

GNOSIS

(An International Journal of English Language
and Literature)

Vol. 1 – No. 2 January 2015

Editor

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Publisher

Yking Books
G-13, S.S. Tower, Dhamani Street, Chaura Rasta,
Jaipur - 302003, Rajasthan, India
Phone No. - 91-141-4020251, M.: 9414056846
E-mail: ykingbooks@gmail.com
Web: ykingbooks.com

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Editorial

The maiden issue of *GNOSIS* in October 2014 had such a very hearty welcome from the readers in India and abroad that articles have been flowing in quick succession to fill the folder for this issue even before the deadline of 15 December 2014. The thumping reception of the journal shows the depth of multicultural issues in literature to which critics and readers are attracted. We believe that the scope of literature is beyond merely the traditional range. To us today literature and language are inextricably linked to many other spheres and branches. Keeping this in mind, we have now included the media and the performing arts too in the scope of our journal. We look forward to many more such articles from scholars.

As a journal committed to quality research and writing, we are aware of the need to delink quality from publication cost. Hence, our decision to charge no publication fee from the scholars whose papers will be published in the issues of *GNOSIS*. At the same time since *GNOSIS* is a self-financed venture, co-operation and support in the form of subscriptions are solicited from the readers and admirers of English Literature and Language from all over the world.

There are thirteen research/critical articles, one play, one short story, eleven poems of five poets, three book reviews, two interviews and one conference report in this New Year issue. Before concluding, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my reverend Associate Editor, Dr. Indira Nityanandam and our esteemed members of the Board of Advisors and Review Editors for their selfless and tiresome efforts in assessing the articles very sincerely and giving their valuable remarks to bring out this issue in such a grand manner.

I am also grateful to the revered contributors who have made this issue of the Journal a beautiful reality. Wishing all the readers a mental feast and a very Happy New Year.

Saikat Banerjee

Confrontation with the Repressed Memories in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*

Lata Mishra

Abstract: This paper explores the two child characters, Amir and his friend Hassan in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. The paper attempts to see and feel the characters and their pain so that the importance, the character, and the role of the adult narrator Amir's act of remembering that child (himself) and his friend can be formulated. The paper also tracks Amir's road to hope that his freedom will be assured on the new ground as he does not find happiness and peace in his own country, Afghanistan, which forces him every day to fill his heart with hate in order to survive.

Keywords: Memory, Repression, Guilt, Grief, Violence, Resistance.

Introduction: *The Kite Runner* (2003) is multi-layered novel which narrates the story of many generations. Besides being a kaleidoscope to cultural, religious, political, historical aspects of Afghanistan from 1933 to 2002, the story also has an humanizing effect on its readers. It deals in various kinds and facets of human bonds with all of its manifest complexities and contradictions, as between father-son, man-nation and between friends. The universal themes of friendship, betrayal, memory and guilt, sin and redemption, uncomfortable father-son relations, are emotionally treated. My approach in this paper is to explore the two child characters, Amir and his friend Hassan, to see them and feel their pain so that the importance, the character, and the role of the adult narrator Amir's act of remembering that child and his friend can be formulated. The paper also tracks Amir's road to hope that his freedom will be assured on the new ground as he does not find happiness and peace in his own country, Afghanistan, which forces him every day to fill his heart with hate in order to survive. The injuries suffered by the physical body of the characters during civil war and terrorism have an impact on their national identity and in the act of migration their physical appearance becomes a marker of exclusion on alien soil.

In *The Kite Runner*, Amir spends many years away from Afghanistan as an immigrant in the United States. Amir the hero of the

The Power of Numbers in the Game Called Life: A Study of Usha Ganguly's *Rudali*

Nandini C. Sen

Abstract: Mahasweta Devi's *Rudali*, a short fiction in Bangla has taken on a life of its own in the world of theatre and cinema. In both its avatars the story has reinvented itself. A 'Rudali' is a hired mourner who performs during the death of an important member of the community. *Rudali* is the story of Sanichari, a woman of doomed fate and her incredible fight for a life of basic subsistence. Her life as a lone crusader sees various ups and downs and finally vindication comes in the form of her unison with other women in similarly debauched situations. Sanichari, the Rudali finally comes into her own when she finds herself as part of a group which is geared towards an economic enterprise and through this unison can also raise their voices against the injustices which they have been subjected to. Trapped in the throes of poverty, Sanichari leverages her position as a professional mourner to avenge herself.

Keywords: Feminism, Mahasweta Devi, Usha Ganguly, Theatre, Subaltern Voices.

Mahasweta Devi's *Rudali*, a short fiction in Bangla has taken on a life of its own in the world of theatre and cinema. In both its avatars the story has reinvented itself. Interestingly both the theatrical and the cinematic version have been directed by women. Mahasweta's story has been adapted into a play by the famous writer/director Usha Ganguly in 1992 and the cinematic version has been directed by Kalpana Lajmi in 1993. The language used in both the theatrical and the cinematic version is Hindi. Mahasweta's novella is based in rural Rajasthan so its Hindi rendition being linguistically close to Rajasthani gives it a greater degree of authenticity. Mahasweta has an enormous facility with language. Her hard hitting Bangla is peppered with dialects making translation a difficult task. This paper however chooses to look at the play in translation and seeks to analyze Ganguly's interpretation of Mahasweta's work. *Rudali* is the story of Sanichari, a woman of doomed fate and her incredible fight for a life of basic subsistence. Her life as a lone crusader sees various ups and downs and finally

Perambulating on New Ground: A Background Experience for Thoreau's “Walking”

Robert Tindol

Abstract: Henry David Thoreau's “Walking” is a work that is remarkable for novel use of scientific metaphor. The foundation of the essay's metaphorical constructions can be understood by analyzing the quest Thoreau undertook in hopes of locating the body of Margaret Fuller after she and her husband and infant had been lost off Cape Cod in an 1850 shipwreck. The result is an essay in which the human psyche is separated from its surroundings so that motion itself—and by extension, human endeavour—can be held in a new type of intuitive focus.

Keywords: Thoreau, Scientific Metaphor, Extension, Human Endeavour.

Henry David Thoreau's essay “Walking” is noteworthy for its mythic thrust and its novel use of scientific metaphor, and furthermore, for locating itself relentlessly away from the well-trodden ground of Walden Pond. *Walden*, after all, is about the building of huts, the squirreling away of commodities, and the reduction of all things economic in both a literal and figurative sense to the bare essentials. But as Thoreau maintained, the purpose was not so much to reduce life to its barest elements as to prove that such an attempt was good for the soul. The further test of Thoreau's scientific metaphor was to be fully explored in “Walking”, which he finished at the end of his life. The foundation of his metaphorical constructions can be seen in the quest he launched in hopes of locating the body of Margaret Fuller.

Thoreau's search for the remains of a life prematurely terminated is almost the polar opposite of Emerson's opening of his young wife's tomb.¹ Unlike his mentor's ruminations on the persistence of

-
1. Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*: Vol. IV, 1960-1982. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 7. In one of the most famous passages from his notebooks, Emerson states rather matter-of-factly that, earlier on the day of March 29, 1832, he had gone to the tomb of his first wife, Ellen, and had ‘opened the coffin’. Ellen Emerson had died a year earlier of tuberculosis at the age of 20.

Indian English Novel between ‘Individual Talent’ and the ‘Tradition’ of Social Realism

Abdulmonim Ali Ben Ali Ash-Shaibani

Abstract: The history of Indian Novel in English is enveloped in the writers’ views and involvement with the socio-cultural and political transformations. Indian English Fiction is a product of pre-colonial caste-bound and mythically traditional sociality and colonial-native cultural collision. From these perspectival domains, the reader/critic of Indian English Fiction is required to probe and relate to the growth and development of this genre of literature.

Keywords: Social Realism, Realistic Discourse, Myth, Diasporic Condition, Tradition.

The paper is a discursive reading of the struggle between the writers’ individual talent and innovations and the canon of social reality that imprisoned the Indian writers of English. The article is located within the theoretical framework of cultural relativism that emphasizes on the particularity of community culture and tradition against the attitudinal universalism of global culture. In view of the development of Indian Novel in English, one can easily discern the predominance of social realism as a leading feature that holds this literary genre palpably discrete and uniquely Indian.

The history of Indian Novel in English is enveloped in the writers’ views and involvement with the socio-cultural and political transformations. Indian English Fiction is a product of pre-colonial caste-bound and mythically traditional sociality and colonial-native cultural collision. It is in these two-sketched domains that the reader/critic of Indian English Fiction is required to probe and relate to the growth and development of this genre of literature. There is a constellation of power element within the narrative: the writer’s method/technique and the traditional convention as a social commitment. Therefore, we find two discourses within the Indian Novel in English, the mythical/symbolic and the realistic/historical. The mythical form reflects the realistic features in the society, and the mythical elements

Humour and Tumour: Breast Cancer, Graphic Memoir and Miriam Engelberg's *Cancer Made Me a Shallower Person: A Memoir in Comics*

Sathyaraj Venkatesan &
Ragahavi Ravi Kasthuri

Abstract: Mainstream breast cancer narratives are mostly angry or sentimental pathographies which either portray women as champions of their physiological dysfunction or infantilize them. Miriam Engelberg's graphic pathography *Cancer Made Me a Shallower Person: A Memoir in Comics* (2006), on the contrary, reconfigures the normative representational economy of breast cancer through deploying humor and cartoons as primary mode of narration. In an interview on NPR, Engelberg explains her choice of comics as mode of expression thus: "somehow in the cartoon form, panel by panel, the absurdist part of this whole experience [breast cancer] comes out in a way that it wouldn't if [one] were just writing an essay" (Engelberg). The present paper by close reading *Cancer Made Me a Shallower Person: A Memoir in Comics* investigates the use of humor and cartoons as a dominant form and further examines Engelberg's philosophy of shallowness that enables her to confront her breasted experience.

Keywords: Graphic Medicine, Breast Cancer, Humor, Comics.

Joy and grief, in the nocturnal forest,
loved without recognizing each other,
and there was born unto them a son, Humor.
(C.W. Kimmins *The Springs of Laughter* 1928)

Mainstream breast cancer narratives are mostly angry or sentimental pathographies which either portray women as champions of their physiological dysfunction or infantilize them. Miriam Engelberg's graphic pathography *Cancer Made Me a Shallower Person: A Memoir in Comics*, on the contrary, reconfigures the normative representational economy of breast cancer through deploying humor and cartoons as primary mode of narration. In an interview on NPR, Engelberg explains her choice of comics as mode of expression thus: "somehow in the cartoon form, panel by panel, the absurdist part of this whole experience

Mirroring the Parsi Community: A Study of Ardashir Vakil's *Beach Boy*

Ketan K. Gediya

Abstract: It is accepted that literature produced by the minorities across the globe share its frustrations and aspirations with the rest of the communities. Each such community can have its literary space, its own claustrophobia, and its own mental ghettos. Similarly, the writers of India's smallest ethno-religious minority community, namely, the Parsis have successfully endeavoured to document the Parsi worldview in diverse shades in their literary works. They fall into two categories – expatriates and stay-at-home writers and use English as medium of their expression. Particularly the novels of Firdaus Kanga, Rohinton Mistry, Farrukh Dhondy, Bapsi Sidhwa, Boman Desai, Farishta Murzban Dinshaw and Ardashir Vakil revolve around the way of life of their community and its ethos which is remarkably different from that of other Indian communities. The present paper is an attempt to study how Ardashir Vakil's *Beach Boy* depicts Parsi life and traditions which ultimately contribute to make the novel a unique literary creation.

Keywords: Ardashir Vakil, Beach Boy, Parsi Fiction, Parsi Community, Parsiethos, Ethnic Identity.

Creative writing by the Parsis has evoked significant interest in recent times. But the trend of writing in English by the Parsis started a century ago. Behram Malbari was one of the earliest Parsi poets writing in English. Cornelia Sorabji contributed to the genre of short story with her three collections during the early 20th century. D.F. Karaka, Nergis Dalal, Perin Bharucha and Saros Cowasjee contributed to the novel form between 1940 and 1980. In the works of these early writers there was little stress on the issues and problems faced by the Parsi community. During 1980s there emerged a second generation of the Parsi novelists whose works centralize their community. This group includes novelists like Firdaus Kanga, Rohinton Mistry, Farrukh Dhondy, Bapsi Sidhwa, Boman Desai, Farishta Murzban Dinshaw and

Love and Desire in Kamala Das' *Summer in Calcutta*: Lacanian Perspective

P. Prayer Elmo Raj

Abstract: Kamala Das is a path breaking post-independent poet whose poetry created ripples among the existent placid corpus of conventional Indian poetry. Her poems parted from the unadventurous traditional Indian poetry with confessional shades of physical love. *Summer in Calcutta* (1965) poetically presents her sincere autobiographical exploration of womanhood and love coupled with eroticism. Encumbered love is no love. Her poems depict the complexity of life and selfhood. Poems, in this collection, traverses beyond the story of erotic sex and physical love to explicate the entangled self, its conflicting emotions and desires, the effort to self-revelation and self-assertion, the pain of frustration, despair, humiliation and the depression caused by the state of being not loved and further. Is the search for love in the poems of Kamala Das merely physical? With its variously convoluted manner in which love is presented, Kamala Das' poems also offer this possibility of entering into a psychoanalytic discourse. Lacan views love as a series of paradoxes in relation to desire. The paradox resides in the fact that she loves when she desires which demonstrates the interplay of the real and symbolic. Thus the paradoxical duplicity of love and desire, here, moves beyond the formula of 'sexuation'. Love is not simply narcissistic, in Lacan's view. It is a "unique case of direct asexual sublimation of drives experienced in the ecstatic surrender". Therefore moving out of the conventional interpretations of the interconnections between love and desire, Lacan also points out the possibility of the creation of symbolic *other*. This paper is an attempt to critically interpret the theme of love and desire in *Summer in Calcutta* from a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective.

Keywords: Lacan, Kamala Das, Love, Self, Other, Desire, Imaginary.

I

Kamala Das' poems abound in "apparent imaginative daring, stylistic innovation, richness of energy and music" (Raveendran 17). Her poems resemble "modern Indian woman's ambivalence" (Kohli 27).

The Politics of Representation: Nawal El Saadawi and Patriarchy

Chitra Rohan

Abstract: The paper is an attempt to explore issues of religious orthodoxy, capitalism and patriarchy in the novels of the Egyptian writer Nawal El Saadawi, a prolific writer who has won bouquets and insinuations for an 'excessive' emphasis on the oppression and victimization of women in patriarchal Muslim cultures. Though, in her many interviews, she has been vehemently critical of Western forces and all forms of injustices, inequalities and oppressions perpetrated by the Islamic community; her works have come in for criticism from both the Muslim and Western worlds for eroticizing and sensationalizing the experiences of the Egyptian Muslim woman in a manner that makes it appealing to the stereotypical Western notion. The objective of this paper is to foreground the stereotypical characters that El Saadawi portrays in her works with a view to advancing the idea that her intention is to please the Western reading public by spicing up her works with aspects that quench the thirst of the Western reading public; thereby making her mostly West inclined in her writings.

Keywords: Religious orthodoxy, victimization of women, patriarchal Muslim cultures, stereotypical characters, Western reading public.

Deeply rooted Western attitudes complicate the approach to Third World women's history. The nineteenth century equation of the West with progress and modernity, and the East with stagnation and tradition, still colors much of the discussion of women in Third World societies. (Tucker 1)

The divergent voices and trends within Western feminism that view the term 'Third World Woman' in a 'generalized' manner tends to create an image which is arbitrarily constructed and at the same time carries the signature of Western humanist discourse. This takes place when they consider women worldwide as a coherent oppressed group with identical interests and desires regardless of class and cultural differences. They later use particular methodologies to provide 'proof' of universality and cross-cultural validity. As a result they consider the

A Crying Need for Equality in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors*

Shruti Soni

Abstract: Women are the innate part of our Indian society and cannot be neglected by their less power and authority. But still, there has been a struggle to liberate women from male oppression. Feminism is a kind of revolution which raised its voice for the liberation of women from the dead habits and customs of the patriarchal society. In literature, it always point out the 'feminine identity', 'feminine liberty' and 'feminine emancipation'. It refers to the advocacy of women's rights, status, and power at par with men on the grounds of 'equality of sexes'. Shashi Deshpande is a contemporary and India's most acclaimed existent authors. She presents the carved figure of women of the Indian society, depicts their disgruntlements and disappointments and has given a platform to them in her novels to voice against this agonized plight. Sarita of *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is the portrayal of the contemporary middle class, educated, urban Indian woman who faces the impudent gender discrimination shown by her parents. The novel mirrors the relationship of Saru (Sarita) with her parents, her brother (Dhurva), her friends, her husband and with herself in the search of her own identity. It is all about the traumatic experience of the protagonist as her husband refuses to play a second fiddle role. She faces the lamentable humiliation and neglect as a child by her parents and after marriage as a wife by her husband. Her husband, Manu pours out his frustration or his inferior complexity in the form of sexual barbarism and it is the most mundane picture of our Indian women and it has been vividly portrayed by Deshpande in the novel. This paper will stress the need for women to break free from the shackles of their traditional position and see their own need for self fulfilment as more important than the duty of sacrificing themselves for their husbands and children.

Keywords: Women's Liberty, Self-fulfilment, Gender Discrimination.

The question of being a woman is more difficult than it perhaps originally appeared, for we refer to Women not only as a Social Category but also felt a sense of self, a culturally conditioned or

Visibility of the Invisible: A Select Study of Indian Lesbian Writings

Saravanan Sujaritha

Abstract: Same-sex love is a controversial subject all over the world. India, which is familiar for its culture and tradition, was/is shocked about its existence, particularly about women's relationship. Many people have started to blame education and economic independence of women as a main reason for it. The paper tries to look at the existence of same-sex love in the ancient India and its present position. The hypothesis of the paper is to trace out the emergence of the margin (Lesbians) to the centre through a study of select literary works.

Keywords: Gender, Lesbian, Discrimination, Culture.

Change Never Changes: Change is the unchanging phenomenon of the universe. As change is a common and an important phenomenon, even the powerful nature becomes a victim of this fact. On such grounds, the culture and tradition, which are created by human beings, face tremendous changes. Due to the influence of other cultures, the Indian culture, which is familiar all over the world for its rich values, has undergone/undergoes changes. In recent times, globalization has paved way for the influence/assimilation of other cultures upon the Indian one. Earlier, due to the influence of the invaders, the same has existed.

The present India, where marriage is considered as a sacred unison, witnesses the concept of living together and accepts it without much hassle over it. However, it is not ready to consider/discuss same-sex love and besides those who indulge in it is seen as outcasts. The Indian cultural practices which are determined by certain rules and regulations mould the mentality of its citizen to look at it as a taboo. The tension to discuss same-sex love is evident from less number of books on it and most of them are written by men which centre on men than women.

The term same-sex love is common for both genders. To indicate woman's love for another woman, the term lesbian is used widely which

Contesting Domestic Hegemony: Power Politics within the Post-colonial Indian Domestic in Select Contemporary Fiction

Minu Susan Koshy

Abstract: India, as a post-colonial nation, has had its own unique experience of colonialism which was reflected the best in the domestic arena. The domestic, just as any other site of human interaction, involves currents and cross-currents where power and the consequent processes of marginalization and authority take shape. In the post-colonial domestic, this takes place in multiple ways, the most prominent one being through domestic servitude—i.e., through class politics and gender politics within the domestic arena. Power relations within the domestic sphere assume significance in post-colonial social orders in that they are a reflection of the wider network of power relations that exist in the post-colonial nation as a whole. They shape and are in turn shaped by the dynamics of the relationship between the post-colonial inhabitants and the domestic. My paper attempts to explore power relations within the post-colonial domestic as represented in contemporary fiction produced in different parts of the country- *A Terrible Matriarchy* by Easterine Iralu, *Aftertaste* by Namita Devidayal and *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri, set in post-colonial Nagaland, Mumbai and West Bengal respectively.

Keywords: Post-colonial, Domestic, Cultures of Servitude, Gender, Class.

India, as a post-colonial nation, has had its own unique experience of colonialism which was reflected the best in the domestic arena. The post-colonial domestic is the site where the inner and the outer, the private and the public intersect. By post-colonial domestic is meant, in very simplistic terms, that which is concerned with the interior realm, complementing the public sphere of human existence in post-colonial social orders, characterized by power hierarchies unique to erstwhile colonized nations. Yet, in attempting any definition of the term 'domestic', it has to be kept in mind that it is a term that is continuously deconstructing itself in as much as there is no fixed 'domestic', that is, a constant for all social orders and individuals during all epochs. The term assumes different dimensions in different social and material

‘Dented, Painted, and Pained Women’: A Reflection through the Lens of Advertising Media

Bhavya Singhal

Abstract: Advertising Media is a tool for providing entertainment to the audience worldwide and for emancipation of the distressed. It does not show this kind of responsibility rather it is based on the notion of solid consumer culture that caters each consumer’s daily actions, words, and visual perceptions and due to this, most of the advertisements are based on sex appeal just to attract the attention of viewers. A masked face and an objectified body are two things on which advertisements rely where women are moulded, framed and presented in such a manner that not only these women who are endorsing these products but women audience also conform to the notions of femininity. The present paper is a modest attempt to analyze the role of advertising industry, especially the visual advertisements on television in promoting the notion of ‘dented, painted and pained women’. The paper draws the attention of people towards certain issues which are merely ignored by common mass and tries to show how certain changes in the mindset of audience can really bring change in the advertising field resulting in the empowerment of women in real sense.

Keywords: Femininity, Media, Beauvoir, Dented, Painted, Pained, Sex Appeal.

There is nothing more expensive than a female tear. When a single drop comes out, it first mixes with ‘Loreal’ eyeliner and ‘Dior’ mascara. Then when it comes down to cheek it mixes with ‘D&G’ blusher and in case it touches the lips it gets mixed with ‘Maybelline’ lipstick. This means that a single drop is worth at least Rs. 1,500. (Mobile SMS)

The portrayal of women in advertising media is defined not in terms of their inner qualities but rather they are selected and presented as ‘dented and painted’ women to endorse and promote their sales. A masked face and an objectified body are two things on which advertisements rely where women are moulded, framed, and presented in such a manner that not only these women who are endorsing these

Gendering Mimicry and Mimicking Gender: A Discussion of Gender Performances in Comedy Reality Shows in Malayalam Television Channels¹

Vinita Teresa

Abstract: Mimicry-based comedy shows are ubiquitous in Malayalam television industry. However, like many other areas of human expression, mimicry is also heavily male-dominated and is firmly embedded in the heterosexual, patriarchal discursive matrix. Since this art form is almost exclusively practised by men, humour is used to reinforce female gender stereotypes. This paper attempts to study the manner in which gender operates and is performed in these comedy reality shows.

Comedy reality shows in Malayalam television channels are especially interesting as far as gender performativity is concerned since it (like many other performing arts) predominantly employ men to perform the role of women. Some of these 'men' are transgenders who get to be 'women' only while performing these kinds of gender-specific roles. Also, the standard reality show format which entails the presence of a glamorous and 'feminine' woman as anchor and an audience which consists largely of women who enthusiastically consume the enactment of gender stereotypes prove to be a paradoxical combination of various levels of gender performances. The paper looks at how heterosexual men and women and transgender individuals come together on the same platform and negotiate their own personal sexual orientations and gender roles while using humour as medium of expression.

Keywords: Mimicry, Gender, Performativity, Humour, Cross-dressing.

This paper is an attempt to make a foray into the field of gender and humour in India, especially Kerala, by textually analyzing some of the episodes of *Comedy Stars*, a Malayalam comedy TV reality show aired by Asianet, one of the first satellite TV channels in South India.

1. An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the Researchers At Work Conference (RAW CON), 2014, organized by the Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Hyderabad. The author is greatly indebted to the audience whose feedback has immensely helped in shaping the final version of the paper.

Play

The Choice (A short play)

P. Raja

Characters

King Deva

Queen Madhana

Brahma, King's Friend

Queen Mother

Town crier

Passer-by.

SCENE ONE

(The Palace. King Deva is seen relaxing in a rocking chair and engrossed in a book he was holding close to his chest. His lips are mumbling out undecipherable words for a time, and then closing the book with still his thumb as a book mark, laughs hysterically awhile and then opens the book to continue reading. This time he reads with only his eyes for a time and then laughs again silently.)

Deva : What a poet! What a book of love poems! When wine goes in, wisdom comes out, they say. But when love goes in, it is poetry that comes out. Exquisitely chiselled poems. Every poem in this book reveals the poet's admiration for his sweet heart's beauty. Just one read.... And the poem gets glued to one's mind. Let me repeat what I have read and enjoyed just now.
(He shuts closed the book and then looks at his queen getting dressed in the anti-chamber. He recites from his memory.)

“Do not come so close to me, O beauty!

If you want me to lend you my ears.

At close quarters,

my inquisitive eyes,

Short Story

"Mayhem or Mania"

Indira Nityanandam

Zahida stared out of the window, stared at something in the distance, stared with unseeing eyes! A passerby would certainly notice her looking intently at something—unaware that those eyes could not see anything. The eyes today were mere orbs with no sense of sight. How many years had passed by since Zahida had been able to look at anything! The changing colours of the sky, the shades of green in the municipal garden across the road, the bright reds and yellows and pinks that were her favourite shararas, the dark green mehendi that had been drawn so artistically on her palms and feet, the mehendi that would turn a dark, deep red (and that would indicate how much Azhar would love her) but which instead was dyed with the blood of.... Zahida could not see today, could not see the passing tragedy of life today. But yet she could see, continued to see, vividly the happenings of more than thirty years ago!

With love and care, her parents had arranged for her nikaah today. The small tenement was bustling with friends and relatives. Children wandered about in the mohallah—mothers were too busy to pay them any attention, to scold them or to lay down any dos and don'ts. Older kids tried/pretended to be busy and useful. The aroma of korma and biryani wafted in appetizingly. Abbu had a happy twinkle in his eyes—getting a daughter married was an achievement for this small-time carpenter Zafar Mian. He had toiled day in and day out, night and day, to be able to collect the amount required for his dear daughter's marriage. How could he not do this for she was the only surviving child of his seven—one still-born, one dead before a week old, and the others struggling in vain to overcome malnourishment and sickness, fighting a battle they could not win. Thank Allah he did, five times each day, for leaving him with at least one child to shower love and affection on. Zahida was his 'nur' and today she was to be married to Azhar—a driver in the mill across the river. Zafar Mian and his Begum, as he

Poems

X'mas Spirit

Stephen Gill

I see her resurrecting in Christmas trees
mistletoe and Santa Claus.

I see her appearing
within the decoration in churches
homes and offices
in parties, family reunions
and drinks.

I see her
in the festive rush that is tiring
and cards
which people have no time to send
but they do.

I see her
in the sounds of the Joy
to the World
and Jingle Bells

cranked out of loudspeakers
in malls and street corners.

She is missing
from the victims of wars
which seem to be routine fate
of humankind.
She is missing from young lives

Book Reviews

Perspectives on Women Empowerment

Sanjay Kumar

Perspectives on Women Empowerment. Kumar, S. Jaipur : Yking Books, 2010: pp. 298, Rs. 995 (Hardbound), ISBN – 978-93-80930-09-1.

Book Review: Sanjay Kumar, Lansdowne, 246139.

The past few decades have witnessed the focusing of attention on gender issues in general and women empowerment in particular among policy makers, feminist scholars, political scientists, sociologists, historians and litterateurs too. 'Empowerment' has become a catchphrase and a magic bullet that can fast track the process of social transformation. Representation, assertion and identity formation are key elements in empowerment of women as it entails a voice out of centuries long silencing. It is a complex concept and its interpretations vary according to ideological perspectives. The book under review edited by Dr. Satendra Kumar is an anthology consisting of thirty two articles on a varied range of issues but the basic emphasis is a literary perspective of women empowerment. The title of the book being literary perspectives on Women Empowerment would have been more suitable and appropriate. As in all anthologies, there are gaps. But they do not take away from the value of what is one of the most thought provoking and rich in content books on the Indian intellectual heritage to come out in recent times. Really this is welcome edition to what Sheldon Pallock calls *Literary Cultures in History*.

Dr. Kumar has sincerely culled articles with a view to give holistic picture of women as a gender category and their quest for asserting due position in civilization matrix. Majority of articles are focused on writings of leading literatures of English, Hindi, Kannada etc. Novels, fictions, poetry, short stories by many luminaries of different languages of literature had been taken into account for investigating and reading into the silences. The anthology covers the wresting of a number of renowned novelists, play-writers, story writers, poets and literatures like Premchand, Mulkraj Anand, Ismat Chughtai, Shashi Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Kamala Markandaya, Jhumpa Laheri, Mahesh Dattani,

Dhoti and Other Poems

K.V. Raghupathi

Dhoti and Other Poems. Raja, P. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2014: pp. 80. Rs.195/- \$10 (Paperback), ISBN – 978-81-7273-867-9.

Book Review: K.V. Raghupathi, Thiruvapur – 610 101.

The collection under review is a deviation from his previous collection, *Five-headed Arrow* (2013) which deals with love poems. Back to his earlier collections, Raja has once again filled the present collection with humour and irony. The collection has 54 poems written on mundane themes with a sense of humour and ease. The opening poem “Dhoti” is a recollection of an experience in his life. The poet is used to wearing *lungis* most of time. On the day of his mother’s death, he was given a dhoti, “immaculate white with no border” (13). Until then the poet did not know how to wear dhoti, and his father had taught him “amidst tears/the wearing of dhoti”. “While trousers suffocated” his groins, the poet recalls humorously, “dhoti gave me all AC comfort” (13). Ironically enough when the poet wanted to wear dhoti sloughing off his trousers, father whisks away his dhoti saying “wait till I die”. On the one hand, the narration runs humorously, on the other, one is touched by the pathos it evokes at the end. This is Raja’s technique, distinct and inimitable.

Longing for the unknown/unknowable is denoted in the poem “If only there is Gate...” (21). “The Hungry Gecko” (22-23) vividly captures a gecko on the hunt “trying to catch a meandering cockroach”. Unregretful, the poet says, noticing the gecko smacking its “teeny-weeny lips” after capturing the cockroach, “hunger knows no rhyme or reason” (22). “Traffic Jam” (24) is a metaphor for his overcrowded ideas. “A Green Doubt” (27) is a poignant poem in which the poet recalls how a coconut tree which was planted by his grandpa in the front yard of his ancestral Home did not live “to see the seedling grow”. Ironically, the poet’s father slips and falls “on a rainy day/and didn’t ever get up”. The tree yields pleasures to the poet “without being sure/of whom it should be grateful to” (28). In the poem

Water Please

K.V. Raghupathi

Water Please (A Play). Raja. P. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2014: pp. 131. Rs. 250/- \$15 (Paperback), ISBN – 978-81-7273-855-6.

Book Review: K.V. Raghupathi, Thiruvavur – 610 101.

Raja is primarily and popularly known as a short story writer, a poet and a translator. With the publication of the play under review, another dimension has been added to his personality. Though it brings me a surprise, he has proved his mettle with self-assurance and penchant that is in no way inferior to his poetry and short story writing. Dedicated to his friend, fellow writer, inspirer and above all, a good human being as mentioned in the text, Mrs. Maggi Lidchi Grassi, the play is written in five acts with varied scenes. Set in historical backdrop dating back to the reign of the king Sri Krishnadeva Raya, exactly in 1862, the playwright beautifully blends it with contemporary situation with a sense of humour. The play is about water, how it has been deprived for long and how it has been brought to Pondicherry. There is no serious plot involved in it, it is simply a story taken from history and exquisitely dramatized. The story weaves around Maggi, a middle aged, white complexioned, short but sturdy French woman, who incidentally becomes the secret source for revealing the history behind bringing the drinkable water to the residents of Pondicherry.

Pondicherry, then known as town is divided into two, white and black; the former inhabited by the French and the latter by browns, Tamilians. The play opens with the situation of non-availability of drinkable water in the white town. The French Guy, the visitor comes to know that one Siddha who lives in a hamlet called Sombatta, near Thirukanur village, a suburb of Pondicherry, can perform this miracle. Maggi knows how this Siddha came to live in Sompattu and from her we come to know how a curse has fallen on the white town dwellers and the cure will come with a white man and they are destined to have water from a whore. Meanwhile the readers/audience are introduced

Interviews

Interview with Lakshmi Kannan

Indira Nityanandam

Rarely, do I get an opportunity to meet a good multi-lingual writer in flesh and blood. And that happened when a couple of years back, I met Lakshmi Kannan at a seminar in Ahmedabad.

According to Wikipedia, Lakshmi Kannan is an eminent bilingual writer who writes in English and Tamil. She uses the pen-name of 'Kaaveri' for her writings in Tamil. A poet, novelist, short story writer and translator, she has published twenty one books that include four collections of poems in English, several books of fiction in English translation as well as her original works in Tamil. She has given readings and talks in many national and international seminars and has published critical essays on gender sensitivity, on retrograde practices on women in the name of religion and custom. Lakshmi was the Indian participant in the International Writing Programme at Iowa, U.S.A.; a Writer-in-Residence at the University of Canterbury at Kent, U.K., a British Council Visitor to the University of Cambridge, U.K., and a Sahitya Akademi Writer-in-Residence and Fellow, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.

Often, I wonder about how the creative process functions and thought I would ask her about it. She readily agreed to my request and as Lakshmi Kannan lives in Delhi, the only way to do it was through technology. This is what resulted.

IN: Thank you, Lakshmi for agreeing to a conversation via E-mail. As someone who has read your writings both in English and Tamil, I would like to begin with a question that has always intrigued me! As a writer writing with equal ease in two languages, what would you consider to be the difference between the two?

LK: This could perhaps be one of the most vexed questions faced by a writer who writes in two languages. 'Bilingual' is a term that may sound good on paper but functioning in two languages brings you up to a bewildering fork that calls for the choice of one language over another, at a given point in time. As for the difference between the two

Interview with Basavaraj Naikar

Jaydeep Sarangi

J.S:Please tell us about your childhood....

B.N: My childhood was a strange mix of heaven and hell. As long as I was in my Primary School, the Practicing School at the Government Training College for Men, I was looked after by my grandmother, I enjoyed the heavenly bliss. Although I missed my parents there (as they lived in my native place, Naragund) I was carefree and lived the life of pure innocence. I can never forget my friends, the tall trees of sky jasmine, the aromatic flowers, the melodious music of nightingale, twitter of birds and a variety of birds, and the beauty of Nature and the classical beauty of the college buildings which were built in the British rule in India.

J.S:How did you come to writing?

B.N: In my childhood or boyhood I had not planned to be a writer. As I was trained in Hindustani classical vocal music by my beloved guru, Sri Dattubuwa Thakurdas and I had made conspicuous progress in it at that young age of ten to thirteen years, my father wanted me to be a great musician in later life. But the unexpected demise of my father in 1963, when I was only thirteen clamped great economic tragedy on our family. Hence our plans had to be changed. I had inevitably dropped the idea of choosing music as a career although music is my first love and philosophy is my second love and literature was chosen by me for my livelihood. When I completed my SSLC and joined the prestigious Karnatak Arts College, I used to hear a lot about the erstwhile Principal of the College, Dr. V.K.Gokak. Naturally I chose Dr. V.K.Gokak as my role model. But when I joined the Karnatak University, Dharwad for my M.A., I toyed with the idea of becoming a Milton critic like B. Rajan. During my M.A. days I had written my first short story entitled, "Fulfilment" but I had not shown it to anyone lest they should laugh at me. When I was a student of M.A, I had an occasion of bringing Dr. Mulk Raj Anand from the Airport of Belgaum to Dharwad and had a golden chance of talking with him. I was amazed by his humanism and great affection for me and he answered all my

Conference Report

Conference Report

H.S. Chandalia

**XI Annual Conference of Rajasthan Association for Studies in English
on
Learning from the Masses: Exploring the Folklore
1-2 Nov. 2014**

Organized by Department of English, Jai Narayan Vyas University and
Mahila PG Mahavidyalaya, Jodhpur

Venue—Mahila PG Mahavidyalaya, Sursagar Road, Jodhpur

A Report

Folklore is an important genre of literary and culture studies. Rooted deep in the anthropological and ethnic reservoir of knowledge and enshrined in the customs and traditions, the folklore amasses the wisdom of the people passed on through, in most cases, the word of mouth from one generation to the other. Usually associated with the rural and the rustic, folklore has been the source of several of the classic works of literature. There are several facets of this colourful stream of knowledge. A study of folklore, thus, becomes not only an interdisciplinary but a transdisciplinary study. Keeping in view this fact the theme of the XI Annual Conference of Rajasthan Association was decided as “Learning from the Masses: Exploring the Folklore.”

The conference was jointly organized by the department of English, Jai Narayan Vyas University, Jodhpur and Mahila PG Mahavidyalaya. Prof. Sudhi Rajiv, Professor and Head, Department of English, JNV University was the Director of the conference while Dr. Satish Harit, Associate Professor took the responsibility of the Convener of the conference. Dr. Manorama Upadhyaya, Principal, Mahila PG Mahavidyalaya served as the Co-convener of the conference. About one hundred delegates from the states of Rajasthan, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, etc., participated in the conference.

Unlike routine conferences where paper presentations make the crux of the entire proceedings, the XI Annual Conference had practical

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