

# INDIAN LITERATURE: DIALECTICS OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

1900 AD -- 2000 AD

The term Indian literature can be very problematic because of variety of languages in which it is written and different regional identities of the writers and cultural specificities constantly emerging in their writings. However, one is accustomed to using the term in the singular when one refers to literature in India and uses plural when referring to the languages. There is no doubt that at any given moment the common patterns as manifested in the literary texts in different languages can be accepted on one single level of organization and hence in spite of the tension between Indian ness and regional specificities, between kshetra (region) and desa (nation state), these texts create a sense of unity in literature. But this unity of Indian literature emerges only when one understands it in the pluralistic context or in the context of cultural diversity. Indian literature demonstrates unity through acknowledgement of differences.

## **The Idea of Indian Literature**

The idea of Indian literature is not based on language literature equation because of India's multilingual situation and writers writing in many languages and hence identification of Indian literature only by its affiliation to a particular language is not possible. The literature of India is not identified in terms of language alone, or geographical territory or political unity but more as recognition of the relationship existing between the people and literature. This sense of communality is responsible in the development of a cultural space by the writers of India which is more stable and abiding than a political concept of a nation state. The idea of Indian literature gives us a perception which recognizes the relationship between literatures in different Indian languages, each having its own peculiar character and temperament and identifies certain features cutting across the limitation of ethnic, religious and linguistic boundaries. In Indian literature the vibrant Indian ness emerges only when one understands it in its pluralistic context hence any study of Indian literature is an inter-lingual study of literature written in twenty-two Indian languages recognized by the constitution of India. It reveals the features of commonality as well as wonderful diversities expressed in different Indian languages. It ensures that all groups can preserve

their own diversity yet each individual is linked to the mainstream and that every stream in its own way is the mainstream.

A certain homogenizing impulse is inherent in positing a category called Indian literature because the term makes its appearance in literary discourse around the time India came to be perceived and imagined as a nation. It was during the colonial period that India came to be projected as a nation, as a collective super organism with its separate history and destiny. However, India and Indian literature had existed as ideas and images in creative writing in the country for centuries but they began to emerge as critical concepts and tools of comparison probably only in the nineteenth century when the Western scholars, inspired by the affinity between European and Indo—Aryan languages, began to study the literatures in Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit that they called ‘Indian Literature’. Unlike in West European countries where the nation states and national literatures were constituted by the same historical movement, Indian literature had attained its civilisational and historical unity much before India attained nationhood. It is true that idea of a modern state took root in Indian society because of India’s contact with western ideas, but very soon, Indian writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (Bengali, 1838-1894) made use of this newly acquired notion of nationalism to attack the colonial rule and created a distinctive civilizational concept of universalism that was accepted by many as a reply to Western Colonialism. Revivalism and reformism were natural corollaries of the newly emerging idea of nationalism. Rabindra Nath Tagore (Bengali, 1861-1941), the greatest name in modern Indian literature made federalism an important part of his concept of national ideology. He said that the unity of India has been and shall always be a unity in diversity. The foundation for this tradition had been laid in India at the social and not at the political level, by medieval saints like Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya, Tukaram and others. It is this solution—unity through acknowledgement of differences—that India has to offer to the world. As a result, India’s nationalism is mingled with its spiritual tradition with truth and non-violence preached by Mahatma Gandhi in the beginning of the twentieth century and non-alignment advocated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, after India became a sovereign state in 1947, which demonstrated India’s concern for its pluralism. Modern Indian pluralism is a multi lingual, multi-cultural, secular, nation—state concept.

## **Back ground**

### **The Renaissance**

In almost all the Indian languages, the modern age begins from 1800 AD or near that time. The impact of western civilization, the rise of political consciousness, and the change in society could be seen in what was written

during that time. The founding of the college of Fort William in Calcutta in 1800 AD, symbolizes the consolidation of British supremacy in India and the cultural programme for political purposes that the British contemplated at that time. Contact with the Western World resulted in India's acceptance of western thought on the one hand, and rejection of it on the other, and as a result efforts were made to revive India's ancient glory and Indian consciousness. A large number of writers opted for a synthesis between Indianization and Westernization, in their search for a national ideology. All these attitudes were combined to bring about the renaissance in 19<sup>th</sup> century India. But it was a renaissance in a country which was under foreign domination. So it was not the kind of renaissance which had spread in 14<sup>th</sup>—15<sup>th</sup> century Europe, where scientific reasoning, individual freedom and humanism were the dominant characteristics. The Indian renaissance took a different shape, in the context of Indian race, milieu and moment, and as a result, nationalistic, reformist and revivalist thinking found its way into literature, which slowly turned itself into a pan-Indian movement spearheaded in different parts of the country by renaissance leaders like Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833), Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Madhav Govind Ranade, U.V. Swaminatha Aiyer, Swami Dayanand, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, K.V. Pantulu, Narmadashankar, Lavshankar Dave, and others. The leaders of the renaissance, in fact, succeeded in instilling nationalistic fervour in the people, and induced in them a desire for social reform and a sentimental yearning for their past glory.

It is true that the idea of a modern state took root in Indian society because of India's contact with western ideas, but very soon Indian writers like Bankimchandra Chatterjee (1838-1894) and others made use of this newly acquired concept of nationalism to attack colonial rule, and in the process created their own brand, of nationalism, rooted in the soil. Bankimchandra wrote many historical novels like *Durgesh Nandini* (1865) and *Anand Math* (1882), acquired a pan-Indian popularity and made nationalism and patriotism a part of *Dharma*. This alternative was a distinctive civilisational concept of universalism that was accepted by many as a reply to western colonialism. Revivalism and reformisms were natural corollaries of the new emerging idea of nationalism. As a result, India's nationalism is mingled with its spiritual tradition, with truth and tolerance preached by Mahatma Gandhi, and non-alignment advocated by Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, showing India's concern for its pluralism.

Patriotic writings proliferated almost spontaneously in different languages, as the resistance of a community against foreign rule and the voice of the poets became more pronounced after 1857. Rangalal in Bengali, Mirza Ghalib in Urdu and Bharatendu Harishchandra in Hindi expressed themselves as the patriotic voice of that era. This voice was, on the one hand, against colonial rule, and on the other, for the glorification of India. Besides, Mirza Ghalib (1797-1869) wrote *ghazals* in Urdu, about love, with unusual imagery and

metaphors. He accepted life both as a joyous existence and as a dark and painful experience. Michael Mdhusudan Dutt (1824-1873) wrote the first modern epic in an Indian language, and naturalized blank verse in Bengali. He was a typical example of the young Bengal—an epithet meant for a batch of young students who accepted the western education and knowledge but were rebels and challenged the traditional poetic sensibility and developed a true national consciousness. Subramania Bharati (1882-1921) was the great Tamil patriot-poet, who revolutionized the poetic tradition in Tamil. Radhanath Ray (1848-1908) in Oriya effected a change in taste and approach as well as in literary sensibility and style. Kerala Varma and Raja Raja Varma were the renaissance writers in Malayalam. Themes from anthology or history were taken up to write epics, by Maithilisan Gupta (1886-1964) in Hindi, Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957) in Punjabi and others, with the express purpose of fulfilling the needs of the patriotic reader.

The birth of the novel is associated with the social reform-oriented movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This new genre, borrowed from the west, is characterized by a spirit of revolt, right from its adoption into the Indian system. The first Tamil novel, *Pratap Mudaliyar Charitram* (1879) by Samuel V. Pillai, the first Telugu novel, *Sri Ranga Raja Charitra* (1872) by Krishnamma Chetty, and the first Malayalam novel, *Indu Lekha* (1889) by Chandu Menon were written with didactic intentions and to re-examine evil social customs and practices like untouchability, caste distinctions, denial of remarriage of widows, etc. In other first novels, like the Bengali novel, *Phulmani O Karunar Bibaran* (1852), by an English woman, H. Catherine Mullens, or the Hindi novel, *Pariksha Guru* (1882) by Lala Srinivas Das, one can discover shared patterns of response and articulation towards social problems. Fakirmohan Senapati (1843-1918) of Oriya wrote about common people and their problems and was the first Indian novelists of social realism. The writings of Vishnu Shasri Chiplunkar (1800-1882) and of Gopal Ganesh Agarkar (1856-1895) and B.G. Tilak (1856-1920) created a new social awareness in the Maharastrian society.

Historical novels were written by Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Hari Narayan Apte (Marathi) and others to describe the glorious past of India, and to instill nationalist fervour in her people. *Ushakal* (1895) is the most popular of Apte's historical novels on Shivaji. C.V. Raman Pillai (1858-1922) wrote historical novels in Malayalam to create a pantheon of heroes to inspire the people with high ideals. Novels were found to be the most appropriate medium to eulogize the intellectual and physical richness of the past, and reminded Indians about their obligations and rights. The Indian writers revived a glorious past to generate feelings of pride and encourage the spirit of sacrifice for the national cause. In fact, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the idea of national identity emerged from literature and most Indian writings turned into the voice of enlightenment. This paved the way for India to understand the real, factual position by the time it reached the threshold of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was during that time that Tagore

wrote the novel *Gora* (1910), to challenge colonial rule, colonial criteria and colonial authority, and to give new meaning to Indian nationalism.

### **The emergence of Prose**

The most important literary event that revolutionized literature was the emergence of literary prose in all the modern Indian languages, and the advent of the printing press, under the patronage of an Englishman, William Carey (1761-1834), at Serampore, Bengal. It is true that Sanskrit and Persian had a vast body of prose, but the necessity for prose in modern Indian languages, for use in administration and higher education, led to the emergence of prose in different Indian languages at the beginning of the modern period. The grammars and word-books and the primers and readers for many of the modern Indian languages were compiled by English scholars with the help of Indian Pundits and Munshis. The birth of newspapers and periodicals in Indian languages between 1800 and 1850 was extremely important for the development of prose. Raja Rammohun Roy gave an impetus to Bengali prose, and the missionaries of Serampore started Bengali journalism on its career. Prose existed in Indian languages but did not have a continuous tradition and was not properly developed. One must concede that prose had a very limited sphere of application and was hardly used, with a few exceptions in literary works. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Indian writers desired to make use of the various western prose forms in their respective languages they became aware of the potentiality and the possibilities of prose as an effective instrument of literary and non-literary communication. Christian missionaries and the officials of the East India Company under their colonial agenda were also aware of its usefulness. After the East India company took over the Diwani rights of Bengal, Bihar and North Western Province (present day Uttar Pradesh) in 1765 Christian missionaries set up text book societies in different parts of the country to teach languages and then it became highly fashionable to translate all and sundry works of English literature with the basic idea that it would strengthen Indian languages. The Indian scholars attached to Fort William College—Lalluji Lal, Sadal Misra, Mir Amman, Ramram Basu, Mrityunjay Vidyalkar, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and others—made significant contributions to the making of a new prose in their respective languages. It is true that the prose written by foreign scholars was artificial and the prose styles in modern Indian languages developed through translations acquired an inevitable tenor and tone of translation language. They are less supple than what they need to be. This colonial legacy is so firmly rooted in contemporary Indian literary culture that often we find Indians making a naïve claim that literary prose is a positive and original contribution made by the British to Indian culture. Indian prose writings, free from any foreign intervention, first appeared in religious tracts and works on social problems. The trend started with the publication of Rammohan's Persian work *Tuhfat-ul-*

*Muwahhdin* in 1803 and it was backed by journalism carried through newspapers and periodicals in different languages. And in the course of time Indian prose became a strong instrument in the freedom movement when the war of independence came in 1857, a bilingual newspaper in Persian and Devanagari scripts entitled *Payam-i-Azadi* was started in Delhi. Its July 1857 issue carried Bahadurshah Zafar's message to Indians. "I appeal to every citizen of India, to all people of different religions, to wrest freedom from the cursed Feringee, call an all-India Panchayat of able, wise and God-fearing people like the Haryana *Sarvakhep Panchayat*, and let them draw up a constitution and administer the country. I shall gladly transfer all my rights to that Panchayat." The emergence of prose as a powerful medium brought a kind of change that coincided with the process of modernization. Prose, in due course, became a very important vehicle of literacy expression. Letters of Ghalib, *Urdu-i-Mualla Ud-i-Hindi* (1858) and *Chinna patra* (1912) by Tagore are examples of informal prose writing which later developed into personal essay. Religious debates fascinated almost all the 19<sup>th</sup> century intellectuals. Keshabchandra Sen, Swami Dayanand, Swami Vivekananda, Vishnushastri Chiplunkar, Pandita Ramabai by their religious and social writings contributed towards the growth of prose in different languages. Bankimchandra Chatterjee wrote historical essays which were all published in his journal *Bangadarshan*. Sir syed Ahmad Khan and Narmad wrote biographical essays. Most of the writers were associated with one or more than one journals which were used by them to express their views on various topics which played distinctive roles in the growth of prose literature. Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century came to an end a prose literature of immense merit came into existence in all the languages. 20<sup>th</sup> century prose manifested itself in various genres and emerged as a powerful instrument for human expressions. Lakshminath Bezbarua (Assamese), Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi (Hindi), Ramachandra Shukla (Hindi), N.S. Phadke (Marathi), Sanjayan (Malayalam), Puran Singh (Punjabi), Swami Vedachalam (Tamil), Haraprasad Shastri and Tagore (Bengali) and others are some of the best prose writers and because of their efforts it began to grow in size, variety and quality. It helped in the growth of novel and short story. Premchand, Tagore, K. Sukumaran, D.K. Kelkar, Puthumaipittan, Mokkapati Narasimha Shastri, Masti and Rajshekar Basu used the form of short story and contributed to the creation of a mosaic of opulence in prose.

### **Cultural nationalism**

The dawn of the Modern Age in India is marked not so much by the contact as by the conflict with the western civilization which gave rise to political consciousness of India and which took a definite shape with the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885. But in Indian situation because of a long tradition of religious humanism as propounded by the saint-poets in all parts of the country, Indian nationalism grew as religiously

personified nationalism with accent on social purification and social reform. This kind of nationalism generated love for the country, its culture, civilization and its plurality of religions distinguished from any institutional religion. During the days of freedom struggle there was a revival of interest in the devotional poetry of the middle ages; songs of Mira and Kabir became popular. The devotional poets did not sing of national freedom, but their songs reflected the same sense of self-effacing dedication—devotion to a cause at once deeply human, based on equality and justice. The cultural manifestations of glorifying India's past revived the images of old heroes, gods and goddesses. The poets made a fervent search for a myth which they discovered in the saga of lord Krishna, the inexhaustible fountain of strength. Bankimchandra Chatterjee described the geographical entity of the country as mother and Goddess, and in his song 'Vandemataram' included in his novel *Anandamath* (1882), he identified the motherland with Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. The idea of a freedom movement received spiritual elevation at Bankim's hands. The Malayalam poet Vallathol regards worship of the motherland and the mother-tongue as the two sides of the same coin. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) related the age-old values of asceticism and non-violence to the needs of a modern mass movement and nation building. His saintliness was a message in itself which attracted a large number of people in the rural areas to see him and to listen to him. In fact the songs of the *Charans* in Rajasthan and the *Pavadas* in Maharashtra were a response of the village folk poets to the 1857 war of Independence which indicate very strongly the existence of a separate stream of socio-political patriotic poetry in India's own tradition. This was the time when Swami Vivekananda, following the path already set by Sri Ramakrishna, staged a triumphal return from Chicago to address the youth of India to come forward and conquer the whole world with the strength of India's spirituality. And at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sri Aurobindo gave articulation to the 'aspirations of young India a divining intention of the spirit of liberty, the beating of whose wings was being heard over Asia.' He inclined towards the growing extremist trend which got a philip because of the British Government's announcement of the partition of Bengal in 1905. The whole country stood like a solid block to oppose it and paved the way for radicals to spread the ideals of militant nationalism which inspired writers like Sharatchandra Chatterjee to write the novel *Pather Dabi* (1926) to extol revolutionary nationalism. Before this Tagore in his novel *Ghare Baire* (1916) heralded the emergence of political novel and both condemned and extolled militant nationalism and which was, in fact, a display of ambivalence in his perception of nationalism. In fact, in the first twenty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century with the partition of Bengal, the Jalianwala Baga Massacre, the Rowlatt Act, and such other events the national struggle was intensified focusing more on radical nationalism. However at the same time Gandhi's impact of non-violence movement also attracted the writers of that age? This phase of anti-colonial and reform oriented spiritual movements was a major thrust in the making of Indian

literature. On the one hand, the tradition of cultural nationalism was upheld to be used as a handle to fight against colonial rule and on the other, the social movements encouraged the re-examination of Tradition itself which contained several retrogressive customs and practices like untouchability, caste distinctions, denial of remarriage to widows, patriarchy that oppressed and dominated women. This double battle promoted the ambivalence common to the literary works of that time because most of the writers had a poor opinion of mere political thinking. Tagore in a letter to a Gujarati poet wrote, “The political civilization which has sprung up from the soil of Europe and is over-coming the whole world like some prolific weed, is based upon exclusiveness.” Like Tagore, writers like Vallathol, Kumaran Asan, Keshavsuta, Jaishankar Prasad, K.V. Puttapa, D.R. Bendre, Veereshalingam, Gulam Ahmed Mehjoor, Nazrul Islam, Subramania Bharati and many others revived through their writings the age-old concept of cultural nationalism based on universal brotherhood. However, Tamil poet Bharatidasan (1891-1962) became an ardent champion of Tamil culture and extolled ‘nadu’(region) more than the ‘desa’(nation).

### **The advent of Mahatma Gandhi**

In 1915 Mahatma Gandhi entered the political arena and his idealism based on Satya and Ahimsa further enlarged the scope of Cultural nationalism. Gandhi spoke the language of the common man and was for the outcastes. His weapon was the weapon of truth and non-violence. He was for traditional values and against industrialization. He very soon turned himself into a medieval saint and a social reformer. Tagore called him *Mahatma*, a saint. Gandhi became the theme of both poetry and fiction of cultural nationalism. He became an apostle of peace and idealism. Satyendranath Datt, Kazi Nazrul Islam and Akbar Allahabadi accepted Gandhi as a challenge to western civilization, and as an assertion of the dignity of Asian Values. Gandhian heroes swamped the fictional world of that time. Raja Rao, Tarashankar Bandhyopadhyaya, Premchand, V.S. Khandekar, Saratchandra Chatterjee, Lakshmi Narayana, Mulkraj Anand all created Gandhian protagonists as rural reformers or social workers with moral and religious commitments. It was not the writers, but the people, who created the Gandhi myth, and the writers, in their turn, used it effectively to mark a period of great awakening. Saratchandra Chatterjee (1876-1938) was one of the most popular Bengali novelists, whose popularity continues unabated even today, not only among Bengali readers, but also among people in other parts of India, by means of the numerous translations of his books, which are available in various Indian languages. His pet theme was the man-woman relationship, and he was well known for his portrayal of women, their sufferings and their often unspoken love. He was both a Gandhian and a Socialist. Premchand (1880-1936) wrote novels in Hindi. He was a true son of the soil, deeply attached to the land of India and its people. He was the finest literary exponent of the Indian



peasantry in Indian literature. As a true Gandhian, he believed in the idealistic theory of 'a change of heart' in the exploiters. But in his magnum opus, *Godan* (1936), he becomes a realist and records the suffering and struggle of the Indian rural poor. K.M. Munshi (Gujarati), Hari Narayan Apte (Marathi), Lakshmi Narayana (Telugu) wrote political novels under the influence of Gandhi. Literature was crucial in the nationalist-patriotic cultural resistance to British rule which encouraged a certain multilingual exchange through translation and pointed out how 'language-centered regionalism' and a nationalism that transcended linguistic divisions could emerge as complementary notions.

### **Indian Romanticism**

Another collective movement that gave a solid foundation to the idea of Indian literature was 'romantic' movement ushered in the second decade of the twentieth century by three great forces which influenced the destiny of modern Indian literature. These forces were Sri Aurobindo's (1872-1950) search for the divine in man, Tagore's quest for the beautiful in nature and man, and Mahatma Gandhi's experiments with Truth and Non-violence. Sri Aurobindo through his poetry and philosophical treatise, *The Life Divine*, presents the prospect of the ultimate revelation of divinity in everything. He wrote mostly in English. Tagore's quest for beauty was a spiritual quest, which attained fruition in the final realization that service to humanity is the best form of contact with God. Tagore was aware of a supreme principle pervading nature and the entire universe. This supreme principle or the unknown mystique is beautiful, because it shines through the known, and it is only in the unknown that we have perpetual freedom. Tagore, a many splendoured genius, wrote novels, short stories, essays and dramas, and never ceased to try out new experiments. His collection of songs in Bengali, *Gitanjali* (song-offerings) received the Nobel Prize in 1913. Tagore's influence, after the award, inspired writers of different Indian languages to popularize the age of romantic poetry. This poetry in Hindi is known as *Chhayavad*, the age of romantic mystery. In Kannada, it is *Navodaya*, the rising Sun and in Oriya it is known as *Sabuj*, the age of green and in Malayalam *Kalpanikta* (the age of imagination), Jai Shankar Prasad, Nirala, Sumitra Nandan Pant, Mahadevi Verma, Vallathol, Kumaran Asan, G. Shankar Kurup. Kalindi Charan Panigrahi, B. M. Srikantayya, Puttappa, Bendre, Vishwanath Satyanarayana, Umashankar Joshi, and poets of other languages highlight mysticism and romantic subjectivity in their poetry. The poets of *Ravikiran Mandal*, a group of six poets in Marathi search for a hidden reality in nature. This romantic pan-Indian movement according to many can be claimed with some justification as the final phase of the Romantic movement that started in Germany and appeared in different countries in Europe in successive stages and there are others who think that the romantic writers in the Indian languages, have through their poetry often attacked the European Romanticism's "obscurantist

tendencies” and high Brahmanism in orientalist constructions of India in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. One can refer to Malayalam, Hindi and Assamese romantic poetry for the justification of this statement. It is no doubt that Indian romantic poetry is not an imitation of western romantic poetry, but a spontaneous expression of a particular state of mind and experience of the Indian poets which they tend to demonstrate from time immemorial. One may, therefore, like to concede that romantic sensibility of oneness of the self with nature and its mystical manifestation and the humanist concept of universal man are age-old poetic concepts which indicate the continuity of the poetic experience of the literary mind of India. In every age some new insights covering the sensibility of the age are added to keep the continuity of the romantic tradition ever vibrant and dynamic. In fact, the romantic trend of the modern times follows the tradition of Indian poetry, where romanticism indicates the vedantic oneness between nature and man, more along the lines of Vedic symbolism and not paganism. It is not western romantic ideal of return to nature, to the *unconscious*, the realm of imagination or feeling but an affirmation of the organic relation of man and nature, of the microcosm and the macrocosm, of the inner and the outer world and of the interior and transcendent imagination. In Indian context, the term romanticism is widely used as an umbrella term along with its local manifestation. Indian romanticism is a reaction to the prosaic matter of factness of the earlier mode. It created new diction, language, metrical structure and symbolism. Its emotionalism lent itself to reformist and patriotic compositions which, however, contrasted sharply with the public rhetoric of nationalist literature especially in poetry. Its anti-industrial thrust which supported Gandhi’s critique of colonialism influenced Gujarati poet Umashankar Joshi, Tamil poet Subramania Bharati and Assamese poet Nilamani Phookan. Romanticism in Indian context is not merely a literary attitude but is a part of a popular programme for both national autonomy and social uplift and thus has a bigger perspective than the British romantics and hence Tagore could so easily move from romantic to God as an experience and then to affirmation of life. Suryakant Tripathi Nirala from romanticism to social realism and again back to love and devotion, Krishna Shastri from *Bhavakavita* to modern anxiety and questioning and Shankar Kurup from the romantic to the modern. Mohammed Iqbal (1877-1938), the greatest poet that Urdu has produced, second only to Ghalib, went through initially a romantic-cum-nationalistic phase in his poetry. His best collection of Urdu is *Banga-i-Dara* (1924). His quest for pan-Islamism did not deter him in his concern for humanity at large. In his poem *Iblis Ki majlis-e-shewa* Marx has been introduced as ‘a Kalim without the light, he is the Christ without the crucifix?’ Indian romanticism contributed to the definition of a distinctive modern Indian self and even an alternative national identity in which a poet introspectively became the site for the assertion and manifestation of specific Indian literary traditions even while being under the influence of the western, especially, British romantics. Indian romanticism is fraught with

mysticism—not like English romanticism which wants to break puritanical shackles, seeking joy in Hellenism. Poetry of this phase became a document of the experiences of the poet's search for the unknown, longing for beauty, brooding over death and challenging the very scheme of things. It, however, did not snap its links with the tradition, and drew inspiration and sustenance from ancient texts, religious and secular. The literature of this period utilized lyrics and moved from theocentricism to anthropocentrism—from devotion to God to devotion to the world, its beauties, man as a reflection to supernatural and man's pursuit of joy and beauty. The acceleration of the independence movement and the social and cultural reformation movements influenced it and made it also a literature that examined social and nationalist issues

### **Progressive Literature**

In the thirties, before India won independence and established itself as a sovereign democratic republic, emphasis began to shift in Indian literature from romantic individualism to social relations. The romanticisation of the past and personification of nature and urge for *advaita* oneness began to give away to a more realistic and critical approach to existing social institutions. The traditional idealistic view of life gradually yielded to a greater concern for the socio-economic conditions of the people. If earlier, in view of the movements for social reform by the Ramakrishana Mission, Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj and others, the writer was concerned with the moral degradation of the society, now one found him disturbed by the poverty of the people and national oppression. Premchand, whose earlier stories had romanticized freedom, now took hold of the ordinary peasant—exploited in the extreme—as the central character of his writings. On the one side, the impact of Mahatma Gandhi turned writers in different Indian languages towards the depiction of the life of the common man, the poor and the illiterate, particularly the villagers and to aim for Gandhian humanism of class-caste harmony, on the other side, another orientation, caused by the introduction of Marxist ideology attracted writers to give a new definition of their role in society on the side of the struggling humanity and write about the Marxian equalitarianism of a classless society.

The advent of Marxism on the Indian literary scene in the thirties is a phenomenon which India shared with many other countries. Both Gandhi and Marx were driven by opposition to imperialism and concern for the dispossessed section of society. The progressive writers Association was originally established in 1935 by some expatriate writers in London which included Mulk Raj Anand, Sajjad Zaheer, Raja Rao, Muhammad Ali and others. In the manifesto they made it clear that the duty of every Indian writer is to give form to each revolutionary change as evident in the Indian scene. In 1936 Premchand and 1938 Tagore in the annual conferences of progressive writers asked the Indian writer to express progressively the various transformations of Indian society. Soon it became a

great pan-Indian movement that brought together Gandhian and Marxist insights into society. The movement was especially conspicuous in Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Telugu and Malayalam but its impact was felt all over India. It compelled every writer to re-examine his/her relationship with social reality. In Hindi *Chhayavad* was challenged by a progressive school and the movement came to be known as Pragativad (Progressivism). Nirala and Nagarjun were undisputedly the most powerful and noted Hindi poets of the progressive group. In the *Badalraga* (1920) of Nirala, the peasant is not alone; a revolutionary gallant is with him. The Bengali poets Samar Sen Vishnu Dey and Subhas Mukhopadhyaya added a new socio-political outlook to their poetry and revealed the poet's solitary struggle, his unending exploration of the beauty and dignity of human existence. Rootedness to the soil, compassion for the wretched, and sincerity of expression are the qualities of the novels of Fakir Mohan Senapati. One could see a powerful progressive note in the Oriya poetry of Ananta Pattanayak and Sachiananda Rautray, Rautray's poem *Baji Raut* is a remarkable document of the struggle of the people against British colonial rule. Manik Bandhopadhyaya was the most well-known Marxist Bengali novelist. Malayalam fiction writers like Vaikhom Muhammed Basheer, S.K. Pottekkatt and Thakazhi Shivsankara Pillai, made history by writing progressive fiction of high literary value. They covered fresh ground exploring the life of ordinary men and the human relations that economic and social inequalities fostered. Shivaram Karanth, the most versatile fiction writer in Kannada, never forgot his early Gandhian lessons. He was aware of the gap existing between the ideals and the reality and wrote about economic exploitation of the untouchable. Yashpal (1903-76) and Rahul Sankrityayan (1893-1963) were most noted exponents of Marxism in their Hindi novels. Sri Sri writing in Telugu was Marxist, but showed interest in modernism at a later stage in his life. Syed Abdul Malik, in Assamese, wrote with an ideological bias. The critical norms of progressive literature were established by the pioneer of this phase in Punjabi by Sant Singh Sekhon. The progressive writers movement attracted the attention of eminent poets of Urdu, Josh Malihabadi, Makhdum Mohiuddin and Faiz Ahmed Faiz. Imbued with the Marxist spirit they infused in the age-old symbolism a political meaning. However, a tension was quite visible among writers in the 30s and 40s about accepting either the Gandhian or the Marxist model. In *Dhatri Devata* of Tarashankar Bandyopadhyaya a comparison is made between Marxian radicalism on the one hand, and the Gandhian non-cooperation movement with its techniques of picketing and boycott on the other, to prove that a *via media* is to be found and that can only be the natural revolutionary pattern of socialism. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said in his Presidential Address to the Lucknow Congress in 1936, "I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in socialism and when I use this word I do so not in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific, economic sense."

## Search for Modernity

A great work of art, in the Indian context, is the expression of both the traditional and the actual. As a result, the concept of modernism grew in the Indian context along different lines. The urge was to create something new. Even the imitations of western modernists came as a challenge to understand their own realities. Writers during this time presented their manifestos, explaining their ideas of modernity. A new language was found to articulate their own historical position. Jibanananda Das (1899-1954) was the most important Bengali poet after Tagore who had a total sense of poetry. He was an imagist and used language not just to communicate, but to grasp reality. Bibhuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyay (1899-1950), the Bengali fiction writer whose novel *Pather-Panchali* (The Saga of the Road) was filmed by Satyajit Ray, and which received international acclaim, presented the unsophisticated and warm hearted village life that is passing away. In his quest for identification with man's every day relation with nature, he proved himself to be no less modern. Tara Shankar Bandyopadhyay (Bengali, 1898-1971) depicted in his novels the pulsating life of a whole generation staying in a village or a city, where society itself becomes the hero. In depicting regional life, the social change and human behaviour, he achieved utmost success. Uma Shankar Joshi (Gujrati) initiated new experimental poetry and spoke of the shattered self in the modern day world. Amrita Pritam (Punjabi) created an intensely personal poetry of an unearthly glory, without losing contact with the earth. B.S. Mardhekar (Marathi, 1909-1956) reflected in his poetry contemporary reality with the help of images, indicating the limitations of man and the inevitable despair arising from them. Gopal Krishna Adiga (1918-92), the famous modern Kannada poet, developed his own personal idiom, and became mystical. He also displayed the agony of his time. Practically all the writers reflected the despair of man, arising out of his sense of helplessness in society and in the larger sphere of history. The imitation of the west, the degeneration of canons and the disillusionment of the middle class psyche, are some of the characteristics of Indian modernity. Modernism became a way of documenting the dehumanization of society in India after independence with its attendant morbidity, alienation and loss of identity. There was a shattering of the gestalt as Dilip Chitre would call it. However, the Tradition of humanism was very much alive and hopes for a better future are not discarded. Like in European Modernism political conservatives and radicals were both accommodated by Indian modernism too (Adiga and Muktibodh) since both had grown cynical and frustrated about the authoritarian tendencies of the nascent state and economic and moral deprivation and both were on the look-out for powerful forms of new expressions. This is the most fascinating aspect of Indian modernism that it accommodates both conservatives and radicals. Probably, this is the most important characteristic it has in common with European modernism (Yeats and Louis Mac Neice).

In western terminology, modernism is a breaking away from established rules, traditions and conventions and implies fresh ways of looking at man's position and functions in the universe, and inheres, in some cases, remarkable experiments in form and style. In India modernism as a phenomenon or value, is not an absolutely unrelated one without reference to the past or the future. The element of permanence is one of the essential ingredients of all the creative expressions, which is explained by the word *Sanatana* which means *Nitya nutana* (forever new). It is not a voyage backward through time but a reassertion of the centre. Thus, modernism has a time significance which has both linear and circular movements. It absorbs in it traditional values as well as new innovations, and is indicated by the term continuity. In India, nothing is rejected; new alternatives are created which become part of the continuity of thought and creativity. This is the Indian way of thinking which is not logo-centric and exclusive, but symbolic or inclusive. The west develops through substitution; it rewrites itself again and again. India develops through accommodation. New ideas may supplant older ones but the older ones linger on. They are allowed to coexist with what is new. It is both a critique and an extension of tradition. In other words, changing from within and creating new perceptions by remodeling the outside forces are what writers present as their own agenda to understand the Indian modernity. In this way the pan-Indian elite tradition of Sanskrit (marga), the regional (desi) and folk (loka) traditions and the alien tradition of English co-exist in the linguistic sensibility of Indian languages, the nature of their combination is often an index to the modernity of an artifact in the language. But one cannot possibly identify one single reference point of modernity and, therefore, one may conclude that Indian modernity is like a mosaic. However, one thing is very clear that modernism was a demand of our own history and not a command from the west. Western models might have been employed at times as tools of subversion but the agenda for the new aesthetic was set up by our own literary history.

In spite of this kind of a view being prevalent in the fifties, the majority of the new writers portrayed a dreadfully artificial world based on some formulas of western modernism. This was done by the writers who knew it well that a majority of the old guards starting from Rabindranath Tagore were rooted in the Indian soil. Modernity for Tagore and Prem Chand and Kumaran Asan and others was to create a new approach to life. Writers like Tagore put forth some principles of modernism like universalism; permanence and *ananda* which make poetry look inward. Self-expression of the individual, utter nakedness (transparency), truthfulness, a negation of fashioning in order, tearing off the veil of illusion, definiteness and self-reliance were the characteristics of modernity for the old guards. The writers drew largely on life for their themes, and new horizons opened up before them. When under the influence of the European modernist movement with a specific historical strain Yeats was writing: "Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold", Rabindranath Tagore then wrote, "Thou hast

made me endless such is thy pleasure". The Indian reality could not be interpreted by the western model created by movements like imagism, anti-novel, anti-play, anti-hero, expressionism, beat poetry, surrealism, avant-garde, and experimentalism.

There were experimentalists who showed concern with the inner reality, but the champions of inner reality mostly obsessed with sex produced erotic literature in different Indian languages. Daiva Chandra Talukdar (Assamese), Suresh Joshi (Gujarati), Buddhadev Bose (Bengali), Manto (Urdu), Ismat Chughtai (Urdu) and A.N. Krishna Rao (Kannada) are a few writers who wrote explicitly about sex. One can even include Thakazhi Shiv Shankar Pillai (Malayalam) in this category, though he went beyond mere sex in creating a strong sense of realism and deep human interest in the lives of the oppressed and marginalized. Besides these writers, there were others who regarded modernism as a 'measurement-oriented' intellectual approach, which fell short of the 'holistic experience' that related an individual's centre to the physical and intellectual world and thus regained for him personal faith and identity and a sense of community.

The Indian mind does not refer to a tradition of the past or a tradition of the culture of the past. It believes that what exists today is tradition, is culture. In a culture like the Indian, the past does not pass off. It keeps on providing paradigms for the present. The present grows from the past and both the past and the present, change together. But the rhythm broke down because of the modernistic experimentation in the early fifties drawing its sustenance from the west. Most of the Indian poets looked outside and accepted Eliot, Mallarme, Yeats and Baudelaire as their models and in the process rejected Tagore, Bharati, Kumaran Asan, Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi. The novel *Sekhar Ek Jivani* (1941) and the collection of Poems by Ajneya (1911-87) in 1943 bear the impress of Eliot. The Bengali experimentalists Sudhindranath Datta (1901-60), Premendra Mitra (1904-88), Jibanananda Das (1899-1954), Bhuddhadev Basu (1908-74) were all influenced by the western literary sensibility but for them west came as a challenge to understand their own realities and the forces of history shaping human destiny. Writers during this time presented their manifestos, explaining their ideas of modernity. A new language was found to articulate their own historical position. Jibanananda Das was the most important Bengali poet after Tagore who had a total sense of poetry. He was an imagist and used language not just to communicate, but to grasp reality. The concept of experimentation 'includes a profound ethical concern, the quest for new values and searching examination after basic sanctions or sources of value' as spelt out in the preface to *Tar Saptak*, a collection of modernist experimental poems under the editorship of S.H. Vatsyayan Ajneya. Umashankar Joshi (Gujarati) initiated new experimental poetry and spoke of the shattered self in the modern day world. As already explained Amrita Pritam (Punjabi), B.S. Mardhekar (Marathi, 1909-1956), Gopalakrishna Adiga (1918-92), the Kannada poet, all displayed the

agony of their time. Practically all the writers reflected the despair of man and a sense of helplessness particularly when they looked at themselves as a part of the society and also in the larger sphere of history. However, the traditions of humanism were very much alive and hope for a better future was not discarded. This is the most fascinating aspect of Indian modernism that it accommodates both, the new western experimentation and the continuity of Indian tradition which are amply illustrated in the novels of Bhushan Bandyopadhyaya (Bengali, 1899-1950), Tarashankar Bandyopadhyaya (Bengali 1898-1971), and many others. Bhai Vir Singh's Punjabi novel Sundari reflected Sikh aspirations and valorized the Sikh way of life. Kalki in Tamil became the master story-teller in the forties. Visvanatha Satyanarayana's *Veyi Padagalu* in Telugu was a courageous defense of the traditional values against the onslaught of modernity. Ismat Chughtai (Urdu) was conspicuous for her radicalism and total disregard of the middle-class taboos towards sex. Jhaver Chand Meghani (Gujarati) through his novels described the living experience of Saurashtra. V.S. Khankekar introduced intellectual content in his novels. Indian novelists tried to discover the Indian identity through their novels set up mostly in rural background. These writers following their tradition revealed the dialectics of continuity and change rooted in it. These writers made an effort to retrieve, rediscover and redefine elements of culture in a creative way, by a return to pride in roots, while looking ahead.

However, the poets of the fifties and even the sixties developed an identity crisis. The specific identity crisis, the conflict between traditional Indianness and western modernity is discernible in the writings of the major language areas in India during those days. Because of the crisis, the predicament of the writers of the fifties and sixties can be analyzed through three divergent attitudes of life. Either the writer is in dispute with society or else he starts the search and explores the contemporary reality and in the process goes in for a world belief, psychoanalysis, existentialist philosophy or social realism. But then this separates him from the common masses and their reality. But this does not apply to all the writers

There were many writers of that age who had a profound understanding of the social reality and their literary experience was always contextualized to the contemporary history but at the same time they knew how to challenge and transform the existing system of development and the concept of modernity and create their own models of development and modernity in pursuance with the traditional holistic view of man living in harmony with nature and society as well as exploring new innovations. A poem *Twarikh* (history) in Punjabi by Amrita Pritam written on the independence of India is typical example of the historical consciousness of the writers of that era which accommodates without any conscious efforts both traditional Indianness and western modernity.



## Indian Drama: The period of transition

Sanskrit drama after the 10<sup>th</sup> century lost its tenor. It strove no more through symbol and gesture to realize the truth behind human experience. Medieval Indian literature was a glorious representation of man's exploration of the Divine that turned the era into the era of devotional poetry which was a little indifferent to secular representation of life on stage. The Islamic taboo against such forms of entertainment was also responsible for the decline of Indian theatre, and, therefore, drama remained in a state of oblivion. However, folk plays continued to entertain the audience which has always remained a vehicle of expression of protest, dissent and reform and thereby has induced at one level emotional enjoyment and on another level stimulated rational judgment. One can make bold to say proper Indian drama, which is essentially an urban growth originated in these folk dramas.

With the advent of the modern period and the impact of western literature, drama took a new turn and developed as a form of literature. The Parsi theatre, around 1850, started staging plays based on Indian mythology, history and legends. With its moving troupes, they traveled to different parts of the country and made a tremendous impact on their audience. Agha Hashr (1880-1931) was an important playwright of the Parsi theatre. But Parsi plays were mostly commercial and cheap. In fact, modern Indian theatre grew mainly as a reaction against crudity and superficiality of Parsi theatre and to express the emerging national consciousness. However Parsi theatre will be remembered in the history of Indian theatre mainly because of its emphasis on the 'spectacle' and its influence on the style of acting. Initially playwrights in different Indian languages delved into India's folk tradition to create plays to protest against colonialism, social injustice and westernization. Michael Madhusudan Datta, (Bengali, 1825-74) in his farces satirized the half-educated young rich imitating western manners. Bharatendu Harishchandra, (Hindi, 1850-1885), also through his satires and farces condemns the decadent social institutions and ridicules the western mode of life which had begun to permeate the life of the people during those days. His play *Andheri Nagari* has become a byword for any set up or situation where justice has no relevance. Dinabandhu Mitra (Bengali, 1829-74) in his play *Neela Darpan* had dealt with the exploitation of the country at the hands of the British colonialists. The depiction of the horrors of planter rule was promptly translated into English by one of the famous Bengali poets, Madhu Sudan Dutt under the pseudonym of Rev. Long. In fact playwrights of that era of the 19<sup>th</sup> century enlightenment wrote mythological and historical plays and social satires to make a concentrated effort to express political feelings and urge for social reforms. Girish Chandra Ghosh (Bengali), Dwijendra Lal Roy (Bengali) Ranchodbhai Udayram (Gujarati), M. M. Pillai (Tamil), Balvant Pandurang Kirloskar (Marathi), Hemchandra Barua (Assamese) and others through their plays demonstrated political subjugation and strived for civil liberty and

questioned our social affairs. The first public theatre in Bengal came into existence in 1872. During this time there was a strange kind of configuration of imitation of the West as well as resistance to it or adjustment, accommodation, and assimilation of the gifts of the west. The net result of this complex social conditioning was a strange kind of romanticism which magnified in drama—love, passion, agony, a kind of rationality and spirit of adventure. Social relations revolving round individualistic, passionate, romantic love were encouraged. C.V. Raman Pillai (Malayalam) and Viresalingam (Telugu) wrote social comedies and mythological plays. Viresalingam like Kirloskar made the mythological plays relevant to the contemporary time. Gurazada's *Kanya Sulkam* revolutionized Telugu drama by introducing the spoken Telugu. T.P. Kailasam also revolutionized Kannada stage. Tagore wrote a number of plays and added a new dimension to the traditional conception of Indian drama by creating an integral vision of the march of humanity towards an idealistic order larger than human life. In his dance-drama the most dominating symbol is of *yatri*—not only *yatri* but *chirayatri* who is on his way to *nandanpath* so that he may discover the ultimate truth. There were others like K.P. Kolhatkar and P.G. Gadkari in Marathi and Gunabhiram Barua in Assamese who gave dignity to theatre. Jai Shankar Prasad (Hindi) and Adya Rangacharya (Kannada) wrote historical and social plays to highlight the clash between idealism and the harsh realities by which they were surrounded. P.S. Mudaliyar gave Tamil stage respectability and new direction and similarly K.M. Munshi through his social satires gave a new meaning to the Gujarati stage. It was the time of emergence in Bengali and Marathi of great actors like Sisir Bhaduri and Bal Gandharva.

Sachindranath Sengupta (Bengali) Lakshminarayan Misra (Hindi) and T.P. Kailasam (Kannada) broke fresh ground by concentrating on the life of the middle class and their problems and making them heroes in their plays. It was Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) in 1940 which brought about a change in experience by highlighting the reality of the collective. It did not register only the need for a social change but, in fact, initiated a line of action, protest and revolt. It picked up the conventions of the folk drama and gave a blow to cheap idealism. Bijon Bhattacharya (Bengali), Sajjad Zaheer (Urdu), Sant Singh Sekhon and Balwant Gargi (Punjabi) and others emphasized on the depiction of the life of economically exploited and socially oppressed and on the struggle of the masses. The effect of this new drama movement was far-reaching. It helped in the establishment of the people's theatre or group theatre and the making of modern theatre complete, in the fifth decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Making of Modern Theatre**

In the field of theatre, particularly in the sixties and seventies, Badal Sarkar, Mohan Rakesh and Girish Karnad described the condition of nothingness and absurdity, but with the hope that reason can and will exert a selection-

pressure in the right direction. This is the racial unconscious giving shape to Indian literature even during the days of a near total disintegration—emotional and otherwise. Then comes the age of contemporary group theatre run by amateurs who combined the truth of object with the outer reality. As against this, in the regular auditoriums the ‘other theatre’ continued with its social awareness, giving a new perspective to the function of theatre in society. It combines the truth of object with the inner reality to foster a new dimension of change in experience. This theatre is seeking the ‘chariot in darkness’, because in the contemporary theatre man has been robbed of his metaphor—the metaphor of the invincible soul of man. This other theatre is struggling hard to discover this metaphor and re-establish confidence in man. Now we see in this theatre people who can give away their life in their struggle for a cause—for the emancipation of the suppressed. These people are Bhoma of Badal Sarkar (Bengali) or Hanus of Bhisham Sahani (Hindi). That’s why the history of the contemporary ‘other theatre’ is the history of extending the social schema.

Aesthetic response is connected with social schema which, if extended by the writer on the basis of complex social conditioning, can be meaningful. Now in plays like poster by Shankar Shesh (Hindi) or Spartacus by Utpal Dutt (Bengali), an effort can be discerned for an ‘epistemological rupture’ in the existing structure to allow us to transcend the life attitudes created by the formula and market-oriented modernism. Transcendence of this attitude, sometimes with the help of an extensive use of folk elements, allows a ‘complex seeing’ of alternative points of view.

The energy of folk theatre comes from the fact that although it seems to uphold traditional values, it has also the means of questioning these values. Now the dialectics of continuity and change are creating a dilemma, but even in the face of this dilemma the writer is affirming his identity with the tradition as well as with the complex social conditioning to unfold a total view of the Indian psyche. Sometimes the dilemma takes its toll and the writer ends up with an eye to expediency and forgets about the enduring totality.

In fact, this is commercialism which has captured the literary market in the last decades of the last century. In the Dravidian languages, popular serials of different kinds seem to be a craze. Telugu writers, like Malladi Venkatakrishna Murti or Yerramsetti Sai trade on the reader’s nostalgia, with descriptions of men and women in their pristine simplicity against the primitive background of mountains, jungles and rivulets or they seek to explore the reader’s longing for forgotten history and visionary romance, or they describe black magic, voodoo and witchcraft. One can say in passing that beside drama in Tamil one can see the ever-increasing market for pulp ‘pocket’ novels. In Gujarati, either the novel is cheap pulp, or it is an academic exercise.

## **Discourse of Experimentation**

However, there were experimentalists with a difference, who showed their urge to experiment and to discover a new idiom to express the complexities of our predicament, but they differed in the ways they experimented and perceived the new reality. The hungry poet's of Bengal inspired by Allen Ginsberg (the Beatnik poet), especially Sunil Gangopadhyay and Shakti Chattopadhyay and the Digambara poets of Telugu like Nagnamuni, Jwalamukhi and Nikhileshwar gave a new twist to experimentation by displaying anger and frustration with Dadaist and Surrealist elements in their modes of imagination. Free verse and prose came to be increasingly used; images replaced older figures of speech, poetic imagination as well as idiom was freed from conventional habit and clichés. Annada Shankar Ray said about these changes that there was nothing foreign about them: 'We went surrealist without reading about it. Ionesco's absurd world had descended upon us'. All the experimentalists like Navakanta Barua, Agyeya, Kunwar Narain, Sitanshu Yashaschandra, Chandrasekhar Kambar, Ayyappa Paniker, Rahman Rahi, Vinda Karandikar, Harbhajan Singh, Sri Sri, Akhtar-ul-Iman, Makhdoom Mhouddin and many others either used the Marxist paradigm for interpreting reality or depended on their personal vision. There were many who spoke indirectly through ambivalent images while some used under statement and irony or spoke directly writing a sort of anti poetry. There are many who have broadly divided these writings into a high modernist one where the emphasis is on stylistic innovation per se and the various 'avant gardist' movements which constitute an attempt to nativise western modernism through the deployment of indigenous forms of articulations and through the accommodation of greater segments of Indian reality within these forms.

Even the advanced and progressive ideas that came from the western world through English education were confined to the educated urban community and grew independently without becoming a part of the continuity of the Indian literary process. However, the poetry of social realism became a dominant trend in contemporary Indian literature in the sixties and the seventies. After Independence, the poet felt a strong agony because of the pressure of disintegration of society and broken relationship with our past heritage.

## **The psychology of Partition**

The idea of a homogeneous India with its multi-lingual, multi-religious population, an India as a geographical space stabilized through centuries, was considered by the poets and artists as something permanent and hence the freedom of the country in 1947 which was a flawed and fissured freedom since its gift was a divided India, came as a rude shock to most of them and they were completely bewildered. India witnessed the worst bloodbath in the memory of the sub-continent just before it became Independent, after the partition of the

country. India's nationalism at that juncture was nationalism of mourning. It was a false dawn for the writer who felt, like Nazrul Islam of Bengal that the *Swaraj* did not bring anything for the hungry child. The deepest anguish was expressed by the poets of the Punjab and Bengal directly affected by partition. For millions of people the independence of the country brought terrible suffering and humiliation, fear of loss of human dignity and a morbid sense of isolation of being uprooted. Amrita Pritam invokes the sufi poet Waris Shah as the symbol of the undivided Punjab and exhorts him who has always given words to the suffering of the people. But Amrita Pritam asks him now, who is going to help us today?: 'when a daughter of the fabled Punjab wept/ he gave tongue to her silent grief/ Today a million daughters weep/ but where is Waris Shah/ to give voice to their woes? The partition does not change the life of the wily politicians and the businessmen for whom communalism is yet another instrument of exploitation and profit. Selflessness slowly gave way to selfishness in politics. The trauma of partition slowly turned into a trauma of utter hopelessness. There is no doubt that the poet had a coiled beam of hope of nation and society affluent and flourishing but with the passing of time, the dream remained unfulfilled, and when no fulfillment came till the sixties, the whole attitude to life took a different turn. In place of agony, resentment took over. Dreams and values were turned down as romantic sentimentality. Angry protests were raised against the political and social powers, institutions, establishment, and rejection of the constraining conventions became inevitable. The compelling situation drove the young poets to hostility and revolt—to frustration and extremity. The poets bade adieu to the earlier individualistic trend in poetry which had started with all kinds of experimentations in the early fifties. Poets now write on the theme of agony and the theme of struggle with clenched teeth. The poetry moved further nearer the downtrodden. Poets like Dhumil in Hindi showed a great range of social realism. O.N.V. Kurup in Malayalam added to his lyricism the sharpness of anger towards social injustice.

Now poetry is a combination of emotion, irony and the suffering of the common man caught in social contradictions. In the progressive poetry two trends were visible—one of the old unchanged trend of progressive poems of protests and struggle. One can take the name of Sri Sri, Nirala, Vaikom Muhammed Basheer, and other who in spite of the Bolshevik revolution and Marxist aesthetics drew sustenance mostly from the soil. This kind of poetry was the outcome of the nationalist consciousness created by the middle class and Indian folk writers during the freedom movement. But after the fifties it moved a step further and became quite radical. Now the creed of militant young poets felt that bullet can achieve what the ballot had not. Alok Dhanva in Hindi wrote: "This is not poetry but bullet to be shot at". Baqar Mehdi in Urdu gave vent to the angry and rebellious mood of modern poetry. Telugu Digamber (naked) poets in their figures and symbols mixed up the pleasant and the ugly. Chullikad in Malayalam took up the question of social justice and oppression while the

Marathi Dalit literature by poets like Namdev Dhasal and Narayan Surve and novelist like Laxman Gaikwad and others betrayed in the eighties the anguish of a community and demanded the shaping of a just and realistic future for the underprivileged and the outcasts. Gaikwad in his novel *The Pilferer* is more concerned with social change than the literariness of the artifact. The Kannada *Bandaya* (the rebel) are concerned with forms of violence in a classless society. Literature moved nearer to the downtrodden and the exploited. In fact, the Naxalite movement of the seventies brought with it *Uttara Adhunikta* (post-modernism) which created in the Indian literary scene a new literary orientation. This was the time when Raghuvir Sahai in Hindi published another collection of poems *Hanso Hanso, Jaldi Hanso* (laugh, laugh, laugh soon) hinting at the impending political crisis. His poem *Ramdas* was a unique document of our feeling of insecurity. When Subhas Mukhopadhyaya in Bengali thought of the son who had gone to the forest, one was bound to remember almost a whole generation of youth who were thrown behind bars or went underground in the seventies during the Naxalite movement. Manjit Tiwana in Punjabi showed her bewilderment and asked: “What times are these/sitting on the threshold of it/we ask the whereabouts/ of our home.”

The second trend came as an integral part of the modern poetic sensibility, which did not have the fire amply demonstrated in the progressive poems of the sixties, seventies and in the Dalit poetry of the eighties, but now it is more ironical, artistic and aesthetical. One could find the beginning of this direction initially in the poems of Muktibodh in Hindi or Bishnu Dey in Bengali and some others. Muktibodh says that now, “In this city, there is no sun or moon/ In the mist of conspiracy there are shadows of ghosts/ Under the slippers of Gandhi, army boots are reverberating/ The selfish baboons are sitting on the turret of the fort/ the roads are dark/ and, one can only listen to the poisonous whispers”. Bishnu De on the other hand, reveals to us the poet’s solitary struggle, his unending exploration of the beauty and dignity of human existence in opposition to the mounting crisis of uprooted identity. This is the predominant trend of the contemporary poetry. The contemporary poets in their satire and cynicism reflect a total view of their socio-cultural existence. What Bishnu De said long back, “Fear no more the dark/ Cover your face with my hands” can now evidently be found in contemporary poetry written by Joy Goswami (Bengali), Rajesh Joshi (Hindi), Balachandra (Malayalam), Chandra shekhar Patil (Kannada),

### **The urge for Uttara Adhunikta (Post-Modernism)**

It is just a coincidence that in western literature, modernism started falling apart in the 60s at the time of Vietnam, Woodstock, peace marches, race riots, demonstrations and violence. By 1968, minimalism, the last of the modernist styles, collapsed in heaps of rubble on gallery floors. In 1969 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Andre Breton’s death, a group of followers announced that the

historical period of surrealism had ended though it had some eternal values. By 1970 post-modernism became a new catchword. In place of technology, people now talked about ecology and return to nature. In place of progress and objective truth, people now talked about cooperation and interpreted truth as magical reality. The new trend was no more experimental and creation of new forms, but it veered towards the psychological and the narrational for personal content, life-like contexts, and subjective facts. Here in India modernism and post-modernism are not in opposition to each other, but they, supplement each other. One can easily restate these terms as *adhunikta* and *uttara adhunika*. *Uttara Adhunika* is not a synonym of post-modernism. It is also not used as a counter-concept to *adhunikta* or modernism. It does mean, on the analogy of *uttara mimamsa* and *purva mimamsa* of Indian philosophy, the next phase after modernism. Post-modernism arose out of conceptualist premises that art is information—while protesting its modernist aridity.

In the Indian context, *uttara adhunika* (roughly post-modernism) has arrived as a reaction to media-operated and market guided reality—a reaction to modernism of the sixties which was linked to a particular way and view of life, common in the western world and increasingly common in the affluent societies of east Asia and Latin America. It has come to challenge the very idea of Euro-centricist modernism, internationalism—the tendency to compare every literary text/ trend with some Euro-American product. Now one realizes that by borrowing things from the west one cannot bring about change and enter the realm of modernity. The elements of modernity are to be sought in our own roots and traditions—in our own realities. Our failure to bring about a true economic development, technological change and modernization is to be understood properly.

We come across many instances of writings trying to explore their roots and find their moorings, and probe whole areas of experience blurred during a period of extreme modernism of the last several decades. The Hindi poet Raghuvir Sahai bemoaned such a situation. “Can poetry change society/ No, where there is too much of art/ no change will occur”. Thayathu Sankaran in his book of criticism *Adhunikatayude Jirna Mukham* in Malayalam brought to our notice the decaying face of modernism. After a period of extreme modernism, the writers are now willing to convey the message in more direct terms. The modernist idea that anything simple should not be accepted is now questioned. It is established now that simple texts may present complex extra-textual structures. Even cultural references simply stated in poetry can have different romantic values. In fact, the contemporary writers now reflect a total view of their socio-cultural existence. The *Gangeo Pattro* group of Bengali critics called it ‘Total Poetry’. *Uttara adhunika* dramatizes the shift of dominant from problems of knowing to problems of modes of being from an epistemological dominant to an ontological one. Now in place of modernist questions like “How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it? *Uttara*

*adhunikta* raises questions like “Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it? What is a world? What kinds of world are there? The idea is to look at the self in relation to the world holistically.

When Rabindranath Tagore said, “there was a time when every (Indian) artist had the freedom of being Indian in a natural way,” he was articulating a nostalgic awareness of the past as well as the bitter reality of the present. Now in the *Uttara adhunik* era, the effort is to be natural, to be Indian, to be nearer the common man, to be socially conscious. The third generation of Malayalam writers like N. Prabhakaran, P. Surendran prefers the term anti modernism to post-modernism and are content simply to narrate human tales without any explicit social message or philosophical pretensions. Now Tamil writer like Vannanilavan sums up this mood by saying, “we have stared enough at the skies/ we have relished enough the fruits of freedom/ let us become children.” Zacharia, V.R. Sudeesh (Malayalam), Vijaydan Detha (Rajasthani), Surendra Prakash (Urdu) and others are now writing stories without any theoretical prejudices. In other words, it is developing a sense of Indianness, the manifestation of which Amitabh Gupta (Bengali) of the *Gangeo Pattro* group found first in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Bengali literature and then in the first two decades of the twentieth century literature.

### **Use of mythology and living experience**

One of the dominant trends visible in the *uttara adhunik* literature is the use of mythology to present the modern predicament. Mythic thoughts, in fact, are attempts to mediate the gaps between continuity and change, thereby authenticating the idea of ‘total poetry’ with reference to man’s existence—both mundane, and spiritual. In Agyeya’s (Hindi) poetry we find a shift towards the realization that the individual’s entity is just a humble part of the larger reality. Ramakanta Rath (Oriya) affirms in his *Radha* man’s relationship to the transcendent by using, the mythical past. In contemporary Indian poetry along with a sense of urbanity, an attitude of irony, frequent use of mythological sequences as structural images, a continuous involvement with the problems of expediency and eternity are very much visible. Playwrights like Girish Karnad, Kambar (Kannada), Mani Madhukar (Hindi), G.P. Deshpande, Satish Alekar (Marathi), Manoj Mitra and Bibhas Chakravarti (Bengali) are using myths, folk legends and religion-centric tradition to understand our present day existence. In the Indian post-modernist period, the departure from Euro-centricist modernism has created a new literary code, the socio-cultural mythical code—which is used in the organization of poetry by Kunwar Narayan (Hindi), Dilip Chitre (Marathi) Sankha Ghosh (Bengali), and in novels by Bhyrappa (Kannada), Prapanchan (Tamil) and others. Myth is now accepted as a meaningful sub-text of the literary text. Even in novels dealing with city life, the familiar frustrated young urban male protagonist lives on, on one side, with his racial unconsciousness and talks



of idealism and spirituality, and on the other feels trapped between the inner lack of freedom and progress, and the external imposition of a free and progressive existence.

In the field of novel and short-story, contemporary writers go for the material or the living experience of life. Without exception to any big social or psychological truth, the writer depicts experiences taken from dual contacts with the milieu and the environment and makes it relevant in the modern context. The genuineness of individual experience of the modern short-story writer highlights many problems of the modern society and brings us face to face with the dilemma of inter-relationship and broken values. In this process, the totality of inter-relationship and values become clear.

The contemporary short-story writer has made new experiments with structure. In this, the plot is not built up as an organic whole having a beginning, middle and an end with dramatic twists like the plot of a drama. In this, a single point of the life circle is reconstructed in a creative and artistic way. These stories unravel every aspect of the reality of life. The impact of the aesthetic value of the story does not rest in the end of the story. The conventional style of 'story telling' is discarded it obtains the help of symbols, images and other poetic means to magnify a particular moment in life. Nirmal Varma (Hindi), U.R. Ananthamurthy (Kannada), Muni Manikyam (Telugu) and many others have made their presence felt in this area. U.R. Anantha Murthy explores the relevance of some traditional values in today's changed context. His novel, *Samskara*, is a world classic which portrays the spiritual struggle of man in terms of the urgency of life's demands.

### **Regional experience**

In novels, besides the living experience, the writers show concern for the neglected regions of this vast country. The novelists dealing with a region and having a living experience of the life pattern of that area understand every feeling, need and the urge of that region. A Writer selects the life of a particular region where he has stayed but in fact projects the image of the life-pattern of the Indian people, because India still lives in villages and different regions rather than in the cities. Tara Shankar Bandyopadhyaya (Bengali), Bhagwati Charan Verma (Hindi), Phaniswar Renu (Hindi), Akhilan (Tamil) and others wrote novels to expose the abysses of passion and hopelessness, the strength and weakness, the beauty and the ugliness of the community staying in a particular region. Contemporary Indian novels by Jayamohan (Tamil), Debes Ray (Bengali), Shivprasad Singh (Hindi), dealing with various neglected regions and the spoken dialect of that area, give a composite picture of total India pulsating with new experience and struggling for keeping the old values and in the process sometimes discarding them. In this period of *uttara adhunika*, these novels dramatize the shift of the dominant from problems of knowing to problems of

modes of being. It gives a glimpse of actual India which stays in villages where people of different religions stay together. Their culture is a composite culture. It is not possible to undo this situation prevailing in Indian villages. Rahi Masoom Raza (Hindi, Urdu) explains this in a very interesting way in the introduction of his novel, *Adha Gaon (Half Village)*, “ why should I allow any-body to ask me to leave my village Gangoli and go, for example to Rai Bareli? Why shall I go, sir? I won't go.”

These novelists of a region have forcefully demolished the myths created by the western Indologists that Indianness is just fatalism or Indianness is to be identified with harmony and order and that the Indian vision cannot perceive its own reality and that the two-nation theory is to be applied to India.

Those novels are also important where the social life of the city-dwellers is delineated with all sincerity, but at the same time, without giving any importance to the pseudo and subjective formula of modernism. Though it is difficult to paint authentically the life of the city, as here, the life has many barriers and also the life of the novelist is bound with his own complexities. The central tension in the vast majority of contemporary Indian novelists is that of transition from a rural and traditional to an urban and modern situation, expressed either through a romantic nostalgia for the village left behind or through fear and hatred for the cruel impersonal city with all its sex, horror, violence and cruelty. Thakazhi Shivasankar Pillai (Malayalam), Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya (Assamese), Pannalal Patel (Gujarati), Quratulain Hyder (Urdu), Mannu Bhandari (Hindi), Nayantara Sehgal (English), Bhyrappa (Kannada), Vyasaraaya Ballal (Kannada) Vishram Bedekar (Marathi), Samaresh Basu (Bengali), and others with their rural-urban sensitivity have portrayed the Indian experience in its totality.

In short, there are some specific social phenomena shared by all Indians like the break-down of the joint family system, breakdown of the rural middle class, exploitation by politicians and the business community, the communal problem, problems of rural poverty and urban unemployment, the frustration of the educated unemployed, general middle-class taboo on sex and endless religious superstition. All these provide a common bond to the Indian novelists who combine a deep awareness of social contradictions with the modern sense of form. They are aware of the complexity of modern life and portray the psychological insight with an existentialist concern for the solitary individual and take up the questions of values from a civilisational point of view and re-examine tradition in ontological terms and in the process revolutionize the very idea of narration.

These writers are discovering their roots and a sense of belonging and trying to understand the Indian reality in terms of their past experience or tradition. Tradition in the Indian context is not a fixed entity within a time span. Indian literary concepts like *marga-desi*, (elite and folk) *shastrachara-deshachara* (elitist idiom and folk idiom), *natyadharmi-lokadharmi* (stylization and mimetic)

reveal the dialectics of continuity and change rooted in the Indian tradition. So contemporary Indian writers like Binapani Mohanty, Pravasini Mahakud (Oriya), Afsar Ahmed, Anil Ghorai (Bengali), Kumar Pash (Urdu), Surjit Pattar (Punjabi), Savitri Rajeevan (Malayalam), and K. Rajanarayanan (Tamil) and many others have their tradition as well as social questions connected with it. These writers have made an effort to retrieve, rediscover and redefine elements of culture in a creative way, by a return to pride in roots while looking ahead.

### **Desivad (Nativism) in literature**

In fact, writers and critics like Bhalchandra Nemade, G.N. Devi, Kanji Patel and Himanshi Shelat and others are in the search for a new metaphor of the socio-cultural existence of India to enable them to explore as how to develop their own modernity by absorbing traditional values as well as new innovations. This has led to a movement known as *Desivad* (nativism) in literature based on a concept of *kula* and *sheela*. *Kula* is heredity, inheritance, tradition. *Sheela* is the making of a man, his demeanour and personality which, however, are conditioned by his *kula*. *Sheela* in its own time and space goes on discarding elements of *kula* which have lost their potency and in the process generates new modes of thought and action and thereby ensures the continuity of a culture, which in turn, enriches and invigorates the *sheela* making modernity sharp and effective. *Desivad* is not an obsession with roots but has emerged more as a reaction to the hegemony of *videshi* (foreign) ideas which is at the same time not to be replaced by a counter-hegemony of sanskritic revivalism but to create an agenda of indigenism displaying cultural self-respect and autonomy of thinking of the majority of ordinary people of folk who make up the plurality of Indian civilization. It will be wrong to say that in a tradition that has been as open to transformation as ours, it is wings rather than roots that signify a living culture. One who understands the *kula* and *sheela* concept of our existence understands it well that for us both the wings and roots are important. The Indian mind has always conceived of change within a framework of continuity. Our modernism as a phenomenon or value is not an absolutely unrelated one without reference to the past or future. Nativism is a celebration of the pluralism that is at the very core of Indian culture and literature. It is the avant garde tradition of Indian writings in different languages which constitutes an attempt to nativise and analyze it with reference to *desi* as two poles of the same continuum and thus accommodate greater segments of Indian reality. It is an interrogation of the existing canons that are most often a continuation of the orientalist notions of 'Indianness' governed by wrong premises like the privileging of high textuality, the marginalization of the non canonical performative and counter hegemonic texts and trends, simplifications of our over determined literary contexts and movements and aesthetic reductivism. Most of the nativistic writers understand it well that a meaningful modernity which is truly Indian does not mean dealing

with a culture which is a monolith or literature which is a monologue. Nativism is post-colonial in its battle against the invasion of alien sensibilities and modes of feeling and articulation, while it is post-modernist in its emphasis on cultural difference. A meaningful modernity which is truly Indian, can be developed not by merging the Western modernism with the Indian realities and creating new category to go with the emergence of a new writing and critical awareness in respect of modern Indian literature in different Indian languages. In fact, in place of any synthesis of the East and the West or India's civilisational categories and the values of western modernism, if the East & the West are accepted as opposites to be interpenetrated to create a structure then that could give us the right understanding of Indian modernism. The interpenetration of India's pluralistic cultural tradition with the new elements of contemporary western civilization is to be obtained for our modernity to define its place and role in a fast changing world. *Desivad*, therefore is not a search for *swadeshi* (indigenous) and rejection of *videshi* (foreign) but *swaraj* (protection & continuation of Indian ways of thinking which is multiple by definition), a search for the creation of categories of modernism. The choice *Desivad* offers is, therefore, not tradition versus western modernism, but the choice of both versus the forced acceptance of one.

### **Dalit literature**

One of the most significant features of the post modernist era was the emergence of writings of the outcasts, as a major literary force. The word dalit means the down-trodden. The literature which is concerned with the socially under privileged, and which asserts the socio-political stature of the underdogs, is known by this name.

In fact, Dalit writers like Namdev Dhasal, Daya Pawar, Narayan Surve (Marathi), Yoseph Macwan (Gujarati), T.B. Siddalingaiah (Kannada), in their writings raise the question of social justice and oppression, and betray the anguish of a community and demand the shaping of a just and realistic future for the under-privileged and the outcasts in society. Most of the dalit poems deal with the collective memory of pain, suffering and violence the dalits have suffered over the centuries. The insurrectionary dalit literature of Marathi, Gujarati and Kannada—now coming up also in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Punjabi and other languages—that articulates the pain, indignation and fury of a most creative and imaginative segment of our people marginalized and oppressed since the time of the *srutis*, constitutes another avant-garde attempt at forging an alternative nationhood of a caste-free society. Dalit literary movement is a dialogue with the so-called high-caste Hindus. The multi-voicedness that is central to the dialogic approach manifests itself in the dalit poetry as a dramatic encounter between the collective voice of a community and the members of the same community or those who oppress them. The Marathi dalit novelist Laxman

Gaikwad is more concerned for a social change than the literariness of the artifact. Dalits now challenge the tone and content of the existing literary canon created by the *shastra* protagonists and decentralize the whole process of a literary movement. It creates an alternative aesthetics and extends the linguistic and generic possibilities of literature. Dalit poetry rejects the norms set by poetics and throws overboard classical values like propriety, balance, restraint and understatement. The diction of these poets is deliberately subversive as it challenges the middle class notions of linguistic decency and redraws the map of literature by discovering and exploring a whole new continent of experience that has so far been left to darkness, and silence. The recent phase of dalit writings seems to be more mature, sober, larger in its concerns, more conscious of form, less angry and complaining. The new generation of writers is also careful to avoid ghettoization and broaden the scope of their concerns and transcend the ideology of destructive hatred. There is even a tone of celebration of the dalit identity in the new generation writers.

The contemporary Avant-gardism movements that are mostly driven by larger humanitarian concerns and social issues like protection of ecology, search of water in villages, violence towards women, the case of corrupt politicians and mafia menace, child labour, caste discrimination have given new meaning to feminist writings and a realistic understanding of the impact of globalization of literature. In fact women's writings today is part of the larger enterprise of empowering women and this in turn join hands with other struggles for social justice on various fronts such as issues of dalits and tribal's, imperialist economic and cultural interventions, class and caste exploitation, developmental issues and environmentalists' struggle against ecological pollution. All these have received due attention in the writings of different Indian languages.

### **Women's writings**

Emancipatory women's writing has emerged strongly in all Indian languages in the contemporary times, seeking to subvert the man-dominated social order and forging revisionary myths and counter-metaphors by women writers like Kamala Das (Malayalam, English), Krishna Sobti (Hindi), Ashapurna Devi (Bengali), Rajam Krishnan (Tamil), Mahasweta Devi (Bengali) and others. Veterans like Mahasweta Devi are relentless in their exposure of the Western mode of development which is linked with the destruction of nature and oppression of women. Greed based economic development leads to impoverishment and under development of others, resulting in the degradation of *prakrati* (nature) and *nari* (women) and hence women writers are making efforts through their writings and activism to safeguard and cherish the environment by rediscovering the key position of women. Mahasweita Devi, in her story, the *Hunt* describes vividly how an illegitimate tribal women, marry Oraon, can fight to save the depredations of nature and the honour of women, who tend to be

marginalized as sex commodities only. She resurrects the real meaning of the annual hunting festival, by dealing out justice for a crime committed against the entire tribal society, against illegal deforestation, against nature, against oppression of woman. What Mary Oraon does, using violence to kill an oppressor of women, is common in Indian myths, where goddesses kill male demons to establish female power. The story not only unveils a profound ecological loss, the loss of the forest as the foundation of life, but also captures and reconstructs the insights and visions that Indian women provide in their struggle for survival.

However, the women's movement in India is different from the Western feminist movement, which seeks enemies and expresses itself through anger and confrontation, which is based on a notion of totalized oppression of women across cultures and nationalities, unleashed by the inequality of gender, patriarchy and to certain extent, capitalism. Here in India writers like Ashapura Devi, accept the feminine construct as a valid construct and use the inequality to expose marriage and widowhood, unfair work practices, sexual servitude, the problems of bearing and rearing children in poverty, gender discrimination and other forms of exploitation. Here feminism means total upliftment of the entire society, and therefore, Ashapura Devi dreams of an ideal domestic scene, where women enjoy the same rights as men, in an affirmation of human values. In the writings of Anees Jung (English) also, one finds women oppressed, as they have been always, yet they talk of fulfilling relationships, the joys of marriage and children, the exhilaration of breaking free from the bonds of rituals and exploitive social practices and they sing with joy, and pray in the name of God. Faminity, by definition, for these writers like Raji Seth (Hindi), Jaya Mitra (Bengali), Savitri Rajeevan (Malayalam), Nabaneeta Dev Sen (Bengali), Gagan Gill (Punjabi), is not a limiting factor, but an expending one - holistic, eclectic, trans-specific, and encompassing diverse stirrings. Faminity is a struggle for a certain basic principle of perceiving life, a philosophy of being. It is a principle and a philosophy that can serve not just women but all human beings.

The story, the *Hunt* by Mahasweta Devi also raises the question as how to expose the western mode of development with totalizing tendencies which is now a part of the global economic system. This system is quite evidently not sustainable and inequitable and does not allow alternate approaches to life and usurps local spaces which are spaces of taste, fragrance and sensuousness and ultimately local culture, value, significance and belief and hits at the very core of the plurality of Indian existence. It is also affecting the creativity of the writer because his value is now determined not by his literary value but by his market value and as a result avant garde writers like Kamal Kumar Majumdar (Bengali) and others are completely marginalized. However, there is a group of writers who think that globalization cannot be stopped and that is the key to progress. It has brought changes in our languages. Use of words of two languages, English and any one Indian language has entered in our language use in a big way

creating a vital relationship between local, pan-Indian and international identities which reveals the true nature of Indian literature. Acceptability and open mindedness have increased. The effect of globalization is creating a new narrative. Global grid is now acceptable. On the other side, the other group of writers thinks that the autonomy of literature is in danger. There was a time when it was said that if the writer wanted he could change the world but today the man who was in the centre of history is threatened. The information hype is new real which is now threatening the objective reality. The information technology is now turning objectivity into imagination and imagination into reality. But there is no doubt that the global cannot survive without local. The global can reach us only being local. The global has to locate itself, has to have a locus and as a result, in comparison with global the local in the post-modernist period is getting importance and becoming exclusive as a demonstration of Indian nativism. It has now become part of our self-assertion which has become possible because of the decolonization of mind asserting its difference from Euro-American universalist critical discourses and establishing the Indian identity.

### **Indian Diaspora Literature**

After the end of the imperial period Indian professionals and businessmen voluntarily emigrated to improve their prospects. The second generation, who were children of the Indian labourers also belong to this group, who with better adoptability instinct and education made a place in the society of the host country and by combining and synthesizing both cultures created a new brand of diasporic culture but as Edward Said says, it was more a schizo-phrenic nature of the expatriates reality or what Bhabha calls inter-national culture based not on the exoticism of multi culturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hibridity but for them it was definitely a liberated experience. Dev, a Punjabi poet living in Europe gives bent to this reality.

I was never much involved  
In your ecstatic joys;  
In your moment of grief, however,  
I'm one with you.  
Like the fate of an uprooted jew,  
Punjab, for your frail health  
come, lets share a last drink.

This was the second generation Indians who had a very toiling experience of existence as inferiors to a better culture and also were victims of racism. In fact their strength in maintaining their culture also has kept them apart from other ethnic groups in many places creating hard feelings and struggles for dominance that sometimes exploded to violence.

This group of the second generation which included the children of the mistreated, discriminated and underprivileged classes of migrants of the colonial times and the voluntary migrants who were professionals and academics or

businessmen who started moving to foreign countries in the 50s and 60s of the last century in search of fortune and who had close access to the mother land but had certain anxiety, if not guilt towards the homeland. The writers of this generation like V.S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie write in English. But they are not the only writers who wrote in English representing the diasporic Indian writings. However, the initial assumption was that the diasporic writings meant writings in English and barring a few top writers the rest of them occupied a kind of second space of exile and cultural solitude. Among the old diasporic writers such as Raja Rao, G.V. Desani and Kamala Markandaya grew up in India, began their writing careers in India and then for one reason or another moved to the United State or Britain. This early generation of writers articulated the problems of writing in English, of grappling with the straitjacket of mainstream English to represent the varied textures of Indian life. Raja Rao in the preface to his novel *Kanthapura* which was published in England in 1938 writes:

“The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an alien language.”

A few lines later he adds:

We in India, think quickly, we talk quickly and when we move, we move quickly. There must be something in the sun of India that makes us rush and tumble and run on. The Mahabharata has 214,778 verses and the Ramayana 48,000. The Puranas are endless and innumerable. We have neither punctuation, nor the treacherous ‘ats’ and ‘on’s’ to bother us—we tell one interminable tale. Episode follows episode, and when our thoughts stop our breath stops, and we move on to another thought. This was and is still the ordinary style of our storytelling. I have tried to follow it myself in the story.” Rao and Desani experimented with the language, ‘Indianising’ English if one wants to call it that but in different ways. While Rao attempts to provide the Cadence of Kannada in English, Desani transcribes the idiosyncrasies of Indian English to great comic effect. But the third generation diasporic writers, who settled abroad and accepted by the West by virtue of their talent, are concerned with truth as they see it in life around them. They are Vikram Seth, Amitabh Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Amit Chaudhuri, Jhumpa Lahiri and others who use English no more as a colonial language and never suggest a self-conscious distancing from their Indian situation and at the same time their use of English do not show any lack of commitment to Indianness. They have brought name and fame to them as well as their mother country. They are read by the western readers and not just by indofiles or by those who are more interested to know about India rather than to enjoy these writings as literature.

In fact these writers including Jhumpa Lahiri are honest and authentic to their experience and write about the Indians who have settled either in the United states or England and do not comment on something that they are not well-



versed in. the Indians who have settled abroad feel themselves exiled, as they are in their consciousness unable to cut off completely their umbilical chords that still bind them in their emotional crisis.

The diasporic literature in English is read both in the West and India but those diasporic authors of Indian origin who write in different Indian languages are primarily read in India by the readers of different languages areas. However, expect a few well established writers like Llokranjan Dasgupta of Germany writing in Bengali, Usha priyamvada or Susham bedi of US writing in Hindi or Abhimanyu Anant of Mauritius also writing in Hindi or Dev, Sati Kumar, Ajmer Rode of Europe, England and Canada writing in Punjabi the rest of the diasporic writers in different Indian languages are struggling hard to overcome marginality and become a strong voice in the ethnic literary discourse and also in the historiography of different Indian languages. it is a different matter that Alokranjah Das Gupta has a strong presence in the Bengali literature but by virtue of his poetic excellence and to because it is a voice from Germany or Usha Priyamvada is referred to in Hindi literature but as a novelist of merit before her migration to US. Susham Bedi's case is all together different. She has by her literary talent overcome the insider/outsider syndrome (Ashis Gupta) and has established herself in the Hindi historiography as a writer who is at home in both cultures. Similarly it can be said of Punjabi writers like Dev, Sati Kumar or Ajmer Rode who have shown, the propensity to keep the ties with one's native land and at the same time have romanticized the native land and developed new bonds within one's adopted homeland. Their texts themselves are journeys between source and target cultures, between homelands and the current place of abode or in other words des/pardes or 'imaginary homelands'. But for these Punjabi writers past is constantly in focus which empowers them to fight their battles of self-respect in their new lands and also live in mourning of the moments of trauma and with their pain of adjustment. This experience is more with those writers who have created a 'third space' for them in the diasporic Indian Literature. So says Amar Jyoti:

To live in an alien land  
to suffer, tolerate discriminations,  
the hatred of those eyes  
this is the definition of homelessness.

These diasporic writing has developed its own theoretical position privileging a double vision of mythologising of history or describing perpetual homelessness or renewal and change creating both a looking forward and a yearning backward condition. Sometimes they feel homeless in their new home or nostalgically think of their home land which they have left or create an imaginary homeland where they live and thus diasporic consciousness in Punjabi and other Indian language writings particularly moves alternatively between two sets of discourse, the older discourse of nostalgia problematising their identity of expatriation, alienation and racial discrimination and a new discourse of

absorption and transplantation and validation of their dreams and in the process resolving the conflict between continuity and disruption which is so beautifully described by Kamal Kapur:

Plonk in the middle of  
thoroughfares cars honking  
in traffic jams heat and smoke  
the thought of you stirs  
some root unseasonably thrusts  
its stem out of my  
nipples and flowers.

This is the most authentic reflection of the 'third space', writers of the Indian diaspora who have as commented by Bhiku Parekh like the banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the India way of life, spread their roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, they have several homes, and that is the only way they have increasingly come to feel at home in the new world. Members of the Indian diaspora share a diasporic consciousness. It is generated in part by a complex network of historical connections, spiritual affinities and unifying cultural memories and manifest itself in varying degrees in the literary productions of Indian communities around the world. "These writers engage in their works the complicated politics of their (dis) locations; their narratives carry the inscriptions of their complex perspectives—perspectives that are simultaneously shaped by their ethnicity, gender, migrancy and post coloniality.

The third generation of Indian diaspora mostly of young people who are unable to speak any of the Indian languages or otherwise use creole or speak Indian languages in a broken tongue, are children of migrant Indian parents who keep to the old ways and their children feel trapped by their differences, not only at the host society but at home also. However with their resilience of youth most of them find a balance and some even start appreciating aspects of their heritage culture. These young Indians speak English, German and French in a perfect natural way and are now established professionals in different fields: media, administration, corporate world and are part of establishment in their respective countries of stay. In the post modernist multi-cultural situation they are not nostalgic but curious about the sartorial, culinary, literary, cinematic and religious images of India which are transmitted across space and time through electronic networks, films and theatre linking and juxtaposing again across space and time new subjectivities within the diasporic community. Among the diasporic youth of the third generation two characteristics are very vivid: film making and Hindu Activism. The best example of film making by the professionals of third generation, is the comedy 'Goodness gracious me' which was shown on BBC channel two by young versatile Indian actors and writers which makes fun of the Indian Cultural stereotypes, highlighting generation

difference and presenting what their parents did and new the young generation hated to do that. For example:

- Parents peeled the stamps off letters that the postal service missed to mark up.
- Your more came home with napkins stuffed in her purse of the restaurant she last ate at.
- When you became part of that vicious clan who recycled wedding gifts.
- Parents took Indian snacks anywhere it says, “No food allowed” or ate the famous hamburger, no meat; water, no ice; 3 cups; and 18 ketchups please.

It even makes fun of British monarchy and different British establishments and in the process displays (a) the confidence, brightness and strength of purpose in young professional Indians (b) resistance against cliché-ridden cultural conventions and also the natural urge to establish their British identity in the multicultural set up of Britain. When one can laugh at oneself it shows maturity and confidence. And therefore one feels a little astonished to read Yasmin Jiwanie’s review of the ‘Masala’ made n US by Srinivas Krishna. The review which grudgingly bespeaks of the film and says that it presents the complexity of diaspora culture in a trivial way and repacks it for easy consumption by white Canadians. Jiwanie says very strongly that it violated Indian, made a mockery of their sense of being and betrayed them to the wider society. Yasmin Jiwanie’s readings are stereotypical as she could not understand the underneath irony and humour and trauma and memory of the film which in no way can be termed as black humour. The film is about people who are “not at home”. In fact Srinivas Krishna makes it problematic from ‘within’ the diaspora by asking questions about what ‘home’ actually means to specific diasporic groups. It is said that ‘Masala’ is the intertext of Gurinder Chadha’s ‘Bhaji on the Beach’ (Vijay Mishra). There is another film ‘Mississippi Masala’ by Meera Nair which provides a perspective from within the diaspora and addresses gender concerns through providing women a more central role in the shaping of their future (Pratyusha Basu). The latest craze is the ‘Bombay Dreams’ a play being shown in London for the last one year to the capacity crowd.

The role of these films and plays is understandable emphasizing change but Hindu activism, it can be claimed, believes in an unchanging constant tradition. By these contrasting images one can successfully project the complexities of British and American Indian youth and their creative minds. These two aspects reveal two distinct responses of the youths to the cultural differences. Here one may ask about the genesis and also aim of the Hindu movement particularly when it does not go for any internal reform but rather external representation. Is it only an approach to prove one’s separate identity? Has the vision of Hinduism anything to do with the political situation in India? It is no doubt an urge of the post modernist period to search for one’s own identity and also to establish it but more than that it is a protest against racism, against

the term ethnic which is used for the diaspora to prove that the other represents the civilized race and they, a different creature, uncivilized and inferior, skin dark and all that. There is no doubt that globalization has delinked culture from territory but in the post-modernist period roots, ethnicity, tradition have become quite important so much so that people are now realizing the threat to local culture because of the entry of globalization in the life of a nation.

It is true that both frames, films and Hindu activism represent resistance. First frame resists the popularly stereo-typed first generation Indian: gentle, submissive, overachieving and full of culture and the second frame resists the contrapuntal modernity. It is hoped that this third generation will give a new meaning to diasporic creativity.

There is a post script to this paper. It will not be proper if we ignore a large number of diasporic Indian writings which have created a deep impact by changing the quality of people's lives with the help of spiritual messages of the eternal India. They are the Gurus like Deepak Chopra, known as wellness Guru in America, whose bestselling book 'The seven spiritual laws of success' has created a stir in the minds of millions as how to realize the full potential hidden in them and understand divine intelligence directly. These Gurus are adored and on many occasions abused also because of the fear of the West in the propagation of cult worship. But most of these spiritual messages go beyond faith and religion and demonstrate an universal urge as how can one mentally and spiritually change the lives of people and make this world free of violence by spreading compassion, love and understanding among each other.

However, the most interesting aspect that one notices in Indian literature today is a fierce trend of polarization due to the onslaught of commercialism. Now the battle lines have been drawn with so much gusto that for many up and coming writers of today, commercial magazines, however prestigious they may be, are taboo. The Tamil little magazine *Ka Cha Da Tha Pa Ra* says in its manifesto, "we care a dam about those who barter literature for a living. We care two hoots for those who are keenly in search for the buttered side of the literary loaf".

It is true that little magazines like Pahal (Hindi), Anustup (Bengali), Tatparya (Marathi), Vasagan (Tamil), Rujuwatu (Kannada), Nagmani (Punjabi) are carrying on a continuous interrogation of both literary modes and social assumption and turning them into vehicles, by means of which the real vitality of a culture survives, but at the same time to draw a battle line and condemn in the name of popular literature is not acceptable to many. *Padigal*, a little Tamil magazine, says literature should not, in the name of fighting popularism, become anti-people. However commercialization and the subsequent pressure, both insidious and open, have compelled even gifted writers like Sunil Gangopadhyay and Shirshendu Mukherjee (Bengali) to churn out instant novels and then regret it in private, having written them. It is true that because of the lotus eating habit of the reader, the formula-based and easily readable novels are written, but at the

same time experimentation also continues with a clever mixture of the reader's curiosity, the publishers' handout and the critics' eulogy. In recent times, stories like *Tirich* (Hindi) by Uday Prakash or *Sooryana Kudure* (The sun's Horse) by U.R. Anantha Murthy (Kannada) became a high point for discussion in the literary circle. With the help of magic reality, they brutally expose the psychology of a sick society. In Kannada literature, one of the attempts is to grasp the significance of the culture of the collective and another to understand the dangers of the commercializing culture. If Devanoor Mahadeva, who belongs to the Bandaya movement stands for the latter, T.G. Ragava represents the former.

The present day crisis in India is the conflict between expediency and universality, and as a result, a large number of writers are in the process of identifying a pattern of problem-solving within the traditional system, vigorous enough to generate and sustain an indigenous process of modernization, which does not need readymade external solutions, and is in accord with indigenous needs and attitudes. The new crop of writers are concerned with truth as they see it in life around them. Even for the Indian English writers English is no more a colonial language. There are outstanding contemporary English writers like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Vikram Seth, Shashi Despande, Amitabh Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharur, Arundhati Roy and others who would never suggest a self-conscious distancing from their Indian situation and show lack of commitment to Indianness. Those writers who are aware of their inheritance, complexity and uniqueness, express in their work, without any conscious effort, both tradition and the actual. What is noteworthy is that Indian literature is written in many languages, but there is a vital, living relationship among them because of polyglot fluidity, inter-lingual translations, shared themes, forms, concerns, directions and movements. All these keep the ideals of Indian literature dynamically alive even today.

It is generally said that we are living in an impoverished literary age having no more stalwarts like Tara Shankar Banerjee, Pottekat, Prem Chand or Gopinath Mohanty. But what is missing in fact, is a society with enough literary perception to ensure celebrity status to new talents and thus to ensure a continuity between generations. What is further missing is a literary life, continuous exchange, a constantly open debate between writers and other members of the society who speak the language of honest men. In the present day situation, it has become impossible to recommit to a cause mobilization for collective action. We can only hope that in this new century, writers will re-establish their position.

-----