prufrock lacks the determination to enter the room where the so-called fashionable ladies assemble every evening, he turns back and comes down the staircase. In this context, the line “To turn back and descend the stair” serves the function of an inter-text in the sense that it reminds the readers of Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* where a young man ascends a staircase to murder a woman, an old moneylender. Although Prufrock has no intention to murder someone, the image of stair in both Eliot and Dostoevsky is ambivalent because, on the one hand, it posits a possibility of communication, and on the other, it preserves a distance between both the parties. So, the image of stair only exposes the latent weakness in Prufrock’s character as a lover. Being a man of passivity and inertia, Prufrock can only hear the “voices dying with a dying fall”, another intertextual suggestion from Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, where the love-sick Orsino remarked in respect of a piece of music—“That strain again! It had a dying fall.” In this context, the observation of Manju Jain is worth quoting—“Voices dying with a dying fall would be voices fading away gradually. There is probably a play on the notion of the voices dying and the death-in-life existence of Prufrock and the women, submerged beneath the music and the conversation of a repetitive, monotonous social routine.”

In course of Prufrock’s mental journey, Eliot’s ingenuity in the form of the device of intertextuality comes out at its height when Prufrock assumes various roles which serve as disguises for the duplicities of desire, and among these multiple roles the prominent ones are that of John the Baptist, Lazarus and Hamlet. John the Baptist’s beheading has been narrated in Mark 6: 17-29 and in Matthew 13: 3-11. According to the Biblical story line, John the Baptist condemned the marriage of Herod with his brother’s wife, Herodias, as unlawful. Later, Herodias got the chance to take revenge upon John the Baptist when on Herod’s birthday, her daughter, Salome, came in, danced and pleased Herod to such an extent that he vowed to give her anything she wanted. She came back consulting her mother and demanded the head of John the Baptist. Accordingly, a soldier cut off the head of John the Baptist and brought it on a platter. In this poem, Prufrock also conceives a parallel situation by imagining that like John the Baptist, his head will be beheaded and will be brought on a platter before the so-called fashionable ladies. This mock-heroic comparison in the poem brings the pathetic timidity of Prufrock into sharp

focus and turns him into a laughing stock before us. This comparison is also indicative of Prufrock's terrified self-consciousness and of his split personality. It also suggests his fear of castration.

Prufrock also compares himself with Lazarus because like the latter he too has suffered intensely for his lonely life and frustration in love. There were actually two Lazaruses mentioned in the Bible. One was a dead man whom Christ brought back to life (John 11: 1-44). The other was a poor and miserable man who, after death, went to heaven whereas Dives, a rich and pleasure-loving man, went to hell after death. Dives begged Abraham to send Lazarus back to earth to warn his five brothers, rolling in sin and luxury (Luke 16: 19-31). Although Lazarus did not come back to earth, Eliot uses the allusion to suit his purpose. Prufrock's desire of identification with Lazarus shows his keen power of imagination, his innate desire for role-playing and his habit of self-dramatization. The use of the expression "To tell you all" in this context implies the idea that Prufrock wants to tell all about his frustration in love and the sufferings of a lonely life. The expression may also suggest that Prufrock intends to warn all the would-be lovers that love is nothing but suffering.

Prufrock next confessed that despite his hesitation he is not Prince Hamlet, nor was he intended to play the role of a heroic character. Hamlet was the principal character in Shakespeare's tragic drama *Hamlet* who was the prince of Denmark and was commanded by the ghost of his father to take revenge on Claudius, his uncle, who had not only poisoned his father to usurp the throne but also married his mother Gertrude within a short time after the death of her first husband. The father's command appeared too heavy a burden on Hamlet's shoulder, and he began to vacillate and delay in taking action. According to Coleridge, Hamlet's inaction was because his will was paralysed by too much reflection and self-analysis. In this poem, Prufrock resembles Hamlet in his self-awareness and worry, in his delay and indecisiveness. But when he says, "I am not Prince Hamlet", the negative thought of Prufrock is, on the one hand, a sign of his repressed aspiration for the role, and on the other, a sign of his evasion of the responsibilities that acceptance of such a role would involve. Consequently, Prufrock takes refuge in self-mockery and distances himself from the Prince by assigning to himself some subordinate roles in the play. He, therefore, prefers for himself either the role of a talkative courtier like Polonius or that of Yorick, the fool. So, through Prufrock, Eliot presents the picture of a man who is too fastidious



to trust his instincts, who hesitates but is no great figure like Hamlet and who does not risk the emotional upheaval of love.

Thus, Eliot's *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, one of the heralding texts of modernism, is densely intertextual and is replete with allusions, references, juxtaposition, discontinuity, fragmentation, ambiguity and de-structured or de-humanised subjectivity. In this poem, it seems that Eliot asks us to see the modern hero, Prufrock, in relation to the heroic ideals of the past so that we may be able to redefine the terms on which we make judgments about the worth of Prufrock in the present. A thorough conceptualization of the nature of love that has been displayed in the poem probably hints at the fact that the concept of love in modern time needs revision as there has been an evolution in the material and moral standards of man- and- woman relationship. Though emotions of pleasure and pain have not altered, social demands have resulted in different responses to similar situations. It is for this reason that Prufrock, a middle-aged bachelor, who is acutely aware of his social background, fails to articulate his innate feelings in front of the ladies belonging to a fashionable society. Therefore, the standard of judgement regarding human nature needs to be reassessed in the contemporary time because in the modern context love is not wholly blind and human nature is also one of the dominating factors to influence the so-called lovers in the present time. In other words, love is not merely a 'marriage of true minds' in our present time, and is frequently touching upon the complex spheres of human mind. Viewed from this perspective, the application of the intertextual device in the poem is one of the best mediums for the reassessment of human nature because it enables us to read the mentality of Prufrock which stands in sharp contrast to the conventional lovers like Orlando in *As You Like It* or Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night*.

### **Conclusion:**

The above discussion on the device of intertextuality and its application in Eliot's *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* makes it clear that the intertextual phenomena is an evolutionary style of thinking, a way of seeing the world in which all things, all situations, all human relations and conditions take their meaning from clandestine association of thought. Such type of intertextuality and correlation then, if properly and intellectually applied in a text, can not only enrich the text itself but also pave the way for cultural evolution. So far as the case of Prufrock in *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is concerned, the relevance of the device of intertextuality lies in

the fact that it is one of the best possible devices by which the poet is able to capture successfully the voice of a neurotic, paranoid modern man who is obsessed with time, mortality and social conduct.

### Works Cited

Brueggemann, Walter. *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*. Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky.

Jain, Manju. *A Critical Reading of the Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Columbia University Press, 1980.

Riffaterre, Michael. "Intertextual Representation: On Mimesis as Interpretive Discourse." *Critical Inquiry* 11 (Spring 1984): 141-62.

Sarker, Sunil kumar. *T.S. Eliot: poetry, plays and Prose*. Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, Nice Printing Press, Delhi.

Shaw, Harry. *Dictionary of Literary Terms*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. 1972.

Sperber, Dan and Deirdre Wilson. *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.

Tiwari, Nidhi. *Imagery and Symbolism in T.S. Eliot's Poetry*. Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, Nice Printing Press, Delhi.

# The Relation between Word & Meaning: In Western Epistemological Approach

Rita Mukherjee

Department of Philosophy, Suri Vidyasagar College, West Bengal

## Abstract

*Epistemology which is one of the most important parts of philosophy is a science which deals with the nature, source, condition & scope of knowledge. The present paper attempts to examine the relation word and meaning as it exists in the western epistemological theories such as Referential theory, Ideational theory, Behavioural theory and Use theory. The views of these theories relating the issue of the relation between word and meaning are different. The paper concludes that word has no separate meaning, so far as our knowledge is concerned.*

**Keywords:** word, meaning, Epistemology, knowledge etc. .

Epistemology is one of the most important parts of philosophy. The word ‘Epistemology’ consists of two words- ‘episteme’ and ‘logos’. ‘Episteme’ means ‘Knowledge’ & ‘logos’ means ‘science’ and hence *Epistemology* is a science which deals with the nature, source, condition & scope of knowledge. The word ‘knowledge’ is derived from the word to ‘know’. In our daily life we can know many things with the help of our sense organs. But all knowing things are not knowledge. So the word “know” has two senses: 1. weak sense of ‘know’ and 2. Strong sense of ‘know’.

In weak sense of ‘know’ there are certain conditions. ‘I know that ‘p’ is true ‘means (i) ‘I’ believe that ‘p’ is true. (ii) My belief is true (iii) There are certain arguments for supporting my truth of believe. In case of synthetic proposition the word ‘know’ is used in weak sense .For example, Fire burns. But in the case of necessary truth the word ‘know’ is used as strong sense, for example, the proposition about our consciousness. In this sense Descartes says, ‘I think therefore I am’. Also in case of analytic statement the word ‘know’ is used as a strong sense.

Strong sense of knowledge means propositional knowledge .When knowledge is expressed through the sentences, that knowledge is called propositional knowledge.

Propositional knowledge means knowledge of a true proposition which is believed to be true by the knower and whose truth is justified by sufficient evidences. This kind of knowledge is the basis of all others forms of knowledge. So in the field of western philosophy we mean by the word “knowledge” is propositional knowledge. A proposition or a sentence is a collection of words. ‘Word’ is a smallest part of meaning. To put in other words, there is a relation between word and meaning. In western epistemology, there are various types of theories about the relation between word and meaning. In this context William P. Alston (1988) mentioned three theories: 1. *Referential Theory*– this theory has been attractive to a great many theorists because it seems to provide a simple answer that is readily assimilable to natural ways of thinking about the problem of meaning.

According to the *referential theory*, a word is meaningful by its referring occurent that means meaning of a word depends on the object, which it refers. So according to this theory a word itself has no meaning, meaning is constituted by its referent. In this context, Bertrand Russell says, in his book *Principles of Mathematics*, “words all have meaning, in the simple sense that there symbols that stand for something other than themselves”.

Referential theory exists in two forms. The view of the first form is that the meaning of an expression with it refers. The first form of the theory can easily be shown to be in adequate by virtue of the fact that two expressions can have different meanings, but the same referent. For example, the two expressions ‘Rabindronath Tagore’ and the ‘author of Gitanjali’ refer to the same individual. Although they have different meanings, the converse phenomenon, same meaning but different referents can be demonstrated, not for different expressions, but for different utterances of the same expression. There is a class of terms, sometimes called ‘Indexical Terms’, for example, ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘here’, which systematically change their reference with changes in the conditions of their utterance .When John utters the word ‘I’ it refers to John ; when Smith utters it ,it refers to Smith .Here ‘I’ has the single meaning ,the speaker. For avoid the difficulties of first form of referential theory, another view is that the meaning of a word determined by referential relation. For it may be that although ‘Suktara’ and ‘Sandhatara’ refer to

the same object, they are not related to that referent in the same way. So this view is also defective.

First of all, there are many words as found in our everyday speech like ‘Ah!’, ‘Oh!’ etc. feeling expressed words and there are conjunctions and other components of language are meaningful but refer to nothing. Referential theorists usually reply to this objection denying that “syncategorematic” terms like these have meaning “in isolation”, or that they have meaning in the primary sense in which nouns, adjective and verbs have meaning .

For avoiding this difficulties referential theorists give a proposal to use the expression ‘stand for’ in terms of the expression ‘refer to’, which is such that every meaningful linguistic unit stands for something. In broader sense, the expression ‘stand for’ means denotation, connotation, definition, etc.

Another meaning theory is *Ideational theory* which was propounded by the great thinker John Locke in his ‘Essay Concerning Human Understanding’, section -1, chapter-2, Book-3, “the use, then of word is to be sensible marks of ideas, and the ideas they stand for are their proper and immediate signification”.

According to this theory, what gives a linguistic expression a certain meaning is the fact that it is regularly used in communication as the “mark” of a certain idea, the idea with which we continue our thinking has an existence as well as a function that is independent of the language. A linguistic expression gets its meaning by being used as such through an indication. This presumably means that whenever an expression is used in that sense, 1. The idea must be present in the mind of the speaker, and 2, the speaker must be producing the expression in order to get his audience to realize that the idea in question is in his mind at that time. So far as communication is successful, the expression would have to call up the same idea in the mind of the hearer.

These conditions are not the fact satisfying. The real difficulty lies in the fact that we are unable to spot “Ideas” as we would have in order to test the ideational theory .There is to be sure, a sense of ‘idea’ in which it is not completely implausible to say that ideas are involved in any

intelligible bit of speech .Idea in this sense is derivative from such notions as ‘meaning’ and ‘understanding’, and so can provide no basis for an explication of meaning.

One deficiency of the ideational theory, as generally and widely claimed, lies in the fact that it does not look for ideas present or active in the minds of speakers and listeners in order to settle questions about what a word means in the language or about the sense in which a speaker uses a term on a given occasion.

According to Behavioral theory word meaning can be determined by the stimuli and its response. According to this theory ‘word’ meaning can be determined in two sides:

- (i) Through word meaning and
- (ii) Through sentence meaning.

Generally, single word has no common element, it can’t determine the meaning of the word. Hence we take alternative view which can be determined the meaning through sentence. For instance, “bring me another cup of coffee please”. Here situation is that “I have recently had a cup of coffee”. It may be that “I have taken more than one cup of coffee” & now “I have no need to take coffee”. If in some situation the meanings of the two sentences are completely different then it can’t determine the meaning of the sentence.

In this context we can mention Wittgenstein’s theory of meaning. His philosophy is divided into two parts: early Wittgenstein & latter Wittgenstein. In the early Wittgenstein, the theory of word meaning is called *Tractatus theory* of meaning and in latter Wittgenstein the theory of word meaning is called the ‘Use theory’ of meaning. According to *Tractatus theory*, word itself is meaningful; i.e., meaning of a word is predetermined .The meaning of a word is determined by the nature of the object, which the word refers. For example, the meaning of the object ‘table’ is predetermined by the word ‘table’. According to this theory, in the same situation function of a word is same.

After that the later Wittgenstein has rejected the *Tractatus theory*, of meaning & he said that meaning of a word cannot be predetermined .He also says that the act of word is never same. We have a false idea about language. So we think that all words have same act in same situation.

Wittgenstein says that to refer something is not the only act of word, but one of the acts of word. That is why, he argues that sentence is the circumstance of word, out of sentence word has no meaning. According to this theory, meaning of a word depends on its use, and it suggests that the use of word is its meaning. This theory of meaning is called *Use theory* of meaning. To explain the use theory of meaning, Wittgenstein uses two concepts: Language game & Forms of life.

- (i) Language game means the combination of linguistic & non-linguistic activity. For example, the word 'pain' is expressed by both linguistic and non-linguistic activities. A new born baby can express his/her pain through his/her crying, but after learning language she expresses her pain through a sentences 'I feel pain'. According to the view of Wittgenstein, 'crying' is a non-linguistic expression of pain and the sentence, 'I feel pain' is the linguistic expression of pain. So the formation of the word 'language-game' is the conjunction of linguistic & non-linguistic activities.
- (ii) Form of life, means various ways or various modes in which human being behaves. For example, if a boy can utter the word 'ball' then it can't say that the boy has known the meaning of the word 'ball'. Hence utterance of word is not the meaning of the word. Many activities are related with the word 'ball'. Meaning of word, as observed in the present discourse, relates to and is determined by society and societal systems, norms and other factors involved with it. The statement "language is a 'form of life' means that language is the ability to behave in a certain way. There we can say that meaning of the word depends on the context. So use of word depends on the form of the social life.

Therefore, on the basis of above discussion we can safely conclude that word has no separate meaning. For this reason we can't always want to know the meaning of a word very clearly from dictionary. Sometimes word meaning depends on its use in a sentence, sometimes depends on how it behaves in certain way and sometimes depends on context. Hence it is evident that word itself has no meaning, so far as, our knowledge is concerned.

## Reference

Alston, William P *Philosophy of Language*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India. 1988. Print.



Locke, John. *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Vol. I. Revised Edition. London: Everyman's Library. 1963. Print.

Locke, John. *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Vol. II. Revised Edition. London: Everyman's Library. 1964. Print.

Pitcher, George. *The Philosophy of Wittgenstein*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India. 1985. Print.

Russell, Bertrand. *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*. London: Penguin. 1963. Print.

Russell, Bertrand. *Principles of Mathematics*. 1903. Published as Routledge Classics. London, New York: Routledge.. 2010. Print.

# Translation

---

**Kasai<sup>1</sup>**

**Butcher**

**Ramkrishna Mandal<sup>2</sup>**

**Translated by: Susanta Kumar Bardhan,**

Suri Vidyasagar College, Birbhum, West Bengal

Listening to his son's proposal Kestapada gets startled—"No, no, Nitai, we belong to Baistam Caste. To kill animal is a sin. Son, please don't do that deed". Nitai reacted with anger—"Born of Baistam caste family. To kill animal is sin. But isn't leading these eight lives to death by making them starve a sin? In addition, you are suffering from asthma; mother, pressure. Working tirelessly day and night and at the same time suffering from acidity, (my) wife has become skinny. Our children do not have a drop of milk--- who will manage these? By pulling rickshaw continually I have turned weak. Still can I sustain the expenditure of this family?"

Kestapada in a very lean voice said, --"I realize everything, son. If not, take any other work as a profession."

Nitai with strong determination expressed, --"Please, do come in the way. As it has struck in my mind, I will run a meat-shop". --Then Nitai left out swiftly.

Following his own plan Nitai sold his rickshaw and managed his capital. At the bus-stand one businessman was ready to sell his *gumti*<sup>3</sup>. Nitai bought that. From 'Asha Art Studio' he got a signboard painted and printed—HINDUR KATA MANSER DOKAN, Pro:-- Nitai Das<sup>4</sup>. Signboard was fixed on the roof of the *gumti*. Nitai bought two *khasis*<sup>4</sup> from the retailers. Then in one winter morning he inaugurated the meat-shop by chopped off the throat of *khasi*<sup>5</sup> and stripped off its skin.

Baistam-by-caste Kestapada's innermost heart got shaken on the very first day when Nitai's helper Janaa Mal was seen drawing the *khasis* by the rope to the gumti and Nitai with a chopper in hand was seen driving them. Even after invoking *Mahaprabhu*<sup>6</sup> in obeisance Kestapada cried out in an earnest voice, --"God, forgive me for the sin. I am very helpless. I cannot labour – dependent on my son's earning. *Thakur*<sup>7</sup>, absolve me of my sin".

On that day Kestapada's mind got depressed. Not a single day he could think that such innocent lives of animal would have been copped and killed for their survival. But the earlier part of his life was spent in great happiness. Poverty was very much present in his father's family, but happiness and joy was not less.

## Two

Kestapada's father Madhab Das owned two *bighas*<sup>8</sup> of farmland. It was a parental property. In different local bazaars he used to sell *pan* leaves for running his family. He was *Hari*<sup>9</sup>-devotee. In every evening he used to beat *mridangam*<sup>10</sup> and chant *harinam*<sup>11</sup> in the *atchala*<sup>12</sup>. The neighbours used to act as assistant composers. Child Kestapada used to be with him. During the month of Baishakh Madhab Das along with Kestapada used to carry on *tahal*<sup>13</sup> at every dawn. Madhab sang rhythmically beating *mridangam*; a pair of cymbals was in the hands of Kestapada. Hitting rhythmically the pairs of cymbals against each other Kestapada used to dance and sing in tune with his father's —Bhaja Gourangya, kaha Gourangya, laha Gourangyer nam re--. Following his father Kestapada at his very boyhood took the sacred rosary of beads and learned evening prayer.

Like his father Kestapada started the business of selling pan leaves. In the evening he used to sing *harinam* in the *atchala*. He became the father of a son and two daughters. Maintaining the legacy of Baisnab family Kestapada named his son Nitaipada. Poverty was very much present in the family as it was big.

Boy Nitai completed his primary education but was too naughty. He used to have mangoes from others' trees without permission and blame was targeted towards Kestapada. As his son's education was evidently stopped, Kestapada engaged his son in the works at the husking mill of the *Kamars*<sup>14</sup>. The boy was not consistent in his work. That job did not last long. Consequently,

for the purpose of earning livelihood Nitai went to the town a half mile away from their village to pull rickshaw.

At every 6 A. M., he used to come to town by bus and take the rickshaw from the owner's depot. He used to have his lunch at a hotel in the town. That was followed by gossiping with some friends, smoking bidi and then resuming the work of pulling rickshaw. At night paying the rent for the rickshaw to the owner, he left for home by the last bus. The daily travelling after doing hard labour was tiring one. So Nitai started searching for at least small house in the town.

Opportunity also came before him. At Bhagarpara<sup>15</sup> of the town about uprooted people of two hundred families developed a residential locality on the unrecorded land. That land was occupied illegally. Following his friend Atul, Nitai too occupied a part of that land and erected a thatch-and-mud-walled house there.

Kestapada did not have a single drop of relief in his mind. His son was now not coming home at every night. He started coming home once or twice a week. He became worried about his son's food and lodging.

Kestapada's anxiety was more for his two daughters than for his son. Horrible The worry snatched his sleep at night and suffocatingly troubled his thought. The daughters had now become young. The unruly young boys of the locality were seen wandering near his house. The thought of marrying the daughters was now consuming Kestapada.

At one point Kestapada determined to marry his daughters. Let him be in dearth of money. The farmland which he had would be sold to Fatik Morol. He engaged himself in searching for suitable groom. While doing so, he found a groom at Kharbona village five miles away from his own village. He sold Fatik the small farmland inherited from his grandfather through his father. Eldest daughter got married. He got rid of one big responsibility. Still he did not have relief. The youngest daughter was gradually becoming young. What would be about his fate? With greater force poverty tightened her grip on the neck of his family.

### Three

Nitai stuck to his point—"I won't pull rickshaw on rent. I've got fed up with the frequent replacement of axle, tire, and tube. The owner does not bear the daily maintenance cost. But he

collects the rickshaw rent everyday unfailingly. Hopeless, most portion of the earning is consumed by the person not involved in work. “Nitai paused a little. Looking at his father he tried to weigh the intention of his father.

Kestapada asked, “What will you do then?”

Nitai replied, “I will buy a new rickshaw.”

Kestapada hesitantly asked, “Where shall I get money?”

--“Mortgage this house.”

Kestapada got contracted and said in a low voice, “Father’s homestead, shall I mortgage?”

Nitai without inhibition said, “What is the matter with that? When I will have money, we will get back this property.”

Kestapada could not dare to say ‘NO - -’. In recent times his health was not going well. Asthma used to ail him. Now he could not go out selling pan. Total dependence on his son.

Therefore, rickshaw was brought in exchange of house and the adjoining land.

#### **Four**

So far Nitai had been earning the livelihood by pulling for seven years without any break. He, however, could not meet the family expenses with his earning. Nitai stayed at the town with his wife and their babies. His parents and sister, were at their native village. Nitai had to bear the expenditure needed for their food, clothing, diseases, etc. Nitai had already two daughters and a son. The moment the next issue came to the womb of his wife, Nitai thought— She is not a woman but a fertile paddy-seed-sowing land. Within a short time paddy seedlings get ready for plantation. He rushed his wife to hospital.

In order to lessen the financial burden of two families Nitai proposed, “Father, (you all) come to town. —expense will be lessened if food is cooked in one kitchen. I cannot meet the expenses any longer.” Kestapada sighed with a sound and he along with his wife and daughter came to town to stay with his son’s family.

But earning by pulling rickshaw day and night was not sufficient to fill the mouth of demon Want. Nitai stated thinking of other means. Through calculation Nitai traced the better profit in meat-shop keeping. Therefore, he decided to open a meat-shop.

### **Five**

In spite of his reluctance Kestapada had to go to his son's meat shop in order to have money. That money was needed to buy good from the ration shop, vegetables and grocery item. For this he was bound to go to the meat-shop every day. From the very morning rush of customers was before the meat-shop. That scene could be very much seen especially on Sundays or Saturdays. On these days of the week in-service people seemed to have become mad for eating meat. Kestapada was to found standing in one side of the shop. While standing there, he astonishingly observed the swiftness in Nitai's working hands. From the customers there were different demands for the different parts of the dressed body of the castrated he-goat—the hind leg, chest, or the neck, etc. his assistant Jana Mal cut the ordered parts from the body and handed that over to Nitai. Nitai put that on the wooden slab and rhythmically cut that into pieces. Sized pieces of meat were weighed, put in a packet made of sal leaves, and handed over to the customers according to their respective order. Then collection of money from them was unfailingly done by Nitai. The wooden plank in the gumti got reddened with blood. On that were laid the recently cut-off goat heads – their pitiful still look. Beside those, were laid the entails covered with the peeled-off skin. A heap of rejected parts of goat-legs was to seen in one side of the shop. By the side of the gumti a wooden stake was fixed on the earth for giving sharp blow on the neck of the castrated he-goats. That place turned red. Flies were gathering round that. Blood was streaming down to the drain.

At the initial stage Kestapada's head used to reel. Still he had to stand and see the event in the meat-shop. Because if he did not take money from his son, he could not do marketing. At the same time until Nitai could get some interval in his work, he could not hand over the money to his father. Standing there Kestapada felt the tremor in his inner self. By himself he prayed to Mahaprabhu—"Forgive me and others. Forgive my son Nitai".

### **Six**

For some formidable days Nitai had been sensing a pain in his belly. Assuming that it was the problem of acidity, he took homeopathy medicine. No alleviation was felt. Instead pain was increasing day by day. Gradually, the pain reached such a level that Nitai had to stop doing his works. Kestapada took his son to a better doctor. The doctor checked him and advised to have an x-ray photo of the belly. From that photo of Nitai's belly a tumour was detected. It needed immediate operation. In an unknown apprehension Kestapada sensed a sudden tremor in his heart. After thinking deeply Kestapada admitted his son in Mangalpahari Christian Hospital where doctors were all Sahebs. Those doctors had reputation in their treatment.

Operation was done by that time. However, patient did recover. On the hospital bed the young boy was gradually getting thinner and thinner day by day and was getting leveled with the bed. The hopeless condition of his son was haunting Kestapada at the core of his heart. Everyday money was getting drained. When the saved money got exhausted, Kestapada saw nothing but darkness before him. At this crisis moment, only hope lied with Fatik Morol<sup>16</sup>. To him Kestapada rushed. Helpless Kestapada's earnest entreaty to Fatik Morol softened the latter to buy the homeland mortgaged to him through registration. That way Kestapada got some amount of money. But to his utter misfortune, he did not have his son back to life.

The in utter sorrow, Kestapada felt the breaking of his rib returning town he always lay down on the bed. But just after elapse of two days his daughter-in-law informed, "Father, there is no rice at home. For the last seven days we have been borrowing rice from Anilda's wife. Today's food will be somehow managed. For this I can request no more. Moreover, how long will they lend or provide us? They are also having financial crisis."

He heard the words of daughter-in-law and resultantly, darkness rolled down before his eyes. – "What is the way-out now? What will happen from tomorrow? Six pairs of eyes of six hungry lives are staring to him. Let him leave aside his own hunger". Throughout the night he could not sleep. The wood-worms of thoughts were scratching and consuming his brain. His thoughts mainly concerned what he could do. He would resume his pan business. But he realized that he did not have that much strength to wander for that business purpose.

Kestapada uttered in a helpless voice, "O, Thakur, do me a favour with a means. Protect these orphan lives. I am now in deep fathomless distress."



Morning appeared. Day grew high gradually. There was nothing to chew. Starvation hit children were dry-faced, Tears rolled down from their eyes. Daughter-in-law collected some herbs and leaves, boiled those, added some salt to the boiled item and served that sauce to the children. They did not want to eat that. The little one was rolling the dust and crying, “I will eat rice. Give me rice. Where is rice?” the eldest granddaughter with his pity-marked face came before him, -- “Grandpa, will the rice not be cooked today in our house? Hunger is too much. A long time has passed after we took the sauce of herbs and leaves”.

It proved unbearable for Kestapada to listen to such cry. He shut his ears. The bites of thousand wasps caused severe wounds in him. Lying on bed with worry-ridden head Kestapada spent the whole day and whole night by groping in darkness to trace a means.

### Seven

It was next day morning. Jana Mal was seen fastening Nitai’s pet castrated he-goat to the wooden stake. The goat was restlessly trying to run away. By one side Kestapada was seen standing with his drawn bright chopper. His two eyes looked reddened. The rolled eyeballs were burning with brightness. Jana clasped the goat tightly. The entire surrounding was getting filled with the helpless *ma ma* cry of the goat. Kestapada tightly clutched the chopper in his hands. The veins of his hands swelled. Raising the chopper above his head Kestapada with whatever strength he had and with aim swiftly struck the neck of the goat with that.

### Notes

1. *Kasai or Butcher* is short story written by RamkrishnaMandal. It was published in *SukherKhonje (In Search of Happiness): A Collection of Short Stories*, in the year 2004. This anthology was published by Poorba, Kolkata.
2. RamkrishnaMandalis Retired Reader in Bengali, Suri Vidyasagar College, Birbhum. He did his Ph. D from Visva-Bharati, Shaniniketan, India. He has established himself as a literary figure in the Bangla. He has published several volumes of short stories, literary critical essays and humorous stories. He edits Abakash: SahityaPatra, a literary journal in Bangla.
3. *gumti*: a small make-shift shop made of wood and/or iron.

4. HINDUR KATA MANSER DOKAN, Pro:-- Nitai Das: Literally this signboard content means 'Hindu's pieced meat-of shop Proprietor: Nitai Das' meaning 'A Hindu Shop of pieced meat Proprieter: Nitai Das
5. Khasi: a castrated he-goat.
6. *Mahaprabhu*: This title meaning 'The Great Lord' is addressed by the *Baisnab* community at Sri Chaitanya who is considered be one incarnation of Lord Krishna.
7. *Thakur*: God
8. *Bighas*: a unit for the measurement of land.
9. *Hari*-devotee: devotee to Lord Krishna
10. *Mridangam*: a drum-like musical instrument
11. *Harinam*: prayer song relating to Lord Krishna
12. *atchala*: an eight roofed open platform before a temple
13. *Tahal*: moving and singing song relating to Lord Krishna in the dawn.
14. *Kamar*: blacksmith
15. *Bhagarpara*: locality built in the area which was used for burial of carcasses.
16. *Morol*: main leader of the *mondal* (in Bangla) locality or village. The word *morol* has derived from *mondol*.

# BOOK REVIEW

---

## **INTRODUCTION TO STYLISTICS. Susanta Kumar Bardhan.**

**Kolkata: Jaydurga Library Pvt. Ltd. 2014. ISBN: 9789381680513; pp. 8+176. Rs. 120.**

**Reviewed by: Soutik Sen**

Purandarpur High School, Birbhum, West Bengal

Stylistics is a special branch of linguistic study which attempts to portray and characterize the nature of prominent linguistic features occurring in a particular piece of text. A piece of writing stands apart in comparison to other pieces of writing, not only because of its content, or what it is trying to express, but by how it is expressed or presented, that is, by the selection of linguistic features, and how these are arranged in the text. Stylistics is concerned with analyzing the choice of linguistic features and their arrangement in the text.

Undoubtedly Stylistics is a very subtle scientific study associated with close and critical dissection of complex linguistic features present and prominent in a text. Very few books are available, especially for the students and the beginners or new learners that can kindle interest in this subject and awaken curiosity by introducing a lucid way of discussion and elucidation. Susanta Kumar Bardhan's book *INTRODUCTION TO STYLISTICS* comes as a gust of fresh wind to fill this vacuum. This book will enable the students to understand stylistics in a way which is clear, disciplined and obviously less difficult or complicated.

This book with an attractive as well as thought-born cover design consists of twenty-two chapters and all the chapters contain chapter-structure. This chapter-structure which includes systematic presentation and arrangement of certain sections and sub-sections such as Objective, Introduction, Course, Content, let us Sum up, Sample Questions, will guide the readers to study this book in a coherent manner without losing concentration and certainly without any confusion. Some quoted long statements will give the readers a chance to get acquainted with the original exchange of words or language of several renowned linguists and great stylistics experts such as Flower, Batson, Jacobson, Throwbridge, Leo Spitzer, Halliday, Widdowson and C.T. Indra.

The advanced readers and learners of linguistics and stylistics will find **Discourse Analysis** (chapter xv) of this book really interesting and thought provoking. This book is not only confined

to mere elaboration or elucidation of complex theoretical aspects associated with stylistics but also it attempts to make the readers self-sufficient by giving them an opportunity to learn about **Application of Linguistic Insights to Literary Interpretation**. Three chapters (chapter xvii chapter xix chapter xx) are devoted to detailed discussion regarding application of linguistic insight to literary interpretation. However this application seems to be incomplete to some extent as it is limited to the analysis of poems only. Application of linguistic insight to study the prose texts such as novel, short story, essay and also drama could have enriched this volume a great deal.

There are few typographical errors in this book. A brief description regarding the theme and purpose of the book has been stated in a nutshell at the back cover of the book. In addition to this, a short introduction about the author with a special emphasis on his areas of interest enriches the paratextual elements of the book. However a picture of the author along with a list of books written and published by him, e-mail address could have widened the scopes of the readers to learn more about linguistics, satisfying their urge to communicate and interact with the author. The neat illustration on the cover page, fine-quality of pages good quality of printing and above all an affordable price will make this book a constant companion of all the curious readers.