

The Indian Novel in English:  
Context, Form and Language

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This is original research and has not been previously presented  
for the award of any degree in this or any other university.

## Abstract of Thesis

The object of this thesis is to examine the Indian novel in English within the context of the cultural and literary traditions of India. I have examined three aspects of the Indo-Anglian novel - context, form and language - with reference to its religious and social background; the two dominant indigenous narrative forms, the folktale and the purana; and the Indian languages as used by Indian-language novelists to express an Indian sensibility and ethos.

Most of the Indo-Anglian novelists are firmly rooted in the Hindu tradition. Novels like Kanthapura and The Man-eater of Malgudi significantly resemble, in their point of view, Hindu religious texts like the Vishnu Purana. Both in their treatment of theme and characterisation, Indo-Anglian novels assume certain values and ideals which are typically Indian. Themes of conflict between father and son (as in The Village), husband and wife (as in The Old Woman and the Cow) or brother and brother (as in The Financial Expert) need one's awareness of the joint family as norm; and of an Indian society organised around groups rather than individuals. Appreciation of a character like the holy man, so often portrayed in Indo-Anglian fiction, is not possible without the recognition of the important place virtues like asceticism hold in Indian thought and tradition.

Though the novel is essentially a product of the West and was borrowed by Indian authors in the mid-nineteenth century, it has been considerably influenced by the folktale and the purana. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Rajmohan's Wife (1864), the first important Indo-Anglian novel, contains significant elements of the folktale. Several modern novelists realise the relevance of traditional forms of narrative in presenting an Indian reality. Raja Rao's Kanthapura is a commendable attempt to incorporate a folk form in

the body of a novel. Narayan's novels, though they start and end realistically, tend to be fantastic in the middle, as do Indian folktales. The impact of the purana can be recognised in a novel like Kanthapura or The Man-eater of Malgudi in its mode of presenting the story in the first person, from a Brahminic viewpoint, and in the conflict assuming a profoundly religious overtone.

Because the English language is alien to the Indian social and cultural ethos, the Indo-English novelist does not always succeed in conveying the subtle nuances of Indian life. Works like Nectar in a Sieve and Kanthapura show the novelists' failure to express adequately Indian village life in its appropriate idiom. Often they have to interpret Indian social customs, or literally translate Indian-language idioms and proverbs, at the risk of being either obvious or unintelligible to the English reader. Comparison of Indian-language novels like Gora (Bengali), Matira Manisha (Oriya) and Uska Bachpan (Hindi) in the original with their translations in English suggests that the difference between the Indian-language and the English texts is considerable.

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The following editions of the novels have been used in this thesis:

<u>The Bachelor of Arts,</u>	The Michigan State College Press, East Lansing, 1954.
<u>Coolie,</u>	Kutub Popular, Bombay, no date.
<u>The Dark Room,</u>	Pearl Publications, Bombay, 1960.
<u>The Financial Expert,</u>	The Noonday Press, New York, 1966.
<u>Gora (Bengali),</u>	Indian Press Ltd., Allahabad, 1920.
<u>Gora (English),</u>	Macmillan, London, 1924.
<u>The Guide,</u>	Indian Thought Publications, Mysore, 1972.
<u>A House Undivided,</u>	Hind Pocket Books, New Delhi, 1973.
<u>Kanthapura,</u>	New Directions, New York, 1967.
<u>The Man-eater of Malgudi,</u>	Indian Thought Publications, Mysore, 1973.
<u>Matira Manisha (Oriya),</u>	New Students Stores, Berhampur, Orissa, 1959.
<u>Nectar in a Sieve,</u>	Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1973.
<u>The Old Woman and the Cow,</u>	Kutub Popular, Bombay, 1960.
<u>Possession,</u>	Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1967.
<u>Rajmohan's Wife,</u>	<u>Bankim Rachanavali</u> (ed. Jogesh Chandra Bagal), Sahitya Sansad, Calcutta, 1969.
<u>Mr. Sampath,</u>	Indian Thought Publications, Mysore, 1966.
<u>Steps in Darkness,</u>	Hind Pocket Books, New Delhi, 1972.
<u>The Strange Case of Billy Biswas,</u>	Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1971.
<u>Untouchable,</u>	Kutub Popular, Bombay, no date.
<u>Uska Bachpan (Hindi),</u>	Saraswati Press, Banares, 1957.
<u>The Vendor of Sweets,</u>	Indian Thought Publications, Mysore, 1971.
<u>The Village,</u>	Kutub Popular, Bombay, 1954.
<u>Two Virgins,</u>	Chatto and Windus, London, 1974.
<u>Where Shall We Go This Summer?</u>	Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1975.

The following abbreviations have been used:

<u>B.R.</u>	<u>Bankim Rachanavali</u>
<u>Critical Essays</u>	<u>Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English</u>
<u>JCL</u>	<u>The Journal of Commonwealth Literature</u>
<u>The Man-eater</u>	<u>The Man-eater of Malgudi</u>
<u>Nectar</u>	<u>Nectar in a Sieve</u>
<u>TLS</u>	<u>The Times Literary Supplement</u>

## A Note on the Spelling of Indian Words

It is not always easy to transcribe Indian words (in Sanskrit or any other Indian language) in English. I have spelt words in the usually accepted Anglicised way: purana, and not purana; Krishna, and not Krstna, and so on. In Indian languages there are three 'sa's ( स, श, ष ), and I have used 's' for स (as Sarbojaya, and not Sharbojaya); and 'sh' for श and ष (as Krishna, and not Krisna; Shiva, and not Siva). Not only do different authors spell Indian words differently, but even the same author spells the same word in different ways.

In referring to Indian names, however, I have retained the most usual spellings: Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (not Chatterji); Bibhutibhushan Banerji (not Banerjee). 'Chatterjee' and 'Banerji' etc., are Anglicised forms of Bengali surnames such as 'Chattopadhyaya' and 'Bandopadhyaya'. And while some prefer to retain the Bengali surnames, others use the Anglicised forms, spelling them differently.

While quoting from books and journals (mostly printed in India), sometimes I have noted errors, which may be either the authors' 'Indianisms' or the printers' 'contribution'. In such cases I have quoted the text exactly, assuming that such errors are 'Indianisms'.

Indian Creative Writing in English: the Problems of Definition and Evaluation

Creative writing in English in India is a recent development and is one of the cultural consequences of the Indo-British encounter. The language originally introduced as the medium of higher education to expose the natives to Western science and philosophy, has, rather unpredictably, proved to be much more significant as the only link language in multilingual India, and the language of scholarship, science, politics and commerce. Though English is rarely spoken except by educated Indians and on formal occasions - the English-speaking Anglo-Indian community being the only exception - the modern cultural scene and the English language have been inseparable in India for the last hundred and fifty years.

An inherent sense of contradiction in the Indian approach to the role and relevance of the English language has marked the Indian language and literary scene for the last few decades. In a country that is multilingual and had known the impact of alien languages and cultures earlier, as the result of foreign invasions and subjugations, English has not been just one of the many languages; its impact has not been like the impact of any foreign language - like Persian, for example. In many respects, English has been in India a language with a difference. On the one hand, it has served Indians as their window to the wider world, particularly the Western world, as the link language inside the country and the language of all forms of modern scholarship. On the other, it has been condemned as an alien language and the legacy of the foreign rulers.

The growing importance of English as an international language and the lack of consensus among Indians to accept one of the Indian languages as their national language have further accentuated the uncertainty regarding



the role of English in India<sup>1</sup>. The considerable bulk of Indian writing that has been possible in English, particularly in the last fifty years, in the midst of such uncertainties and lack of perspective, seems amazing. This writing may be divided into three broad categories: (i) referential (all forms of scholarship, politics, philosophy, journalism, religion, etc.), (ii) creative (fiction, drama, poetry, etc.), and (iii) translation (from creative and critical works in Indian languages into English).

Critics do not seem to have taken seriously this growing body of Indian literature in English until the third or fourth decade of this century. There was, of course, occasional report of some individual author being praised by someone from England (Sarojini Naidu being appreciated by Edmund Gosse, for instance), but there is no evidence of any systematic study of this literature as such in the nineteenth or early twentieth century. And when critics seriously concerned themselves about this new literary development, their first problem was one of identification. Here was a body of literature in the English language composed by Indians or about India, and it was not clear what literary tradition it belonged to - Indian or British. It is not always easy to identify a body of literature in the initial stage of its growth. It was difficult to decide whether American literature in the beginning was a part of British literature or an independent literature in its own right. Literatures of many countries, particularly of countries having a colonial past, were derivative and imitative in the beginning. Countries like Canada, Australia and the U.S.A. did take considerable time to develop literatures with their own identity. Indian writing in English was perhaps a more baffling phenomenon than, say, writings in countries like Canada or Australia or the U.S.A. Though these countries took some time to develop a literary identity of their own, they always shared the common language, English, with England. In all these English-speaking countries, therefore, the problem was one of developing their own literary traditions. But in India, both the English

language and the tradition of writing in such a language, were new.

Critics of Indian writing in English did not, at least in the beginning, find much difference between Indians' writing in English and Englishmen's writing about India. They tended to classify all writings about India, whether by Indians or by Englishmen, under one category and tried to coin words like 'Anglo-Indian' to describe such literature. Edward Farley Oaten in A Sketch of Anglo-Indian Literature (1908) and Bhupal Singh in A Survey of Anglo-Indian Literature (1934) used the term 'Anglo-Indian' to signify the writings of both Indians and Englishmen and made preliminary surveys of these writings. Oaten, though he includes in his work Indian authors in English like Derozio, Toru Dutt and a few others, primarily means, by 'Anglo-Indian', Englishmen writing about India. In his work he discusses the situation of the British community in India and the potential of India as a source of imaginative literature. He writes:

When a colony becomes a nation, it generally becomes the parent of a literature. But inasmuch as the British community in India is neither a colony nor a nation, but little more, relatively, than a garrison, the great literary question for the Anglo-Indians was whether they should be content to import their literature, like other luxuries of life, from the home country, or should attempt to supplement it with writings of their own. 2

Oaten, in his 'Appendix', also includes Michael Madhusudan Dutt's 'Is this Civilization' which originally was written in Bengali and later translated into English. It is not clear whether by 'Anglo-Indian' Oaten also means Indian works translated into English. Singh, though he writes in his 'Introductory' that 'the survey does not exclude Indian novels written by men of nationalities other than the English'<sup>3</sup>, devotes only four and a half pages - in a book of three hundred and ten - to Indian authors in English. However, the works of Oaten and Singh have some importance as pioneering attempts in classifying and assessing Indian literature in English.

Since Oaten and Singh, critics have coined words like 'Indo-Anglian', 'Indo-English', 'Indian Writing in English' and so forth and the controversy as

to which is the most convenient term to describe such a body of literature is still going on<sup>4</sup>. Any single term agreed upon to describe such a body of literature would perhaps serve the purpose, but critics have neither been unanimous in the use of any such term nor in their definition of Indian writing in English.

The credit for elaborately surveying all forms of Indian writing in English, critical, creative and translation, and for discriminating between the two literary traditions, Indians writing in English and Englishmen writing about India, must go to Professor Srinivasa Iyengar. After Iyengar's Indian Writing in English (1962), critical awareness of Indian writing in English has acquired an impetus. No critic now puts R.K. Narayan and E.M. Forster in the same literary tradition. Professor Iyengar's term 'Indo-Anglian' to describe all forms of Indian writing in English has gained currency. In this discussion, I prefer the term 'Indo-Anglian' to any other simply because this seems to be the most acceptable to critics. However, I do not consider translations of Indian works into English, even when the translation is done by the author himself, as part of Indo-Anglian writing, as Professor Iyengar does. The term 'Indo-Anglian', in my discussion corresponds to that of Meenakshi Mukherjee's --'only the writings of those who are Indian and who have written in English'<sup>5</sup>.

The perspective of any criticism of Indo-Anglian literature considerably depends on what the critic means by 'Indo-Anglian'. In Oaten's and Singh's works, the emphasis is obviously on Englishmen's writing about India rather than on Indians' writing in English. Professor Iyengar includes Indian works translated into English as part of Indo-Anglian literature and thus, according to him, Tagore is an important Indo-Anglian poet, and he devotes two chapters - out of eighteen - to Tagore. Tagore is a Bengali poet and even though he may have done some work originally in English, is by no means a major Indo-Anglian figure. Inclusion of his name (the only Indian author so far to get the Nobel prize) may create a wrong impression of the Indian achievement in

English. Again, Indo-Anglian writing is obviously a product of two cultures, Indian and Western, and both the Indian and Western literary traditions should be emphasised as the background of Indo-Anglian writing. Professor Iyengar's limitation of his discussion to Indian and Bengali works alone in order to suggest the background of Indo-Anglian fiction (in the chapter, 'The Novel: Themes, Backgrounds, Types') might be misleading.

Modern critics like C.D. Narasimhaiah, C. Paul Verghese, Meenakshi Mukherjee, William Walsh and H.M. Williams are, however, clearly in favour of discriminating between the two types of works - works originally done in English, and works translated from Indian languages into English. Broadly, the tendency now is to divide all writings in English about India and by Indians into three categories: (i) writings about India by Englishmen like Kipling and Forster (the term 'Anglo-Indian' is sometimes used to mean such writing, and in my discussion I use the term in this sense); (ii) writings done by Indians originally in English (Indo-Anglian writing); and (iii) Indian-language works translated into English (Indian literature in translation). Whereas the first and the third categories of writings are easily definable and identifiable (though 'Anglo-Indian' may not always be the right label to put on the writings of Englishmen writing about India, since there is an Anglo-Indian community in India whose literature, however insignificant, is composed in English), the second category, 'Indo-Anglian', still creates problems and deserves more attention as it is sometimes not easy to define the term 'Indian'.

And one may raise other questions relevant to Indo-Anglian writing: is Ruth Praver Jhabvala Indian? If she is Indian, what about Raja Rao, Santha Rama Rau and Ved Mehta? Are they not Americans? Is Kamala Markandaya Indian or British? Is it proper to include Derozio, Toru Dutt and Ruskin Bond in the same literary tradition, when the mother-tongue of Derozio and Bond is English but that of Dutt is Bengali? Are authors like Zulfikar Ghose and Ahmed Ali Indo-Anglians?

One can see that authors termed 'Indo-Anglians' by critics do not constitute a very homogeneous group and it is possible to divide them into several sub-groups. In spite of their common preference for English as the medium of expression, they have enough variety in their backgrounds to suggest that their problems and attitudes are not always the same. In my study I shall use the term 'Indo-Anglian' to refer to Indian authors whose mother-tongue is an Indian language and for whom English is the second language; thus authors like Narayan and Rao, whether they live in Mysore or Texas, are Indo-Anglians. (It is possible though to see the difference of situation between authors living in India and writing in English, and authors living abroad and writing in English.)<sup>6</sup> Authors like Derozio and Ruskin Bond clearly belong to a literary tradition different from that of Narayan and Rao. Because of the scarcity of literary output by Indians for whom English is the mother-tongue, critics so far include these authors in the Indo-Anglian scene. If and when there is a considerable body of literature produced by Anglo-Indians (not to be confused with the sense in which Kipling and Forster are called Anglo-Indians) and other English-speaking Indians, it is likely to be different from the rest of the writings in English by Indians. For the time being, authors like Derozio may be accepted as Indo-Anglians<sup>7</sup>. Ruth Praver Jhabvala, her mother-tongue being Polish, is neither an Indo-Anglian nor an Anglo-Indian, and we may consider her, as she herself puts it, 'as one of those European writers who have written about India.'<sup>8</sup> I do not consider authors like Zulfikar Ghose and Ahmed Ali as Indo-Anglians, because since the Partition, they have been considered (and they consider themselves<sup>9</sup>) Pakistanis. Critics like Klaus Steinvorth who suggest that authors of the sub-continent should be studied together, as 'the Indian sub-continent cannot be divided according to cultures, languages and religions'<sup>10</sup>, surely have a point, and two Urdu-speaking English writers, the Indian K.A. Abbas and the Pakistani Zulfikar Ghose, may be closer to each other than a Kannada-speaking Indian, Raja Rao, and a Punjabi-speaking Indian, Anand. But for convenience, I do not consider authors of Bangladesh or Pakistan as Indo-

Anglians. With the partition of the sub-continent, in different countries different literary traditions, if not identifiable at the moment, are likely to emerge in future.

\* \* \* \*

Since Indo-Anglian literature was taken seriously by scholars like Professor Iyengar and courses on Indo-Anglian literature were offered in Indian and foreign universities, a number of critical works have appeared in India and abroad. However, the quantity of this critical output far outweighs its quality. The uncertainty that hangs around the English language in India has created a very uncongenial atmosphere both for the critic and the creative writer. Most of the discussions by Indians about Indo-Anglian writing have started with questions whether Indians should or could write in an alien language. While some Indian critics have debunked Indian creative writing in English as absurd and ridiculous, others have claimed the English language to be more suitable than Indian languages for creating a true Indian literature<sup>11</sup>. Needless to say, all these discussions have contributed little to the assessment of Indo-Anglian literature as literature. Many of the Western scholars, on the other hand, seem to have taken an interest in Indo-Anglian literature for reasons that are sociological rather than literary. While some have made the mistake of considering Indo-Anglian as the only or the most important form of literature produced in India, others have been amazed at the strange (and hence, beautiful) forms of English that Indians could write. That an Indian has command over English has often been considered a sufficient reason for praising the literature he has composed in it.

The body of critical writings available so far consists mostly of surveys of Indo-Anglian literature from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, or sociologically oriented analysis of the content of this literature. Professor Iyengar's Indian Writing in English, P.P. Mehta's Indo-Anglian Fiction: An

Assessment (1968) and C. Paul Verghese's Problems of the Indian Creative Writer in English (1971) (the title of the book is rather misleading) are valuable as survey works; and C.D. Narasimhaiah's The Swan and the Eagle (1969) and A.V. Krishna Rao's The Indo-Anglian Novel and the Changing Tradition (1972) provide excellent analyses of the social content of Indo-Anglian works. Recently a number of books on individual Indo-Anglian authors have appeared<sup>12</sup>, but apart from providing some more information about the personal life of the authors, these works have not contributed much to the understanding and appreciation of their works. Steinvorth's work is a neat study of the background of Indo-Anglian literature rather than of the literature itself. Several books published by the Sahitya Akademi, the Indian P.E.N. and Mysore University<sup>13</sup>, and journals like Quest, The Miscellany and Indian Literature can increase one's awareness of the Indian literary scene in general as well as the Indo-Anglian scene in particular.

Among the few attempts made so far to assess Indo-Anglian literature as a literature composed in a bilingual and bicultural situation, Meenakshi Mukherjee's The Twice Born Fiction (1971), M.E. Derrett's The Indian Novel in English: A Comparative Approach (1966), David McCutcheon's Indian Writing in English: Critical Essays (1969) are significant. Mrs. Mukherjee in her 'Preamble' promises 'to analyse and evaluate the selected novels against the background of the Indian literary scene and to investigate the conditions which are responsible for certain marked trends in the themes and techniques of these novels'.<sup>14</sup> Mrs. Mukherjee does not quite fulfil her promise but her analysis of some of the recurring motifs like 'renunciation' helps us to understand better the Indianness of Indo-Anglian literature. Though Mrs. Mukherjee in 'The Problem of Style' suggests the necessity of changing the English syntax and idiom etc., in order to make the language a more suitable medium for the Indian author, she does not make it clear how far this change would meet the author's need to convey adequately an Indian ethos. M.E. Derrett seems handi-

capped by her total ignorance of any Indian language (presumably she knows about the historical and social contexts), and her only way of reading an Indian-language work was through English translation. Because of this, she is not in a position to know the difference between the original Indian-language work and the Indian-language work translated into English. Thus, many of her observations regarding the comparison of Indian-language literature and Indo-Anglian literature lack authenticity.

David McCutcheon, whose premature death has been a great loss to Indian literature as well as to Indian art (he completed a work on Bengali terracotta temples not long before his death), has made a significant contribution toward placing Indo-Anglian literature in the right perspective. Being a native speaker of English and also having lived in India and learnt Bengali, McCutcheon was in a unique position to evaluate Indo-Anglian literature. His Indian Writing in English: Critical Essays and book reviews published in journals like The Miscellany and Quest offer fresh insights into the problem and perspective of Indo-Anglian criticism which deserve more attention than they have received so far. McCutcheon points out that most of the critical judgements on Indo-Anglian literature have been biased by the assumption that English was hardly the natural medium for the Indian author:

From the very beginning the judgement of Indian writing in English has found itself beset with peculiar hazards. On the one hand it has been coddled with amazement - treated as a phenomenon rather than a creative contribution. Among Englishmen the reaction was complicated by imperial pride in the protégé who learnt his lesson well. From the Indian side the reaction is complicated by national pride, the desire that Indians can do it - against odds. 15

He suggests that it is irrelevant to emphasise 'cosmopolitanism' or 'Indianness' - as many critics do - to show the achievement of Indian writing in English. Though 'more and more inclined to agree with those who affirm that English as a medium of expression works as a barrier against real insight into the Indian



mind and circumstances<sup>16</sup>, McCutcheon does not rule out the possibility of a genuine Indian literature in English:

It would require very exceptional gifts and total bilingualism to express directly in English the lives of people who themselves do not speak English. 17

Though half a dozen critical works have appeared since Mukherjee, Derrett and McCutcheon published theirs, no significant breakthrough has been made in the criticism of Indo-Anglian literature. It is however a healthy sign that in some of the recent works sufficient attention has been paid to hitherto neglected authors like T. Ramakrishna and A.S.P. Ayyar (Uma Parameswaran has a long essay on these early Indo-Anglian novelists in her A Study of Representative Indo-English Novelists, 1976), and Isvaran and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya (G.S.B. Gupta devotes most of the pages of his Essays on Indian Writing in English, 1975, to these poets). S.K. Desai's Experiments with Language in Indian Writing in English (1974) is an anthology of research papers primarily meant to list the Indianisms in the language of Rao, Anand, Narayan, Malgonkar, Singh and Markandaya; and the work seems to be more useful for students of linguistics than of literature. Indo-Anglians' use of Indianisms (Rao's moulding of English sentences in the syntax of Kannada, Anand's literal translation of Punjabi and Hindi idioms and proverbs, etc.) is of course well known. But what still remains to be adequately explained is how far the use of Indianisms conveys an Indian ethos in an alien language. A textual comparative study of Indo-Anglian and Indian-language works is perhaps what is most needed to suggest the difference between Indo-Anglian and Indian-language literatures as created by the use of English and the Indian languages. Nonetheless, Desai's work will be a valuable source of information for students studying any aspect of the language of Indo-Anglian fiction. Raji Narasimhan's Sensibility Under Stress (1976) occasionally offers valuable insights into understanding Indo-Anglian literature, but a lack of perspective limits the usefulness of her work.

It is, however, by no means easy to assess Indo-Anglian literature composed in a bilingual and bicultural situation. The Indian scholar's lack of

inwardness with the English language and the Western scholar's ignorance or lack of adequate knowledge of the Indian languages and context are the natural handicaps in the evaluation of Indo-Anglian literature. Besides, there seems to be widespread prejudice about such a form of writing which distorts the critic's assessment. (Klaus Steinvorth in his work sees the critics of Indo-Anglian literature as belonging to six categories, each with its bias and prejudice<sup>18</sup>.) Many of the Western critics are clearly interested in Indo-Anglian (and Indian-language) literature as a means to understanding Indian sociology, anthropology and psychology. Kai Nicholson's Social Problems in Indo-Anglian and Anglo-Indian Novels (1972), as the title suggests, is a study of Indian literature as sociology. Dorothy M. Spencer's 'Introductory Essay on Indian Society, Culture and Fiction'<sup>19</sup> is a typical example of a Western critic's tendency to interpret Indian literature as sociology. The translators of the two Indian-language classics, Premchand's Godan and Bibhutibhushan Banerji's Pather Panchali, suggest that their interest in these works is not purely literary<sup>20</sup>. We are even told that in an American university a number of Indo-Anglian novels were included in a course on sociology<sup>21</sup>. And critics like William Walsh who have made pioneering efforts to evaluate Indo-Anglian literature as literature and to introduce it to the West, clearly fail to place this literature in the context of Indian literary tradition as a whole. It may not be out of place here to mention that most of the critical works published so far by Indians have been written by students and teachers of English, and originally as dissertations for university degrees.

Indo-Anglian literature can be seen in two perspectives: as a part of Indian literature, and as a part of the literature composed in English all over the world. The balanced criticism, however, is likely to place Indo-Anglian literature somewhere in between. By its very nature, Indo-Anglian literature is a product of two cultures, and literary critics, in its assessment, have to face problems which, hitherto, they have not had to face anywhere else.

Literary criticism generally aims to place a literature in the context of the literary tradition of the country or the language-area in which it is composed. Australian, Canadian, American or West Indian literatures, until they were recognised as having their own literary traditions, were viewed as part of the literary tradition of the English-speaking world. A common language, which symbolises a common cultural heritage, made critical assessment of these literatures comparatively simple. But it is not easy to assess a literature produced in a country having a long and rich literary and cultural tradition, but written in a language almost totally alien to such a tradition. We can see that the problems faced by the critics of African literature in English are very similar to those faced by the critics of Indo-Anglian literature, and Edgar Wright's observations about African literature are applicable to Indo-Anglian literature as well. The following statement by Edgar Wright fully applies to Indo-Anglian literature if we read 'Indian' in place of 'African':

Both in matter and manner, content and style, culture and language, interests and expression (to use some of the common critical terms of opposition), modern African literature in English has roots and contexts that lie outside the traditional cultural and linguistic soil which has nourished the literature of the west. The western world, not simply the English-speaking elements but the whole European tradition, has been influenced by Greek thought; the study of the Greek and Latin literature, thought, even grammar, was the basis of all education from the renaissance until the end of the nineteenth century. Aristotle and others are (quite rightly and legitimately) alive and well in the literary theories of the west, though now jostled and sometimes ignored by a swarm of later arrivals. 22

As a part of the literature composed in English, Indo-Anglian literature has its closest parallel in African literature in English, and it will be revealing if critics make comparative studies in these two literary areas. Both Africa and India are multilingual and in the recent past have had similar experience of colonial rule and political, religious and linguistic influence from Britain or the West. Both Africa and India have been witnessing a transition from their traditional culture based on an agricultural economy to the

modern or Western culture based on an industrial economy. Both African and Indian societies have recently been considerably detribalised and secularised under the scientific humanistic impact of the West, and now seek a healthy synthesis between their native culture and the culture of the West.

In relation to their linguistic situations also, the African and the Indian writer in English offer grounds for comparison. In Africa and India, after the end of colonial rule, English has been retained and more and more authors are writing in English and trying to convey their native experience in a medium which so far has had exclusively a Western cultural context. By the process of writing creatively, however, both the African and the Indian authors are trying to establish a new relationship with this medium of expression. Comparison of two works like Raja Rao's Kanthapura and Gabriel Okara's The Voice in regard to their attempts to mould the English language to convey the native sensibility, or Narayan's The Man-eater of Malgudi and Chinua Achebe's No Longer at Ease as studies in post-colonial situations can indeed be revealing. But all these similarities need not make one lose sight of the important differences between the African and the Indian situations. India has a long literary and philosophic tradition of its own, distinct from that of any other land, whereas in Africa, with its oral and folk tradition, written literature in English or African languages is a new development in its cultural history, except for those areas with an Arabic or Swahili tradition.

Because a long literary tradition existed in India prior to the introduction of European literature, it is much more appropriate and relevant to assess Indo-Anglian literature as a part of Indian literature. Now, with the emergence of writing in English in many non-English speaking countries, critics are of course becoming more and more aware of the indigenous tradition of writing in each country and Indo-Anglian literature is viewed as a part of Indian literature. But being a literature composed in a Western language, unlike other branches of Indian literature which are in Indian languages, it is in some way different from the rest of Indian literature, and perhaps demands different criteria for

its evaluation. The critic of Indo-Anglian literature has to find out, on the one hand, how far Indo-Anglian literature conforms to Indian literary tradition (including the contemporary tradition of Indian-language writing), and on the other, how far the experiment of conveying an Indian sensibility in a Western medium is being successful.

It must be clear from the beginning that the Indianness of Indo-Anglian literature is not simply due to its being a literature about India or Indians; and authors like Kipling, Forster and Jhabvala, in spite of their writings about India and Indians, are outside the Indian literary tradition. (It is possible though that Anglo-Indian authors might occasionally be quite close to the Indian literary tradition<sup>23</sup>.) Most of the critics seem to discover the Indianness of Indo-Anglian literature in its documentary or exotic content, whereas the true Indianness has to be discovered somewhere else - in the modes of perception of the authors perhaps; and critics looking for the Indianness of this literature have to look beneath its exotic content. The simple fact that this literature so far has attracted the attention of critics and readers mainly for its exotic value - it being studied as sociology and so on - amply suggests that it has not yet been appreciated as literature. The comment made by the distinguished critic of Indian art, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, regarding art, is no less true regarding literature:

For so long as the work of art appears to us in any way exotic, bizarre, quaint or arbitrary, we cannot pretend to have understood it. 24

Indo-Anglian literature and all Indian-language literatures in their modern forms are no doubt the result of the introduction of English language and literature in India, and have a history starting somewhere in the mid-nineteenth century, but they are also in continuation with a long literary tradition, a tradition that is thousands of years old (the Rig Veda being composed in 500 B.C., if not earlier). It is true that Indian authors in the mid-nineteenth century invariably modelled their works, both in prose and

poetry, after British or Western works: Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the first important Indian novelist, modelled his works after Scott's; Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the first Indian poet to introduce blank verse, imitated Milton, and so on. But both in their forms and world views they did remain considerably Indian and true to their tradition. Critics are yet to emphasise adequately how the Indian literary tradition survives in Indo-Anglian literature: how, for instance, traditional forms of narrative such as the purana and the folk-tale have influenced the form of the novel; or how the Hindu view of life and reality has survived in the world view of the novelist. They should also be sufficiently aware of the social and cultural backgrounds of Indo-Anglian literature, and of the fact that being a literature about a non-Western society, its evaluation by Western critical standards may not always be relevant. Common allegations such as the one that the novel, being a Western form, cannot flourish in India, or that Indian authors have poor command over the novel form (made by Kroeber and Naipaul, among others)<sup>25</sup>; suggestions that Indians must always look to the West for literary models (such as Forster makes)<sup>26</sup>; these are based on the assumption of the inviolability of the Western standard of the literary form or the purpose of literature. Adequate awareness of Indian social and cultural backgrounds and the Indian literary tradition might show, for instance, that authors like Kamala Markandaya, very favourably received in the West as 'authentically Indian', are in fact far from being so.<sup>27</sup>

For a true understanding of the nature and quality of Indo-Anglian literature, it is important to understand the situation in which the English language operates in India, and how it differs from the situation in which the Indian languages operate. Evaluation of Indo-Anglian literature based on assumptions such as 'English is one of the languages in which Indian literature is composed', or English 'is used by one and a half million out of a population of over 380 million' are too simplistic, and might even be misleading.

English is not just one of the languages in which Indian literature is composed. The fifteen major Indian languages like Hindi, Bengali and Tamil have their clearly defined boundaries (Indian states are organised on the basis of language), cultural contexts and publishers' markets; whereas English, the only pan-Indian language, has neither a home-state in India in which an audience is clearly defined, nor markets necessarily inside the country. The one and a half million who 'use' English, it must be clearly remembered, also 'use' another language which is their mother-tongue; and they use English and their mother-tongue in different contexts and situations. There is no Indian dialect of English as there are African or West Indian dialect; and it is utterly misleading for authors and critics to equate the English language in India with that in the U.S.A. or Ireland. In India, English is not a spoken language in the sense it is in the U.S.A. or Ireland; and a dialect of a language grows only when it is spoken by the masses, and not if some authors fashion a language in a particular way.

English and Indian languages in India, broadly speaking, operate in two different situations, enjoy different status and are associated with two different sets of values. English is the language of higher education, journalism, commerce and administration; and it is used by educated Indians on formal occasions, education in India being almost synonymous with Western education imparted through the English language. Being the language of the ruling class until recently, it is considered, even now, the language of prestige and power, and is accepted as the language of sophistication and modern (Western, that is) values and culture. Most of the modern institutions in India, like the Parliament and the university, are Western, and English seems to be the appropriate language to be used in these situations. Indian languages, on the other hand, are used in personal and social relationships, on religious and ceremonial occasions, and have the flavour of traditional and rural India into which Western education and the English language have not

penetrated. English and Indian languages are at two different stages of development; the English-knowing Indian and the Indian innocent of English live in two different worlds and often share two world views; and works composed in English and Indian languages are meant for two types of audience and enjoy different marketability. Most of the works in English are published in England or the U.S.A., the two important centres of creative writing in English; whereas, obviously, most of the Indian-language works appear from provincial towns in India.

This inherent difference in the situation of English and the Indian languages results in complex differences in themes, techniques and even points of view of Indo-Anglian and Indian-language works. The exotic nature of Indo-Anglian literature and recurring themes like the East-West encounter clearly show either the Indo-Anglian's intention to appease the Western audience, or to treat a theme to fit to the genius of the English language in the Indian situation. Comparatively poor performance in poetry and the dearth of drama in Indo-Anglian literature perhaps suggest the Indo-Anglian's lack of the sense of rhythm and colloquialism and the absence of an oral tradition in English in India; and significantly, the most commendable achievement in Indian creative writing in English, in recent years, has been in fiction.

No significant attempt has been made so far to compare Indo-Anglian with Anglo-Indian or Indian-language literature. Comparison of Indo-Anglian with Indian-language literature is obviously much more difficult than with Anglo-Indian literature for two reasons: firstly, most of the Indian-language works are not available in English or in any common language; secondly, Indian-language works are likely to lose much of their original flavour when translated into English. Any comparative study of Indo-Anglian and Indian-language literatures, though it should take into account the difference in the situations in which English and Indian languages operate, should also



emphasise the role of the English language and the literature available in this language as the common source of inspiration for both the Indo-Anglian and the Indian-language writer. The Indian-language writer is generally as well-versed in English as the Indo-Anglian, and Indian-language literatures are considerably influenced by Western masters and Western literary traditions. There is hardly any truth in observations made by Anand and others that Indo-Anglians are the 'avant-garde' writers of India and serve as a 'bridge' between the East and the West<sup>28</sup>. Indian-language writers like Tagore and Michael Madhusudan Dutt have done much more than Indo-Anglians to bring together the literary traditions of the East and the West. While it is obvious that a Bengali writer like Tagore has influenced Indian writers in all languages, including English, there is no evidence of any Indo-Anglian writer exercising similar influence on Indian authors in general. It is also not true that Indian-language writers are always read in English translation in language-areas other than their own, nor that any influence an Indian-language writer has on writers outside his language-area, is through the English language. Hindi authors like Premchand are read in the original in non-Hindi speaking states such as West Bengal, Orissa, Assam and Punjab; and Bengali authors like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Tagore are read in the original in non-Bengali states such as Orissa and Assam. An average Indian writer, besides his mother-tongue and English, knows one or two Indian languages. (Narayan observes, 'Every writer in my country is influenced at least by four languages at a time<sup>29</sup>'.) Many of the prominent Indo-Anglians, including Rao, Anand, Khushwant Singh and K.A. Abbas, started their literary career in Indian languages and later switched to English. But there must be many, who with commendable study in English language and literature, have continued to pursue their literary career in Indian languages.

The choice of medium between English and the Indian languages is however a very complex issue and does not at all suggest that the Indo-Anglian

with his command of the English language is more aware of the modern literary trends and techniques than the Indian-language writers are. The controversy regarding the suitable medium for the Indian creative writer is often between scholars who are equally intimate with English language and literature, and should not be confused with the controversy between traditionalists and moderns. Though the majority of Indians living in the countryside are illiterate, have no contact with Western education and the English language, and speak a language which in its diction and flavour is medieval, the Indian languages as spoken or written by educated Indians have recently changed considerably, syntactically and semantically, under the influence of English<sup>30</sup>.

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In the following pages I have endeavoured to place the Indian novel in English in the social, cultural and linguistic contexts of India. My concern is primarily with the modern novel - the novel written after the thirties - as there were neither many novels written before that period, nor was there any novel with great literary merit. In fact the Indo-Anglian achievement in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century seems to be in verse rather than in prose; and Indo-Anglian fiction has attained its present status, both in quality and quantity, by the contribution of modern novelists like Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Khushwant Singh and Sudhin Ghose. In this study, I have referred to novels by Rao, Narayan, Anand, Markandaya, Anita Desai and Arun Joshi. I have selected those novels for my study which, I thought, were more suitable for my purpose - that is, novels which need, for their appreciation, an awareness of those aspects of Indian social, cultural and linguistic contexts which I discuss. My exclusion of novelists like K. Nagarajan, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Sudhin Ghose, and of many important works by the novelists discussed in this study, does not suggest that those novelists or those novels are less important or

less Indian. But I believe that the novels selected are representative of modern Indo-Anglian fiction in general, both in theme and technique.

Apart from the ones written in the said period, the only other novel I have selected for study is Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Rajmohan's Wife. It is the first important Indo-Anglian novel (serialised in an Indian journal in 1864), and the first novel by an author who wrote all his other works in an Indian language and became the most influential novelist in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Curiously, critics so far have ignored this novel (it was out of print for many years), though it is important for an understanding of much of the nineteenth century fiction writing in India. This novel is particularly remarkable as it shows a transition in the Indian narrative form - from the folktale and the purana to the novel - and it combines elements of both, the folktale and the novel, a fact which we notice in the most recent Indian novels.

I have studied the Indo-Anglian novel with reference to its social and religious backgrounds, form and language (without implying that these aspects can be mutually exclusive). Human relationships in India are often determined by values and habits significantly different from those in the West, and to one unaware of the Indian social background much of the meaning of the theme and characterisation of a novel might be lost. The religious background, however, seems more important than the social. The Hindu tradition, both in its literary and philosophic aspects, is clearly manifest in the body of the Indo-Anglian novel; and it is this tradition which seems to influence vitally the form of the novel as well as the world view of the novelist. The influence of the most dominant Hindu literary form, the purana, on the form of the Indo-Anglian novel; and the Indo-Anglian novelist's sharing of the Hindu view of life and reality; these are two important factors which make the Indo-Anglian novel distinctly different from the Western novel, and perhaps suggest that the novel form, which was borrowed from the West, has already taken a different shape under the Indian sun. The similarities of novels like The Man-eater of

Malgudi and Kanthapura with the Vishnu Purana and other religious texts might prove how the Indo-Anglian novel is puranic in form and Hindu in world view.

The form of the Indo-Anglian novel is perhaps the most misunderstood of all its aspects. Most critics seem to assume that it is a European art form with an Indian content. In fact it is doubtful if European art form and Indian content can ever be inter-blended without changing and affecting each other's nature. The similarities of the Indo-Anglian novel with the purana and the folktale suggest that the European form, while dealing with the Indian content, has already got itself Indianised. The folktales which I have analysed, it may be seen, contain elements which we should not fail to notice in the Indo-Anglian novel. The play of fancy in Narayan's The Financial Expert, for instance, is as strong as it is in some of the folktales referred to in my study.

I have chosen two novels, Kanthapura and Nectar in a Sieve, which deal with village life and with situations to which the English language and the values associated with that language have no access (or had no access when the novels were written), to suggest how the novelists attempt to convey an Indian village ethos in a Western medium. I have also compared the originals of three Indian-language novels (written in Oriya, Hindi and Bengali) with their English translations to show how the English language acts as a barrier to communicating in English what one could communicate in an Indian language. My personal experience as a student and teacher of English, as a writer in Oriya and a translator from Bengali and Hindi to Oriya, has, I believe, given me some insight into the problems of the Indian writer in English who operates in a bilingual (sometimes in a tri- or quadrilingual) situation.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Indian constitution, in Article 343, originally envisaged that Hindi would be the only official language of the country. But later the constitution was amended and under Section 3 of the Official Languages Act, 1963, provision was made to continue English, along with Hindi, indefinitely (See India, A Reference Annual, 1968, Publications Division, New Delhi, p.25). Thus, it may seem, English has at last come to stay in India for good. But the uncertainty regarding the role of English in the country still persists. The Hindi-speaking North Indian states are discouraging the study of English, and several Indian universities are replacing English with Indian languages as the medium of instruction.
2. A Sketch of Anglo-Indian Literature, London, 1908, p.3.
3. A Survey of Anglo-Indian Literature, London, 1974, p.B.
4. The participants of a seminar on Indian writing in English at the University of Mysore in 1968, perhaps the last important seminar on the subject to date, could not agree upon a common term to describe such a body of literature (See A. Wendt's 'Summary Account of the Seminar on Indian Writing in English', Indian Literature of the Past Fifty Years, 1917-1967, edited by C.D. Narasimhaiah, Mysore, 1970, p.350).
5. The Twice Born Fiction, New Delhi, 1971, p.15.
6. It might be interesting to record here that Prafulla Mohanty, a London-based Indian painter and author (My Village, My Life, London, 1973) told me in a conversation that the situation of the Indian author - whether he lives in India or abroad - is a very important factor in determining his theme and technique. P. Lal, in an article 'Contemporary Indian Fiction in English', goes to the extent of suggesting that Indo-Anglians living abroad and Indo Anglians living in India belong to two different literary traditions (Indian Literature of the Past Fifty Years, 1917-1967, edited by C.D. Narasimhaiah, Mysore, 1970, p.30 ).
7. In a recent conversation with me, Mrs. Meenakshi Mukherjee agreed that Indo-Anglians whose mother-tongue is English, and Indo-Anglians whose mother-tongue is some Indian language, can easily be seen as belonging to two different literary traditions.
8. See Ramlal Agarwal's 'An Interview with Ruth Praver Jhabvala', Quest, 91, September-October, 1974, p.36.
9. Ahmed Ali, after the Partition, joined the Pakistan Foreign Service. Zulfikar Ghose, though he had migrated to England long before the Partition, writes in his Confessions of a Native Alien (London, 1965, p.2.), 'If I wanted a nationalist label, I would call myself an Indo-Pakistani'.
10. The Indo-English Novel, Wiesbaden, 1975, p.2.

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

11. Indian journals like The Literary Criterion (Mysore) and The Miscellany (Calcutta) generally champion the cause of Indo-Anglian writing. Quest (Bombay) seems to be non-partisan and publishes criticism made both by the protagonists and opponents of Indo-Anglian literature. To get an idea of the nature of controversy regarding the adaptability and suitability of the English language for the Indian author, two essays, one by J. Dutta, a Bengali writer (Quest, 28, January-March, 1961) and another by P. Lal, the Indo-Anglian poet and editor of The Miscellany (Quest, 29, April-June, 1961) may be seen.
12. Arnold-Heinemann, New Delhi is planning to publish a series of books on individual Indo-Anglian novelists. Already books on Raja Rao (C.D. Narasimhaiah, 1973); R.K. Narayan (P.S. Sundaram, 1973); Mulk Raj Anand (M.K. Naik, 1973); Manohar Malgonkar (G.S. Amur, 1973) and Sudhin N. Ghose (Shyamala A. Narayan, 1973) have appeared.
13. The Sahitya Akademy and the P.E.N., besides publishing books on Indian literature (both in English and Indian languages), organise seminars on Indian literature from time to time. Books published by the Sahitya Akademy and the P.E.N. provide valuable information about Indian literature in general. But it must be mentioned that the authors of these books (or the participants of the seminars whose papers or discussions are published) do not seem to follow any common critical criteria, are not sufficiently aware of the literary developments in language-areas other than their own, and often exaggerate the achievements of their literatures. These books may not always be safe guides to students of comparative literature.
14. The Twice Born Fiction, New Delhi, 1971, p.15.
15. The Miscellany, 29, 1968, p.7.
16. *ibid*, p.11.
17. *ibid*, p.11.
18. The Indo-English Novel, Wiesbaden, 1975, pp.8-29.
19. Indian Fiction in English, Philadelphia, 1960.
20. Gordon C. Roadarmel, the translator of Godan, justifies the translation of Godan into English as '...its portrayal of both village and urban society will undoubtedly continue to have relevance for the understanding of India for many generations' (The Gift of a Cow, London, 1968, p.x). 'The immediate appeal of Pather Panchali', say T.W. Clark and Tarapada Mukherji, the translators of the work into English, is 'its vivid, moving and utterly authentic portrayal of village people and their day to day life' (Pather Panchali, London, 1968, p.12).
21. See Sujit Mukherjee's 'The Indo-Anglian Novel as Best Seller', Quest, 65, April-June 1970, p.37.
22. The Critical Evaluation of African Literature, London, 1973, p.5.

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

23. For instance, Kipling's story, 'The Miracle of Puran Bhagat', as a Russian critic rightly points out, displays the author's understanding of 'the national essence of Indian character'. (E.J. Kalinnikova, 'India in Indian Writing in English and British Writing', Problems of Modern Indian Literature, Calcutta, 1975, p.182 ).
24. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Introduction to Indian Art, Delhi, 1969, p.83.
25. A.L. Kroeber, in his article 'The Novel in Asia and Europe' (The Nature of Culture, Chicago, 1968), commenting on the absence of the novel in India, suggests that while its development 'may have been inhibited partly by the epic... a larger factor is likely to have been the Hindu penchant for extravagant exaggeration, which alone would be fatal to the novel as here defined' (p.413). V.S. Naipaul observes in An Area of Darkness (London, 1968): 'Indian attempts at the novel further reveal the Indian confusion. The novel is of the West. It is part of that Western concern for the condition of men, a response to the here and now. In India thoughtful men have preferred to turn their backs on the here and now...' (p.226).
26. Reviewing Tagore's novel, The Home and the World, E.M. Forster comments, 'In literature, as in science, they [Indians] must work over the results of the West on the chance of their proving of use,...' ('The Home and the World', Abinger Harvest, London, 1936, p.321).
27. To get an idea about the favourable response of the Western critics to Marakandaya's novels, see the review of Possession in The Saturday Review, May 25, 1963; and the review of The Golden Honeycomb in TLS, April 29, 1977.
28. Roots and Flowers, Dharwar, 1972, p.15.
29. 'Gods, Demons and Modern Times', The Literary Criterion, Winter, 1972, p.47.
30. Whereas the influence of English literature on Indian literature (or literatures) is often discussed, the influence of the English language on the Indian languages is hardly recognised. Two articles - K.M. George's 'Western Influence on Indian Literature' (Indian Literature, edited by A.Poddar, Simla, 1972) and M.V. Nadkarni's 'Bilingualism and Syntactic Change in Konkani' (Language LXI, 3, September, 1975) - may be seen to get an idea about the syntactic and semantic changes in Malayalam and Konkani under the influence of English. Nirad C. Chaudhury records similar changes in Bengali under the influence of English (The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian, Bombay, 1966, pp.492-493).

The Hindu Tradition and the Novelist's World View

I

Indo-Anglian literature is a Hindu literature and it is the only Hindu literature composed in the English language.<sup>1</sup> It is Hindu because: most of the authors, including all major Indo-Anglians, are Hindus<sup>2</sup>; it primarily deals with Hindu society; and it operates in the context of the Hindu cultural ethos. Such a body of literature, obviously, cannot be adequately understood and appreciated without reference to the Hindu tradition - the Hindu view of life, time, reality and art - and no significant attempt has been made so far in this direction. My purpose here is to emphasise the Hindu background of the Indo-Anglian novel, and to suggest, how, much of the Hindu tradition survives in its world view, motif and characterisation.

The term 'Hindu tradition', however, connotes a variety of things simultaneously - the religious, social, literary and other forms of tradition of the Hindus. It is never possible, in the context of Hindu India, to isolate one form of tradition from the other. For instance, the Hindu view of art as manifest in the literary form of the purana, or the architectural form of the temple, cannot be understood without referring to the Hindu view of divinity (the concept of incarnation is the basis of the purana; and the Hindu temple is built in the image of the human body which is considered the citadel of the divinity<sup>3</sup>). Hinduism, however, is the basis of the Hindu tradition, in all its manifestations. It is said that Hinduism is not a religion in the sense Buddhism, Christianity or Islam are. The Sanskrit term dharma has in fact no equivalent in the English language and has been translated in various ways: 'civilisation', 'right act', 'duty', etc. Hinduism has no one founder; its beginning cannot be placed at a definite point of time; and it is so flexible that one can easily find contradictory schools in the body of Hinduism. As Radhakrishnan puts it:

"Hinduism is more a way of life than a form of thought." The theist and the atheist, the sceptic and the agnostic may all be Hindus if they accept the Hindu system of culture and life. Hinduism insists not on religious conformity but on a spiritual and ethical outlook in life. 4



But in spite of this diversity, Hinduism, perhaps the most complex and ancient of religions, does possess certain features which suggest a basic unity. Most of the doctrines of Hinduism can be traced to the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Mahabharata and the Bhagabat Gita (which of course is a part of the Mahabharata). The theory of karma (the past action determining the present fortune or misfortune); the concept of ideal life as consisting of four stages or ashrams (brahmacharya or studentship, grahasthya or family life, vanaprastha or retirement, sanyasa or renunciation); the aim to attain four ends (dharma or right act, artha or wealth, kama or sensuous pleasure, mokshya or salvation); the three pathways to approach the Supreme (by jnana or wisdom, bhakti or devotion, and karma or service); the concept of God as bisexual; the system of caste as the basis of social structure; these are perhaps the most important tenets of Hinduism and all the forms of Hindu tradition are based on or derived from these tenets.

From the mid-nineteenth century - that is, from the days Indians started using English as a medium of writing - two features of Indo-Anglian writing became obvious. Firstly, there was considerable bulk of writing about Hindu religion, including translation and interpretation of Hindu religious texts; secondly, many of the Indo-Anglians - poets, dramatists or novelists - drew their inspiration from ancient Hindu sources and wrote with the conscious aim of revitalising, reviving and reforming Hindu society. Important Indo-Anglian prose writers like Rammohun Roy, Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghose, Gandhi, Radhakrishnan, C. Rajgopalachari and K.M. Munshi have written extensively about Hinduism and it seems their religious writings enjoy wider readership than the secular writings of other Indo-Anglian authors,<sup>5</sup> and may have influenced Indo-Anglians in general in their style and point of view. Among important creative writers, poets like Aurobindo looked for inspiration to ancient Hindu religious works, myths and legends (his most important poetical work, Savitri, is based on a story from the

Mahabharata); Romesh Chander Dutt's fame rests on the English rendering of the two Hindu epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata; playwrights like Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and Kailasam have re-introduced Hindu legends and lives of Hindu saints on the Indo-Anglian stage (Chattopadhyaya's plays include Sakha Bai, Mira Bai, Jayadeva, Eknath, etc., all based, as the titles suggest, on the lives of Hindu saints; Kailasam's include The Burden, dealing with a story from the Ramayana, and Fulfilment, based on the puranic story of Ekalavya; early Indo-Anglian novelists like T. Ramakrishna, Vimala Raina and A.S.P. Ayyar narrated historical or semi-historical episodes from the Hindu period of Indian history, often glorifying Hinduism (Ramakrishna's Padmini, Raina's Ambapali and Ayyar's Baladitya etc. bear ample testimony to the Hindu source of inspiration of the authors).<sup>6</sup>

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century India was marked by a series of Hindu religious movements such as the ones started by the Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj and Gandhi (who advocated abolition of untouchability and child marriage) which, apparently, were aimed at either reforming Hindu society or giving rise to Hindu nationalism. (Similar religious movements were also started almost simultaneously to reform Muslim society and to promote Muslim nationalism.) Many Indian authors, whether writing in Indian languages or English, seem to have been influenced by such movements; and it can be generally said that Hindu and Muslim authors looked to Hindu and Muslim sources - to the Hindu period or the Muslim period of Indian history, to Sanskrit or Persian literary works etc. - and the literature was far from secular.<sup>7</sup>

It would be very revealing to study how the religious movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century influenced Indian authors and whether the Indian-language authors and the Indo-Anglians were equally affected by such movements; how the religious bias of the authors determined the nature and quality of their works; how the Hindu Indo-Anglian writing differed from the Muslim Indo-Anglian writing; and how the authors of the period helped or hindered,

by their writing, to promote Hindu and Muslim nationalism in the sub-continent which, eventually, resulted in unprecedented communal riots at the time of the Partition.

Though it remains an open question whether Indian-language writing of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was more or less religious in its themes than Indo-Anglian writing of the same period, it seems many important Indian-language writers, like the Indo-Anglians mentioned earlier, did look to their religious past and created a literature that often had a religious flavour. There are certainly not as many scholarly works on religion in Indian languages as in English, but so far as creative writing is concerned, many important Indian-language authors were as religious as their contemporary Indo-Anglians. Two Indian-language authors were so prominent in promoting religious nationalism in India in the said period that they have place now in the political history of the sub-continent. Muhammad Iqbal, the Urdu poet, was a pioneer and champion of Muslim nationalism and the creation of a separate Muslim state in the sub-continent is said to be originally his idea.<sup>8</sup> Bankim Chandra Chatterjee championed Hindu nationalism and all his later novels bear ample testimony to this concern.<sup>9</sup>

Important Indo-Anglians like Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand not only inherited an Indian literary tradition which was deeply religious, they also flourished at a time - the late thirties and the early forties - when religion was playing a vital role in Indian politics and social life.<sup>10</sup> Hinduism was being revived in various ways and for various purposes as were other religions like Islam and Sikhism. Politicians and communalists tried to exploit it for political and communal ends; and poets, philosophers and statesmen like Tagore, Aurobindo and Gandhi perhaps revived it for its eternal spiritual values. Tagore's main source of inspiration, like Aurobindo's, was ancient Hindu texts like the Upanishads or medieval Vaishnava works of Chandidasa and Vidyapati; and Gandhi, who wrote a treatise on the Bhagabat Gita, referred to it, in his autobiography, as his 'dictionary of daily reference'.<sup>11</sup> In addition, ancient Hindu institutions (which symbolised traditional Hindu values) were revived too.

Aurobindo, once an aspirant to the Indian Civil Service and a political revolutionary, retired to an ashram as an ideal Hindu should do after the life of brahmacharya and grahasthya; Gandhi, when in the midst of legal business and prosperous family life, decided to lead, as he put it, 'the life of vana-prastha<sup>12</sup>, and started an ashram, first in South Africa, and later, in Sabar-mati; and Tagore's famous university at Santiniketan was obviously modelled on the mythical gurukula ashram (hermitage of sages) of ancient Upanishadic times. Interestingly, Aurobindo, Tagore and Gandhi in India are referred to as Maharshi (the Great Sage), Gurudev (the Great Teacher) and Mahatma (the Great Soul) which in a way suggests that popularly they are viewed as were Hindu saints of ancient times. Their way of living apparently conformed to that of ancient Hindu sages.

Traditional village India, far removed from foreign invasions and alien cultures, was and is generally religious and Hindu; but in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, for various reasons, Indian intellectuals took a great deal of interest in Hinduism. After the Partition which confirmed the great appeal religion still held for the Indian people, religion does not seem to cease to inspire people any the less. Sociologists like Professor Shils 7 suggest that modern Indian intellectuals seem more religious and more Hindu than their ancestors of the nineteenth century. The revival of Hinduism along with traditional Hindu art and craft-forms is a very significant cultural fact of post-independence India:

Since Independence, and particularly in the past five years<sup>13</sup>, the great Indian dancers of Katha Kali and Bharat Natyam, and the leading Indian instrumentalists, have had a great vogue. Temples are visited more now than ever before; people who before Independence felt little interest in the artistic monuments of India now often express the desire to make a grand tour of the caves and temples. Painters seek to rediscover some connection with Indian traditional and particularly folk-styles as well as subject matters. Even among painters who use modern Western styles, the concrete subject matter and symbolism are connected with village India, with the peasant, with 'the people'. The great religious texts are read - often in English translations - by the intellectuals more than by their fathers' generation or their own in earlier years. 14

Professor Shils' analysis, in the work from which the above passage is quoted, of the background of Indian intellectuals - caste, joint family, the observance of Hindu rituals and ceremonies, arranged marriage, the exposure to Hindu myths and folklore from early childhood etc. - does suggest that Hinduism plays a significant role in moulding their personality; and understandably, most of them, in spite of their Western education which is primarily secular, remain Hindu in their life-style and outlook. To quote Professor Shils again:

There is no such shamefacedness about religion. While a few Indians say that they are atheists or agnostics, they are an inconsequential minority, not more than ten per cent of our interviewees. Most of the others have - as compared with their fellow intellectuals in Europe and America - a quite elaborate religious consciousness, ranging from the performance of the religious exercises early each morning, the daily reading of a sacred text, and the temptation to "go into the forest" to an ineffable sense of the working of a trans-individual power or a belief that there is a ruling spirit in the universe. ... It would not be an outlandish exaggeration to say that it is impossible for an Indian of Hindu descent to cease to be a Hindu. 15

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A political and social background in which Hinduism played so significant a role, a literary tradition immensely religious, and the general inclination of Indian intellectuals towards religion, must have considerably affected modern Indo-Anglian writers. And the material we have about the personal life and background of Indo-Anglian novelists clearly suggests that almost all of them share the situation of the average Indian intellectual as suggested by Professor Shils. A traditional Hindu home and advanced Western education are common to all of them. Raja Rao, about whose personal life our information is relatively scanty, is said to have spent some time in an ashram in South India<sup>16</sup> which particularly shows his religious bent of mind.

And how does the Hindu tradition affect their work? Do they accept or reject the Hindu world view based on concepts such as karma and non-attachment? Does the Hindu mode of characterisation - the division of characters into suras

(gods) and asuras (demons) as in the epics and puranas - have any relevance for them while writing modern fiction? Do they completely break away from the conventional - and extremely popular - literary form, the purana, while adopting a literary form that is new and Western?

It is not always easy to suggest how the Hindu tradition survives in the body of the novel. Hindu myths etc., or for that matter religious myths of any kind, have universal appeal and significance; and Christian authors like L.H. Myers have employed Hindu myths in their works. Again, a literature about a Hindu society may not be Hindu in spirit, if the authors do not share the Hindu world view; and this is why authors like Rudyard Kipling, E.M. Forster and Ruth Praver Jhabvala in spite of their writings about the Hindu society and the use of Hindu myths and symbols have produced a literature that is outside the Hindu tradition. It is not the adoption of a myth or a symbol but the way it is adopted, the attitude to it, that determines its meaning and implication. Writing about a society, or exploring the myths of a land other than one's own, is a common occurrence, and Hemingway's work on Spain, Joyce Cary's on Africa, and Forster's on India are masterpieces. With most of the authors the temptation to write about distant lands is the appeal of the exotic; but authors like the ones mentioned above, have no doubt some insight into the society and culture they have written about. But, generally speaking, they remain a part of another cultural tradition - Forster and Cary remain a part of the British - and their artistic excellence and cultural affinity need not be confused. Forster's A Passage to India, for instance, is an important work about India, but is not Hindu or Indian in its approach or attitude.

The Hindu nature of Indo-Anglian fiction is not so much due to its being written about Hindu society as to its authors being Hindu and sharing and inheriting the Hindu tradition. The Indo-Anglian and the Anglo-Indian, a Narayan and a Forster, can differ significantly in spite of their similarities in theme and technique. A comparison of two passages, one from The Man-eater

of Malgudi (1962) and the other from A Passage to India (1924) will show how Narayan writes in the Hindu tradition and Forster does not. From The Man-eater of Malgudi:

The God was beautifully decorated. He wore a rose garland, and a diamond pendant sparkled on his chest. He had been draped in silk and gold lace, and he held a flute in his hand; and his little bride, a golden image draped in blue silk and sparkling with diamonds, was at his side, the shy bride. The piper was blowing his cheeks out, filling the air with 'Kalyani Rag', a lovely melody at this hour. The temple was nearly a century old, built by public subscription in the days when my grandfather and a few others had come here as pioneers. Beyond the temple had been a forest extending to the river; today all the forest was gone; in its place were only a number of ill-built houses, with tiles disarranged by time and wind, straggling houses, mainly occupied by weavers who spread out their weaving frames all along the street. But the temple, with its tower and golden crest and carved pillars, continued to receive support.

The story of Krishna and Radha was now being recited in song-form by a group of men, incoherently and cacophonously, while they acted as vocal accompanists for Rangi's dance, as she swayed and gesticulated. With all the imperfections, the effect of the incense and the chants made me drowsy and elated, and I forgot for a moment all my problems. Vasu was like an irrelevant thought. He should have no place in my scheme of things. People I had never seen in my life acted as a padding to my right and left and fore and aft. I had lived a circumscribed life and had never thought that our town contained such a variety of humanity - bearded, clean-shaven, untidy, tidy; women elegant, ravishing, tub-shaped and coarse; and the children, thousands of them, dressed, undressed, matted-haired, chasing each other between the legs of adults, screaming with joy and trying to press forward and grab the fruit offerings kept for the Gods. Half a dozen adults had set themselves the task of chasing the children away and compelling them to keep out of the main hall of the temple, but when they overflowed into the corridor and the veranda, half a dozen other people set themselves a similar task of keeping them out of the assembly listening to the Chairman's perorations. They chased them back into the hall with equal vigour, and the gang of children came screaming in, enjoying immensely the pendulum swing back and forth.

Through all the babble, the music went on. But I had withdrawn from everything and found a temporary peace of mind. The sight of the God, the sound of music, the rhythm of cymbals and the scent of jasmine and incense induced in me a temporary indifference to everything. Elephant? Who could kill an elephant? There came to mind the tale of the elephant Gajendra, the elephant of mythology who stepped into a lake and had his leg caught in the jaws of a mighty crocodile; and the elephant trumpeted helplessly, struggled, and in the end desperately called on Vishnu, who immediately appeared and gave him the strength to come ashore out of the jaws of the crocodile. 'In this story', I told myself, 'our ancestors have shown us that an elephant has a protected life and no one can harm it'. I felt lighter

at heart. When the time came the elephant would find the needed strength. The priest was circling the camphor light before the golden images, and the reflections on the faces made them vibrate with living quality. God Krishna was really an incarnation of Vishnu, who had saved Gajendra; he would again come to the rescue of the same animal on whose behalf I was...

Unknowingly I let out a terrific cry which drowned the noise of children, music, everything. 'Oh, Vishnu!' I howled. 'Save our elephant, and save all the innocent men and women who are going to pull the chariot. You must come to our rescue now'. Unknown to myself, I had let out such a shout that the entire crowd inside and outside the hall stood stunned, and all activity stopped. (pp.181-183)

From A Passage to India:

This corridor in the palace of Mau opened through other corridors into a courtyard. It was of beautiful hard white stucco, but its pillars and vaulting could scarcely be seen behind coloured rags, iridescent balls, chandeliers of opaque pink glass, and murky photographs framed crookedly. At the end was the small but famous shrine of the dynastic cult, and the God to be born was largely a silver image the size of a teaspoon. Hindus sat on either side of the carpet where they could find room, or overflowed into the adjoining corridors and the courtyard - Hindus, Hindus only, mild-featured men, mostly villagers, for whom anything outside their villages passed in a dream. They were the toiling ryot, whom some call the real India. Mixed with them sat a few tradesmen out of the little town, officials, courtiers, scions of the ruling house. Schoolboys kept inefficient order. The assembly was in a tender, happy state unknown to an English crowd, it seethed like a beneficent potion. When the villagers broke cordon for a glimpse of the silver image, a most beautiful and radiant expression came into their faces, a beauty in which there was nothing personal, for it caused them all to resemble one another during the moment of its indwelling, and only when it was withdrawn did they revert to individual clods. And so with the music. Music there was, but from so many sources that the sum-total was untrammelled. The braying banging crooning melted into a single mass which trailed round the palace before joining the thunder. Rain fell at intervals throughout the night.

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He had not to wait long. In a land where all else was unpunctual, the hour of the Birth was chronometrically observed. Three minutes before it was due, a Brahman brought forth a model of the village Gokul (the Bethlehem in that nebulous story) and placed it in front of the altar. The model was on a wooden tray about a yard square; it was of clay, and was gaily blue and white with streamers and paint. Here, upon a chair too small for him and with a head too large, sat King Kansa, who is Herod, directing the murder of some Innocents, and in a corner, similarly proportioned, stood the father and mother of the Lord, warned to depart in a dream. The model was not holy, but more than a decoration, for it diverted men from the actual image of the God, and increased their sacred bewilderment. Some of the



villagers thought the Birth had occurred, saying with truth that the Lord must have been born, or they could not see Him. But the clock struck midnight, and simultaneously the rending note of the conch broke forth, followed by the trumpeting of elephants; all who had packets of powder threw them at the altar, and in the rosy dust and incense, and clanging and shouts, infinite Love took upon itself the form of SHRI KRISHNA, and saved the world. All sorrow was annihilated, not only for Indians, but for foreigners, birds, caves, railways, and the stars; all became joy, all laughter; there had never been disease nor doubt, misunderstanding, cruelty, fear. Some jumped in the air, others flung themselves prone and embraced the bare feet of the universal lover; the women behind the purdah slapped and shrieked; the little girl slipped out and danced by herself, her black pigtails flying. Not an orgy of the body; the tradition of that shrine forbade it. But the human spirit had tried by a desperate contortion to ravish the unknown, flinging down science and history in the struggle, yes, beauty herself. 17

It is rare to come across passages such as these, in Indo-Anglian and Anglo-Indian fiction, so similar in theme and attitude. For one thing, Anglo-Indian authors like Kipling avoid intimate Indian and religious scenes which Indo-Anglians so often portray. In both these passages, the novelists describe temple scenes - the Hindu crowd watching the ritual of their deity; the joy, excitement and ecstasy of the crowd; the paraphernalia such as the playing of the music associated with Hindu rituals, and so on; and both the passages are remarkable for the vivid and intimate observation of the novelists, and for their sympathy, understanding and insights.

In their description of the crowd - the adults chasing away the children, or the little girl breaking off the cordon and dancing by herself - both novelists view the scene with a sense of fun, amusement and joy. But, for the narrator of *The Man-eater*, the religious scene has a significance which is simply not there for the narrator of *A Passage to India*. For the narrator of *The Man-eater*, 'the sight of God', 'the rhythm of symbols', etc., produce 'a temporary peace of mind' and 'a temporary indifference to everything'. He is reminded of a myth of the *Bhagabat Purana*, the myth of Krishna saving Gajendra, the elephant, when the latter was caught by a mighty crocodile; and he has no doubt that Kumar, the temple elephant, who is now the target of Vasu, the taxidermist, will be saved by God. The narrator himself is in the situation of Gajendra, helpless and bullied by Vasu, who like the crocodile

of the myth, has known his weakness and has let him fall into his grip. The narrator's sense of indifference (or inaction, or withdrawal, or detachment) at the face of a crisis and his complete faith that God will intervene at the right moment is a typical Hindu attitude to life and reality; and as we see later, Vasu kills himself while killing a mosquito (is the mosquito one of the incarnations of Vishnu that stings Vasu's head just when the temple procession with the elephant at the head is to pass Vasu's flat?). The wisdom implied in the Hindu narrator's world view as suggested by the myth of Krishna saving Gajendra is confirmed by the reality of facts; and the narrator, a semi-educated Brahmin, emerges as one whose understanding of the world and reality is perfect.

The narrator of A Passage to India, on the other hand, despite his vivid and intimate knowledge of the temple scene, remains an alien. (The Forster passage might remind one of his description of Gokul Ashtami.)<sup>18</sup> He is excited by the ecstasy of the crowd, impressed by the sense of 'infinite live' that pervades the atmosphere, but he does not share the faith that is the cause of such ecstasy or love. He does not see 'the living quality' on the face of God as the narrator of The Man-eater does, but describes in detail the architectural design of the temple and the colour and the make of the model. His aesthetic distaste for the ceremony is obvious (as is Forster's in 'Gokul Ashtami') in his comparison of the image of God with 'a teaspoon'. 'The sight of the God' does not make him indifferent enough to overlook the details which, after all, are so familiar to the narrator of The Man-eater. The latter too is aware of the beauty of the image, but suddenly his thoughts turn to infinity; he does not notice the beautiful hard white stucco that went into the making of the temple, but imagines the passing of time - the disappearance of the forest and so on - and the temple appears to him more as a symbol than a piece of architecture.

If Forster's focus is on the concrete, the momentary, the exotic and the human, Narayan's is on the abstract, the eternal, the symbolic and the

divine. A South Indian Brahmin born and brought up in a religious, traditional and exclusive society and a British liberal reared up in a Christian and secular atmosphere are not likely to share the same world view. Like Narayan, Forster too refers to Hindu myths (the myth of Kansa), but his narrator does not view the myth as suggesting the inevitable world order as Narayan's narrator views the myth of Gajendra and the crocodile to be. Forster's reference to the Hindu myth of Kansa, who according to his narrator, is 'Herod directing the murder of some Innocents', over-simplifies and thereby belies the Hindu significance of the myth. The Hindu myth of Kansa and the Christian myth of Herod, in spite of their apparent similarity, do not imply the same world view. The concept of incarnation implied by the Hindu myth is different from that of the messiah of the Old Testament. Forster's employment of Christian parallelisms comparing Kansa with Herod, Gokul with Bethlehem, and his reference to Hindus ('Hindus, Hindus only, mild-featured men...') and foreigners ('The assembly was in a tender happy state unknown to an English crowd...' etc.) clearly reflect a world view different from Narayan's, or for that matter, other Hindu authors'. Forster's vision is perhaps more cosmopolitan and human (Hindu myths reminding him of Christian myths, the Hindu crowd of the English) than Narayan's (the Hindu myth and the Hindu crowd constitute the complete world, nothing outside matters; the term 'Hindu' suggesting an identity is not even mentioned once). But Narayan's vision is authentically Indian, and as M.M. Mahood, comparing the temple scene of The Man-eater with that of A Passage to India observes, 'Whatever the infelicities of Narayan's prose, his imaginative vision in his temple scene is much steadier than is Forster's'.<sup>19</sup> Forster partly violates the Hindu ethos of the temple scene by referring to Christian and foreign elements which are not tolerated in Hindu religious ceremonies, and may even give rise to a sense of pollution in the minds of some Hindu readers.

The basic difference between Forster and Narayan - the one viewing the scene from outside and the other from within the cultural context - not only determines the nature and quality of these two passages, but also of the

two novels. In general, I would agree with Nissim Ezekiel, the Indo-Anglian poet, who has made the following comment in a symposium comparing Forster's method of handling the Indian theme with that of Indian authors:

...all I can say is if you see religion or any culture from the outside as Forster tends to, it seems to me impossible to make anything really big out of it. You have to get under the skin of your character, you have to see what his motives are, conscious and sub-conscious, and I think the Indian writer, writing in the Indian language, is able on the whole to do this even when translated; he doesn't really come across very successfully but undoubtedly the Hindu element in his culture is the predominant element in his writing, I would say. Now one can be of course critical of it, one can say this particular attitude and the kind of characters that he is dealing with will not allow the writer to make a complex work of art out of it, and therefore the work of art tends to be of folk art, it tends to be simple. It tends to be more like a tale than a novel in the Western sense. 20

II

The impact of Hindu tradition on the works of contemporary Indo-  
Anglians like Rao, Narayan and Anand seems no less significant than that on  
the works of Aurobindo, Tagore and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. It cannot be a  
matter of chance that these three important Indo-Anglian authors - Rao, Narayan  
and Anand - have shown keen interest in the Hindu tradition, religious, liter-  
ary or artistic. Narayan's study of Sanskrit and classical Tamil; his  
rendering of the stories of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas into  
English;<sup>21</sup> his interest in classical music, Indian philosophy, mysticism and  
his friendship with Paul Brunton (about whom he talks in his autobiography);<sup>22</sup>  
his awareness of the life after death (about which he writes in The English  
Teacher, the novel he considers 'more than any other book...autobiographical  
in content'<sup>23</sup>; his admission to Ved Mehta that perhaps he cannot write without  
'Krishna, Ganesa, Hanuman, astrologers, pandits, temples'<sup>24</sup> etc.; these are  
significant pointers to the fact that Narayan is firmly rooted in Indian and  
Hindu tradition. His autobiography, My Days, and collections of essays and  
anecdotes like Reluctant Guru, Next Sunday and My Dateless Diary, though they  
do not examine in depth his concern as a writer and seem insignificant to  
explain his method and purpose as a novelist, occasionally reveal him as an  
admirer of traditional Hindu art and philosophy. In two of his articles,  
'Speaking as a Writer' and 'Gods, Demons and Modern Times', Narayan emphasises  
the contemporary relevance of ancient Hindu literary works. 'It is inevitable',  
he says, 'that a writer, though he may be a 20th century product, should see  
the world and its affairs through the concepts of these myths [Hindu myths]  
and read their symbolism in modern terms.'<sup>25</sup> Referring to Sanskrit literature  
Narayan observes, '...traditional literature, style and material inevitably  
become a background for one's own efforts, even if one generally writes of a  
modern society with recognisable characters and characteristics.'<sup>26</sup>

Raja Rao is intensely Hindu and Indian - and, as his friend and the

distinguished novelist Ahmed Ali puts it: 'Indian that Raja Rao is, he is conscious, even over-conscious of his Indianness'.<sup>27</sup> Rao has written little about art, literature and philosophy, but whatever he has written, shows his great appreciation and admiration of the Hindu tradition; and more importantly, his ambition to integrate the Hindu tradition into the body of his novels. 'The Indian novel can only be epic in form and metaphysical in nature', he writes. 'It can only have story within story to show all stories are only parables'.<sup>28</sup> He attempts, he says, 'to create a language to express the authentic rhythms and sensibilities of the Indian psyche',<sup>29</sup> the Sanskrit, that is. That Rao shares the Hindu view of art and aesthetics is clear in a brief essay on literary theory in which he compares the author with an upasaka (worshipper):

Unless the author becomes an upasaka and enjoys himself in himself (which is Rasa) the eternality of the sound (Sabda) will not manifest itself, and so you cannot communicate either and the word is nothing but a cacophony. 30

Though Anand apparently attacks organised religious institutions in his novels, and is not reluctant to express his Marxist bias (he was a member of the Indian Communist party for some time), he is no less enthusiastic about the Hindu tradition, particularly the literary and the artistic. In his The Hindu View of Art his admiration and appreciation of the Hindu tradition is obvious:

...I believe that the truth conceived by the sages of ancient Hindu thought and practised by their followers during the ages is in the blood of India. It is an inheritance at birth from father to son, and from son to son; and, if it does not come out in its purity and its strength to-day, if it has been polluted by the accretions of wrong thinking of the Hindus themselves, or by the imposition of alien cultures upon them, it will emerge intact one day - one day when Indians search within their hearts for this truth, or lifting the veil of sensualism and materialism in which their pandering to alien ideals has enshrouded them, they look for it among themselves in the soil of India. For Hindu idealism is not only in the blood of India, it is also in the soil of India. 31

As an art critic (who edits the art magazine Marg) and a literary

critic who has written more on art, language and literature than any other Indo-Anglian novelist, Anand has shown great interest in the Hindu tradition. In a recent published letter in which he discusses tradition and modernism in the Indian novel in English (the title of the work, Roots and Flowers, explains), he suggests an amalgamation of the Western novel form and the traditional Indian literary form:

In so far as the novelists of India, writing in English language, were inspired primarily by the modern European and American novel, they may become the instruments for the metamorphosis of the imported technique into the racial unconscious inherited by us from our tradition. 32

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It is not my purpose here to elaborate upon the views of Indo-Anglian novelists on Hindu tradition, art or literature, but to suggest how the Hindu tradition survives in the body of their works. The fact that these three important novelists have shown a keen awareness of the Hindu literary and artistic traditions suggests that the continuity of the Hindu tradition in their works is mostly a conscious process, and critics who complain that there is no 'tradition' in Indo-Anglian writing, for Indo-Anglians living at far distances and exposed to different climates and cultures can hardly have a sense of community, are wrong.<sup>33</sup> The Hindu tradition seems to be important enough to lend a dimension of continuity to Indo-Anglian writing, as distant in space and time as that of Aurobindo to Anand.

Lack of adequate awareness of the Hindu tradition has often misled critics into responding unfavourably to works of novelists like Narayan and Rao. Narayan has particularly been accused of lacking a sense of seriousness and social concern. V. S. Naipaul, who incidentally has written more on Narayan than on any other writer, complained in An Area of Darkness that Narayan seems 'for ever headed for that aimlessness of Indian fiction', that Narayan's is a 'negative attitude', that 'the India of Narayan's novels is not the India the visitor sees', that 'there is a contradiction between his form which implies concern and his attitude which denies it'.<sup>34</sup> In his recent articles on Narayan, Naipaul does not seem to have changed his opinion about Narayan. He considers Narayan to be a

traditional Hindu, like his heroes in Mr. Sampath and The Vendor of Sweets, and his novels 'less the purely social comedies...than religious books, at times religious fables, and intensely Hindu'.<sup>35</sup> William Walsh who is among the distinguished critics who admire Narayan, finds Narayan's themes 'not particularly contemporary, fashionable or provocative'.<sup>36</sup> In an otherwise appreciative article, 'Well Met in Malgudi', an anonymous critic writes that 'Narayan is a comic writer of the most rewarding kind' and is a 'very funny writer',<sup>37</sup> Natwar Singh who is among the first Indian critics to admire Narayan and introduce him to the West, writes in an article entitled 'Tribute to R.K. Narayan' that 'the great social, economic and political changes that have taken place in the last ten years or so have, it seems, left him untouched'.<sup>38</sup> V.Y. Kantak in an essay, 'The Achievement of R.K. Narayan', writes:

His very simplicity, his naivete seems to set a problem.  
There is so little on which to expatiate intellectually, analyse,  
expound, fathom the depth of.

... ..

Narayan remained placidly unresponsive alike to the contemporary movement of thought and feeling and to the fairly long tradition of the novel of social idealism in the country,..... 39

I do not want to suggest that Narayan is a very committed writer, committed to social justice or any such ideology, as Mulk Raj Anand is; but to point out that neither social concern nor contemporary relevance are absent from his works nor are they incompatible with the puranic or Hindu nature of his writing. Though more has been written on Narayan than any other Indo-Anglian novelist, both by Indian and Western critics, Narayan criticism seems considerably one-sided. Narayan's sense of humour, irony and understatement have been over-emphasised; and his lack of commitment and seriousness as a writer has almost been taken for granted. It is reassuring that M.M. Mahood, in a recently published article on Narayan, has emphasised adequately, perhaps for the first time, that Narayan does not lack social concern or seriousness.<sup>40</sup>



Her observation suggests a new possibility in Narayan criticism - the re-examination of Narayan's works in the light of social concern - and M.K. Naik, a distinguished Indian critic, taking the clue from Mahood's article, has written recently about Narayan's social and political commitment as a writer.<sup>41</sup> M.M. Mahood, contradicting the prevailing critical opinion that Narayan lacks social concern, and particularly keeping in view Naipaul's criticism of Narayan, writes:

Non-attachment is not indifference; we cannot assume that the older India was incapable of self-assessment, or that the India that 'goes on' does not encompass the Young India that Gandhi exhorted to relentless self-criticism. 42

Professor Mahood observes in The Man-eater 'a social and political concern which firmly connects the surface and the depths, the mundane and the mythological';<sup>43</sup> and adds, 'The total acceptance of which Naipaul speaks is there as a religious acceptance of what life will demand; and there is no acceptance of dirt, corruption, procrastination and social indifference'.<sup>44</sup> Her analysis of The Man-eater clearly reveals that it is a novel, complex and contemporary, which includes significant social, political and historical comments. She refers to the Sanskrit and puranic tradition against which the novel is written, but does not examine in depth the nature of this tradition, her main concern being to demonstrate the contemporary relevance of the book. A greater awareness of this tradition can not only confirm Professor Mahood's thesis, it may also give an insight into the way the Hindu tradition works in the treatment of a contemporary theme.

If Narayan criticism seems one-sided, critics of Raja Rao differ so radically on their assessment of his works that Rao can safely be taken as the most controversial of Indo-Anglian novelists. Generally, Indian critics seem to be enthusiastic and Western critics sceptical about his works. About The Serpent and the Rope, C.D. Narasimhaiah writes:

...I do not remember reading any other novel - I must hasten to add I have not been an avid reader of fiction - with such respect and admiration, which for me is a way of saying that hardly anywhere else in my reading did I experience a fuller and more complete engagement of the deeper levels of personality. 45

Narasimhaiah considers Rao 'the most significant Indian writer in English' and 'a major novelist of our age'.<sup>46</sup> He considers Kanthapura 'a minor classic'.<sup>47</sup> Meenakshi Mukherjee, commenting on the form of Rao's novels, concludes:

Perhaps Raja Rao's final achievement will lie in the direction of establishing a new literary genre in prose fiction based on a concept of reality different from what the Judaeo-Christian tradition envisages. 48

A.V. Krishna Rao considers The Serpent and the Rope 'probably the greatest Indo-Anglian novel, written at many levels of creative perception'.<sup>49</sup> David McCutcheon, commenting on the form of The Serpent and the Rope, observes:

I think it could be done with more economy and less argument, and I think Rao does not avoid the danger of his unconditioned attitude, refusing identifications, lapsing into 'tears idle tears', the sweet indulgence of emotion without an object. 50

H.M. Williams, referring to the much-discussed stylistic experiment in Kanthapura, says that 'there is a risk of these stylistic inventions becoming monotonous, irritating, and Kanthapura does not wholly escape the charge, but it is a risk worth-taking'.<sup>51</sup> In The Saturday Review, the reviewer of Kanthapura observed that Kanthapura 'is not a book easy to read' and it is 'not surely a successful novel in ordinary terms'.<sup>52</sup> Whereas Indian critics seem vaguely aware of the Hindu and puranic nature of Rao's works (vaguely, because no study of his works with reference to Hindu or puranic texts seems to have been done so far), Western critics are more or less uncertain about such nature, and cautious and non-committal in their remarks.

We can examine here Narayan's The Man-eater and Rao's Kanthapura with reference to Hindu religious texts like the Bhagabat Gita and the Vishnu Purana to see how these novels in their world views (the forms are examined in another chapter) are Hindu and puranic. Though all the puranas have basically

the same form and deal with similar themes, the Vishnu Purana seems more significant in the context of understanding Narayan's novel, and even Rao's. The Vishnu Purana is said to be the most perfect of puranas;<sup>53</sup> and Narayan in The Man-eater alludes to the character of Bhasmasura who was killed by Vishnu in one of his several incarnations. The world view of Rao's narrator in Kanthapura considerably resembles that of a devotee of Vishnu. She envisages India's situation as that of Ayodhya - Rama rescuing Sita from the kingdom of Lanka and so on (p.181) - and Rama again is an incarnation of Vishnu. (It is however possible to see the similarity between Kanthapura and the Devi Purana,<sup>54</sup> the presiding deity of Kanthapura being a Devi, Kenchamma.)

Both The Man-eater and Kanthapura deal with the conflict of two forces - the forces of creation and destruction. The Man-eater is a study of the arrival of modernity in a traditional society. The traditional Hindu ethos of Malgudi - 'the continuity of the traditions of our ancient home', as Nataraj puts it - is violently disturbed by the messenger of Western science and technology, Vasu, who believes: 'After all we are civilised human beings, educated and cultured, and it is up to us to prove our superiority to nature. Science conquers nature in a new way each day; why not in creation also?' (p.15) Kanthapura studies the arrival of the message of Gandhi, through the person of Moorthy, and how the peace and stability of the prosperous village, Kanthapura, is lost and the villagers (the narrator of the story being one of them) desert the village. The message of Gandhi destroys both the political and social structure of the village; and as Narsamma, the mother of Moorthy and the custodian of traditional values, puts it: 'Oh, this Gandhi! Would he were destroyed' (p.12).

And creation-destruction is the fundamental theme of all the puranas. The 'five characteristics' or pancha-lakshanam of the purana as mentioned by H.H. Wilson are: '1. Primary creation, or cosmogony; 2. Secondary creation, or the destruction and renovation of worlds, including chronology; 3. Geneology

of gods and patriarchs; 4. Reigns of the Manus, or periods called Manvantaras; and 5. History....'<sup>55</sup> Creation-destruction, therefore, is the important theme of the purana, its characters being gods and ancestors, and it is concerned with Manvantaras or Epochs (the Hindu calendar of time) and History. These five characteristics, however, are often too inter-connected to be distinguishable from one another; and it is hardly possible to write a purana if any of the 'five characteristics' is violated. We may, using the modern terminology, say that 1 and 2 deal with theme; 3 with characters; 4 with time-sequence and 5 with social relevance. In modern works of fiction we look for these characteristics as well. But a modern work of fiction - we mean in the Western sense - is not a purana; for, the world view implied or assumed by the 'five characteristics' is not the world view implied or assumed by the critical terminology meant to assess modern fiction.

The puranic theme of creation-destruction dealt with in these novels has to be understood in the context of the Hindu view of creation and destruction. The Hindu world view does not imply the mutual exclusiveness or opposition of the forces of creation and destruction, but their simultaneous existence. Creation and destruction are recognised as two aspects of the same thing. The second characteristic of the purana is said to be 'Secondary creation, or the destruction and renovation of worlds', which suggests that creation and destruction are not viewed as contradictory forces. The emphasis on the variety and simultaneity of existence is a most important motif in all Hindu myths and literary compositions. As D.A. Flaherty observes about Hindu myths:

...each myth celebrates the belief that the universe is boundlessly various, that everything occurs simultaneously, that all possibilities may exist without excluding each other.... The content of this pattern is ...the resolution of chaos into order and its dissolution back into chaos. 56

Before suggesting the compatibility of the puranic world view and social concern in The Man-eater and Kanthapura, I want to emphasise at this point that the purana and other Hindu religious texts are not works devoid of

social concern or contemporary relevance, and modern Indian novelists who retain the Hindu tradition in their form and world view do not necessarily imply a negative attitude and lack of social realism. A careful study of the 'five characteristics' of the purana reveals that the purana is as much a social and historical document as a religious one. By definition the purana concerns itself with history (in ancient literature, purana and itihasa (history) are used as synonyms)<sup>57</sup>; and H.H. Wilson's commentary, among other things, clearly shows the significance of the Vishnu Purana as a history of medieval India. Allegations by Western and Westernised Indians that Indians had no sense of history are based on the assumption that the Western method of historiography is the only method possible. The Hindus view human history as an insignificant part of the cosmic design - and as Professor Kirk notes:

The assumption that this is only one of myriads of worlds of past, present and future reduces the sense of the importance of our particular history with its peculiarities and incidents. 58

The Hindu view of history is hardly different from that of religion. The god-demon conflict of the purana, for instance, is similar to the dharma-adharma conflict of history. As Richard Lannoy neatly puts it:

In the Hindu scriptures history is represented as a ceaseless conflict between the Dharma and Adharma - between the moral, idealistic, spiritual forces and the unregenerate forces of darkness, lust, and evil - in which the Dharma always wins. History, ethics, politics, and social speculation are blended together in a cosmic ritual scheme, with gods and culture-heroes acting as conciliatory mediators between the sacred world and the profane world. The battle between good and evil is conceived as a cosmic sacrifice for the common good, ultimately uniting gods and men.... 59

The fact that the characters in the purana, by definition, are 'gods and patriarchs' need not mean that the purana concerns itself with any world other than the human. The Hindu world view does not draw a line of distinction between gods, demons and human beings. A god can manifest himself in the form of a human being, as the theory of incarnation implies; a man can ascend to godhead by noble deeds as Yudhisthira did in the Mahabharata; a demon can

occasionally prove to be superior to gods, and so on. And more importantly, Hindu religious texts emphasise (and I quote from such texts later in this chapter) that the god and the demon are not different from human beings. The human being has in him both demonic and divine tendencies. 'The characters in the epics', observes R.K. Narayan in his introduction to Gods, Demons, and Others, 'are prototypes and moulds in which humanity is cast, and remain valid for all time'.<sup>60</sup>

Though the purana and other Hindu religious and literary texts are concerned with creation and destruction or the conflict of opposite forces, there is no progress in the Western sense; and the social concern and contemporary relevance of these texts should be viewed accordingly. The concept of linear progress of time and events is alien to Hindu thought, both Time and Reality being viewed as cyclical. (The most dominant symbol in Indian art and philosophy, down the centuries, is chakra or the wheel.) Time, according to the Hindu view, does not progress from the past to the present, and then to the future, but merely repeats itself in innumerable Kalpas or cycles. Events, historical or otherwise, merely recur in cycles as well. Each event indicates a similar pattern of conflict between two opposite forces, and all the puranas and other Hindu texts have the same basic theme. To quote Lannyoy:

Change does not increase the good; there is no such thing here as progress; value lies in sameness, in the repeated pattern of the known, not in novelty. What is good in life is exact identity with all past experience, and all mythical experience. 61

This cyclical concept of Time and Reality is manifested in a myth in the Vayu Purana.<sup>62</sup> The creatures that God created are shown as 'harmful or benign, gentle or cruel, full of dharma or adharma; truthful or false'. And when they are created again, it is said, 'they will have these qualities' and this will please Him.

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Narayan's method of blending together the puranic world view and contemporary realism in his theme of conflict of opposite forces in The Man-eater can be explained by analysing the character, personality and activities of Vasu; and by studying the nature of relationships between Vasu and the pahlwan, Vasu and Nataraj, and Nataraj and Sastri.

The affinity of The Man-eater with the purana becomes obvious even to one who is not aware of the formal aspects of the purana, because of the unmistakable similarities between Vasu and the puranic demon. Sastri, an 'orthodox-minded Sanskrit semi-scholar', interprets the puranic stories of Ravana, Mahisha, Bhasmasura - as Narayan himself does in Gods, Demons, and Others - and explains why Vasu is a rakshasa. According to Sastri, 'Every rakshasa gets swollen with his ego. He thinks he is invincible, beyond every law. But sooner or later something or other will destroy him' (p.96). It is not difficult to see that Sastri's interpretation of the purana does not differ from Narayan's:

Over an enormous expanse of time and space events fall into proper perspective. There is suffering because of the need to work off certain consequences, arising from one's actions, in a series of births determined by the law of Karma. The strong man of evil continues to be reckless until he is destroyed by the tempo of his own misdeeds. Evil has in it, buried subtly, the infallible seeds of its own destruction. And however frightening a demon might seem, his doom is implied in his own evil propensities - a profoundly happy and sustaining philosophy which appeals to our people,..... 63

The demon, thus, is viewed as invincible, reckless, strong and so forth; and his fall is implied in his misdeeds or ego, according to the law of karma. All the demons of the puranas are described as possessing great strength and power, which of course they attain by their hard penance from the Supreme God; and they are misled by their ego to their own destruction.

Since Narayan deliberately casts the character of Vasu in the mould of a demon,<sup>64</sup> we will first see what a demon means in Hindu religious texts and the puranas. All the Hindu texts describe the demon and the divine.

The Bhagabat Gita devotes one chapter (Chapter XVI, 'Divine and Demonic Tendencies') to the demonic and the divine qualities in man:

When a man is born with demonic tendencies, his birth right is hypocrisy, arrogance, conceit, anger, cruelty and ignorance....

In this world there are two kinds of beings: those whose nature tends toward the Divine, and those who have the demonic tendencies....

Men of demonic nature know neither what they ought to do, nor what they should refrain from doing. There is no truth in them, or purity, or right conduct. They maintain that the scriptures are a lie, and that the universe is not based upon a moral law, but godless, conceived in lust and created by copulation, without any other cause. Because they believe this in the darkness of their little minds, these degraded creatures do horrible deeds, attempting to destroy the world. They are enemies of mankind.

Their lust can never be appeased. They are arrogant, and vain, and drunk with pride. They run blindly after what is evil. The ends they work for are unclean. They are sure that life has only one purpose: gratification of the senses. And so they are plagued by innumerable cares, from which death alone can release them. Anxiety binds them with a hundred chains, delivering them over to lust and wrath. They are ceaselessly busy, piling up dishonest gains to satisfy their cravings....

...These malignant creatures are full of egoism, vanity, lust, wrath, and consciousness of power. 65

The Vishnu Purana also describes in detail the demonic qualities in kings and human beings in the Kali Age (approximately, the modern age, which, according to the puranic belief, is the worst of all the four ages into which Time is divided):<sup>66</sup>

...Wealth and piety will decrease day by day, until the world will be wholly depraved. Then property alone will confer rank; wealth will be the only source of devotion; passion will be the sole bond of union between the sexes; falsehood will be the only means of success in litigation; and women will be objects merely of sensual gratification....Thus in the Kali age shall decay constantly proceed, thus the human race approaches its annihilation. 67

In their description of the demonic qualities neither the Bhagabat Gita nor the Vishnu Purana suggests that the demon is one outside the human race. The human being is viewed as one having both demonic and divine tendencies. There is no reference whatsoever, in these two quotations, to the physical appearance of the demon; and perhaps physical appearance is irrelevant in



determining whether one is a god or a demon. A demon is not viewed as essentially a Satan or dark force, but as one misguided and misdirected. In fact the two words employed in the Bhagbat Gita to describe the demon are prabrutti (passion) and nibrutti (restraint). A demon is one who has passion and strength, but no restraint or sense of direction. His fall is implied in his violation of the moral order - by accumulating wealth and seeking sensuous pleasure by dubious means.

In the light of the definition given in Hindu religious texts, the character of Vasu clearly emerges as demonic. He possesses passion and energy, but no restraint or sense of direction. But like the puranic demon, he is not an anachronism or a mere symbol. He is a very contemporary living human being, representing in many ways the modern Indian youth of the post-independence era - and he takes part in the freedom movement and helps to usher in this era. He unmistakably represents almost all that is valued in the Western educational system - the system which has been adopted in toto in independent India. He has received an advanced education; he has attained great physical strength and power; he has travelled widely; he has modern ideas such as how to promote foreign exchange; he is unsentimental and scientific: he kills and stuffs animals hygienically and with skill; he is bold and can kill a man-eater by himself; he is smart, active, resourceful, and so on. He contrasts with Nataraj and Sastri - and with the poet and the journalist - in every possible way. Nataraj and Sastri are 'orthodox-minded Sanskrit semi-scholars (a phrase which Nataraj applies to Sastri, and which is applicable to himself); they are meek and mild, physically as well as mentally; they have rarely travelled beyond the small town of Malgudi; their ideas even regarding the printing business are traditional (their neighbour already possesses a Heidelberg machine which they have yet to get); their life-style is in many ways archaic - both of them preoccupied with Brahminic rituals and ceremonies; and they can be easily identified with the puranic

sages and traditional India.

Narayan's allusions to contemporary political and social situations in the portrayal of the character of Vasu become obvious once we understand the time in which the novel is set. It is the post-independence, post-colonial, democratic, Nehru period of Indian history. In no other period of Indian history do we realise the transition to be as acute as in this period - the fifties and the early sixties. This period started with Indian independence in 1947, with so much hope and enthusiasm that the Partition and Gandhi's death did not seem to matter as much as they should have. This mood of over-enthusiasm, aptly voiced by Nehru, on the day of independence, reflected the mood of the country in general:

Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.... 68

But this mood did not persist for long. Over-enthusiasm was soon followed by disillusionment. It is perhaps a common experience of all newly independent countries to pass through a period of over-enthusiasm to disillusionment. Themes of enthusiasm and disillusionment are frequent in post-independence Indo-English and Indian-language novels.

However, the theme of The Man-eater is neither enthusiasm nor disillusionment. The novel is not set in the period when Nehru made the above-mentioned speech nor when the Indian disillusionment reached its climax in the late sixties, in the last phase of Nehru's leadership. The novel is set in a time when, the enthusiasm of having a country restored to itself being over, the Indians started seriously questioning if the country was moving in the right direction. And R.K. Narayan, who has said in a broadcast interview over the B.B.C. that he has no interest in politics and he does not consider the

novel as the appropriate form for social protest,<sup>69</sup> raises some questions in The Man-eater which should be taken seriously, if one is to understand the political and social situation of modern India.

Narayan recognises the parallelism between the creation-destruction theme of the puranas and the clash of traditionalism and modernism of this later period. Creation and destruction, in the puranic context, are not opposite forces, nor are the traditional Indian values and modern Western ideas and ideologies in Narayan's novel. A powerful demon without his over-enthusiasm for his newly gained power and a Westernised Indian without his over-emphasis on Western political ideology and science could perhaps be the ideal characters for the purana and the modern novel. The over-enthusiastic Indian of the post-independence India, whose true representative is Vasu, is the demon of the modern epoch.

Narayan is one of the rare writers of modern India who suggests the danger implicit in the over-enthusiasm expressed by Indians for their political freedom and Western science and technology. In the story 'Lawley Road', he satirises the misplaced enthusiasm of the Malgudi municipality for renaming Malgudi streets after Indian leaders and removing the statues of British administrators from the city-centres. In Waiting for the Mahatma, we meet misguided Jagdish, who has recourse to violence and terrorism to drive away the British from India with the belief that he is following Gandhi; and the photographer, who after participating in the freedom struggle, has nothing else to look back to except four albums of photographs showing innumerable processions, public gatherings and the hoisting of the national flag. In The Vendor of Sweets, Narayan ridicules the idea of employing mechanical devices to write fast (which he noticed some American authors do)<sup>70</sup> in Mali's idea of having a novel-producing machine in Malgudi.

In The Man-eater, more than anywhere else, Narayan develops the theme of Indian over-enthusiasm for political freedom and Western science. We

clearly identify Vasu with this over-enthusiasm which, undoubtedly, is a quality of the demon as described in the puranas and Hindu texts. The demon of folklore - black, tall, active in midnight, with more than one head or two eyes etc. - described in folktales and even in puranas, and portrayed in Indian paintings and carved in Hindu temples, is, however, another matter. Narayan no doubt blends, in the character of Vasu, the characteristics of both the demon of the religious texts and the demon of folklore. Vasu's tanned face, large powerful eyes under thick eyebrows, a large forehead and a shock of unkempt hair like a black halo, his affinity with the man-eater, etc. are qualities of the demon of folklore rather than of the serious religious texts. Neither the Bhagabat Gita nor the Vishnu Purana, as we saw earlier, considers that physical appearance determines the quality of a person. By emphasising the folklorist-demonic qualities of Vasu - qualities appropriately noticed by Nataraj and Sastri, both 'Sanskrit semi-scholars' - critics like M.K. Naik seem to view Vasu more as a demon of folklore than of serious religious texts. Viewing Vasu as a demon of folklore may lead us to see the novel in a wrong perspective and miss its contemporary relevance. Although the folklorist-demonic qualities of Vasu are elaborately described in the novel, and give the narrative a sense of fantasy and folktale, for understanding the social and contemporary relevance of the novel, the demonic nature of Vasu's personality should be viewed in the light of serious religious texts rather than of the folklore.

The post-independence Indian's over-enthusiasm in the character of Vasu, is amply manifest in its political, economic and moral aspects; and the internal evidence of the novel suggests that Nehru is viewed as the leader of these over-zealous Indians. (The external evidence is obvious. The novel is published in 1962, presumably written in the late fifties and the early sixties.) In the opening chapter of the novel, Nataraj, who himself seems to have no inclination for contemporary politics or classical poetry, introduces

two of his friends: 'the poet who was writing the life of God Krishna in monosyllabic verse', and for whom Nataraj's admiration is 'unbounded' and Sen the journalist, 'who came to read the newspaper' on his table and 'who held forth on the mistakes Nehru was making' (p.2). These two friends, one pre-occupied with the life of Krishna, and even writing it down in monosyllabic verse, which was the fashion in the medieval Bhakti period, and the other preoccupied with Nehru, the most Westernised politician with his ideas of democracy, modern technology and international co-operation (the famous Pancha-Shil) are as distant as two human beings could be; and significantly, both find a ready listener in Nataraj. These two minor characters indeed hold the keys to the two major themes of the novel - the moral and the political-economic - and we notice their presence throughout the novel, and their similar reaction in the presence of Vasu.

When Vasu intrudes into Nataraj's printing press stirring the blue curtain, Sen is busy talking about Nehru's industrial policy:

...If Nehru is practical, let him disown the Congress....Why should you undertake projects which you can't afford? Anyway, in ten years what are we going to do with all the steel? (p.12)

And with the arrival of Vasu - in whom Nataraj at once recognises the demonic tendencies - there is 'a sudden lull'. Soon Vasu finds himself comfortably seated in the Queen Anne chair (like Malgudi itself, a product of traditional craftsmanship, with British design), and announces that he is H. Vasu, M.A., Taxidermist - and he has come to Malgudi to promote the industry of taxidermy.

In Malgudi, Vasu remains completely engrossed in this industry. The zeal with which he explores the potentialities of Mempi Forest as the promoter of foreign-exchange for the country might remind one of Nehru's enthusiasm for promoting heavy industries under the Five Year Plans. Like Nehru (and unlike Gandhi) Vasu believes in rapid industrialisation of India; and shares the background of advanced Western education and participation in the civil disobedience movement.

The passage in which Vasu gives an account of his past life, is significant to an understanding of many of his activities in Malgudi, and the puranic and contemporary meaning of the novel:

He said, 'I was educated in the Presidency College. I took my Master's degree in History, Economics and Literature.' Then he had joined the civil disobedience movement against British rule, broken the laws, marched, demonstrated and ended up in jail. He went repeatedly to prison and once when he was released found himself in the streets of Nagpur. There he met a phaelwan at a show. 'That man could bear a half-ton stone slab on his cheek and have it split by hammer strokes; he could snap steel chains and he could hit a block of hard granite with his fist and pulverize it. I was young then, his strength appealed to me. I was prepared to become his disciple at any cost. I introduced myself to the phaelwan.' He remained thoughtful for a while and continued, 'I learnt everything from this master. The training was unsparing. He woke me up at three o'clock every morning and put me through exercises. And he provided me with the right diet. I had to eat a hundred almonds every morning and wash them down with half a seer of milk; two hours later six eggs with honey; at lunch chicken and rice; at night vegetables and fruit. Not everyone can hope to have this diet, but I was lucky in finding a man who enjoyed stuffing me like that. In six months I could understudy for him. On my first day, when I banged my fist on a century-old door of a house in Lucknow, the three-inch panel of seasoned teak splintered. My master patted me on the back with tears of joy in his eyes, "You are growing in the right lines, my boy". In a few months I could also snap chains, twist iron bars, and pulverize granite. We travelled all over the country, and gave our shows at every market fair in the villages and in the town halls in the cities, and he made a lot of money. Gradually he grew flabby and lazy, and let me do everything. They announced his name on the notices, but actually I did all the twisting and smashing of stone, iron, and what not. When I spoke to him about it he called me an ungrateful dog and other names, and tried to push me out. I resisted...and...' Vasu laughed at the recollection of this incident. 'I knew his weak spot. I hit him there with the edge of my palm with a chopping movement...and he fell down and squirmed on the floor. I knew he could perform no more. I left him there and walked out, and gave up the strong man's life once and for all. (pp.16-17)

The Vasu of the Presidency College and the civil disobedience movement is like the demon undertaking penance to get the boon from God. In Vasu, the Master of Arts in a free India, we recognise the demon, strong and powerful, with the boon already bestowed on him. The novel opens with the strong and powerful Vasu arriving in Malgudi, just as every purana begins with the demon, already powerful, starting to make use of his power. And in employing

the power gained from God the puranic demon goes wrong; as Vasu, the Westernised Indian youth, went wrong in exercising the political power attained from his former master.

The Independence, the Partition and the change-over of the leadership from Gandhi to Nehru, as suggested earlier, are the three important events of the time against which the novel is set. The above passage refers to the Indian freedom struggle and independence, and the involvement of Vasu and the Indian youth who had the most advanced education under the British system, in these events. Soon after independence, Vasu finds himself, by accident, in the streets of Nagpur and joins as an apprentice under a pahlwan. There is hardly any logical connection between Vasu's qualification in History, etc., his participation in the civil disobedience movement - a non-violent movement under Gandhi - and his new ambition to become a pahlwan 'at any cost'. Vasu, young and energetic, in a free country, lacks a sense of direction, as every puranic demon does; and when he bangs his fist on a 'century-old door', and hits the pahlwan, his guru, and leaves him paralysed, unable to 'perform' any more, we realise that Vasu, instead of employing his strength and power in a creative way, is turning out to be destructive.

The Vasu-pahlwan relationship, though described only in one passage of the novel, explains Narayan's method of employing traditional themes and motifs - implying a traditional world view - to suggest his concern for contemporary society. One can see that the post-independence Vasu-pahlwan encounter is not very different from the puranic encounter between Ravana and Shiva, which Narayan himself describes as follows:

Ravana is ten-headed, twenty-armed, and is indestructible. If one head is cut off, another will grow in its place; if one limb, another; no god could ever vanquish him. No power in the Universe could kill him. Such is the protection he has acquired from both Siva and Brahma after rigorous prayers to them....

...Ravana had taken the army across the Himalayas, to teach his brother a lesson and while flying back home victoriously in a chariot he had seized, was irritated when the high Kailas peak obstructed his passage, and he tried to shake and uproot it though it was the abode of his patron God Siva. 71

The difference between the two encounters - Vasu succeeds in paralysing his guru but Ravana fails to move Mount Kailas - is only apparent. Both disciples, the modern and the puranic, commit the sin of betraying the guru, the most dreadful sin in the Hindu world; and they are punished, in due course, by the law of karma. Ravana is killed by Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu; and Vasu kills himself, like Bhasmasura, while infatuated with a woman.

In the relationship of Vasu and the pahlwan, Narayan suggests the theme of guru-shishya relationship which is a major theme in all forms of Hindu literature - traditional and modern. The Bhagabat Gita is a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, whose relationship is that between the guru and the shishya. All puranas consist of dialogues between gurus and shishyas. In the Vishnu Purana, Parasara is the guru and Maitreya is the shishya. The guru-shishya relationship is equally important in an understanding of traditional and modern India. Richard Lannoy who thinks that the only authority possible in India is Sacred Authority (which means that all forms of leadership and organisations in India can only be religious by nature), has this to say about the guru-shishya relationship:

The only authentic meeting that can still occur between two human beings stripped of their masks, is within the initiatory magic circle of the guru-shishya relationship. 72

In Indo-Anglian literature, in fact in Indian literature in general, we frequently come across this theme of guru-shishya relationship. It is a recurring theme in all Raja Rao's novels. Narayan treats this theme in all its complexity and ambivalence, serious and comic implications, in almost all his novels. The relationship between Raju and Velon in The Guide; Margayya and the priest in The Financial Expert; Sriram and Gandhi, and Gandhi and Jagdish in Waiting for the Mahatma; Jagan and Gandhi, Jagan and his cousin in The Vendor of Sweets; Chandran and the holy man in The Bachelor of Arts; and Srinivas and the landlord in Mr. Sampath; these are studies in guru-shishya relationship in all its possibilities. In a number of stories,



particularly in 'A Horse and Two Goats', and episodes like the one in the last chapter of The Guide when an American journalist interviews Raju, Narayan ridicules the attitude of those Westerners who look to India as their spiritual guru and of Indians who accept the role, however reluctantly. Narayan has recorded with amusement and irony his own experience when, in an American university, being asked about Yoga and mysticism, he found himself in the situation of a reluctant guru.<sup>73</sup>

The relationship between Vasu and the pahlwan, apart from suggesting the traditional theme of guru-shishya relationship, bears allusions to contemporary political situation in India. It suggests in a way the violence that followed the Partition, and Nehru's recantation of Gandhi's ideology in independent India, as in the programme of promoting heavy industries under the Five Year Plans. After leaving the pahlwan, Vasu meets one Suleiman, in Junagadh, who teaches him the art of killing and stuffing animals, and whom Vasu considers a 'saint':

'...I was in Junagadh - you know the place - and there I grew interested in the art. I came across a master there, one Suleiman. When he stuffed a lion (you know, Junagadh is a place where we have lions) he could make it look more terrifying than it would be in the jungle....'...'He was a saint. He taught me his art sincerely'. (p.15)

Vasu's progress from the civil disobedience movement to taxidermy, from Gandhi to Suleiman, may suggest the shift of loyalty of the Indian leadership from non-violence to violence. It was in Junagadh that India and Pakistan, soon after the Partition, had the first test of their military strength. The king of Junagadh, being a Muslim, wanted to merge with Pakistan, but Nehru annexed it to India by force, in total disregard of Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence, to protect the Hindus who of course form the majority of the population of the state. The Vasu-Suleiman encounter might remind one of the Hindu-Muslim encounter in Junagadh when we notice that Vasu's guru is a Muslim.

The theme of the guru-shishya relationship is extended in the novel

in two ways: by suggesting, firstly, that Vasu's predicament after he betrays his guru, the pahlwan, is that of one who has no guru, and hence, is doomed; and secondly, that the relationship between Nataraj and Vasu, Vasu and Sastri, and Sastri and Nataraj are only variants of the guru-shishya relationship.

Once Nataraj leaves the pahlwan and Suleiman, we notice that for the rest of his career, he accepts no one as his guru or guide. Without a guru, the Hindus believe, there can be no salvation. When Vasu encounters Nataraj, we have a feeling that Nataraj, a Brahmin, might turn out to be Vasu's new guru, and the Vasu-Nataraj encounter might prove to be a happy encounter between modern and traditional India. In his first meeting with Vasu, and his subsequent relations throughout, Nataraj questions Vasu's purpose and activities. But Vasu, instead of showing any humility or respect for the Brahmin (the custodian of traditional values etc.), starts bullying him:

... 'Oh, you will never understand these things, Nataraj. You know nothing, you have not seen the world. You know only what happens in this miserable little place.' (p.17)

The Westernised modern Indian Vasu and the traditional Brahmin Nataraj could have mutually helped and guided each other, both acting as the guru and the shishya simultaneously. Vasu could have learnt from Nataraj that, after all, there was something called 'moral law' (which, according to the Bhagabat Gita, all demons tend to forget), and Nataraj could have changed his negative attitude, of looking mostly to the past and rarely to the future, and of being more enthusiastic about the temple than about the Heidelberg machine (an attitude which Naipaul thinks is Narayan's). Though Vasu and Nataraj find each other indispensable, as the traditional and modern Indian must, their relationship does not prove mutually beneficial and creative.

Potentially an ideal form of guru-shishya relationship, the relationship between Vasu and Nataraj, in the context of pre-independence and post-

independence India, manifests itself in the complex and tragic form of the love-hate relationship that exists between the colonial and his master. Professor Mahood in her analysis of the novel has made it clear that Nataraj in his relation with Vasu and Sastri shows signs of 'colonial mentality':

...Nataraj, in his dealings with Vasu, fluctuates between shrillness and servility: exactly the behaviour that, before independence, the British criticized in their Indian subjects, without any recognition that it was a form of conduct that arose from the colonial situation itself. Nataraj even begins to show that most depressing by-product of the dependency relationship, a tendency to bully other people in compensation for being bullied. 74

Vasu, on the other hand, exploits the goodness of Nataraj for his own profit, and in addition occupies the attic of Nataraj without authorisation. Vasu's only reason for being in Malgudi, after travelling from as far away as Junagadh, is to acquire wealth. In his devotion to wealth and his lack of piety, qualities which the Vishnu Purana attributes to demons, Vasu resembles the puranic demon as much as the colonial masters of Asia and Africa. The historical importance and the natural beauty of Malgudi (about which Raju in The Guide and Krishnan in The English Teacher talk so much) are irrelevant to him:

'You think I have come here out of admiration for this miserable city? Know this, I'm here because of Mempi Forest and the jungles in those hills. I'm a taxidermist. I have to be where wild animals live.' (p.18)

Vasu and Nataraj have obviously spent more of their life in British India than in independent India, and political freedom (though Vasu is one of those responsible for it) need not mean their psychological freedom from a colonial complex. Vasu's sense of superiority manifest in his over-asserting the Western virtues of democracy, human liberty and individualism, and in bullying Nataraj and Sastri; and Nataraj's sense of inferiority in his desperate attempt to be on talking terms with Vasu, arise from the same colonial situation. Vasu in some way resembles the Englishman arriving in India for

commercial interest (in fact the East India Company's sole interest was commerce), and Nataraj suggests the colonial Indian, providing room for the Englishman and being served the 'summons' for alleged misbehaviour. Vasu's exploitation of Nataraj and Malgudi is an obvious metaphor for exploitation in general, and that of a colony by its master in particular.

Vasu in his attitude to Nataraj and Malgudi resembles significantly the Englishman in pre-independent India and the Westernised Indian of the post-independence period. His sole interest in exploiting the commercial potentialities of Malgudi and his over-enthusiasm for Western political ideology and industrialisation are features of British and Nehru periods of Indian history. In fact, to many in India and abroad, the change-over of the Indian administration from Mountbatten to Nehru meant no difference in the form and quality of government; and Nehru himself is on record commenting that he was the last Englishman to rule India.<sup>75</sup> Apparently absurd and arrogant statements of Vasu such as the following do suggest the Westernised Indian's over-enthusiasm for Western political and social ideologies:

'Oh, come on, don't be a fussy prude, don't imagine that you are endowed with more sensitive nostrils than others. Don't make yourself so superior to the rest of us. These are days of democracy, remember.' (p.63)

'More people will have to die on the roads, if our nation is to develop any road sense at all!' (p.38)

'Drink is like marriage. If people like it, it's their business and nobody else's....' (p.38)

Out-westing the West is a typical attitude of the educated Indian - obviously a colonial complex - and Ruth Praver Jhabvala and V.S. Naipaul in some of their articles have ridiculed this Indian attitude.<sup>76</sup> Professor Shils, in his work referred to earlier, concludes that 'India is still intellectually a province of the British metropolis'.<sup>77</sup> Vasu's attitude towards himself resembles that of the British in India towards themselves (elaborately discussed by A.J. Greenberger in The British Image of India)<sup>78</sup>

on the one hand, and that of the Indians who succeeded the British only to follow the British policy with greater conviction and zeal. The poet and the journalist, who represent the common people of Malgudi, recoil at Vasu's presence no less than Indians must have done in the presence of British rulers in the past:

He stepped in, saw the Queen Anne chair occupied by the poet, and remarked, half-jokingly, 'That's my chair, I suppose.' The poet scrambled to his feet and moved to another seat. 'H'm that's better,' Vasu said, sitting down. He smiled patronizingly at the poet and said, 'I haven't been told who you are.' 'I'm, I'm...a teacher in the school.' 'What do you teach?' he asked relentlessly. 'Well, history, geography, science, English - anything the boys must know.' 'H'm, an all-rounder,' Vasu said. I could see the poet squirming. He was a mild, inoffensive man who was unused to such rough contacts. But Vasu seemed to enjoy bothering him. I rushed in to his rescue. I wanted to add to his stature by saying, 'He is a poet. He is nominally a teacher, but actually...'

'I never read poetry; no time,' said Vasu promptly, and dismissed the man from his thought. (pp.19-20)

The main focus of the novel, however, is not on the conflict at political or economic level, but at the level of morality. 'Now is the testing time for Nehru,' says the journalist, referring to the Chinese aggression, which, Professor Mahood rightly interprets as a reference to Nehru's foreign policy of Peaceful Co-existence (Pancha-Shil) and domestic policy of Westernisation. But the deeper conflict, in Nehru's India, takes place between two world views - the profoundly religious, perhaps archaic, world view of Sastri and Nataraj, and the grossly utilitarian, modern world view of Vasu - world views implied in Gandhism and Nehruism. The nature of this conflict - perhaps remotely suggested in the characters of Nataraj's two friends: the poet preoccupied with the life of Krishna, and the journalist with Nehru's policy - comes to surface in the conflict between Nataraj-Sastri and Vasu.

'I had been brought up in a house where we were taught never to kill. When we swatted flies, we had to do it without the knowledge of our elders' (p.66). This statement of Nataraj could have been the statement of

Sastri, or of any Indian Brahmin. When Vasu kills and stuffs all sorts of animals - crow, hyena, cat, dog - in total disregard of the Hindu belief in the sanctity and dignity of all animals, the conflict becomes deep and significant. It is much more than a political or economic conflict, it is a conflict between two world views. Much of Western philosophy and civilisation, based on the assumption that man is superior to and master of all animals and living beings, is radically different from the Hindu belief that man and animals are essentially equal and inseparable, possessing the same 'soul', which moves, according to the law of karma, from lower animals to higher and vice versa. In a story in the Brahmavaiivarta Purana, which Zimmer re-tells as 'The Parade of Ants',<sup>79</sup> Indra is told by Shiva that the ants in his house really bear the souls of his ancestors. Modern Hindus may not believe in the theory of migration or trans-migration of soul, but their attitude to the animal world, and the world around them in general, is significantly different from that of many in the West of the post-industrial era. Kamala Markandaya realises that one of the most important differences between a Western and an Indian writer lies in their assumption of the place of man in the universe:

...The gulf really opens when I encounter the assumption, here in the West, that the earth was created for man: an assumption that seems to be used, consciously or unconsciously, to justify almost any kind of assault upon the animal kingdom, and upon the systems of the earth itself.

Whereas I, with my background, happen to believe that everything exists by its own right. I do find that I have a way of riding this particular hobby-horse right into my novels, although I am not aware of it at the time. 80

The assumption that man is insignificant in this vast expanse of time and space, reflected in the Hindu attitude to history as we have seen earlier, is certainly a basic motif in all forms of Hindu philosophy, art and literature. In the Hindu pantheon of gods and goddesses, both human beings and animals seem to enjoy equal status. Often, a god is a combination of man and animal, as Ganesha (the elephant-god) is; and god and animal are inseparable.

'You have no doubt excelled in giving it the right look, but, poor thing, it's dead. Don't you see that it is a garuda?'  
'What if it is?'

'Don't you realize that it's sacred? That it's the messenger of God Vishnu?'

'I want to try and make Vishnu use his feet now and then.'

'You may be indifferent, but haven't you seen men stopping in the road to look up and salute this bird when it circles in the sky?'  
I wanted to sound deliberately archaic and poetic.

He ruminated for a second and added, 'I think there is a good business proposition here. I can supply them stuffed eagles at about fifty rupees each. Everyone can keep a sacred garuda in his puja and I'll guarantee that it won't fly off. Thus they can save their eyes from glare. I want to be of service to our religious folk in my own way.' (p.64)

Two contrasting world views are clearly implied in this talk between Nataraj and Vasu. For Nataraj, the eagle is garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu, a symbol of the preservation of the world order; but for Vasu, it is nothing more than 'a good business proposition'. In Vasu's suggestion that by providing a stuffed garuda he can help the religious folk to perform their puja, we can hear the demon who, as the Bhagbat Gita puts it, offers sacrifice to God 'in name only, for outward show'<sup>81</sup>; as well as the modern scientist who over-asserts his power over Nature.

Vasu's attitude to women and children is not very different from his attitude to birds and animals. He ignores Nataraj's son although he is present so often, and kills the pet of the grandchild of the octogenarian. Concerning male-female relationships, his views are startlingly original:

'Only fools marry, and they deserve all the trouble they get. I really do not know why people marry at all. If you like a woman, have her by all means. You don't have to own a coffee estate because you like to have a cup of coffee now and then',....  
(p.38)

...'Drink is like marriage. If people like it, it's their business and nobody else's....' (p.38)

Like the puranic demon, Vasu believes that the universe is 'conceived in lust and created by copulation', and 'gratification of the senses' is his one purpose. In his attitude to man-woman relationships, he violates the

moral and social code of the Hindu world. The male-female relationship as envisaged in the Hindu philosophy is significantly different from that in the Western. The Hindu god is conceived as bisexual, sometimes presented as half man half woman;<sup>82</sup> but generally as a male god accompanied by his consort. The Hindu marriage is not a contract between two individuals as Christian or Islamic marriages are, but a permanent union of souls, designed in heaven. The man cannot perform his religious duties unless he is accompanied by his wife - the Sanskrit equivalent of 'wife' being saha-dharmini (one who assists in performing the religious duties). Rama, while performing the Rajasuya Yajna, had to have a golden image of Sita beside him, since Sita herself had already been banished. In Narayan's novel, we find Sastri taking his wife with him on the pilgrimage.

In viewing woman as a means to sexual gratification rather than religious achievement, and by asserting his individual right to look after his own 'business', Vasu violates both the moral and the social code of the Hindu world. (We see in the next chapter that male-female relationships in Hindu society are viewed as a communal affair, and Vasu is as much a social rebel as Panchi in The Old Woman and the Cow, or Lalu in The Village.) Vasu's attitude to women and sex is not different from many in the West in the present age who fail to recognise sex as a means to some nobler end. Narayan himself has clearly expressed his disapproval of the Western attitude to sex in a well-written passage in his autobiography:

Somehow, for the working out of some destiny, birth in the physical world seems to be important; all sexual impulses and the apparatus of sexual functions seem relevant only as a means to an end - all the dynamism, power, and the beauty of sex, have a meaning only in relation to its purpose. This may not sound an appropriate philosophy in modern culture, where sex is a 'fetish' in the literal sense, to be propitiated, worshipped, and meditated upon as an end in itself; where it is exploited in all its variations and deviations by movie-makers, dramatists, and writers, while they attempt to provide continuous titillation, leading to a continuous pursuit of sexual pleasure - which, somehow, Nature has designed to be short-lived, for all the fuss made - so that one is driven to seek further titillation and sexual activity in a futile never-ending cycle. 83



Vasu's attitude is in direct conflict with that of the Malgudi community. His assertion of the right of the individual to determine his 'business' in relation to sex and marriage, may remind many of the fact that it is the Nehru government which, by adopting the Hindu Marriage Act (1956), recognised the Hindu marriage as a contract between two individuals, each partner having the right to divorce the other. This Act, which historians like Percival Spear consider 'Nehru's greatest success...achieved with the greatest effort, and likely to influence the future most',<sup>84</sup> significantly changed the Hindu social laws in operation from the time of Manu. Vasu's attitude perhaps reflects an over-enthusiasm for Nehru's programmes for social reforms.

If the encounter between Nataraj-Sastri and Vasu is symbolic of the encounter between traditional and modern India, in the relationship between Sastri and Nataraj there is much to suggest that India cannot forge ahead if it is incapable of self-assessment. Though introduced in the novel in a half comic half ironic way, and made to appear archaic, withdrawing and even insignificant, Sastri is a memorable and important character in the novel.

Sastri, with his silver-rimmed glasses on his nose, entered, bearing a couple of blank cards and a specimen type-book. He paused for a second, studying the visitor, placed them on the table, turned and disappeared through the curtain. (p.21)

As his name indicates, he is the wise man of the novel; and the similarities of his views with Narayan's makes us believe that he represents the author more than anyone else in the novel. His relation with Vasu and with Nataraj are complex indeed. Though a subordinate to Nataraj, and occasionally bullied by him, he is more a guru to Nataraj than anything else, and Nataraj-Sastri relationship is a form of guru-shishya relationship. Nataraj himself seems conscious of this: 'The relation of employer and employee was reversed at my press whenever there was an emergency' (p.12).

Sastri resembles the traditional Indian guru in being unimpressive, archaic, and even detached to a fault. When the crisis following Vasu's arrival in Malgudi reaches its climax with Vasu being found dead in his own room, and Nataraj, Sastri's employer is completely demoralised, Sastri thinks it the appropriate time to go on pilgrimage:

He was business-like, and turned a blind eye on my emotional condition.' After the marriage at Karaikudi, my wife insisted on going on a pilgrimage to Rameshwaram, and to a dozen other places. A couple of children fell ill on the way. I was fretting all along to get back, but you know how our women are! Sickness or not, my wife insisted on visiting every holy place she had heard of in her life. After all, we get a chance to travel only once in a while....' (p.239)

Sastri admits that he should have dropped a card to Nataraj, when on pilgrimage, 'but when one is travelling it is impossible to sit down and compose a letter, and the idea gets postponed' (p.239). But it is Sastri who sustains Nataraj throughout the crisis, as an ideal guru should do for his shishya, by his upadesham (advice). Nataraj no doubt notices the demonic qualities in Vasu from the beginning, but it is Sastri who understands these qualities with far greater clarity and conviction, and in relation to ancient texts; and it is Sastri, again, who could prophesy the ultimate fate of Vasu. In viewing Vasu as one in the line of Ravana, Mahisha and Bhasmasura, Sastri no doubt believes, like the authors of the puranas, that the dharma-adharma conflict and the Yugas repeat themselves in cyclical order; that the present reality is so insignificant a part of the cosmic design of things, that there is no reason whatsoever to feel depressed or demoralised.

In relation to Vasu, Nataraj behaves like one of the colonised. He feels he is exploited, but misses Vasu's 'rough company' and wants to be on 'speaking terms' with him somehow (p.93). Sastri, interestingly, from his first encounter with Vasu, rejects him completely. If there is a love-hate relationship between Vasu and Nataraj, between Vasu and Sastri there is only mutual rejection. Sastri, unlike Nataraj, symbolises that India which rejected the West completely.

What about my lunch? Sastri did not care whether I had time for food or not - he was a tyrant when it came to printing labels, but there was no way of protesting. He would brush everything aside. As if reading my mind he explained, 'I'd not trouble you but for the fact that this satyanarayana puja must be performed today in my house; my children and wife will be waiting for me at the door....' (p.11)

Sastri does observe the satyanarayana puja, his dharma; but he does not have the courtesy to see that his employer has his lunch. He sustains his employer in the worst period of his life, but does not have the time to drop him a card while on pilgrimage. He does possess the Eastern dharma, but lacks the Western duty. Non-attachment as a religious virtue he has, and he is wise. But he lacks adequate social concern - he tries to evade the crisis by withdrawing himself from it - and he is indifferent. Both in his wisdom and weakness he represents the traditional India that remained unaffected by the Indo-British encounter for centuries, became no doubt archaic, but sustained itself and survived. And Narayan in the character of Sastri - and in the novel in general - asserts the wisdom and virtue of ancient India as much as he rejects its attitude of withdrawal and indifference.

Narayan ends the novel the way the author of a purana would end his narrative. Vasu, the modern counterpart of the puranic demon, is eliminated, not by any external agent, but by his own misdeeds, according to the law of karma; and the Malgudi world returns to normalcy. Sastri breathes peacefully now that another demon has met his end:

'...Every demon appears in the world with a special boon of indestructibility. Yet the universe has survived all the rakshasas that were ever born. Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment. Otherwise what is to happen to humanity?' (p.242)

Vasu simply adds to the number of demons by one, and nothing new or extraordinary seems to have happened in the world with his rise and fall.

Sastri and Nataraj again start discussing K.J.'s labels, which of course they were discussing before Vasu's arrival in Malgudi, and we can imagine the poet and the journalist joining them soon. We can imagine too a new demon, a new Vasu, appearing again from somewhere and being destroyed in due course. As in the past, so also in the future, conflicts between opposite forces, between Vasus and Natarajs, are likely to be repeated in Malgudi again and again, thus implying that both time and reality are cyclical.

### III

"The fault of others, Rangamma, is the fruit of one's own disharmony", says Moorthy, Raja Rao's protagonist in Kanthapura (p.61); and this statement of the young Brahmin who leads the village community of Kanthapura to the Indian freedom struggle bringing about the almost total collapse of the community, amply explains his attitude to the struggle. The struggle takes place at two levels - the political (Moorthy and the villagers against the policeman Bade Khan and the English planter, the Skeffington Coffee Estate sahib), and the social (the Mahatma and Moorthy against the Swami and Bhatta). The political conflict as envisaged by the old woman narrator can easily be seen as a puranic conflict between the divine and demonic forces, between dharma and adharma. The conflict at the social level does not quite imply a clash of two sets of opposite values, both the Mahatma and the Swami, Moorthy and Bhatta being equally firmly rooted in the Hindu tradition and having respect for each other. Bhatta, the disciple of the Swami, has a kind word for Moorthy: 'Moorthy was a good fellow' (p.30). Rangamma who reports the Gandhi-Swami encounter tells the villagers that they have respect for each other; the Swami only complains that Gandhi is unnecessarily 'meddling with the dharma sastras' and Gandhi feels that the Swami 'did not interpret the dharma sastras correctly' (p.90). It is like the controversy of the sages, as described in the puranas, over certain moral

and religious issues.

Narrating a contemporary story in a traditional form is Raja Rao's favourite technique of storytelling and, as we see later in this study, several of his short stories in The Cow of the Barricades (1947) are successful experiments in this technique. The folktale, being the most appropriate form of storytelling among the illiterate Indian masses, who of course form the majority of the population, is perhaps the most natural medium for expressing Indian sensibility; and Rao retains this form in several of his stories and in the novel Kanthapura to communicate an Indian sensibility adequately. In The Serpent and the Rope, Rao retains the puranic form, a form very close to the folktale, to express a sensibility, a world view, distinctly Indian. In order to make the narrative more plausible, Rao tells his stories and the novel Kanthapura, which embody the folktale form, through the medium of illiterate Indians, particularly grandmothers. The story of 'Kanakapala' in The Cow of the Barricades, like Kanthapura, is narrated by a grandmother. The Serpent and the Rope, with his narrator researching in Albigenian heresy and Buddhism, expresses a sensibility as much Western as Indian, and cannot be said to be as puranic in its form and world view as Kanthapura is. But as David McCutcheon suggests, The Serpent and the Rope contains significant elements of the shastra (Hindu religious texts which of course include the puranas),<sup>85</sup> and it cannot be appreciated fully by readers unaware of, or unsympathetic to the Hindu tradition.

The choice of an old Brahmin widow who comes from a family expert in the Vedas ('Veda Sastra Pravina') as the narrator of the Kanthapura story sufficiently indicates the novelist's intention of presenting the narrative in a traditional form and from an intensely religious point of view. The same story, if narrated by other participants in the social and political events of Kanthapura like Bhatta or Bade Khan, would have been unrecognisably different. The old woman's narrative significantly resembles two brief episodes

by two other villagers, Jayaramachar and Siddayya. Siddayya's narrative, as suggested later in the study, is a folktale, pure and simple, which makes no reference whatsoever to religion. It expresses an essentially peasant sensibility, Siddayya being a low-caste Hindu, a Pariah. But Jayaramachar's Harikatha, Jayaramachar being a Brahmin and a scholar, though a folktale, is intensely religious. The old woman narrator no doubt combines something of both of these narratives in her long story, but it is Jayaramachar that she loves and admires:

--you know Jayaramachar, the famous Harikatha-man? They say he had done Harikatha even before the Mahatma. And a funny Harikatha-man he is too, sister. (p.10)

The women of Kashipura consider the Kanthapura narrator funny too (they call her "the aunt of the pancakes" (p.179) and so on). Like Jayaramachar, the old woman narrator is occasionally funny and amusing. But her story is mainly serious.

Kanthapura, perhaps more than The Man-eater, is an attempt to present a very contemporary and secular theme of modern India from a profoundly puranic and religious point of view. We can study the meaning of the novel by examining the role of Kenchamma, the presiding Goddess of Kanthapura, in the whole episode; and by examining the Kenchamma myth in its relation to two other myths suggested in the novel - the myth of Shiva and the myth of Vishnu.

It is significant that in the opening passages, describing the peace and stability of Kanthapura, the narrator refers to Goddess Kenchamma as both benign and terrible:

Kenchamma is our Goddess. Great and bounteous is she. She killed a demon ages, ages ago, a demon that had come to demand our young sons as food and our young women as wives. Kenchamma came from the Heavens - it was the sage Tripura who had made penances to bring her down - and she waged such a battle and she fought so many a night that the blood soaked and soaked into the earth, and that is why the Kenchamma Hill is all red....Thank heaven, not only did she slay the demon, but she even settled down

among us, and this much I shall say, never has she failed us in our grief. If rains come not, you fall at her feet and say "Kenchamma, goddess, you are not kind to us. Our fields are full of younglings and you have given us no water. Tell us, Kenchamma, why do you seek to make our stomachs burn?" And Kenchamma, through the darkness of the temple sanctum, opens her eyes wide - oh! if only you could see her eyelids quicken and shiver! - and she smiles on you a smile such as you have never before beheld. You know what that means - that very night, when the doors are closed and the lights are put out, pat-pat-pat, the rain patters on the tiles, and many a peasant is heard to go into the fields, squelching through the gutter and mire. She has never failed us, I assure you, our Kenchamma." (p.2)

This image of the Goddess Kenchamma, benevolent and yet terrible, is perhaps the most powerful image in the novel and represents, in a sense, the Hindu concept of creation-destruction. Kenchamma, like Durga or any other Goddess, represents Shakti (which literally means 'energy', but also is a synonym for 'goddess') in both its aspects, creative and destructive. The 'great' and 'bounteous' Goddess responsible for the peace and prosperity of the village is also the Goddess who 'killed a demon ages, ages ago' and made the Kenchamma Hill 'all red'. Such combination, or rather inseparability of opposite qualities is common in all forms of Hindu symbolism. As Zimmer notes, referring to the Hindu concept of divinity:

This symbolism of the dreadful-yet-benign is a dominant trait in all Hindu symbolism and mythology. It is essential to the Hindu concept of divinity. Not alone the Supreme Godhead and Its *Máyá*, but every godling in the teeming pantheons of the mighty tradition, is a paradox: potent both to further and to destroy; to entangle with benefactions and to redeem with a stroke that slays. 86

In his reference to the Goddess Kenchamma the novelist obviously combines the puranic motif of the descent of the divinity with the folk motif of associating a landscape (sthala) with supernatural significance. The popular belief that the 'red' colour of the Kenchamma Hill is due to 'Kenchamma and her battle' again conforms to the Hindu symbolism of 'red' suggesting creativity. 'Red', the colour of blood, is the favourite colour of the Hindu Goddesses Durga and Kali (Kenchamma obviously is a popular manifestation of

either of them), whose faces are pasted with vermilion. The Hindu married women wear vermilion marks on their foreheads as a sign of their good fortune. This is how Zimmer explains the significance of painting the Hindu Goddess red:

The Goddess is red in colour....Red is the active colour. She is the primordial energy, planning and producing the evolution of the universe. She is called Vimarsa-Sakti; vimarsa meaning "deliberation, reasoning, planning"; sakti, "energy". 87

Zimmer, however, does not mention that vimarsa primarily means 'sorrow'; and the Goddess who represents the creative force essentially looks angry and sad. The benign and the dreadful are inseparable and the Goddess who gives a rich harvest to the villagers also brings smallpox and cholera to the village to punish the villagers. The harvest and the smallpox both equally symbolise for the villagers the love of Kenchamma:

Then there is the smallpox, and we vow that we shall walk the holy fire on the annual fair, and child after child gets better and better - and, but for that widow of a Satamma's child, and the drunkard Dhirappa's brother's son, tell me, who ever has been taken away by smallpox? Then there was cholera. We gave a sari and a gold trinket to the goddess, and the goddess never touched those that are to live - as for the old ones, they would have died one way or the other anyway. Of course you will tell me that young Sankamma, Barber Channav's wife, died of it. But then it was not for nothing her child was born ten months and four days after he was dead. Ten months and four days, I tell you! Such whores always die untimely. Ramappa and Subbanna, you see, they got it in town and our goddess could do nothing. She is the Goddess of Kanthapura, not of Talassana. They ought to have stayed in Talassana and gone to Goddess Talassanamma to offer their prayers.  
(pp.2-3)

The narrator not only emphasises that the Goddess of benevolence is the Goddess of wrath; she also justifies Her wrath. If the young Sankamma died of smallpox, it was for her sin, and the law of karma had to work its way. The world view reflected in the narrator's brief account of Goddess Kenchamma is not different from that in her account of the political and social events which she narrates so elaborately. The Kenchamma episode in fact suggests the pattern of the entire Kanthapura story and much of the puranic meaning of the novel would be lost if the parallels between the Kenchamma



myth and the freedom struggle are not adequately understood.

It is important that the narrator frequently refers to Kenchamma - and always with unshaken faith, reverence and endearment. Such references, apart from attributing puranic 'pauses' to the structure of the novel (in a purana, each chapter generally opens and ends with the reference to some divinity), keeps the episode of Kenchamma, described in the opening passages, alive in the mind of the reader. Kenchamma is seen as presiding over all that happens in the village - and as the link between the worldly human affairs and the cosmic design of heaven. She is perhaps the only 'constant' (except the narrator herself) who remains present throughout the events of the tale, thus providing a sense of continuity to the narrative which describes the times of turmoil and disintegration:

- (i) ...And how we regretted the evening the Sankara-jayanthi was over. The air looked empty.

But by Kenchamma's grace it did not end there. The next morning Moorthy comes to us and says,.... (p.8)

- (ii) ..."Oh, this is against the ancient laws - a patel is a patel from father to son, from son to grandson, and this Government wants to eat up the food of our ancestors", and everybody, as they passed by the Kenchamma grove, cried out, "Goddess, when the demon came to eat our babes and rape our daughters, you came down to destroy him and protect us. Oh, Goddess, destroy this Government", and when the women went to cut grass for the calves, they made a song, and mowing the grass they sang:

Goddess, Goddess, Goddess Kenchamma,  
...                      ...                      ...  
Red is the earth around the Goddess,  
For thou hast slain the Red-demon.                      (p.94)

- (iii) "Hé, hé," the rains have sunk into the earth, and Gap-tooth Siddayya drives his stick into the earth and says, "Why, she has gone four fingers deep," and they all say, "Why, it rained as though the goddess had asked for it." (p.110)

- (iv) ...but never would Rangê Gowda be anything but Patel in Kanthapura. And when he reaches the Black-serpent's-anthill he gets down, throws the reins into Mada's hands and walks up unhurriedly to the courtyard. And Priest Rangappa is heard to ring the bell in the sanctum, and all eyes grow dim and the eyelids droop and everyone says, "There, there the goddess is going to show her face," and they tremble and press against each other, and when the legs itch they do not scratch, when the waters drip they do not shake,

and then suddenly the curtain is drawn, and Mother Kenchamma is there straight, bright and benign, and the candelabra weave their lights around her, and they say, "Maybe, she has passed a good night." (p.111)

- (v) Then the police inspector rushed at the coolies and whipped them till they began to search their way again among us, but we began to call out to them, "Oh, don't go, brother! - don't go sister! - oh, don't go in the name of the Mahatma! - oh, don't go in the name of Kenchamma!" (p.138)
- (vi) ...and the thuds of the lathi and the ringings of the cattle bells and the rain on the earth and the shouts of the market people and the kerosene tin that still beat, we all felt as though the mountains had split and the earth wailed, and the goddess danced over the corpse of the Red Demon. And when the police inspector gave an order, we all pressed our heads tight to the earth to wait a lathi shower,.... (p.139)
- (vii) And of a sudden the coolies of the city stop work and at a command the lights are all put out, and there is nothing but the rising moon and a rag of cloud here and there and all the stars of night and the shining dome of the Kenchamma temple, and the winking lantern from the Skeffington bungalow. (p.170)

These are only some of the excerpts which suggest the presence of Kenchamma in the villagers' mind throughout their religious, political and social activities; and more importantly, their viewing of all their activities and experience as an enactment of the Kenchamma myth. The rain and the harvest are at the mercy of Kenchamma (iii); The 'Red-man's Government' is the new 'Red Demon' (ii); Everyone is aware, even the powerful Patel, that the smiling Kenchamma might become dreadful if she is not properly honoured (iv). Kanthapura's participation in the Indian freedom struggle draws its inspiration from the Mahatma and Moorthy as much as from the Kenchamma myth (v); and clearly, the destruction caused to Kanthapura by the freedom struggle is a manifestation of Kenchamma the dreadful, dancing over the corpse of the Red Demon (vi). But however powerful the Red Demon might appear, he is bound to be slain by Kenchamma (the lantern from the Skeffington bungalow, symbolising the Government's power, is 'winking'), Kenchamma is bound to prove her might and Kanthapura can look forward to a happy and prosperous future (the dome of the Kenchamma temple is 'shining') (vii).

In fact, Bade Khan and the Skeffington Coffee Estate sahib, for the villagers, are no better than the demon that once came to demand 'our young

sons as food and our young women as wives'; just as the Mahatma and Moorthy are as noble as sages like Tripura of the ancient ages. After Jayaramachar's arrest, when the Government sends Bade Khan to Kanthapura, he fails to find accommodation in the village and settles down in the Skeffington Coffee Estate with a Pariah woman. Bade Khan in his relation to his patron, the Skeffington Coffee Estate sahib, resembles the colonial determined to serve his master (and reminds us of Vasu's over-enthusiasm for Western values):

So Bade Khan went straight to the Skeffington Coffee Estate and he said, "Your Excellency, a house to live in?" And Mr. Skeffington turned to his butler and said, "Give him a hut", and the butler went to the maistris' quarters and opened a tin shed and Bade Khan went in and looked at the plastered floor and the barred windows and the well near by, and he said, "This will do", and going this way and that, he chose a Pariah woman among the lonely ones, and she brought along her clay pots and her mats and her brooms, and he gave her a very warmful bed. (p.15)

Mr. Skeffington who obviously is a representative of the rabid colonialism at its worst, clearly conforms to the image of a puranic demon. He is not totally devoid of good qualities (nor are the puranic demons). 'He is not a bad man, the new sahib. He does not beat like his old uncle, nor does he refuse to advance money ...' (p.54). When the labourers of the Estate catch the mysterious fever, he gives them medicine and insists on its use by all. But his flaw is as great as the demon's. He seems to believe that 'life has one purpose: gratification of the senses', and his 'lust can never be appeased':

...he will have this woman and that woman, this daughter and that wife, and every day a new one and never the same two within a week. (pp.54-55)

Mr. Skeffington's encounter with the Brahmin Seetharam has many parallels in the puranic encounters of demons with sages, or demons infatuated with young women:

...It's only when it is a Brahmin clerk that the master is timid, and that since the day Seetharam wouldn't send his daughter. The master got so furious that he came down with his revolver, and the

father was in the back yard and the young son shouted out, "The sahib is there, the sahib", and as Seetharam hears that, he rushes to the door, and the sahib says, "I want your daughter Mira," and Seetharam says, "I am a Brahmin. I would rather die than sell my daughter." - "Impudent brute!" shouts the sahib, and bang! The pistol shot tears the belly of Seetharam, and then they all come one by one, this maistri and that butler, and they all say, "Master, this is not to be done." And he says, "Go to hell!" (p.55)

The sahib's infatuation with Seetharam's daughter is like that of the demon Mahisha with Devi (described in Gods, Demons, and Others) or that of Bhasmasura with Mohini; and the sahib seems destined for the fate that has befallen innumerable demons before him. The contempt of the Hindus for the sahib is aroused and even the maistri and the butler raise a protest against him because he attempted to seduce a Brahmin's daughter. Had the sahib attempted to seduce a Pariah's daughter, the fault would not perhaps appear so significant; but the Hindu law of karma is now likely to work with greater force.

Against the demonic Bade Khan and the Skeffington Coffee Estate sahib are set Moorthy and the Mahatma, who in their life-style and philosophy resemble the sages of the puranic period. The representatives of a colonial administration are generally corrupt, and characters like Bade Khan and the sahib are not uncommon in African fiction, or fiction anywhere dealing with colonial rule or the freedom struggle. But in non-Indian fiction we do not come across characters like Moorthy and the Mahatma (the Mahatma as portrayed in fiction does not necessarily correspond to the real Mahatma Gandhi) who, though involved in the freedom struggle which is primarily political in nature, appear to have a religious rather than a political mission. As we have seen earlier, in the thirties and forties of this century the nationalism that was aroused in India in order to unite the country as well as to fight the British was a religious nationalism; and it is a fact of Indian history that the Indian freedom movement, particularly the movement led by Gandhi, was intimately linked with Hindu philosophy, even with Hindu rituals. Many leaders who fought against the British during this period were primarily religious leaders. In traditional Indian society, organised on the basis of caste and clan, religious leaders were the natural leaders of the community (and still

are, though after Independence the Government has been trying to replace religious organisations with political ones). The combination of religion with politics, which Gandhi supported, invariably created the impression that the Indian freedom struggle was a religious struggle, which, for a Hindu, is a struggle between the gods and demons. In Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan, a novel set against the communal riots that preceded and followed the Partition, we see that the leaders of the village of Manomajra are the priests of the Sikh and the Muslim communities.

Characters like Moorthy and the Mahatma set against Bade Khan and the sahib might lead one to believe that the novel in its puranic rendering of the story is distorting the reality. How is it that all those opposed to the British rule are noble (suras) and those supporting it are ignoble (asuras)? By interpreting in puranic terms a struggle which is primarily political, the old woman narrator no doubt simplifies the events; and she herself being a participant in the struggle and understanding little of its political implication is in no position to view the events objectively. But in view of the mingling of religion and politics in India in the period in which the novel is set, the old woman's narrative is quite realistic. The role the Mahatma plays in Kanthapura, a role similar to that of an ancient sage (Jayaramachar compares the Mahatma with Valmiki), was a reality in Indian politics and society, though it might be that Gandhi did not intend to play such a role.

In the beginning of the novel, Moorthy is introduced not as a political but as a religious leader, 'who had gone through life like a noble cow, quiet, generous, serene, deferent and brahminic' (p.5), actively organising and participating in various religious ceremonies of the village. Moorthy's involvement in politics - his initiation into Gandhi's ideology, his organising the Congress Committee, his political protest, and so on - hardly changes his religious image. His political activities seem exactly like his religious

activities and he symbolises the Indian freedom movement of the Gandhian period - the satyagraha movement which blended politics and religion. In Moorthy's struggle for political freedom (Moorthy literally means 'image', and he is the image of the Mahatma), we can see his puranic quest for the ultimate truth through the understanding of worldly phenomena. For the puranic sage, the worldly phenomena are symbolic of a more important cosmic reality (the conflict between gods and demons, for instance, is symbolic of the eternal conflict between dharma and adharma). So also for Moorthy. The political struggle for India's freedom, for Moorthy, is essentially a spiritual struggle for the emancipation of the soul:

That evening Moorthy speaks to Rangamma on the veranda and tells her he will fast for three days in the temple, and Rangamma says, "What for, Moorthy?" and Moorthy says that much violence had been done because of him, and that were he full of the radiance of ahimsa such things should never have happened, but Rangamma says, "That was not your fault, Moorthy!" to which he replies, "The fault of others, Rangamma, is the fruit of ones own disharmony," and silently he walks down the steps, and walks up to the temple, where, seated beside the central pillar of the mandap, he begins to meditate. And when the evening meal is over Rangamma comes to find our Seenu, and lantern in hand and with a few bananas in her sari fringe, she goes to the temple, and Moorthy, when he sees the light, smiles and asks what it is all about. Rangamma simply places the bananas before him and stands waiting for a word from him. Moorthy lifts up the bananas and says, "I will drink but three cups of salted water each day, and that I shall procure myself. I shall go to the river and get water, and tomorrow if you can get me a handful of salt, that is all I ask." (p.61)

... ..

Moorthy said his gayatri thrice a thousand and eight times, and when the sanctum lights began to flicker he spread out his upper cloth on the floor and laid himself down. Sleep slowly came over him, and so deep was his rest that people were already moving about the streets when he awoke. He rose quickly and hurried down to the river and hurried back again and, seated by the central pillar, began once more to meditate. People came and people went; they banged the bell and touched the bull and took the flowers, and still did Moorthy enter deeper and deeper into meditation;.... (p.62)

This is Moorthy, not the young Brahmin performing the camphor ceremony in the absence of Jayaramachar or organising religious festivals like the Ganesh Jayanthi, but Moorthy in the midst of political turmoil. The two

Moorthys, Moorthy the religious leader and Moorthy the politician, are hardly distinguishable. In fact, Moorthy protests against the establishment, both political and social (against the Skeffington Coffee Estate sahib, against Bade Khan, and against his mother), by fasting in the temple, a ritual practised by pious Hindus for purification of the soul (atma-suddhi). In puranas and other Hindu religious texts, both human beings and demons are described as taking recourse to fasting to gain the favour of the Supreme God, Brahma. Gandhi's fasting as a political method (he also did it, as he said, for the purification of his soul) is well known. Moorthy's form of protest as described in the novel hardly suggests any political motive; rather it suggests the puranic motive of gaining spiritual favours by means of ascetic measures. Moorthy's viewing of the participation in the freedom struggle as a spiritual act (it is significant that he disappears before the violence breaks out in the village) clearly determines the tone of the novel - a novel about a contemporary theme but appearing puranic and conforming to the Hindu world view.

By casting the characters of the opposing forces in the mould of gods and demons, and by emphasising the sage-like qualities of Moorthy (who might remind many of the puranic character, Dadhichi)<sup>88</sup>, the novelist encourages the reader to view the freedom struggle as a form of dharmayuddha (war for dharmayuddha). In Hindu literature, wars between the divine and the demonic forces are invariably described or suggested as dharmayuddha. This concept, which obviously implies religious approval of war, has two implications. Firstly, the war is fought by the noble ones to protect their dharmayuddha. (Hindu warriors in ancient and medieval literature are shown fighting for dharmayuddha rather than for 'chivalry'; even when a war is fought for a woman, as for Sita in the Ramayana, it is for dharmayuddha; warriors fighting for chivalry, a most recurring theme in medieval European literature, seems rare in Hindu literature.) Secondly, the God in some human incarnation is often shown fighting for dharmayuddha

or supporting those who fight for dharmā; and the war invariably ends with the victory of the forces that fight for dharmā.

The concern of all Hindu religious texts and puranas with dharmā-yuddha is so obvious a theme that it is hardly necessary to elaborate upon it. In the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, Rama and Krishna (both human incarnations of God Vishnu) fight for dharmā and win. The Bhagabat Gita which is a poem describing the war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas in the field of Kurukshetra, views the war as dharmā-yuddha. In fact the first line of the first stanza of the poem refers to the religious nature of the war (dharmakshetre kurukshetre...). All the episodes of war in the Vishnu Purana describing the conflict between the gods and demons end with the triumph of the gods.

It is interesting that in Indian literature from medieval times up to the present, all wars between Hindus (or Indians, the two terms often being synonymous) and non-Hindus are viewed as dharmā-yuddha. Thus, the emphasis is not on the military aspect of the war (on the violence, bloodshed, or the arms and ammunition), but on its religious nature. (The Bhagabat Gita is more concerned with the philosophy behind the war than with its military details.) The historical wars that were fought between the Mughals and the Rajputs, the Marathas and the Muslims, or the Indians and the British (though in this case, 'war' may not be the right word), are, in Indian literature and popular imagination, essentially dharmā-yuddha. Nirad C. Chaudhury elaborately analyses this concept of Hindu war in his The Continent of Circe; and it is appropriate here to quote a few lines:

... the realistic Hindu practice of war had its idealistic theory, which was developed very early. Frightened by the militaristic violence and the proneness to bloodshed of their people, the ancient Hindu moralists tried to restrain and purify it by formulating a moral concept of war of righteousness, or, as they called it, Dharma Yuddha. ... It was proclaimed as the duty of the warrior, the Kshatriya, that he should defend and succour the distressed. 89



Two chapters in Rao's novel, chapters 17 and 18, giving in minute details the account of the clash between the villagers of Kanthapura and the police remind us of dharam-yuddha. It is obvious that in these two chapters the narrative reaches its climax. The opposing forces, the villagers whose preoccupation with religion suggests their nature, and the policemen about whose nature we learn from the activities of Bade Khan, stand face to face; and we are already aware of what these two forces represent. The villagers stand for Gandhian non-violent struggle and face the police with indomitable courage and determination, whereas the police are involved in a series of rapes, murders and so on, representing an establishment that is corrupt and demoralised. In the end, the police burn almost all the houses of Kanthapura, auction the corn-fields and kill or wound most of the villagers. The surviving villagers, in despair and disgust, run to the neighbouring village. The final account of the clash and the escape as described by the narrator who is one of those who survives and flees to the neighbouring village, is moving indeed:

... And they asked this about the fight and that, and of their sons who were with us, and their fathers and their husbands, and of Mota who had a scar on the right eye, and Chenna who was this-much tall, and Betel-seller Madayya, you couldn't mistake him, he was so round, and we said what we knew and we were silent over what we knew not, and they said, "Ah, wait till our men come back, wait!" But we said the police would not leave us alone and we'd go away and we'd leave our wounded with them. And we took our children and our old women and our men and we marched up the Kola pass and the Beda hills, and, mounting over the Ghats, we slipped into the Santapur jungle path, and through the clear, rustling, jungle night we walked down to the banks of Cauvery. Across it was Mysore state, and as dawn broke over the hissing river and the jungles and the mountains, we dipped in the holy river and rose, and men came to greet us with trumpet and bell and conch, and they marched in front of us and we marched behind them, through the footpaths and the lanes and the streets. And houses came and cattle and dung-smell and coconut shops and children and temple and all. They hung garlands on our necks, and called us the pilgrims of the Mahatma.

Then we ate and we slept, and we spake and we slept, and when they said, "Stay here, sisters," we said, "We'll stay, sisters," and we settled down in Kashipura. (pp.177-178)

Apparently, such a tragic turn in the narrative does not reinforce the belief, the belief clearly implied in the Kenchamma myth, that Kenchamma would protect the village whenever there is any demonic intrusion; and it is possible to view the novel as a criticism of Gandhism. A reviewer in The Saturday Review observes that the violence that takes place in the end of the narrative suggests that the Mahatma was not altogether successful.<sup>90</sup> It is obvious that the villagers sometimes take recourse to violence (in fact it is the throwing of a stone at the police by a villager that starts the series of violent activities by the police); and the Gandhian method of struggle fails to save the village from being completely destroyed. Even the narrator whose faith in Kenchamma and the Mahatma remains unshaken in spite of the terrible tragedy, becomes cynical at one moment of her narrative:

Mad we were, daughters, mad to follow Moorthy. When did Kenchamma ever refuse our three morsels of rice - or the Himavathy the ten handfuls of water? ...But some strange fever rushed up from the feet, it rushed up and with it our hair stood on end and our ears grew hot and something powerful shook us from head to foot, like Shamoo when the goddess had taken hold of him; and on that beating, bursting day, with the palms and the champaks and the lantana and the silent well about us, such a terror took hold of us, that we put the water jugs on our hips, and we rushed back home, trembling and gasping with the anger of the gods. (pp.161-162)

Of course, this mood of cynicism lasts only for a while, and the next moment the narrator repents of her statement: 'Moorthy forgive us! Mahatma forgive us! Kenchamma forgive us!' But nonetheless it does suggest that the participants of the freedom struggle, on the verge of the total collapse of their

society, do sometimes doubt the wisdom of their involvement in an action which after all originated in the 'city'.

While presenting a contemporary story in a puranic form and from a traditional point of view, Rao never loses grip of reality. The violence, cynicism and destruction make the story plausible and convincing, but they are also presented in a way which does not violate the puranic nature of the narrative. In The Man-eater, Narayan conforms to the puranic world view (that the evil will eliminate itself) by avoiding the tragedy: the temple elephant is not killed. In Kanthapura, significantly, the tragedy takes place - the entire village is destroyed, but the novel ends with the puranic note of profound optimism.

The episode of violence and destruction, described in chapters 17 and 18, can be seen from two angles: from the realistic perspective, it is a true picture of the Indian freedom struggle, suggesting the strength and the limitations of the masses as well as of the ideology they were following; and from the puranic, it is a narrative, similar to the Kenchamma myth, conforming to the Hindu world view of the inevitability of the triumph of the good over the evil. On the realistic plane, the episode is, no doubt, a series of rapes, arsons and murders; but the narrator, with her puranic outlook, views the episode as a spiritual struggle (she likes to be called the pilgrim of the Mahatma), by turning to Kenchamma and Shiva, implying that the struggle is a dharma-yuddha.

Though the clash of the villagers with the police brings so much misery to the village - apparently suggesting the failure of Gandhism to sustain the village community on the one hand, and the futility of the myth about the protecting power of Kenchamma on the other - the villagers in fact never lose faith in Kenchamma. Their attitude to Kenchamma, in the midst of struggle with the police, corresponds exactly to the attitude they show towards the Goddess if the rains do not fall or smallpox threatens the villagers:

If rains come not, you fall at her feet and say "Kenchamma, goddess, you are not kind to us. Our fields are full of younglings and you have given us no water. Tell us, Kenchamma, why do you seek to make our stomachs burn?" (p.2)

... ..

Then there is the smallpox, and we vow that we shall walk the holy fire on the annual fare, and child after child gets better and better - and, but for that widow of a Satamma's child, and the drunkard Dhirappa's brother's son, tell me, who ever has been taken away by smallpox? Then there was cholera. We gave a sari and a gold trinket to the goddess, and the goddess never touched those that are to live....

"O Kenchamma! Protect us always like this through famine and disease, death and despair. O most high and bounteous! We shall offer you our first rice and our first fruit, and we shall offer you saris and bodice-cloth for every birth and marriage, we shall wake thinking of you, sleep prostrating before you, Kenchamma, and through the harvest night shall we dance before you, the fire in the middle and the horns about us, we shall sing and sing and sing, clap our hands and sing: .... (pp. 2-3)

The villagers participate in the freedom struggle in the same spirit as they participate in the prayer in the temple of the Goddess Kenchamma. They are prepared to sacrifice for the gaining of freedom all their material possessions, which they would also sacrifice to Kenchamma for saving them from famine and smallpox. They are prepared to face death and devastation as a prerequisite to their freedom just as they are willing to perform the ritual of walking on the holy fire to please Kenchamma. Far from losing faith in the Kenchamma myth, they draw their inspiration and strength from it, fully aware that the dreadful is as much the manifestation of the Goddess as the benign, and the dreadful would soon manifest itself in the smiling and the benign. The participation in the freedom struggle is not very different from the religious rituals of the day; and on both of the days on which the struggle and the violence take place, the villagers start their encounter with the police after performing their daily religious rituals, and the focus of their activities seems to be the temple. The first day of the struggle starts:

The next morning, when the thresholds were adorned and the cows worshipped and we went to sweep the street-fronts, what should we see by the temple corner but a slow-moving procession of coolies.... (p.147)

The second encounter:

Three days later, when we were just beginning to say Ram-Ram after the rice had been thrown back into the rice granary, the cradle hung back to the roof, and the cauldron put back on the bath fire, and the gods put back in their sanctum, and all the houses washed and swept and adorned and sanctified, and when one by one our men were slipping in and then hurrying back to their jungle retreats, what should we see on that Saturday - for it was a Saturday - but one, two, three cars going up the Bebbur mound,.... (p.157)

Particularly significant is the fact that the struggle takes place on a Saturday, the day named after Sani, the Hindu God of Misfortune, suggesting the struggle is a part of the cosmic design.

In their struggle with the police, the villagers again and again turn to Kenchamma; they are aware of the protecting power of the Goddess and of the fact that the Goddess is now in a dreadful aspect:

(i)...And our hearts curdled and we cried, "Oh, what shall we do? What?" and the sanctum bell did not ring, nor the conch blow,.... (p.147)

(ii)...and Timmamma turns to her and says, "Oh, where shall we go, daughter, with this new mother and child?" and Kamalamma says, "Why, to the temple,".... (p.152)

(iii) And the shouting grows shriller, and we say, "Surely there's a new attack," and we say, "Now we must run to the temple,".... (p.152)

(iv)...and we all stand trembling before the unadorned god, and we all beat our cheeks and say, "Siva, Siva, protect us! Siva, Siva, protect us!" and each one made a vow of banana libation or butterlamps or clothes or jewels for the goddess, and each one said may her husband or brother or son be safe in the prisons. (p.153)

The sanctum bell not ringing and the conch not blowing indicate the anger of the Goddess (i). The villagers repeatedly turn to the temple at every crisis (ii and iii). In fact, when their struggle with the police reaches its climax, they take shelter in the temple itself (iv), and pray that the villagers of the neighbouring village will come to their rescue (they ultimately flee to the neighbouring village and find shelter there):

..."They are coming to our rescue, they are coming to help us," and there are white figures moving forward, and from the Santur grove comes the noise of drums, and we say, "They are coming," and we look once to the god and once to the east, and once to the god once to the northeast, and we look once to the god and once to the northwest, and we say all these men, all these men and women and children of the Himavathy are with us, and they'll all come with drum and trumpet and horn to free us. (pp.153-154)

The villagers also arrange a satyanarayanapuja - a religious ritual which, as Rao himself tells us in his 'Notes', is observed 'as a means to remove obstacles and to obtain success in a difficult enterprise.' (p.240). During the processions they arrange to demonstrate their anger against the Government, they utter 'Satyanarayana Maharaj ki jay' as many times as 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jay'. Thus, 'victory to the Mahatma' is not different for them from 'victory to the God Satyanarayana'.

The novelist provides two other clues which make this episode of violence resemble the dharma-yuddha as described in Hindu literature. The blowing of the conch is suggested a number of times: '...the sanctum bell did not ring, nor the conch blow ...', (p.147) 'Ratna stopped every hundred steps and blew the conch three times...' (p.165), and so on. The conch, besides being the Hindu equivalent of the European bugle, is a symbol of religious significance. In the Bhagabat Gita, the war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas starts only when Krishna blows a conch named Panchajanya. The fact that the conch bears a name (other conches referred to in the Bhagabat Gita are personified as well; the conch which Arjuna blows is Devadutta, for instance) shows the importance attached to it. The conch, again, is viewed as symbolising the God Vishnu (Vishnu lives in the ocean and the conch is found in the ocean as well); and it is worshipped as such in many Hindu homes.

The other clue is the villagers' prayer to Lord Shiva:

Siva, Siva of the Meru mount,  
Siva, Siva of the Ganges-head,  
Siva, Siva of the crescent moon,  
Siva, Siva of the crematorium dance,  
Siva, Siva of the unillusioned heart,  
Siva, Siva, Siva.... (p.154)

If the presiding deity of Kanthapura is the Goddess Kenchamma (manifestation of Durga or Kali), why then do the villagers, in their struggle with the police, repeatedly invoke the God Shiva? It does not mean that they lack faith in Kenchamma, but simply that Shiva is the Lord of War and Destruction (His tandava dance symbolising the destruction of the universe); and it is appropriate that He be prayed to at a time when the world is witnessing a destruction. In Hindu iconography, Shiva is sometimes shown as inseparable from Shakti (Durga or Kali) as manifest in the form of Shiva-Ardhanari (Shiva-Half Woman). Shiva and Shakti are often viewed as inseparable (like Rama and Sita, or Krishna and Radha); and as Zimmer notes, 'Shiva and the Goddess represent the polar aspects of the one essence and therefore cannot be at variance; she expresses his secret nature and unfolds his character.'<sup>91</sup> The villagers' prayer to Shiva is also a confirmation of their faith in Shakti (i.e., Kenchamma).

The novelist has perhaps another motive in showing the villagers turning to Shiva. Though not in Hindu myths and puranas, in Indian literature and popular imagination since the seventeenth century, particularly since the war between the Mughals and the Marathas which in Indian literature and Indian imagination is a war between the Muslims and the Hindus, Shiva has attained the status of the Lord of War. Thus, the war cry of the Marathas was 'Hara Hara Mahadeo' (victory be to Shiva). In Indian fiction and poetry of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, war between the Hindus and the Muslims is a common theme and Shiva is often the patron god of war for the Hindus. 'Seven out of the fourteen novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterji', says Nirad C. Chaudhury, 'who is the first true Bengali novelist and still remains the greatest, depend for the unfolding of their plots on fighting.'<sup>92</sup> Ascetics abound in Chatterjee's novels, often playing a crucial role, and they naturally draw their inspiration from Shiva, who is the archetypal ascetic. Radhanath Ray, an important Oriya poet of the nineteenth century (a contemporary of

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee), wrote a poem in which Sivaji is shown inspiring his soldiers, in the name of Shiva, to fight the Yavanas (etymologically, the Greeks; but in Indian languages, the term is used to mean the Muslims).<sup>93</sup> Much of the Indian literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth century dealing with the Hindu-Muslim war of the Mughal period, was really meant to inspire the Hindus to fight the British; and Shiva was universally accepted as the patron god of war. Raja Rao very much conforms to the Hindu literature and the Hindu imagination by showing his villagers invoking Shiva while fighting the British Government.<sup>94</sup>

By suggesting that the clash between the villagers and the police is a form of dharma-yuddha, the novelist leaves the reader in no doubt as to its result. Every dharma-yuddha is bound to lead to the triumph of dharma, and all the suffering and destruction of the yuddha or war are nothing but a passing phase. Since everything will be all right in the end, there is no suggestion of tragedy. Neither the tandava dance of Shiva nor the dreadful manifestation of Shakti suggests the end of the world or the end of divine benevolence. After Shiva destroys the world by his terrible tandava dance, Brahma creates the world anew and Vishnu preserves the creation, creation and destruction being inseparable; or, if one moment Shakti manifests herself as the Goddess of Wrath, denying rain to the field or sending smallpox to the village, the next moment she assumes a smiling aspect, sending benevolent rain and eradicating smallpox.

Towards the end of the novel, the novelist introduces another myth - the myth of Vishnu. After the destruction of the world brought about by the tandava dance of Shiva or the wrath of Shakti, when it is created again, Vishnu preserves its order and harmony by destroying the demons, as described in puranas. The narrator's reference to Rama-rajya or the kingdom of Rama (a term Gandhi often used, and a term symbolising the Hindu idea of an ideal state), suggesting the goal of the participants of the freedom struggle, brings the Kenchamma myth full circle:



They say the Mahatma will go the Red-man's country and he will get us Swaraj. He will bring us Swaraj, the Mahatma. And we shall all be happy. And Rama will come back from exile, and Sita will be with him, for Ravana will be slain and Sita freed, and he will come back with Sita on his right in a chariot of the air, and brother Bharatha will go to meet them with the worshipped sandal of the Master on his head. And as they enter Ayodhya there will be a rain of flowers. (p.181)

Finally, we feel re-assured, after witnessing the dreadful Goddess bringing indescribable misery to the village, that she will smile again:

And when the night is over, and the sun rises over the Bebbur mound, people will come from Santur and Kuppur, people will come from the Santur Coffee Estate and the Kuppur Cardamom Estate, from coconut gardens and sugar cane fields, and they will bring flowers and fruit and rice and dal and sugar candy and perfumed sweetmeats, and we shall offer you all, dancing and singing - the bells will ring, the trumpets tear through the groves, and as the camphor rises before you, we shall close our eyes and hymn your praise. Kenchamma, Great Goddess, protect us! O Benign One!" (p.3)

The myth of Vishnu, though referred to briefly, explains the Hindu and puranic nature of the novel. On the one hand, it suggests the profound sense of optimism that invariably marks the ending of the purana; and on the other, the Hindu belief that the present reality had its counterpart in the past as much as it will have in the future, and that the present reality, being only a passing phase, is nothing but an illusion (maya) and will lead to the Reality when Truth alone will triumph (Satyam Eba Jayate).

FOOTNOTES

1. In the post-colonial era, with large number of Hindus settling down in Africa and the West Indies, considerable bulk of literature in English has been written by Hindus. Among them, the Naipauls - Seepersad Naipaul, V.S. Naipaul and Shiva Naipaul - are of course well known. It is possible to assess the literature of Mauritius, where most of the inhabitants are Hindus and English is the main writing medium, the other one being French, as a Hindu literature. Nepal is a Hindu country, and possibly English is used in that country, though not as widely as in India, as a writing medium. In a recent critical study of V.S. Naipaul (V.S. Naipaul: A Critical Introduction, Landeg White, London, 1975) a great deal of emphasis is given to Naipaul's Hindu background.
2. Klaus Steinworth refers to the background of twenty two Indo-Anglian novelists out of whom seventeen are Hindus. He of course considers Pakistani novelists like Ahmed Ali and Zulfikar Ghose as Indo-Anglians. (The Indo-English Novel, Wiesbaden, 1975, pp.50-51.)
3. Mulk Raj Anand's The Hindu View of Art (London, 1933) is an excellent attempt to explain the interconnectedness of religion and art in India. According to him, 'the Hindu view of art is the Hindu view of life, life as interpreted by religion and philosophy' (p.37) and 'the studio of the Hindu artist is...not different from the poet-philosopher's hermitage, or the poet-priest's temple' (p.47). Two important points Anand makes in this work may be noted: (i) the Hindus firmly believed in the intimate relationship of the various arts (pp.153-155); and (ii) the authors of several silpa-shastras (art-treatises) are sages (p.169). In his 'Introduction' to Speaking of Siva (Penguin, 1973) A.K. Ramanujan explains why it is difficult to understand the Vachanakaras (a school of medieval Kannada religious poets) without adequate knowledge of 'the ritual for building a temple' (pp.19-20).
4. The Hindu View of Life, London, 1941, p.77.
5. In his The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity: the Indian Situation (The Hague, 1961), Edward Shils refers to a symposium held in India on 'Books That Have Influenced Me'. Among the Indian books mentioned, most were religious works. Shils' notes: 'Only about one-fifth of the books or authors cited were Continental or Indian (of these approximately half were Indian - only three were modern Indian literary figures, the others being religious classics or modern religious social reformers)'. Shils also notes that among the younger generation, the Gita, the Upanishads and Gandhi's writings are quite popular; and most of the readings are done in the English language (pp.59-60).
6. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar's Indian Writing in English, more than any other work on the subject, serves as guide to Indo-Anglian books and their themes. Many of the books Iyengar mentions have little literary value; and are out of print and difficult to find. But the Hindu nature of their themes is beyond doubt. Three of Iyengar's chapters - 'The Renaissance in India', 'Drama' and 'The Novel: Themes, Backgrounds, Types' may be seen in this context. Uma Parameswaran's

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

6. analyses of the novels of T. Ramakrishna and A.S.P. Ayyar clearly (contd.) show the Hindu nature of the works of these early Indo-Anglian novelists (See 'Nostalgia - The Historical Romances of T. Ramakrishna and A.S.P. Ayyar', A Study of Representative Indo-English Novelists, New Delhi, 1976).
7. Ralph Russell's essay 'The Development of the Modern Novel in Urdu' (The Novel in India, edited by T.W. Clark, London, 1970) clearly suggests that Indian Muslim writers writing in Urdu looked to the Muslim past of India and to Persian literary traditions as their source of inspiration. Krishna Kripalani makes similar suggestions in his Modern Indian Literature: A Panoramic Glimpse (Bombay, 1968, p.22 and p.65). It may not be unfair to say that Muslim Indian-language writers are hardly secular. Indo-Anglian Muslim writers perhaps do not look to their religious past or Persian literary traditions as much as Indian-language Muslim writers do. But nonetheless, Indo-Anglian Muslim writers almost exclusively write about the Muslim community, and almost all better known Indo-Anglian novels written by Muslim authors such as Sunlight on a Broken Column (1961) by Attia Hosain and Inquilab (1955) by Khwaja Ahmad Abbas deal either with the decay of Muslim glory in India or the predicament of an Indian Muslim in a Hindu-dominated society.
8. See Ian Stephens' Pakistan, Penguin, 1964, p.91.
9. See 'Bengali Prose Fiction Up To Bankimchandra', The Novel in India, edited by T.W. Clark, London, 1970.
10. K.M. Panikkar in his The Foundations of New India (London, 1963) gives fairly good idea about the roles of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity in the Indian history, particularly in the last two centuries (See 'The Hindu Reformation', 'The Christian Tradition', and 'Islam'). About the Indian national revival in the early part of the twentieth century, Nehru writes, 'Socially, the Indian national revival...was definitely reactionary. Inevitably, a new nationalism in India, as elsewhere in the East, was a religious nationalism' (Toward Freedom, Boston, 1967, p.33).
11. An Autobiography, Boston, 1970, p.265.
12. ibid, p.206.
13. Professor Shils' work is published in 1961 and hence, the period he refers to here is presumably the late fifties.
14. The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation, The Hague, 1961, p.72.
15. ibid, p.64.
16. Uma Parameswaran in an article on Raja Rao refers to Rao's long contact with a guru in South India (See JCL, 7, July, 1969, p.108).
17. A Passage to India, Penguin, 1959, pp.279-280 and 282-283.
18. See The Hill of Devi, London, 1953, pp.100-120.
19. The Colonial Encounter, London, 1977, p.179.
20. 'A Discussion: Modern Indian Writing', The Miscellany, 28, 1968, pp.69-70.

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

21. Besides Gods, Demons, and Others (New York, 1967), in which he narrates stories from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and several Puranas, Narayan has also summarised the Tamil poet Kamban's Ramayana in The Ramayana (London, 1973).
22. My Days, London, 1975, pp.148-150.
23. ibid, p.134.
24. 'The Train Had Just Arrived at Malgudi Station', John is Easy to Please, London, 1971, p.141.
25. 'Gods, Demons and Modern Times', The Literary Criterion, X, Winter, 1972, p.50.
26. ibid, p.47.
27. Ahmed Ali, 'Illusion and Reality - the Art and Philosophy of Raja Rao', JCL, 5, July, 1968, p.18.
28. Quoted, 'India's Search for Self-Expression', TLS, August 10, 1962, p.585.
29. Quoted, ibid, p.584.
30. Raja Rao, 'The Writer and the Word', Critical Essays, Dharwar, 1968, p.359.
31. The Hindu View of Art, London, 1933, p.217.
32. Roots and Flowers, Dharwar, 1972, pp.1-2.
33. Steinvorth, for instance, writes, 'As a matter of fact, there does not exist anything like "tradition" and "continuity" in Indo-English fiction....' (The Indo-English Novel, Wiesbaden, 1975, p.52.)
34. An Area of Darkness, London, 1968, pp.227-228.
35. 'India: A Wounded Civilization', The New York Review of Books, XXIII, 7, April 29, 1976, p.20.
36. 'Sweet Mangoes and Malt Vinegar: the Novels of R.K. Narayan', A Human Idiom, London, 1964, p.128.
37. TLS, May 9, 1958, p.258.
38. Quest, II, 3, 1956, p.38.
39. Indian Literature of the Past Fifty Years, 1917-1967, edited by C.D. Narasimhaiah, Mysore, 1970, pp.133 and 139.
40. 'On Not Shooting an Elephant', 20th Century Studies, 10, December, 1973. The article, with minor changes, is included in The Colonial Encounter, London, 1977, with a new title, 'The Marriage of Krishna'.
41. See 'Theme and Form in R.K. Narayan's The Man-eater of Malgudi', JCL, X, 3, 1976.

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

42. The Colonial Encounter, London, 1977, p.94.
43. ibid, p.99.
44. ibid, p.112.
45. 'Raja Rao: the Metaphysical Novel (The Serpent and the Rope) and Its Significance for Our Age', Readings in Commonwealth Literature, edited by William Walsh, Oxford, 1973, p.39.
46. ibid, p.39.
47. 'Kanthapura: An Analysis', Critical Essays, edited by M.K. Naik et al, Dharwar, 1968, p.249.
48. 'Raja Rao's Shorter Fiction', Indian Literature, X, 3, 1967, p.76.
49. The Indo-Anglian Novel and the Changing Tradition, Mysore, 1972, p.129.
50. Indian Writing in English, Calcutta, 1969, p.82.
51. Studies in Modern Indian Fiction in English, II, Calcutta, 1973, p.104.
52. The Saturday Review, January 11, 1964, p.62.
53. The purana, by definition, is supposed to have five characteristics (pancha lakshanam); and according to H.H. Wilson, 'there is no one [purana] to which it [pancha lakshanam] belongs so entirely as to the Vishnu Purāna' (H.H. Wilson, The Vishnu Purāna, Calcutta, 1972).
54. Uma Parameswaran has attempted to analyse Rao's novels as studies in the theme of Shakti. Her analysis, particularly of Kanthapura, is too brief (one and a half pages) and superficial. (See A Study of Representative Indo-English Novelists, New Delhi, 1976, pp.147-148.)
55. The Vishnu Purāna, p.v.
56. Hindu Myths, Penguin, 1975, p.11-12.
57. See Durga Bhagwat's An Outline of Indian Folklore, Bombay, 1958, p.15.
58. James A. Kirk, Stories of the Hindus, New York, 1972, p.xiv.
59. The Speaking Tree, London, 1974, p.294.
60. Gods, Demons, and Others, New York, 1967, p.4.
61. The Speaking Tree, London, 1974, p.289.
62. Hindu Myths, Penguin, 1975, pp.46-48.
63. Gods, Demons, and Others, New York, 1967, p.5.

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

64. In his article, 'Speaking as a Writer', Narayan writes, '...putting an ancient tale in a modern garb is also a writer's legitimate activity. I have myself attempted it in one of my novels. In 'The Man-eater of Malgudi', the story closely follows the symbolic tale of Bhasmasura' (ACTIALS Bulletin, edited by C.D. Narasimhaiah, Mysore, 1974, p.31.).
65. The Bhagbad-Gita, Chapter XVI, translated by Prabhananda and Christopher Isherwood, London, 1947, pp.151-153.
66. According to the Hindu calendar, Time consists of four Epochs or Yugas: Krita, Treta, Dwapara, and Kali. Each Yuga possesses special characteristics of good and evil. (See Gods, Demons, and Others, New York, 1967, pp.5-6.)
67. The Vishnu Purāna, pp.387-388.
68. Quoted, Indian Writing in English, Bombay, 1973, p.310.
69. 10 February, 1977, Radio 3.
70. In an article, 'Speaking as a Writer' (ACTIALS Bulletin, edited by C.D. Narasimhaiah, Mysore, 1974, p.29), Narayan talks of an American novelist who told him, 'I finish a novel in nine days since I use an electronic typewriter'. Narayan comments, '...I want to emphasize that the mechanics of writing are of no consequence'.
71. 'Gods, Demons and Modern Times', The Literary Criterion, X, Winter, 1972, pp.52-53.
72. The Speaking Tree, London, 1974, p.347.
73. See 'Reluctant Guru' in Narayan's collection of essays under the same title (Delhi, 1974).
74. The Colonial Encounter, London, 1977, p.106.
75. J.K. Galbraith, The Age of Uncertainty, 1977, p.332.
76. See for instance, Jhabvala's 'Introduction: Myself in India', An Experience of India (London, 1971) and Naipaul's 'Jamshed into Jimmy', The Overcrowded Barracoon, London, 1972.
77. The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation, The Hague, 1961, p.85.
78. See 'The British Self-Image', The British Image of India, London, 1969.
79. Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, New York, 1962, pp.7-8.
80. 'A Pair of Blue Eyes: Some Random Reflections', The Literary Criterion, Summer, 1975, p.22.
81. The Bhagdad-Gita, translated by Prabhavananda & Christopher Isherwood, London, 1947, p.153.

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

82. Shiva is sometimes presented as half man, half woman. See Plate 70 in Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, New York, 1962.
83. My Days, London, 1975, p.148.
84. Percival Spear, A History of India, II, Pelican, 1971, p.255.
85. See 'The Novel as Sastra', The Miscellany, 8, 1961.
86. Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, New York, 1962, p.35.
87. ibid, p.203.
88. Dadhichi (or Dadhicha) is the mythical sage who willingly died so that a bolt could be made out of his bones to kill demons (See Epic Mythology, E. Washburn Hopkins, New York, 1969, p.122).
89. The Continent of Circe, London, 1965, p.100.
90. William Clifford, 'Legacy of the Mahatma', The Saturday Review, January 11, 1964.
91. Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, New York, 1962, p.199.
92. The Continent of Circe, London, 1965, p.103.
93. Sivajinka Utsaha Vani.
94. In popular Hindu imagination, the Muslims, in spite of their forming a significant bulk of the Indian population, are as alien as the British; and it is hardly plausible that a Brahmin widow, obsessed with the idea of pollution and all that, would ever think of Muslims as 'brothers'. In Kanthapura, Rao sometimes has his narrator refer to the Muslims as 'our brothers, the Mohammedans' etc. (p.160), which suggests that Rao, writing the novel at a time when Hindu-Muslim unity was much advocated has sometimes sacrificed realism for the sake of propaganda. 7

## The Social Background

### I

Indo-Anglian novelists, like novelists in Indian languages, write about Indian society, its problems, its values and so on; and it is important to be aware of the social background of their themes and characters for adequate understanding and appreciation of their works. Indian society, by and large, is predominantly traditional, and is based on caste, clan, the concept of joint family and arranged marriage. As a result of its exposure to Western ideas and values, and with the growth of industry and technology, Indian society, in the last two hundred years or so, has no doubt undergone considerable transformation and the patterns of family and social relationships have changed accordingly. But this change is still insignificant in rural communities which constitute eighty per cent of the Indian population.

Some of the recurring themes of Indian fiction such as the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law tangle, suffering of an old widow in a joint family, conflict between brother and brother, and separation of a daughter from her parents, are intimately linked up with their social background. Themes such as the conflict between the individual and the society (as in Mulk Raj Anand's The Village) or between brother and brother (as R.K. Narayan's The Financial Expert) have not only an Indian setting as their background, they are presented in the context of certain values and assumptions. My purpose here is to analyse some of the portraits of family and social relationships in Indo-Anglian fiction with reference to their social background.

Two factors are fundamental to understanding the family and social relationships portrayed in Indo-Anglian fiction: firstly, the common norm of the family is the joint family; secondly, the individual is supposed to exist for the group. In practice, however, the ideal is seldom followed and the inevitable result is conflict in some form or other. The grandmother with her traditional views about the joint family clashes with the daughter-in-law who is all for her separate identity. Although an old widow is to be revered in a joint



family, she may in reality be neglected by all. Two brothers expected to live together peacefully under the same roof may quarrel bitterly after their marriage. But religion and social conventions recognise only the joint family and at moments, a crisis may follow. Again, since the individual is supposed to exist for the group, the group is always eager to determine the individual's life and action. Thus, even in a private affair like marriage, the bride or the bridegroom has hardly any say. It is the superiors in the family or the community or the professional matchmakers who decide the match. Marriage is considered a social duty to procreate progeny and the individual is expected to conform to this social code. When it is otherwise, obviously it leads to a crisis.

The stress and strain of living in a joint family or its shadow and the over-all influence of the group on the individual's life often provide the Indian novelist with rich material. Reverence for age and tradition, superiority of male over female and the living presence of gods and ancient myths are some of the factors that influence family and social relationships. As R.K. Narayan observes:

The eternal triangle, such a standby for a western writer, is worthless as a theme for an Indian, our social circumstances not providing adequate facilities for the eternal triangle. We, however, seek excitement in our system of living known as the joint-family, in which several members of a family live under the same roof. The strains and stresses of this kind of living on the individual, the general structure of society emerging from it, ...are inexhaustible subjects for us. And the hold of religion and the conception of the gods ingrained in us must necessarily find a place in any accurate portrayal of life. 1

Family and social relationships in India, whatever might be their sociological or metaphysical implications, are very complex indeed<sup>2</sup> and it is by no means easy to comprehend them without being a part of Indian social ethos. This is obvious from the fact that British authors - even Kipling who was born and spent his early years in India - have rarely ventured to write about Indian family or social life. 'For all Kipling's tact, curiosity, and linguistic skill,

he could not gain access to a normal, middle-class Indian household', says one of his critics,<sup>3</sup> and nowhere does Kipling portray the relation between a husband and a wife, or a grandmother and a grandson in an Indian family setting. To Kipling, the family and social relationships in India must have appeared strange, and the way he comments condescendingly on the Indian way of life, customs and manners, testifies to the fact. A Passage to India, by far the most widely read novel about India in the West, is brilliant as a work of art, and no doubt Forster with his liberal and humane outlook tries to probe the problem of British India - the clash and overlap of three cultures, Hindu, Muslim and British. But, Aziz, Godbole, Fielding or Miss Quested are only types of their races, and A Passage to India does not evoke the intricacies and nuances of the Indian social ethos.

One suspects that a great deal of Indian literature, both in Indian languages and English, is not appreciated outside India because of the reader's lack of awareness of the Indian social background. This is how V.S. Naipaul reacted when he read Premchand and some other novelists of India:

what little I read of them in translation did not encourage me to read more. Premchand, the great, the beloved, turned out to be a minor fabulist, much preoccupied with social issues like the status of widows or daughters-in-law. Other writers quickly fatigued me with their assertions that poverty was sad, that death was sad. I read of poor fishermen, poor peasants, poor rickshaw-men;.... 4

Premchand who is considered the greatest Hindi fiction writer<sup>5</sup> is rejected by Naipaul for his preoccupation with the status of widows and daughters-in-law. Social issues like the status of widows and daughters-in-law were among major themes of Indian fiction in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and novelists like Premchand and Saratchandra Chatterjee advocating equal status of women with men were considered revolutionaries in India. Naipaul's rejection of Premchand as 'a minor fabulist' may be due to his ignorance of the social background against which Premchand wrote. Here is another instance of the reaction

of a Western critic to Indian literature:

Most of the Indian fiction of the last eighty years is poor, whatever its sociological value. It neither properly embodies the purely Indian culture, nor (when it tries, as it so often does) succeeds in exploiting Western techniques.

... he [Tagore] was by no means a major imaginative writer.... 6

Though it is out of place here to discuss in detail why an Indian author, even of the stature of a Premchand or a Tagore, meets with a poor response from outside, it seems that the reader's lack of awareness of the Indian social background is one reason. The assessment of Tagore as a minor imaginative writer may be due to reading him in English translation, and not in the original Bengali. It could be also due to judging Tagore by Western artistic standards. However, Indo-Anglian literature, being composed in English, has a fairer chance of being comprehended and appreciated outside. Naipaul who rejects Premchand, 'enjoys and admires' Narayan.<sup>7</sup> Premchand or Tagore wrote specifically for the speakers of a particular language and their works are meant to be appreciated from within the local context. R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand write for a heterogeneous audience and their choice of language determines, partly, their themes and techniques. An Indo-Anglian, for instance, spells out some of the social and cultural details unintelligible to the West. Indian-language literature and Indo-Anglian literature are clearly meant for two types of audience, and if a reader prefers a Narayan to a Premchand, this may not mean that the former is a greater artist than the latter.

British authors like Kipling and Forster have avoided themes of family and social relationships presumably because of their ignorance of the Indian social ethos. Indo-Anglians, however, sometimes avoid such themes for other reasons. The very choice of their language is the greatest barrier in portraying lower middle-class family life in its vivid details. The quarrel between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law (as in Bibhutibhushan Banerji's Bengali novel, Pather Panchali), or between sister-in-law and sister-in-law (as in K.C. Panigrahi's

Oriya novel, Matira Manisha<sup>8</sup>), which is almost a stock literary device in Indian fiction in late nineteenth and early twentieth century, cannot easily be conveyed through a language like English. The language of such a quarrel is extremely idiomatic and close to a sort of oral verse tradition. Both the Indian family and society being based on the rigid rule of hierarchy, the very language a person uses may suggest his or her role in such a system. Anand and Narayan when they occasionally refer to family quarrels, do not elaborate them in detail. In reproducing the dialogue of characters in family and social situations, Anand loads his language with literal translations of Punjabi and Hindustani idioms and proverbs, and Narayan uses a language devoid of any cultural overtones. Both methods seem inadequate to convey the flavour of the language used in intimate and emotional moments.



Awareness of an audience which is almost ignorant of Indian family life, social customs, religious rituals and so on, makes the Indo-Anglian novelist uncertain about his themes and techniques when he writes about family and social relationships. He seems to prefer those aspects of family and social relationships which would be easily intelligible to the Western reader, or aspects which would be interesting to him for their exotic nature. Thus, conflict between father and son, the former representing tradition and the latter Western values, is preferred as a theme (Anand's The Village; Narayan's The Vendor of Sweets) to conflict between brother and brother or mother-in-law and daughter-in-law; and elaborate references to marriage and dowry are more frequently made than to birth, death or division of property. Meenakshi Mukherjee has rightly noted that 'among some hundred and fifty novels published in the last thirty years, one finds hardly two dozen books where a marriage ceremony is not described'.<sup>9</sup> Such references to exotic customs are often not integrated in the theme and plot-structure of the novel and can make the novel more a sociological document than a work of art.

II.

Mulk Raj Anand's The Old Woman and the Cow (1960), though not remarkable as a work of art, is authentic in its details of the social scenes and is written in the tradition of the novel of social realism. At the outset, it is a conventional story of the suffering of an Indian woman in a tyrannical society, and in the treatment of this theme, Anand does not differ from the Indian-language novelists of the early twentieth century like Premchand and Saratchandra Chatterjee. Like his predecessors, Anand uses the novel as a vehicle of social criticism and often blames the moneylender, the landlord and the priest for the ruin of the village community. Laxmi, Gauri's mother, sells Gauri to a moneylender which results in the tragedy. ' "Where there is poverty there is a moneylender, a priest and a landlord - and God is always on their side" ', says Gauri. ' 'There is always the drought, and there is the gambling and the borrowing and the squabbling and squandering - not to speak of the drinking and the wife beating!' ' (p.258). It is perhaps the novelist himself who thus summarises the cause of the suffering of the village folk. Anand, like Premchand, interprets Indian society with a Marxist bias and refers to some of the traditional institutions and values with such contempt that they seem to have existed only to exploit the underprivileged. In The Old Woman and the Cow, for instance, he shows both the joint family headed by Mola Ram and the Piplan Kalan society as extremely oppressive and inhuman. Mola Ram and Kesaro are shown as unmitigated villains, and Panchi and Gauri, as victims of one force or the other. In spite of the author's obvious sympathy with Panchi and Gauri, one notices that Mola Ram, Kesaro and Rakhi represent the traditional values, however imperfectly, and the conflict between Panchi and Mola Ram, or Gauri and the community suggests the inherent defect of the prevailing social order rather than wickedness of some of the characters.

Broadly, three types of human relationships operate in the novel: firstly, between Panchi and Gauri as husband and wife; secondly, Panchi and

Gauri as members of the joint family, together with Mola Ram and Kesaro; thirdly, Panchi and Gauri in their relation to the Piplan Kalan community. From the opening chapter till the last, it is obvious that the Piplan Kalan community (Mola Ram and Kesaro, being in full agreement with the community, constitute an extension of it) determines the relationship between Panchi and Gauri. The first chapter which describes the gay atmosphere of Panchi's wedding, also explains the predicament of the individual in a group that is <sup>too</sup> eager to determine all his activities. Panchi's marriage is not his private affair, but an affair of the entire community. Panchi and Gauri are only brought together by their superiors in family or community. Panchi did not even know 'what the girl, Gauri, was like: Was she fair or was she dark? Beautiful or ugly or just plain? (p.5) Yet he was marrying Gauri because the elders of the village arranged the marriage.

'Do not mind them', consoled Chaudhury Subedar Achru Ram, the headman of little Piplan, from his palanquin behind Panchi's horse. 'These farmers of big Piplan are jealous of the soldier-peasants of our village....'(p.7)

To Achru Ram, it was a marriage not between two individuals, Panchi and Gauri, but between two villages, in which every member of the community had some role to play. Thus, Mola Ram was 'the best man', the village barber who was the professional match-maker, was sentimentally eloquent, and even Akbar Shah, the owner of the bands-party, was much more than a professional manager. 'Look at the resplendent uniform of our own Akbar Shah's bandsmen!', exclaimed Achru. (p.6). And precisely because it is a situation in which the community plays so important a role in the individual's life, the tragedy of Gauri is inevitable. The force that effects the tragic separation in the life of Panchi and Gauri is the same force that united them.

Panchi and Gauri as members of a joint family fail to adjust to Mola Ram and Kesaro and escape to Rafique's house. From the opening chapter, the novelist keeps reminding the reader that Mola Ram is greedy, selfish and so on; but, when Mola Ram demands Panchi's obedience, he is only asserting the basic

principle, the superiority of the elder, on which the joint family is structured. On his wedding day, when Panchi feels offended at the barber's patronising attitude towards him and objects to it, Mola Ram reminds Panchi, 'Ohe Baluki Ram is like an uncle to you!...You must not talk to him like that!' (p.10) After their fight, both Panchi and Mola Ram meet Achru Ram to whom Mola Ram appeals, 'Impress upon this young rascal the need, first of all, of respect for his elders - and that he should carry out the orders given to him...!' (p.33) Achru Ram reminds Panchi, 'Our religion enjoins respect for elders' (p.34) and Mola Ram can raise his hand against him as 'his privilege as an elder' (p.35).

Moreover, the village community of Piplan Kalan is a sort of extended joint family, and the basis that holds it, also binds a village community together. Panchi and Gauri run away from Mola Ram and Kesaro, but they cannot dodge Rakhi, the conscience of the gossip-mongering village. Rakhi may be ill-mannered and foul-mouthed, but her logic has the age-old approval of the Hindu society:

'Son', explained Rakhi with sustained viciousness, 'when Sita was abducted by Ravan, and her husband went and fetched her back, what did people say....' (p.264)

Public opinion is an important factor in traditional Indian society and it may be the third angle of the eternal triangle in the Indian situation. When Panchi clashes with Mola Ram, or Gauri returns to her husband, public opinion goes against them and they are left isolated and miserable. That the young couple love each other is beyond doubt, and had the Piplan Kalan community or the joint family not interfered in their affairs, the tragedy would not have occurred.

The Old Woman and the Cow reveals Anand's deep understanding of the East Punjab society and its problems. But writing in a language which has a larger audience outside India,<sup>10</sup> he faces problems which Indian-language novelists do not face, such as, how to write intelligibly for those who are ignorant of Indian society? And while narrating his story, he pauses to interpret and explain, and thereby considerably degrades his art into sociology and propaganda.

(a) ...But in his anxiety to go in, he stepped over the threshold before Laxmi had poured oil on the corners of the doorway - and that was the beginning of his troubles so far as the women of Piplan Kalan were concerned.

'Hai hai!' the old woman cried as though he had murdered her in cold blood.

'Wait!....'

'Hai ni, what will happen now!' another superstitious woman said. (p.14)

(b) Whatever joy had been anticipated by Mola Ram from the wedding, had already turned to disillusionment at the insult implicit in Amru's words about the dowry to the priest, and Laxmi's insinuations which had been overheard by the whole caste brotherhood. And Panchi felt he hated money which was the cause of all quarrels. But the members of the bridal party were still full of excitement at the prospects of their fill at the feast. They were soon to be shorn of this pleasure by the bad food and the copious abuse they received as they settled down. For, according to a convention of this ancient rite, while the men-folk of the bridal party sit down to eat, the women-folk of the bride's side, sit on the tarrace, singing songs of welcome, or concocting limericks and lampoons to be hurled at the most important guests of the marriage party feasting below, in two choruses, composed of questioners and answerers. (p.18)

(c) Panchi had heard that, ritualistically, the last condition was indeed enjoined by custom. And he could not protest against it. (p.23)

These passages are taken from the first chapter of the novel and illustrate the novelist's narrative technique. Anand seems overconscious that his readers are not aware of the social background of his narratives, and that the purpose of his writing may not be understood. While interpreting his narratives he forgets that his Indian readers (The Old Woman and the Cow has been published in India, not abroad) may find the interpretations redundant and annoying, and that he becomes too obvious to be suggestive and complex.

In (a), in the reference to a local custom (the bridegroom should cross the threshold of the bride only after the bride's mother pours down oil on the threshold), the superstition is so clearly implied that explanatory notes such as 'so far as the women of Piplan Kalan were concerned' and 'superstitious woman' are redundant. Passage (b) shows Anand the interpreter at his worst. This passage is a sociological rendering of all that is said in the first chapter. Passage (c) is absurd in the context of the character the novelist portrays in



Panchi. It is implausible that Panchi, the illiterate peasant, can understand concepts like 'ritual', 'custom' and 'protest' and can think so clearly and intellectually.

In spite of Anand's authentic grasp of his material - and he himself, like his characters, is a Punjabi - the distance between the narrative and the narrator is obvious. Anand does not take for granted Indian values, assumptions and traditions as the implied background of his narratives, as, for instance, Narayan does (we examine Narayan's works later in this chapter), but explains such values and narrates the story simultaneously, giving the impression that an Indian novelist writing in the English language must be a sociologist as well! However, in the first place it does not seem necessary to explain so much, even for a Western audience interested in Indian literature (not sociology); and secondly, when there is a need to explain, the explanation should not be obviously different from the rest of the narrative. One may be reminded of Chinua Achebe who, writing of a society about which little is known to the English-reading public, also interprets his narratives quite often. But his interpretation is such an integral part of his narrative that one does not feel his novel is turning into sociology.<sup>11</sup> V.S. Naipaul who has written his better known works about the Trinidad Hindu society has not thought it necessary to explain its beliefs and customs, and he has never been unintelligible to English readers outside Trinidad or the West Indies.

The Old Woman and the Cow, like many Indo-Anglian novels, has much exotic detail to satisfy the Western reader. While exoticism by itself may not be a flaw in a work of art, it is so if and when the exotic is not a part and parcel of the total design of the work. Anand is a far better artist than Kamala Markandaya and Khushwant Singh when it comes to integrating the exotic into his total design. Markandaya's failure to integrate references to Indian customs, ceremonies, weather etc., with her plot-structure and characterisation is suggested in the concluding chapter of this study. Khushwant Singh's long

passages on the Indian monsoon in Train to Pakistan (New York, 1956, pp.90-94) and Indian sex habits in I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale (London, 1959, pp.41-42) are obvious examples of his including exotic detail to the detriment of artistic writing. While the whole of the first chapter of The Old Woman and the Cow (the novel consists of seven chapters) is devoted to details of a Punjabi marriage, it does not seem totally out of place in the context of the plot-structure. It provides a contrasting background to the tragedy, the oppression of the elders of the community, and so on. But the story really begins after Gauri's marriage and a briefer account of the marriage scene would have been more desirable. In the rest of the novel we do not find such elaborate description of any Indian custom, ceremony, festival or profession as we are given of the marriage. The novelist only refers in passing to Panchi's profession (farming), to the separation of Panchi from Mola Ram and to Chaudhury Achru Ram's method of moneylending presumably because they might not be interesting to the Western reader.

An important (and much-discussed) aspect of Anand's fiction is his experiment with the English language to convey an Indian or, more specifically, a Punjabi and Hindustani flavour. Anand has repeatedly emphasised the need for the Indo-Anglian to literally translate Indian-language idioms, proverbs etc. to convey a true Indian flavour, and to consider Indo-Anglian literature as not different from Indian literature in translation. (Anand's views are quoted later in this study.) While it is easy to agree with Anand in theory, it is difficult to understand how literal translations of a few Indian idioms, etc. can adequately convey the Indian-language flavour and the Indian ethos. Language is a complex phenomenon, and besides idioms and proverbs it has various other elements such as syntax, tense and voice which cannot be easily rendered from an Indian language into English; and more importantly, one cannot carry the flavour of one language across to another by taking care of some of its elements while ignoring the others.

In The Old Woman and the Cow, as in his other novels, Anand literally translates, besides idioms and proverbs, some forms of address and swear words and transports some from the Indian-language to English, and retains some Indian-language words which apparently do not have exact equivalents in English. His experiment, however imperfectly made, obviously serves two purposes: it reminds the reader that the characters do not talk in English, and it attributes some exotic flavour to the narrative.

'To be sure, the bridegroom has come on the horse of contractor Birbal! Wah! wah! wonderful!' (p.6)

'But mother-father, the party you have brought is large', said the barber. (p.11)

...And then turning to the priest he said: 'Panditji, there is no hurry - the night is our own!' (p.16)

'Han, son, sit down,' the Subedar said,.... (p.34)

'Wah! wah!' (Hear! hear!) and 'Han' (Yes) are used to remind the reader that the conversation is taking place in perhaps Punjabi or Hindustani. 'Mother-father' (Ma-bap) and 'the night is our own' (Rat Hamari Hai) are Indian-language expressions which convey their meanings in the contexts of their usage. Anand successfully reproduces the conversation of Indian Muslims who frequently quote Urdu couplets (sairis) to make their conversation witty, humorous or serious. (Forster in A Passage to India makes Aziz quote such couplets more than once.) Anand's Rafique Chacha is a convincing portrait of an Indian Muslim (though one can see that the friendship between Panchi, a Brahmin, and a Muslim, in a village of the Punjab, the citadel of communalism, is not too plausible; Anand's purpose in portraying this friendship might be to propagate Hindu-Muslim unity). The Hindustani flavour of Rafique Chacha's conversation is unmistakable:

...when Panchi referred to the incorrigible bad temper of Mola Ram which had led to this crisis, Rafique had said: "Straighten a dog's tail for twelve years and still it will curl, brothers!"....Then while Panchi was rather tired, crest-fallen and wondered how long their troubles would last, Rafique Chacha had consoled him with the words: "Brother, keep faith, sometime to sink and sometime to swim: that is life!" Again, when Panchi had sought to thank his friend the

old man had declared: "Brother, giving is also a form of taking", and I believe with the sage who has said, "Your beauty is in the food you give, your grace is in the clothes you bestow". (pp.61-62)

Anand, though he occasionally succeeds in conveying some Indian flavour by his translations of Indian-language idioms, seems to lack consistency in his approach to the problem of communicating in English an Indian social and cultural ethos. While sometimes he is over-conscious of the Indianness of the speech of his characters, at other times he simply forgets that the speech is in the Indian language. Most of his dialogues, which are often long, clumsy and literary, do not seem appropriate to an informal conversation at all, whatever the language.

(A) Dr. Mahindra turned to the girl with a mischievous glint in his eyes and said:

'Give Panchi a good time when you get home!!' (p.245)

(B) 'Son, she is safe and sound', said the old woman to reassure him. 'The big Daktar, in whose haspatal she was working as nurse, was kind. How shall I tell you of his goodness? ...He did wise talk.....!' (p.248)

(C) 'Perchance he did not tell you', put in Panchi raising his head impatiently, from where he lay, 'that we are all embroiled in the whirlpool of troubles, of famines and droughts and hatred and debts and misery. Are we not being ground down as seed under the huge pestle of an oil mill? Are we not entangled in litigation, and distrust and filthy talk and in robbing each other? The Gods are dead and we are living as dead in this dying world....' (p.251)

Dr. Mahindra (in A) uses an English expression, 'giving [someone] a good time', when he is talking to Gauri. (We cannot assume that he is talking with an illiterate Punjabi girl in English.) In the same speech (B), Laxmi, who is an illiterate woman and cannot pronounce the English words 'doctor' and 'hospital', uses an English idiom 'safe and sound'. Panchi's speech (C) is too literary to be uttered by a farmer in a conversation in Punjabi or any other language.

In the last chapter of the novel, Anand introduces the myth of the banishment of Sita, in the conversation of Rakhi, to suggest the similarities between the situation of Sita and that of Gauri. According to the myth, Sita,

after being restored from Ravana, was banished by Rama, because his subjects suspected her chastity as she had stayed in Ravana's captivity for some time. By introducing this myth, Anand, at least for his Indian readers, loses much of the effect he intends to create in the portrait of Gauri. This myth, far from suggesting Rama's cruelty to Sita or the oppressiveness of public opinion, is generally accepted by the Indian mind as suggesting the appropriate punishment for a wife who lacks chastity. Anand's allusion to Goddess Kali in the character of Gauri (pp.29, 97, 131) and to Shiva in the person of Panchi (pp.37,115,209) in earlier chapters and his comparison of Gauri with Sita and Panchi with Rama in the last chapter suggest his failure to employ a mythical parallel to a contemporary story. (It is difficult to agree with critics like Krishna Nandan Sinha and Jack Lindsay who admire Anand's use of the Sita myth in this novel.<sup>12</sup>) In Hindu symbolism, Kali and Sita represent two different aspects of womanhood: namely, destruction and defiance, and total submission. Anand's muddling of the two myths makes the message of the novel confusing. On the one hand, he moulds the character of Gauri after the Goddess Kali, to suggest that Indian womanhood must defy the tyranny of the community; and on the other, by introducing the myth of Sita, he suggests that total submission to husband and community is the norm for Indian womanhood, and Gauri, for not conforming to this norm, is justly punished.

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Of all Indo-Anglians, Anand is the most preoccupied with the theme of conflict between the individual and the community. The Old Woman and the Cow studies the conflict of the individual with the family on the one hand, and the community on the other. Anand usually shows his protagonist as noble, hard-working, wise (sometimes too wise to be plausible in the context of his background) and struggling desperately against the tyrannical community. In different novels, however, Anand's emphasis varies. In Untouchable (1935), Bakha reacts against the religious code of his community whereas in Coolie (1936) Munoo's reaction is against the prevailing economic inequality. The Village (1939), in many ways a complex and rounded portrait of Indian rural life, shows Ialu in

conflict with his environment at many levels - with his family, his community and so on. The novelist elaborately describes the exploitation of the moneylender and the village priest and how Lalu reacts against such exploitation. But what seems more significant is Lalu's conflict with his family and the rural society in general, and the nature of this conflict is more tragic and complex than that with a moneylender or a priest.

From the beginning, Lalu is portrayed as a lonely and alienated character. Educated in a British Indian school up to the eighth form, he questions the superiority of the elders, and thus clashes with his family and community. One may notice that in almost all matters, religious and social, his family is for him only the community in miniature. That is, the entire community including his family is a homogeneous unit believing in the same set of values. Nihal Singh and Gujri, in their superstitions and beliefs, are no different from the rest of the community, and except Lalu, all their sons accept them.

Both The Old Woman and the Cow and The Village depict in some detail the joint family life and the tension it creates for the individual. While Mola Ram is not Panchi's genuine well-wisher, being his uncle, Nihal Singh is decidedly Lalu's benefactor. But, as custodians of the traditional morality, they almost mean the same thing to their wards. Nihal is no less oppressive than Mola Ram. Lalu, like Panchi, of course does not assault the head of his family, but his reaction against the authority of his father is no less violent. This is how the novelist analyses Lalu's mind when he watches his father on his death bed:

Suddenly he bent over the old man and pressed his limbs, slowly, delicately, inspired by a love such as he had never before felt for his father; for the dirty, old, praying, coughing, belching, swearing, hard, ruthless tyrant who had beaten him and whose death he had so often longed for. (p.201)

Such live-hate relationship between father and son is a common fact in the Indian joint family situation. Nihal represents the vitality and dignity of the family tradition as well as its decadent morality. He is tyrannical,

benevolent and foolish. During his time, the family over which he rules as the presiding patriarch, disintegrates. One of his sons is hanged, his daughter-in-law loses her good name, and the family is driven to poverty and ruin. Nostalgically he recollects, on his deathbed, his past glory and achievement and strangely, realises the fulfilment of his own ideal in Lalu's role as a soldier. In spite of the conflict and bitterness in their relation, there is a reconciliation in the end:

'Son,' he murmured, 'I too have been a soldier. I could not wait, I could not wait for the orders of the jarnel. I rushed out through the reeds and the long grass in the swamp, son, I rushed out with the name of Guru Nanak in my heart and my sword in my hand. And I killed him, son, I killed him with the name of Wah Guru on my lips. Don't think I was afraid, son, I was a soldier too, once, and I would have killed them all, but they were eating, and the Gurus have ordained that no man shall be disturbed when he is engaged in the ritual of feeding the higher self'.  
(pp. 201-202)

The dying patriarch's last words make us see the father-son relationship in a new perspective. The tyrannical old man who, when Lalu cut his hair in a barber's shop so violating the Sikh code of wearing 'five k's', reacted against his son as violently as did the village priest, had himself disobeyed the 'jarnel' in his youth to fight for a cause he thought right. The situation is ambivalent, and the conflict between Nihal Singh and Lalu is suggestive of the conflict between traditional and modern India.

Gujri is a true portrait of traditional Indian womanhood. To her, as to most of the Indian mothers, the two important duties are to see that her children are married as early as possible, and to continue the joint family:

'The two younger boys will soon get married,' she brooded,  
....'Oh no, God, don't let them split up the family,' she  
cried. (p.15)

This ambition of an Indian mother explains the nature of much of the tension that is a dominant theme in Indian fiction dealing with middle class family life. When the sons get married (until their marriage there is hardly

any problem) two types of conflict follow - conflict between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law which provides the Indian novelist with scope for humour, irony and pathos; and disputes over partition of property, which again is a rich source for themes of divided loyalty and bitterness. Much of this conflict would have been absent if, after marriage, the sons had been allowed to live separately from their parents and from one another. However, that does not happen, for the joint family is the ideal, and the parents and the children try to continue the joint family as long as they can. In such a situation, when the individual feels that he can be happy if left alone but has to live with others to conform with social ideals, lies the comedy and tragedy of the joint family life. Anand of course does not concentrate on such themes, his concern primarily being the individual in society rather than in the family, but there are many episodes in his novels when he touches upon family conflict. The quarrel between Gauri, the daughter-in-law and Kesaro, the mother-in-law and the partition of property and separation of two families are two minor themes in The Old Woman and the Cow.

The relationship between Gujri and her daughter-in-law is rather strained, and though their conflict is not as obvious as that of Gauri and Kesaro, it is commendably sustained throughout. Gujri's disapproval of her daughter-in-law's conduct in some way can be explained by the tension between rural and urban societies. Kesari, the daughter-in-law is from a city and hence, unlike the village-bred girls, is sophisticated and lazy. That she was seen sitting near the pond 'naked' and smiling at strangers greatly offends the family tradition.

In the context of the rural society, 'naked' perhaps means not being adequately dressed as a daughter-in-law should be, and smiling at neighbours has a serious moral implication when a daughter-in-law is not supposed to look at a stranger's face. From Ialu's thought it is almost clear that Gujri, though a kind woman, is critical of Kesari's 'city habits' and the rumours about Kesari, most probably, are exaggerations of some of her city habits like not covering the whole body and not feeling shy of strangers:



He had always felt that his mother treated Kesari with a diabolical hatred, unrelieved by tenderness. Yet he couldn't hurt her by making excuses for his sister-in-law, especially as, however much he liked Kesari for the gaiety that she displayed in spite of her mother-in-law's iron discipline and her husband's foul temper, he did not like the rumours that were beginning to be current about her. He had heard that she sat shamelessly naked at the pond when she went to wash clothes there, and wore transparent gauzes on her head through which she could be seen by all and sundry, and that she even smiled at strangers. And what would his friends say if - Perhaps his mother was right. She was wise and good and very affectionate, and sometimes he had seen her and Kesari very happy together, sewing, or spinning as her sister-in-law had lately learnt to do. Indeed, the old woman was kind to the girl so long as Kesari was not lazy and did not indulge in city habits. (pp.107-108)

The relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, so often dealt with in Indian fiction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, is now a hackneyed theme, and with the changed circumstances, largely irrelevant. The mother-in-law has generally been portrayed with less sympathy than the daughter-in-law. This might be due to the fact that most of the late nineteenth century novelists felt the necessity of emancipating Indian womanhood from the age-old customs and traditions of which the mother-in-law was supposed to be the custodian. Usually the mother-in-law is shown asserting her authority and the daughter-in-law protesting. Sometimes the daughter-in-law is shown suffering silently under an oppressive mother-in-law, or a mother-in-law being dominated by her daughter-in-law, maybe with the support of her husband. Banerji's Pather Panchali has an interesting episode of the conflict between Sarbojaya and Indir Thakrun. Though Indir Thakrun is not Sarbojaya's own mother-in-law, their quarrel has many of the ingredients of the quarrel between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. This conflict, as depicted in Pather Panchali, has two significant notes - Indir Thakrun's attachment to Sarbojaya's children and their attachment to her, and Sarbojaya's poverty which makes her unable to maintain Indir Thakrun. Like faith in age and tradition, poverty is always a factor in determining family and social relationships in India.

Lalu's relation with his community is not basically different from that of Panchi's with his. The community in both cases is equally eager to assert its authority over the individual. In Anand's fiction the community seems more oppressive than benevolent. When Lalu cuts his hair in the barber's shop, the entire village takes him to task, and Lalu is made to ride a donkey and is thus severely humiliated. But the priest or the villagers who punish Lalu, are only desperately fighting for the preservation of their faith and Nihal Singh is no less severe in punishing Lalu than the rest of the community:

'The son of a bitch', shouted Nihal Singh, pushing off Dayal Singh's restraining hands and, lifting the barber's silver-mounted staff that lay by, he struck the boy hard on his neck, his back, his legs and his ribs!

'That you should go and disgrace me and my family, drag my name into the dust, spoil the name of our ancestors! Look, people, the darkness has descended upon the world. That one of my sons, my sons, should go and have his kaishas cut!' (pp.91-92)

The community that takes Lalu to task for violating religious taboos is not just devoid of all kindness and love. This may be illustrated by referring to a village woman, Ajit Kaur, who appears only twice in the novel. When Lalu announces the loss of his hair and a scene of confusion follows in his family, Ajit Kaur is the first villager to take note of it, and considers the act as the most terrible insult to their religion of five k's. She seems to feel that Lalu deserves severe punishment. But, later, when Lalu returns to the village after spending some time in the cantonment, it is Ajit Kaur who is the first woman to welcome Lalu affectionately.

Though The Village is not free from some of the artistic flaws we notice in The Old Woman and the Cow, in the method of rendering Indian-language dialogues into English, referring to Indian social customs etc., it is comparatively a satisfactory work. Alastair Niven has rightly pointed out that 'The Village is perhaps the most rounded portrait of village and rural life that the Indian novel in English offers us'.<sup>13</sup> In this novel, more than in any of his other novels, Anand succeeds in suggesting the intimate relationship

and harmony between the villagers and the landscape around them. In his vivid description of the pastoral landscape of the village, the weather, the harvest, and their effect on the mood and life-style of the people of Nandpur, Anand occasionally reminds one of Thomas Hardy:

For truly glory, glory ruled everywhere. It was such a joy to awake to the stillness of the grey dawn and walk out through the dew-drenched fields, still lying under a misted sheet, to some patch of black earth to relieve himself. It was sheer delight to bathe at a running well, groping across his body by the soft glimmer of a lingering moon and the occasional sparkle of a dying star, to see the pale-blue sky tinged with a white-red fire, the fading of the twilight and the opening of the glued eyes of the world with the glow of the morning. And then to walk back just as the cocks in the weavers' lane were beginning to crow, and the sun was rising from the hell where it had journeyed all night, with a glittering halo round his head, more refulgent than the aura of any saint or God. It was a mild, kind sun, not so feeble as it had been before the onslaughts of the winter winds and not so hot as it would become in the summer. To walk back, one's nostrils filled with the breeze which was pregnant with the smell of lush grasses and the pollen of bursting flowers, across bands of fields turned green like strips on a carpet, and a sky clear and flawless, like glass above the mists, shining resplendently with winged life dancing and singing across it. (p.151)

Even in a poetic passage such as this one, Anand does not ignore the filth and the stink which are an integral part of the Indian village. The novel, in spite of its detailed description of the Indian weather and landscape, nowhere seems exotic. The narrative and its natural setting are blended so as to suggest that the narrator is one intimate to Nandpur and its surroundings, and not alien to them.

But in passages where Anand pauses to interpret and explain Indian social customs, the narrative becomes obvious and seems to become little more than a sociological account of Indian village life:

(i) 'The father of Sharm Singh,' she said, addressing her husband in the familiar, archaic convention, 'did you go to see anyone in Manabad and broach the matter of Dayal Singh's engagement?' (p.17)

(ii) Gujri served the dishes she had apportioned to everyone except herself, according to the custom which still prevails among peasant women who eat only after their menfolk, often out of the remainders of the food left in the men's plates. (p.19)

Such interpretative passages, fortunately, occur much less frequently in The Village than in The Old Woman and the Cow.

In rendering into English Indian-language dialogues used in family and social situations, Anand is as inconsistent in The Village as he is in The Old Woman and the Cow. He also fails quite often to record convincingly thought-process of his characters. The following passages are examples:

(i) Lalu passed towards the village, under the shadow of the lawyer's bungalow, keeping to the edge of the road, lest someone should see him and notice that he had his hair cut and spread the rumour before he reached home and "break the vessel". (p.86)

(ii) For not only had they made no overture to him yet, but he felt that "to go a-borrowing was to go a-sorrowing". (p.108)

(iii) 'Hazur, mai-bap', urged Jhandu, half-ironically, 'you wouldn't listen yesterday. You lost your temper.' (p.121)

(iv) ...Bull-headed djinns and gnomes descended on him with huge axes in their hands to prevent him from entering the golden temple of a hundred pinnacles that stood beyond a bed of fountains,..... (p. 150)

(v) 'It is a lie. "Ask the truth of the story seven times and then believe it", Lalu said in a tight-stretched tone. (p.158)

(vi) 'Of course, it is not a bed of roses in the army', he said to himself as he had often said before in retrospect. (p.207)

It is interesting that in The Village Anand uses the Indian form of address mai-bap, as in passage (i), in the Indian-language instead of literally translating it as 'father-mother' as he does in The Old Woman and the Cow. The meaning of the Indian-language proverb 'ask the truth of the story seven times and then believe it' is clear in the context of its usage, but that of the Hindustani idiom 'to break the vessel' (to reveal the secret) is not. While literally translating Indian-language idioms etc., Anand does not seem to bother whether they are intelligible in the context of their use. He shows Lalu thinking, with equal ease, both in Hindustani or Punjabi and English ('break the vessel'; 'a bed of roses'; 'a-borrowing a-sorrowing'). It is not plausible that Lalu (who of course has some English education) can ever think

in idiomatic English. The novelist perhaps makes Lалу think as he himself and other Westernised Indians do. Lалу dreaming of 'gnomes' (iv) is absurd in the Indian situation. The 'gnomes' are neither a part of Indian gardens nor are they supposed to exist under the ground, according to Indian imagination.

III.

Mulk Raj Anand almost divides his characters into two groups, the progressive and the reactionary, and a reader may often fail to realise the ambivalence of the conflict between two characters like Nihal and Lalu, or Mola Ram and Panchi. Again, in Anand, the conflict is always external and obvious. Nihal and Lalu are shown as committed to two distinct codes of values. But in R.K. Narayan's novels, one may come across many episodes which are apparently trivial, meant to create lightness and humour, but significantly revealing of the complexity of family and social relationships.

Narayan's The Financial Expert (1952) centres round a middle-aged man, Margayya, and his rise and fall in financial status. On the whole, his is the image of a public man busy in financial transactions with villagers, and perhaps the primary interest in the novel is the single character, Margayya, in his moods, actions, plans and behaviour. Margayya is thoroughly obsessed with money, and all other considerations for him are secondary. He is greedy, exacting and villainous. But there is a more interesting side to his personality: Margayya in relation to his family. He has his wife, and son, of whom he is particularly fond. He has his elder brother and sister-in-law too, living in the neighbouring house, and the relation between the two families, now living separately in two houses which at one time was one, is a very interesting aspect of the novel. In Anand's novels, one occasionally comes across the conflict in a joint family, but here one sees how, even after the two families are formally separated, the conflict is not resolved, and the relationship of the two families does not come to an end. Narayan with his usual sense of irony and understatement refers to the relation of the two brothers whenever he describes Margayya in his domestic milieu. In the opening of the novel, Margayya is shown sitting under a banyan tree, busy with financial transactions, and at the end of the day's business, he returns home and goes to the backyard for a wash:

Down below at his feet the earth was damp and marshy. All the drain water of two houses flowed into the banana beds. It was a common backyard for his house and the one next door, which was his brother's. It was really a single house, but a partition wall divided it into two from the street to the backyard. (p.8)

Going to the backyard reminds Margayya that even now the two houses are not completely detached. The novelist also describes the division of property between the two brothers after the death of their father:

After the death of the old man the brothers fell out, their wives fell out, and their children fell out. They could not tolerate the idea of even breathing the same air or being enclosed by the same walls. They got involved in litigation and partitioned everything that their father had left. Everything that could be cut in two with an axe or scissors or a knife was divided between them, and the other things were catalogued, numbered and then shared out. But one thing that could neither be numbered nor cut up was the backyard of the house with its single well. They could do nothing about it. It fell to Margayya's share, and he would willingly have seen his brother's family perish without water by closing it to them, but public opinion prevented the exercise of his right. People insisted that the well should remain common property, and so the dividing wall came up to it, and stopped there, the well acting as a blockade between the two brothers, but accessible from either side. (p.8)

What is significant in the partition of their property is again that all-pervasive factor, public opinion. Even a headstrong and self-centred Margayya had to honour it. The two brothers were separated, but had their backyard common as the public opinion was in favour of it. The situation is symbolic; and the separation is never final. In spite of their having a separate house and all that, Margayya and his wife are always conscious that their relatives (and enemies) are living at the other side of the wall. When Margayya's wife, at the sight of the baby son near a burning lamp, gives a warning shout, Margayya reminds her:

"Why do you shout so much, as if a great calamity had befallen this household - so that your sister-in-law in the neighbourhood may think how active we are, I suppose!"

"Sister-in-law - how proud you are of your relatives!" Her further remarks could not be continued.... (p.9)

Margayya's wife obviously disapproves her husband's loyalty to his sister-in-law. Again, one night when Margayya has a nightmare and shouts, and confusion follows in his house, this comment is heard from the next house, ' "Something always goes wrong in that house. Even at midnight there is no peace, if they are at the neighbourhood" ' (p.31). The milk-vendor creating a scene before Margayya's house demanding money, was ' "a disgrace" ' according to his wife ' "with the people in the next house watching" ' (p.42). This may be said to be the excitement of living under the shadow of a joint family.

When Balu, Margayya's son, is five years old and Margayya plans to have the 'schooling ceremony' for him, suddenly the relationship between the two families takes a new turn. As a Hindu with his traditional beliefs, Margayya understands that no 'schooling ceremony' could be complete without his elder brother blessing the child. ' "After all, he is his own uncle, his own blood, my brother. Unless he blesses the child, of what worth are all the other blessings he may get?" ' Margayya explains to his wife, ' "There are times when we should set aside all our usual prejudices and notions - we must not let down ties of blood" ' (p.86), and his wife is convinced. Margayya and his wife invite their brother and sister-in-law to attend Balu's 'schooling ceremony', and when the 'schooling ceremony' procession passes on the way, Margayya's brother is at his side:

His brother and seven of his children came and presided over the function. He presented young Balu with a silver box, and at the sight of it Margayya felt very proud and moved. He asked his son to prostrate himself before his uncle ceremoniously and receive his blessings, after which the boy started out for his school in a procession. (p.87)

Obsessed with his financial problems, Margayya has no time to think of his brother or brother's family. But at moments of domestic crisis, the relation between the two families comes to the surface. When Margayya has to go to Madras in search of Balu (now a grown-up wayward boy), he tells his brother, ' "Keep an eye on this house, will you?" ' (p.132). But when Mar-



gayya returns from Madras with his son,

...their position as helpers of the family disappeared. It was a relationship essentially thriving on a crisis. The moment that the crisis was over, the two families fell apart; and they were once again reduced to the position of speculating from the other side of the wall what might be happening next door. (p.143)

The novel ends with Margayya finding himself a bankrupt, with a hostile crowd around him, and seeking desperately the help of his brother who of course is only too eager to help him.

The episode is symbolic of the conflict between the age-old tradition of kinship and the individual's natural urge to be free and liberated. Margayya, a very strong-willed individual, is shown repeatedly having to submit to society. Though at normal times he can live independent of his brother, at times of crisis the two brothers are supposed to come together. The communal hierarchy, traditional religious institutions and several other factors are based on the assumption that the brothers and their wives constitute one unit. In the context of such an assumption, the separation of the two brothers, whatever might be their past bitterness, could never be final. And it is easy to agree with Graham Greene that Narayan's comedy has 'the undertone of sadness'.<sup>14</sup>

In The Financial Expert, as in almost all of his other novels, the immediate context of Narayan's narrative is the middle-class Hindu joint family. Even when the family seems to be united, as does the family of Margayya, one soon recognises that it is not really so. The interference of a brother (The Financial Expert), a grandmother (Swami and Friends) or an uncle (The Guide) often destroys such unity. Much of the complexity and tension of Narayan's novels arise out of the family situation of his characters. Narayan invariably shows the family bond to be too strong to allow the individual to break away from it (Chandran, in The Bachelor of Arts, returns home after his brief escape from it, and marries the girl of his father's choice; Savitri, in The Dark Room,

returns to her husband and children after an unsuccessful attempt to commit suicide and to earn an independent living). Narayan's women characters are generally religious and conservative, and men, though apparently Westernised, traditional in most of their beliefs and attitudes. He often shows the younger generation as revolting against tradition but returning to its fold afterwards. A significant difference between Anand and Narayan is that Anand's protagonists such as Bakha (Untouchable), Munoo (Coolie), Ialu (The Village) and Gauri (The Old Woman and the Cow) revolt against the tradition and suffer, but do not return to the tradition; whereas Narayan's protagonists conform to the tradition after their brief revolt. Narayan's treatment of the tradition-revolt theme suggests, on the one hand, that the Indian society is too powerful for the individual to assert himself; on the other, it implies a note of tragedy, maybe even cynicism, with regard to the fate of the individual. (Professor Iyengar thinks that Savitri's return to her husband, after her attempt to run away, suggests 'a cynical conclusion'.<sup>15</sup>)

Though Narayan, like Anand, writes primarily about middle-class Indian families, he differs significantly from Anand in his method of rendering Indian-language dialogues and Indian thought-process into English and in his way of referring to the social background of his narratives. The following dialogues, from the first chapter of The Financial Expert, illustrate Narayan's method of rendering into English, Tamil speech patterns uttered in family and social situations:

- (i) "Oh! I see, you don't see a use for it. All right, don't come to me again. I have no use for nincompoops like you. You are the sort of fellow who won't----" He elaborated a bawdy joke about him and his capacity, which made the atmosphere under the tree genial all round. (p.4)
- (ii) "Sorry, sorry", the other hastened to apologize, "I didn't intend to hurt or insult you". (p.4)
- (iii) She came rushing into the house with cries of "What is it? What is it? What has happened?" (p.9)

- (iv) His wife made a noise of deprecation: "It is as I suspected. You were at the bottom of the whole trouble. I don't know...I don't know...that boy is terribly mischievous...and you are...you are..." (p.10)
- (v) He looked round at his clients. And they shook their heads approvingly, making appropriate sounds with their tongues, in order to please him. (p.14)
- (vi) "Stop your nonsense, you earth-worm! Things have come to this, have they, when every earth-worm pretends that it is a cobra and tries to sway its hood...I will nip off your head as well as your tail, if you start any of your tricks with me...." (p.15)
- (vii) "Yes, every Friday. It is the Puja that enabled young Mar-kandeya to win over Yama, the God of Death." (p.26)
- (viii) ...which in turn roused his mother sleeping in the other room, and she sprang up howling: "Oh, what has happened! What has happened!" It was about half an hour before the dawn. All this commotion awakened Margayya himself. He cried: "Who is there? Who is there?" (p.31)
- (ix) "I'm all right," Margayya replied proudly. "You'll see what I'll do that little monkey, that devil you have begotten." His wife gave some appropriate reply, and tried to help in the chase. (p.32)

These passages are spoken by Margayya, Margayya's wife, the priest and one of Margayya's clients, and hence, they are supposed to be in colloquial Tamil. Narayan rarely makes these characters use Tamil idioms and proverbs, though normally such characters would be expected to use them quite often. In two passages (i and ix) he suggests that the speaker uses some vulgar Tamil joke or proverb but leaves the reader to guess what that could be. In such situations, Anand literally translates Indian-language jokes, etc., but Narayan prefers to delete them either because they cannot be intelligibly translated into English, or because their deletion would enhance the suggestiveness of the dialogues. The first reason seems the more probable one. Passage (v) is another example of Narayan's deletion of Indian-language expressions. An Indian-language novelist, instead of reporting the clients' 'appropriate sounds with their tongues' would perhaps reproduce such sounds to speak for themselves.

In several conversations (iii, iv, viii), the repetition of the same sentence to suggest the speaker's anxiety seems typically Indian. Narayan is

closer to Indian-language speech in such renderings. The swear word used in passage (vi) is typically Indian but nonetheless absolutely intelligible in the context of the character's speech. The use of the English mannerism 'sorry sorry' (ii) by a villager and the explanatory note as to who Yama is in a dialogue between two Hindus (vii) are unlikely to occur when such characters talk in Tamil.

While rendering into English Indian-language dialogues uttered in family and social situations Narayan seems almost unconcerned with the idea of carrying the Indian-language flavour into his English. In dialogue situations, he uses straightforward, simple, unidiomatic language as indeed his characters would do if they talked in English. Indianisms are rare in his language and they do not seem intended to suggest the Indian-language flavour of the speech of his characters. (Professor P.S. Sundaram and Lakshmi Holmstrom in their books on Narayan have listed Indianisms in Narayan's language in general and in dialogues in particular.<sup>16</sup> Such Indianisms are few and do not seem significant enough to suggest Narayan's serious concern with conveying an Indian family and social ethos in the English language.)

Although Narayan's total lack of clumsiness in the use of English, both in narrative and dramatic situations, has been praised by William Walsh, Y.V. Katak and others,<sup>17</sup> his dialogues hardly reflect his characters' individuality. The priest in The Dark Room and the priest in The Financial Expert talk exactly alike. The speech of Babu in The Dark Room is hardly different from that of Swaminathan in Swami and Friends. Margayya's witty comments are similar to those of Raju when he is revered as a holy man. Professor A.N. Kaul's observation that 'for Narayan the English language is not in itself a subject but a neutral instrument'<sup>18</sup> is as true in case of Narayan's style in general as in case of his dialogues. Narayan's dialogues are abridged, simplified, occasionally interpreted version of the original, supposedly in Tamil. What makes these dialogues authentically Indian and colourful is their content,

particularly the wit of some of his characters.

It must be a significant achievement of Narayan that in spite of his writing about a society so different from the Western and about which so little is known to English readers, he rarely appears exotic, or to be writing with a sociological bias, as Anand often does. Narayan hardly ever comments on or interprets the beliefs and customs of the society against which his characters are set. This is not to suggest that he is not aware of his Western readers. In fact, he seems to prefer themes which would appeal to Western audience (all his novels to date have first been published in England or the U.S.A.). Holy men, astrologers, priests, temple prostitutes abound in his novels and perhaps they are much less significant in a semi-Westernised Indian society (like Malgudi) than they appear to be in Narayan's pages. But Narayan treats these details in such a way that they cease to be exotic and appear ordinary. He generally assumes Indian customs and beliefs to be the implied background of his narratives, and if and when he interprets such customs, the interpretations do not appear as authorial comments but as an integral part of the narrative. Here, for example, are a few passages from The Financial Expert (again from the first chapter):

- (i) Those spectacles were a recent acquisition, the first indication that he was on the wrong side of forty. He resisted them as long as he could - he hated the idea of growing old, but 'long-sight' does not wait for approval or welcome. (p.4)
- (ii) He didn't feel flattered at the sight of his own reflection. "I look like a wayside barber with this little miserable box under my arm. People probably expect me to open the lid and take out soap and a brush....  
...Now at the Western end of Market Road he saw the V.N. Stores, with its owner standing at the door. "He may put his hand into my pocket and snatch the glasses or compel me to give him a shave."  
He side-stepped into Kabir Lane, and, feeling ashamed of the little box that he carried under his arm, wished he could fling it away, but his sense of possession would not let him. As he passed through the narrow Kabir Lane, with small houses abutting the road, people seemed to stare at him as if to say: "Barber, come early tomorrow morning: you must be ready here before I go for my bath."  
(pp.16-17)
- (iii) His brother's face stood out prominently from among the wedding group in Margayya's memory, as he sat in the corner, beyond

the sacrificial smoke, in their village home. (p.19)

- (iv) "Do you perform Pujas for his sake?"  
"Yes, every Friday. It is the Puja that enabled young Markandeya to win over Yama, the God of Death."  
"O!" Margayya exclaimed, interested but not willing to show his ignorance.  
"Every child knows that story."  
"Yes, of course, of course,...."

The priest asked him further on: "What do you gather from the story of Markandeya?"

Margayya blinked, and felt like a schoolboy. He said ceremoniously: "How can I say? It's for a learned person like you to enlighten us on these matters."

"All right. What was Markandeya?" asked the man persistently. Margayya began to feel desperate. He feared that the other might not rest till he had exposed his ignorance. He felt he ought to put a stop to it at once, and said: "It's a long time since I heard that story. My grandfather used to tell it. I should like to hear it again."

"Ask then. If you don't know a thing, there is no shame in asking and learning about it," moralized the priest. He then narrated the story of Markandeya, the boy devotee of God Shiva, destined to die the moment he completed his sixteenth year. When the moment came, the emissaries of Yama (the God of Death) arrived in order to bind and carry off his life, but he was performing the Puja - and the dark emissaries could not approach him at all! Markandeya remained sixteen to all eternity, and thus defeated death...." (pp.26-27)

- (v) He pushed away the tumbler resolutely. The priest said: "Don't push away a tumbler of milk with the back of your hand." Margayya was no longer going to be treated and lectured like a schoolboy. He said: "I know. But who doesn't?"  
"And yet," said the priest with amused contempt, "you push away milk with the back of your hand as if it were a tumbler of ditch water."

"No, no," said Margayya semi-apologetically, "I didn't push it with the back of my hand. I just tried to put away the tumbler so that you might take it."

Ignoring this explanation and looking away, far away, the priest said: "Milk is one of the forms of Goddess Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth. When you reject it or treat it indifferently, it means you reject her...." (p.29)

- (vi) He had a right to demand the goods of life and get them, like an eminent guest in a wedding house - a guest who belongs to the bridegroom's party, with the bride dancing attendance, ever waiting for the slightest nod or sign to run to his side and do some pleasing act...He swelled with his own importance....(p.40)
- (vii) Margayya said: "You must never ask 'Why' or 'Where' when a person is starting out: that'll always have an adverse influence". (p.50)

While referring to Indian customs, beliefs or superstitions, in passage (vi) and (vii), the novelist assumes the reader to be aware of them. In

passage (i), (iv) and (v), he interprets customs and beliefs in such a way that their meaning becomes clear without making the interpretation obvious or redundant. The common Indian belief that one develops 'long-sight' at the age of forty is referred to in passage (i). The sentence 'He resisted...welcome' suggests that 'the wrong side of forty' and 'growing old' are almost synonyms for Margayya. In such a situation, Anand would perhaps pause to add that 'Indians believe that at the age of forty...' etc. The superstition referred to in passage (vii) is glossed over, whereas the one referred to in passage (v) is elucidated, not by any authorial comment, but by one of the characters. Similarly, the story of Markandeya (iv) is explained by the priest. The meaning and significance of the Puja would not perhaps be clear to one unaware of the Markandeya myth. This myth not only provides the background of the Puja, described in the first chapter, it also helps us to understand Margayya's own Puja. The novelist presumably thought it necessary to explain the myth and made the priest explain it to Margayya whom he showed ignorant of the myth. He makes the narration of the myth interesting by suggesting Margayya's reluctance to admit his ignorance, and the priest's pedanticism and patronising attitude. Thus, while explaining the myth to the reader who is ignorant of it, the novelist also throws light on the two characters, Margayya and the priest, as guru and shishya.

While referring to certain religious rituals and customs in passage (iii) and (vi), Narayan does not explain what 'sacrificial smoke' and 'a guest of the bridegroom's party' mean. A most interesting passage in the whole novel is the one which shows Margayya, in a mood of self-pity, comparing himself with a barber (ii). Narayan, in this passage, shows rare insight into Indian psychology. Barbers as a caste are believed to be among the cleverest of men (there is a popular Sanskrit proverb to this effect<sup>19</sup>), and are associated with litigations, family-quarrels, and so on. The tin box which Margayya carries is not different from a barber's and, more importantly, Margayya is aware of

his ancestors' profession as corpse-bearers (p.151), and suffers from a sort of inferiority complex. This passage is an excellent example of Narayan's method of analysing Indian thought-process without bothering whether the reader is aware of the social and psychological background of his characters.

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The tragic predicament of Savitri in Narayan's The Dark Room (1938), like that of Gauri in The Old Woman and the Cow, is obvious in the context of her society. Savitri's is just not the tragedy of a wife whose husband falls in love with another woman, it is much more than that. Savitri's tragedy is the tragedy of every Indian housewife in a way. Had there been no Santa Bai in Ramani's life, Savitri would have been a tragic figure too. Her position in her family and society before she leaves her husband, is no better than it is after her return to him again. Throughout the novel, even when Savitri is shown in peace and harmony with her husband and the world around her, her peace and happiness depend entirely on her husband's moods and whims. ' "Mind your own business, do you hear?" ' Ramani warns her when she does not want her ailing son to go to school, and her business as Ramani understands it, is ' "to go and work in the kitchen" ' and to ' "leave the training of a grown-up boy" ' to him (p.1). He believes that an ideal wife should be like one depicted in an epic (p.11), and when he takes Savitri to the film, he does not feel unhappy at the heroine's misery and suffering in the hands of her husband, but wants his wife to note ' "how patient she [Kuchela's wife] is, and how uncomplaining" ' (p.22). He expects every woman to be like Kuchela's wife, patient and uncomplaining, whatever the husband or the father or the guardian might be, and advises her daughter accordingly. His daughter's 'submissiveness' pleases him (p.35). He believes that as a man he is superior to Savitri because she is a woman, and it is this idea of male superiority that determines his relation with his wife. 'Who asked you to go near the doll's business? Are you a girl? Tell me, are you a girl?' (p.36). He abuses his son, for, being superior to his sisters, he is not supposed to play with his sisters or with dolls.



One may take Ramani as an eccentric character, and may not notice this attitude, and his affair with Santa Bai may seem an accident. Ramani never feels guilty for his conduct at any stage, and when Savitri remains absent for three consecutive nights, he considers the situation grave because people might talk about the wife of the secretary of the Engladia Insurance Company. His public image is his only concern, never his wife's suffering. He is clear about a wife's (a woman's) role in society:

...Of course, he granted, there was some sense in the women's movement: let them by all means read English novels, play tennis, have their All-India Conference and to go to the pictures occasionally; but that should not blind them to their primary duties of being wives and mothers; they mustn't attempt to ape the Western women, all of whom, according to Ramani's belief, lived in a chaos of promiscuity and divorce. He held that India owed its spiritual eminence to the fact that the people here realised that a woman's primary duty (also a divine privilege) was being a wife and a mother, and what woman retained the right of being called a wife who disobeyed her husband? Didn't all the ancient epics and Scriptures enjoin upon woman the strictest identification with her husband? He remembered all the heroines of the epics whose one dominant quality was a blind, stubborn following of their husbands, like the shadow following the substance. (p.105)

Savitri's suffering has another significant aspect; in her conflict with her husband, she does not get any support from the society around her. Obviously, the social consensus is on Ramani's side. When she protests against her husband for beating the son on a Navaratri day, and does not take food, lying down all the time in the dark room, Janamma, like Rakhi in The Old Woman and the Cow, is the public voice:

"After all, they are better trainers of children than we can be. If they sometimes appear harsh, you may rest assured they will suffer for it later". Janamma went on this strain for an hour more, recounting instances of the patience of wives: her own grandmother who slaved cheerfully for her husband, had three concubines at home; her aunt who was beaten every day by her husband and had never uttered a word of protest for fifty years; another friend of her mother's who was prepared to jump into a well if her husband so directed her; and so on, till Savitri gradually began to feel very foolish at the thought of her own resentment, which now seemed very insignificant. (pp.45-46)

When, after failing in her attempt to commit suicide, Savitri finds herself in the care of Mari and Ponni, she faces a hostile world simply because she is a woman who has not remained inside her house or beside her husband and children:

By this time they had gathered a small crowd of shepherds, urchins and idlers behind them. People came out of their houses and stared at Savitri. One or two shouted to Ponni, "Who is this lady?" (p.115)

The priest whom Mari approaches to employ Savitri in his temple is suspicious and unsympathetic to Savitri from the beginning. The priest's attitude to women in general does not differ from that of Ramani or Janamma. He rebukes Mari for being guided by his wife:

"If she [Ponni] won't let you rest, thrash her; that is the way to keep women sane. In these days you fellows are mugs, and let your women ride you about."...."There must be something wrong about her [Savitri] if she has no home and has to seek a livelihood outside; her husband must have driven her out. Why would a husband drive a wife out?" (p.125)

The implication of a husband driving his wife out is simple to the priest. The fault must be with the wife.

Besides dealing with the relationship between Ramani and Savitri, the novelist also refers to the relationship of two other couples - Ranga and his wife, and Mari and Ponni. As the servant of the house, Ranga knows the conflict between Ramani and Savitri, and he is in total agreement with Janamma and the priest. Ranga says with a sense of pride and superiority:

"Only once has my wife tried to interfere and then I nearly broke her bones. She has learned to leave me alone now. Women must be taught their place." (p.39)

Mari and Ponni are the only couple whose relationship seems to defy the social code. Mari, however, agrees theoretically with the priest about the way women should be treated. It is only that he is too weak to assert his stance. Savitri taking shelter in a house where the wife is dictating terms to

the husband, heightens the irony of her own situation. However, Mari and Ponni who belong to a lower order in the Hindu caste hierarchy are comparatively free from the social morality of the middle-class caste Hindus.

Savitri is alienated from her husband on the one hand and the society on the other. Hers is essentially the tragic predicament of a wife in a society that believes in the superiority of man over woman. 'It seems it is the pattern of housewives', observed Narayan when the novel was widely appreciated by Indian housewives.<sup>20</sup>

To Narayan critics, The Dark Room does not seem to be one of his major works. (William Walsh in his monograph on Narayan does not even mention The Dark Room.<sup>21</sup>) In fact, it is among Narayan's most realistic works, authentically Indian, which shows little awareness of a Western audience or Western point of view. There is no reference to exotic social customs, holy men, or anything that might be of particular interest to a Western reader. Compared to not too plausible relationship between Rosie and Raju (The Guide), the fantastic method of Margayya's accumulation of money (The Financial Expert), or the intimacy between a human being and a ghost (The English Teacher), the theme of The Dark Room is thoroughly convincing and its popularity with Indian housewives testifies to this.<sup>22</sup>

We find a series of dialogues in the novel recording conversations in various social situations: between husband and wife, lover and beloved, high caste and low caste people, among children and women, and so on. Narayan seems capable of reproducing such conversation with understanding and insight. But his main purpose in recording such conversation seems to be to convey its content:

- (i) "Not many words passed between them last night," Ranga said.  
"All the same, the situation appears to be very serious."  
"It is no business of a wife's to butt in when the father is dealing with his son. It is a bad habit. Only a battered son will grow into a sound man."

... ..

The servant-maid who was washing the vessels under the tap looked up and said, "Wouldn't you like to say so! What do you know of the fire in a mother's belly when her child is suffering?"

The cook said, "Only once has my wife tried to interfere and then I nearly broke her bones. She has learned to leave me alone now. Women must be taught their place." (pp.38-39)

(ii) He went to the pyol and sat on it, muttering, "Couldn't you wait till I finished my prayers? No chance for a man to meditate in this world with blackguards like you about. Why couldn't you have come a little later? Hm, let bygones be bygones...." (p.129)

Both these conversations, the one between the servants and the other between the temple-priest and the blacksmith, are supposed to be in Tamil. But there is hardly anything in the language of the conversations to suggest their Indianness. Had the conversation been recorded in Tamil or in any Indian language, perhaps the speaker in (i) would have used a proverb to suggest what is said in the sentence 'Only a battered...a sound man', or 'Women must...place'. 'The fire in a mother's belly' is a common Indian-language expression and the novelist uses it (as he does in The Financial Expert, p.34) presumably because its meaning is simple enough in the context of its use. In passage (ii), he even introduces an English proverb, 'let bygones be bygones', instead of literally translating its Tamil equivalent. As in The Financial Expert, so also in The Dark Room, to record conversations uttered in family and social situations, Narayan's only concern seems to be absolutely intelligible and not to create any strain for the reader to understand the substance of the conversations. He hardly ever uses Indian-language idioms, proverbs or words, and if he uses them at all, he ensures that they are simplistic in their connotations. His simple, direct, un-idiomatic, grammatically correct sentences are inadequate representations of the speech of characters belonging to different orders of a caste-oriented society. (The priest, a Brahmin, is supposed to talk in Sanskritised Tamil, whereas Mari, the blacksmith, should use colloquial Tamil.) If the novel is re-cast into a play - and this has perhaps more dialogues than any other novel of Narayan - the dialogues would scarcely suggest the education, the age and the social hierarchy of the characters.

The comparatively unfavourable response of critics to The Dark Room seems partly due to their inadequate awareness of the social background against which the novel is set. For one thing, Indian society, unlike most societies in the West, is still male-dominated, and an Indian housewife is still a part of a 'doll's house'. The theme of The Dark Room might appear Ibsenian (Savitri might be an Indian Nora Helmer), and hence dated, to Western and Westernised critics, but nonetheless it is very relevant a theme for the Indian novelist of the mid-twentieth century and shows Narayan's concern for society. If the novel appears simple, it is deceptively so. Once we are aware of its social background, we also become aware of its complexity. The names of the two main characters - Savitri and Ramani, as well as the title, are symbolic. Savitri is a mythical character who, by her chastity and loyalty to husband, brought back her husband's life from Yama, the God of Death. The modern Savitri, in spite of her devotion to her husband, fails even to stop him from having an affair with another woman. Ramani, whose name literally means 'woman', does not even understand his own wife. The 'dark room' refers to a small windowless room, not uncommon in traditional Indian houses, which is used as a retreat by womenfolk of the family when they are in grief.

References to Indian social customs are rare in the novel and the novelist assumes the reader's awareness of them:

- (i) Ramani felt that these women would in no way add to the profits of the company, though they added considerable colour to the office on the days when they were present. Kantaiengar bent over his accounts more than ever, resenting this intrusion and feeling self-conscious; the other clerks looked intimidated. Pereira made a festival of it. He arranged their accommodation in a spare corner of the office and flirted with them elegantly. (p.48)
- (ii) A terrific indignation welled up in him: so she was trying to nose-lead him with threats of leaving, like a damned servant!  
(p.83)
- (iii) What ages since I saw him; never been the same man since he married that girl from Tayur, a vicious slattern. Far away there from everybody, in Hyderabad led about by a nose-rope like a bullock.  
(p.87)

(iv) She stood in the water and prayed to her god on the hill to protect the children..... "In Yama's world the cauldron must be ready for me for the sin of talking back to a husband and disobeying him, but what could I do?....." (p.90)

In passage (i), the novelist describes how all the male workers of the office become over-conscious of the women's presence in their midst, as men and women remain segregated in Indian society. Passage (ii) and (iii) allude to the cruel practice of pulling the bullock forward, after putting the heavy load on its back, by means of a rope pierced through its nose. In passage (iv), the novelist refers to the popular belief that a woman who disobeys her husband is bound to be punished, after her death, by the God of Death.

FOOTNOTES

1. 'English in India', Commonwealth Literature, edited by John Press, London, 1965, p.123.
2. Nirad C. Chaudhury's account of the family and social relationships in the semi-urban town where he spent his childhood may prove the point. The chapter 'The Clan and Blood' in The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian (Bombay, 1966) may be seen. In To Live or Not to Live (Delhi, 1970) Chaudhury elaborately discusses Indian family and social life.
3. Louis L. Cornell, Kipling in India, New York, 1966, p.144.
4. An Area of Darkness, London, 1968, pp.226-227.
5. In the introduction to his translation of Premchand's Godan, Gordon C. Roadarmel observes, '...Premchand is generally considered the greatest of Hindi fiction writers.... At the beginning of the twentieth century, Hindi fiction, still in its infancy, was dominated by romantic treatments of Indian legend and history recounting the adventures of high-born heroes and heroines....there is no doubt that he played a very important part in shifting the focus of the novel to a contemporary social context...' (The Gift of a Cow, London, 1968, p.v).
6. Martin Seymour-Smith, Guide to Modern World Literature, London, 1973, p.711.
7. An Area of Darkness, London, 1968, p.227.
8. Translated into English by Lila Ray as A House Undivided (Delhi, 1973).
9. 'Awareness of Audience in Indo-Anglian Fiction', Quest, 52, Winter 1967, p.38.
10. Anand is a favourite author in the U.S.S.R., presumably for his Marxist leanings; and his novels are translated into Russian soon after they are published.
11. Emmanuel Obiechina discusses Achebe's method of referring to African social setting in his Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel, London, 1975 (See chapter 'Setting'). Obiechina observes, 'Achebe's narrative technique is largely discursive, and the physical setting is often implied rather than described,...(p.150).
12. About the employment of myth in The Old Woman and the Cow, Krishna Nandan Sinha writes, 'It has a definite epic strain to it. The closeness to Nekrasov's poem does not in any way diminish the richness and beauty of its original conception, based on the Sita myth which is woven like a central jewel into the whole design' (Mulk Raj Anand, New York, 1972, p.73). Jack Lindsay comments, 'Here the key-pattern lies in the tale from The Ramayana of the wife who is banished because she had innocently lived in another man's house' (The Elephant and the Lotus, Bombay, 1965, p.29).

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

13. Readings in Commonwealth Literature, edited by William Walsh, Oxford, 1973, p.12.
14. 'Introduction' to The Financial Expert, p.vii.
15. Indian Writing in English, Bombay, 1973, p.372.
16. See P.S. Sundaram's R.K. Narayan (London, 1973), pp.132-136; and Lakshmi Holmstrom's The Novels of R.K. Narayan (Calcutta, 1973), pp.92-101.
17. See William Walsh's 'Sweet Mangoes and Malt Vinegar: the Novels of R.K. Narayan', A Human Idiom, London, 1964, pp.128-129; and Y.V. Kantak's 'The Language of Indian Fiction in English', Critical Essays, edited by M.K. Naik et al, Dharwar, 1968.
18. 'R.K. Narayan and the East-West Theme', Indian Literature, edited by A. Poddar, Simla, 1972, p.226.
19. Naranam Napitah Dhurtah.
20. V. Panduranga Rao, 'Tea with R.K. Narayan', JCL, VI, June 1971, p.82.
21. R.K. Narayan (Writers and their Work), British Council, Essex, 1971.
22. See V. Panduranga Rao's 'Tea with R.K. Narayan', JCL, VI, June, 1971, p.82.



Portrait of the Holy Man

I

A study of Indo-Anglian fiction reveals a distinct Indian approach to characterisation. While each novelist has his own world of characters, presented from his individual point of view, it is possible to recognise a certain affinity among the novelists in their selection of characters as well as their technique of characterisation. The Western audience and the English language seem largely to determine the Indo-Anglians' choice of characters, or their focusing on particular aspects of characters. The novelists are inclined to write about those sections of Indians who can fascinate the Western readers for sociological reasons, such as holy men, princes, untouchables, and so on. Conflict or encounter between father and son, the rich and the poor, the high caste and the low caste are fairly common themes. More importantly, the emphasis is on character in relation to family and society rather than on an individual in his private joys and frustrations. In Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable, for instance, Bakha's suffering at the hands of caste Hindus is elaborately described, but not his personal frustration when the girl of his choice is married to someone else. In R.K. Narayan's Mr. Sampath, we recognise Mr. Sampath as a shrewd and eccentric businessman, but his state of mind when he falls in love with the actress Shanti is not elaborated on.

The use of the English language in the Indian situation often makes it necessary for the Indo-Anglian novelist to write about those Indians who can be convincingly shown as talking in English. That is one of the reasons why Westernised Indians or Indians partly or fully settled in England or the United States are preferred as characters. It seems that the English language is also partly responsible for the Indo-Anglian often adopting a first-person

narrative form as a device to evade dialogue situations. The other reasons for the preference of such a form could be the persistence of the oral tradition of storytelling<sup>1</sup> and the rigid caste background of the novelists which presumably incapacitates them when it comes to presenting the narrative from the point of view of people belonging to different castes. It cannot be a coincidence that quite often the caste of the narrator corresponds to that of the novelist. All the four novels of Raja Rao (including the latest, Captain Kirillov) are first person narratives, and all the narrators, like Raja Rao, are South Indian Brahmins. Nataraj (The Man-eater) and Krishnan (The English Teacher), the narrators of Narayan's two first-person narratives, are Brahmins as well. Though Narayan, like Rao, does not always state the caste of the narrator, there is ample evidence in their observing certain rituals and so on that they cannot belong to any other caste. Other Indo-Anglian novelists, in some way, project through their characters something of the attitude and outlook common to their caste. Mulk Raj Anand's Kshatriya background is perhaps reflected in his attitude of revolt against the dominant and privileged classes of society, such as the Brahmins. The contempt of several of his characters (Bakha, Lalu, Munoo) towards the caste Hindus and holy men could be due to his own experience as a child, of being treated as 'untouchable' by certain sections of the society.<sup>2</sup>

Though my purpose, in this chapter, is not to study how the caste background of the Indo-Anglian novelist influences his modes of characterisation, an intimate relation between caste and methods of characterisation seems obvious. (Though it is by no means the novelist's caste alone which influences his characterisation, Brahmin novelists seem to be more puranic in their form and more Hindu in their world view than non-Brahmin novelists.) It is not unfair to say that most of the characters in Indo-Anglian fiction represent the Brahminic or the high-caste Hindu viewpoint. All the novelists I discuss in this study, except Anand, are Brahmins. In Indo-Anglian fiction, so far,

we do not have authors who come from low castes and write about their experience as untouchables or blacksmiths. When Kamala Markandaya, a Brahmin, writes about a peasant woman (Nectar in a Sieve) or Anand, a Kshatriya, writes about untouchables, they see more filth, more poverty, more suffering in the situation of their characters than peasants and untouchables themselves would perhaps see in real life. Interestingly, we have an autobiography written in English, by an untouchable;<sup>3</sup> and a comparison of this work with Nectar in a Sieve or Untouchable may suggest the difference between the caste-Hindus looking at peasants and untouchables, and peasants and untouchables looking at themselves. It may be said in passing that most of the Indian autobiographies start with the author's reference to his caste and emphasise caste as an important background to the author's personality (See for instance, three well known autobiographies: M.K. Gandhi's An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth; Jawaharlal Nehru's Toward Freedom and Rajendra Prasad's Autobiography).<sup>4</sup> The Indian author perhaps remains conscious of his caste, in varying degrees, throughout his work.

Another important factor that influences the Indo-Anglian novelist's method of characterisation is the living presence in the Indian mind of myths, legends and ancient literary works with their archetypal characters, situations and themes. Perhaps no Indian can think of his childhood without thinking of the stories of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Krishnalila (the story of Krishna); and models such as Rama as the ideal husband and ruler, Sita as the ideal wife, Bharata as the ideal brother are ingrained in every Indian mind. In their character portrayal both Indo-Anglian and Indian-language novelists, understandably, show a tendency to conform to certain archetypes which results in a static and monotonous quality in their characterisation. Dorothy M. Spencer and M.E. Derrett have rightly noticed this 'static quality'.<sup>5</sup> Besides the influence of myths, etc., the absence of a tradition of individualism

in Indian society is responsible for the lack of variety and vigour in characterisation. Conformity to caste rules or social hierarchy being the ideal, it is rare, if not impossible, to come across characters in real life who are rebels or adventurers. It is difficult to situate the story of Robinson Crusoe in an Indian landscape. And not surprisingly, Narayan's characters, in their acceptance of the social order and conforming attitude, seem more real and convincing than Anand's, in their moods of revolt and protest.

As pointed out earlier, all Indo-Anglians share the background of traditional Hindu home and high Western education (we do not have, among Indo-Anglians, a pure native genius like Amos Tutuola); and with the single exception of R.K. Narayan, all have lived in the West for a long time. Exposure to two cultures, Indian and Western, has obviously influenced them in their approach to characterisation. Indo-Anglians, apparently, have introduced more Western characters in their works than Indian-language novelists have. But the majority of their characters belong to traditional India, either living in villages or small towns, in joint families (as in the novels of Anand, Narayan and Markandaya); and Anglicised Indians are generally shown as having their roots in traditional India (as in Raja Rao's novels). Indo-Anglian novelists are far more authentic in their portraits of Indian characters than of the Western. Madeleine (The Serpent and the Rope), Mr. England (Coolie), Mr. Long (The Village) and Caroline Bell (Possession) are portrayed either to represent the Western point of view and attitude regarding certain issues in contrast with the Indian; or as mere caricatures. Indo-Anglian novelists do not seem to understand the Western mind and ethos sufficiently to enable them to portray a Western man as a living human being. No Indo-Anglian has categorically admitted this lack of understanding of the Western mind and culture, but the following statement of V.S. Naipaul (who has written Mr. Stone and the Knights Companion with an Englishman as its central character) could easily be that of any Indo-Anglian novelist:

...People who wish me well have urged me to do so [to cease being a regional writer] before it is too late. They say I have lived long enough in England to write about England. I would like nothing better. But there are difficulties.

...

...

...

And I feel I know so little about England. I have met many people but I know them only in official attitudes--the drink, the interview, the meal. I have a few friends. But this gives me only a superficial knowledge of the country, and in order to write fiction it is necessary to know so much: we are not all brothers under the skin. 6

While writing about their Indian characters, interestingly, Indo-Anglians often become over-conscious of the Indianness of such characters. Frequent references to crowded homes and lack of privacy; social customs and religious rituals shown as an important preoccupation of characters; emphasis on surrounding details of characters; these are perhaps the result of the Indo-Anglians' awareness of Western values and settings.

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In this chapter, I want to analyse the Indo-Anglian novelists' method of characterisation with reference to a typical Indian character: the holy man. The holy man is a part of traditional Indian society, and represents in a way the ancient Indian values and wisdom. He has fascinated the Indian mind, in all ages, whether called rishi, sanyasi, sadhu or swami. In classical works like the Ramayana, sages (rishis) are shown as taking part in state affairs by acting as advisers to the king, and teaching young Brahmins and princes about the shastras and the art of administration. They are described as ascetic, wise, endowed with supernatural powers, and susceptible to wrath and jealousy. In puranic literature, the image of the holy man mostly conforms to that of the classical works. In folktales, interestingly, one quite often encounters characters of fraud holy men. In the two folktale collections I refer to in the next chapter, we find some such characters.

Though each religious community has its own holy men - the Muslims

have their mulla, the Sikhs have their bhai and the Christians have their 'priest' - the place of the holy man in Hindu society and the attitude of the Hindu towards the holy man have comparatively greater significance. According to the Hindu view of the world, as I have stated earlier, every man, in the last of the four stages of his life, is supposed to lead the life of a holy man (sanyasa). Thus, according to the Hindu view of life, there is no line of demarcation between the holy man and the man of the world. (Professor Shils records that many Westernised Indians, in their interviews, told him of their desire to 'go into the forest' in the last phase of their lives.)<sup>7</sup> The holy man is not only respected by society, he in a way symbolises the cherished hope of many Hindus who want to live like him. Obviously, few Hindus ever take to sanyasa, but their ambition to do so influences their character and personality in certain ways.

The holy man embodies the Hindu idea of renunciation, asceticism and detachment. He is not attached to anything mundane or worldly: wealth, fame, family or friends. He is aware that this world is nothing but an illusion (maya). He is the ideal human being who is sometimes referred to as jivan-mukta (free from life or bondage) and sthita-prajna (who has attained serenity in wisdom). I have mentioned earlier that in Hindu imagination greatness in any form is viewed as spiritual greatness, and politicians and poets are sometimes viewed as holy men.

All forms of Hindu literature, classical and puranic, emphasise asceticism as a supreme virtue, and it is an important motif in Indian art and literature. Ancient Sanskrit works like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Upanishads contain innumerable allegories in which human beings and demons attain miraculous powers from Brahma, the Supreme God, by practising ascetic measures. Many of the ancient kings and sages were supposed to achieve their greatness by renouncing worldly pleasures and taking to severe austerities.

In Gods, Demons, and Others, R.K. Narayan retells such a story of asceticism. It is about the king Yayati who entered into heaven, in physical body, by leading the life of an ascetic:

He ate the roots of plants and leaves; he overcame all desires and all moods and emotions, and his purity of mind helped him please the spirits of his ancestors as well as the gods. He lived on water alone for thirty years, completely controlling and suppressing his thoughts and words. One whole year he nourished himself by swallowing air and nothing else; he stood on one leg and meditated, surrounding himself on all four sides with fire and the blazing sun above. 8

The life of Yayati in a way sets the ideal which every holy man should follow. Since the ideal is seldom practised, Indian authors often find it convenient to suggest, in the character of the holy man, the gulf between the religious ideal and the common norm, the anachronism of ancient beliefs, and the corrupt nature of religious institutions. But it is not rare for holy men to be presented as noble and wise, in line with ancient sages. In Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Anand Math (1882) we find holy men, who play an important role in the story, portrayed in this vein.

Religious motives being fundamental to the Hindu way of life and the Hindu social structure, we often find family men in society following, consciously or unconsciously, the ideal of the holy man. The act of sex, for instance, is forbidden for a holy man, and a householder living with his wife is sometimes guided by the idea that sex is a sin.<sup>9</sup> Such complex situations provide the Indian novelist rich material for probing human minds and behaviour. An important aspect of character portrayal in Indian fiction, after Gandhi's emergence as political leader, has been to present Gandhi and freedom fighters as holy men. Like Rama, Sita and Bharata, Gandhi, in Indian literature, seems now an archetypal character. He is portrayed as an ascetic, champion of the creed of non-violence, a friend of the poor and devoted to God; and an ideal man is often shown as conforming to this image of Gandhi.

II

In R.K. Narayan's novels, the holy man (or the sadhu or the sanyasi as he prefers to call him) appears frequently, though we rarely find him playing a significant role in Malgudi society. Apart from The Guide, in no Narayan novel is the holy man the central character. Nonetheless, the holy man is an important aspect of Narayan's character portrayal, and Narayan's treatment of this very Indian character can explain something of his method of characterisation.

It is not easy to determine whether Narayan repeatedly introduces the holy man to make the work interesting for his Western audience, or if it is a coincidence that Narayan is fascinated by a character which also arouses so much interest in the West. Indeed, with his Brahminic background and roots in Indian tradition and culture, it would be surprising if Narayan overlooked a character like the holy man, who represents, however imperfectly, the lore and wisdom of ancient India. In his interview with Ved Mehta he is reported as saying that he perhaps could not write without 'Krishna, Ganesa, Hanuman, astrologers, pundits, temples and devadasis' and 'to be a good writer anywhere, you must have roots - both in religion and in family'. 10

Unlike Mulk Raj Anand who introduces the holy man in several of his novels as belonging to the class of oppressors, Narayan shows him as an ordinary member of society, as noble or fraudulent as the rest of it. Mostly, Narayan depicts the holy man in domestic and social situations, both as wise and foolish, comic and pathetic. He provides few details about his daily rituals and background (except in The Guide where the monologue of Raju reveals so much of his past life), but makes his distinct presence felt by the few sentences he (the holy man) utters or the few acts he performs. We have an interesting episode about a holy man in The Bachelor of Arts, the first novel in which Narayan introduces such a character:



Next day Chandran was out of bed at four, and with his father hunting in the garden. Nothing happened for about ten minutes. Then a slight noise was heard near the gate. Father was behind the rose bush, and Chandran had pressed himself close to the compound wall. A figure heaved itself on to the portion of the wall next to the gate, and jumped into the garden. The stranger looked about for a fraction of a second and went towards the jasmine creeper in a business like way.

Hardly had he plucked half a dozen flowers when father and son threw themselves on him with war-cries. It was quite a surprise for Chandran to see his father so violent. They dragged the thief into the house, held him down, and shouted to mother to wake up and light the lamp.

The light showed the thief to be a middle-aged man, bare bodied, with matted hair, wearing only a loin-cloth. The loin-cloth was ochre-coloured, indicating that he was a sanyasi, an ascetic. Father relaxed his hold on noticing this.

Mother screamed, "Oh, hold him, hold him." She was shaking with excitement. "Take him away and give him to the police."

Chandran said to the thief, "You wear the garb of a sanyasi, and yet you do this sort of thing!"

"Is he a sanyasi?" Mother asked, and noticed the colour of the thief's loin-cloth. "Ah, leave him alone, let him go." She was seized with fear now. The curse of a holy man might fall on the family. "You can go, sir," she said respectfully.

Chandran was cynical. "What, Mother, you are frightened by every long hair and ochre dress you see. If you are really a holy man, why should you do this?"

"What have I done?" asked the thief. (pp. 42-43)

Narayan treats the entire episode in a comic vein, but there is a tinge of sadness about it. The encounter between the holy man and the semi-Westernised family of the New Extension of Malgudi is in a way an encounter between ancient and modern India. The modern has reverence for the ancient, the ancient cannot ignore the modern, but they hardly understand each other. The holy man of the episode - and we have no reason to assume that he is a fraud - perhaps believes in values in which private property does not mean anything. Being one who has renounced all worldly belongings and attachments, he is supposed to have free access to every household and it is the sacred duty of society to look after him. It is perfectly justifiable, in the

context of his beliefs, for him to enter a private garden to collect flowers for worship. He can be viewed as bestowing divine blessings on the owner of the garden by using his flowers for a religious purpose.

Chandran and his parents obviously fail to understand the holy man's views. If Chandran's mother wants the holy man to be allowed to go, it is not because she understands him, but she is afraid of his curse. Chandran's father, in spite of his Western education, does not oppose his wife. The situation is typically Indian. The wife is traditional and superstitious; the husband, though Westernised, does not oppose his wife. In Indian fiction, we do not come across many themes of conflict between husband and wife, in middle-class families, in matters of faith and religion. The law protecting private property, and the holy man with his belief in his right of access to others' houses and gardens, exist side by side in Malgudi, an epitome of modern India, without coming into confrontation.

The flower-stealing episode acquires new significance when Chandran, who was once cynical and unsympathetic towards the holy man, himself wears the ochre-coloured robe, shaves his head and becomes a holy man. His new way of life is not different from that of the holy man whom once he attacked with 'war-cries'. The situation is rather ambivalent. Narayan perhaps suggests that the presence of the holy man in Malgudi is not as anachronistic as it may appear on the surface. Every Indian, however Westernised, has in him something of a holy man's attitude to life: viewing worldly things as an illusion (maya) and seeking peace in renouncing private belongings.<sup>11</sup> Chandran might have failed to turn a holy man, but in his attitude he has a strong affinity with the holy man whom he caught as a trespasser in his garden.

In The Guide, the story starts when Velan, a peasant, mistakes Raju, just released from jail, for a holy man; and by a strange development of events, Raju has to assume this mistaken identity for the rest of his life and end up as a martyr to the cause of bringing rain to the drought-stricken world.

Raju is among Narayan's most memorable characters, and by narrating the story with movements forward and backward in time, he portrays the full life-story of Raju, who, before assuming the role of the holy man, was a tourist guide, lover, dance proprietor and convict.

In his treatment of the character of Raju as holy man, Narayan reminds one of the Pirandellian theme of illusion and reality. Raju, in whose past life there was nothing to suggest his religious bent of mind, decides to assume the role of a holy man because that would mean a free supply of food from villagers:

He had to decide on his future today. He should either go back to the town of his birth, bear the giggles and stares for a few days or go somewhere else. Where could he go? He had not trained himself to make a living out of hard work. Food was coming to him unasked now. If he went away somewhere else certainly nobody was going to take the trouble to bring him food in return for just waiting for it. The only other place where it could happen was the prison. Where could he go now? Nowhere. Cows grazing on the slopes far off gave the place an air of sublime stillness. He realized that he had no alternative: he must play the role that Velan had given him. (p.30)

Raju makes the decision casually, without realising the serious implication it might have for the villagers. The villagers of Mangal (at the outskirts of which Raju took shelter in a temple) were waiting for a saint to arrive from somewhere, at the very spot where Raju arrives; and when the boy announces that the saint is 'back at his post' (p.39), Raju suddenly finds himself in the midst of a group of children and their teacher eager to listen to his wise words. As in the past, so also now, he rises to the occasion and plays his role admirably well:

They [the children] had their foreheads smeared with sacred ash, and their slates creaked in the silent night, while the teacher lectured to them, and Raju, seated on his platform, looked on benignly. The teacher was apologetic about the numbers: he could muster only about a dozen boys: 'They are afraid of crossing the river in the dark; they have heard of a crocodile hereabouts'.

'What can a crocodile do to you if your mind is clear and your conscience is untroubled?' Raju said grandly. (p.41)

'And why do you ask us to recollect all that we have said since daybreak?' Raju himself was not certain why he had advised that, and so he added, 'If you do it you will know why.' (p.46)

Raju grows a beard and long hair; offers advice to every villager in his crisis, whatever may be its nature; and prescribes medicine to the sick. He himself is puzzled at his success in the role of the holy man.

The story takes a new turn when Raju decides to throw off the mask of the holy man, which, he realises, has deprived him of any private life, of the right to 'eat like an ordinary human being, shout and sleep like a normal man' (p.48); and he starts narrating his life-story to Velan, with the intention of convincing him that he is not really a holy man. Velan listens to Raju intently, without interruption:

Raju asked, 'Now you have heard me fully?' like a lawyer who has a misgiving that the judge has been wool-gathering.

'Yes, Swami.'

Raju was taken aback at still being addressed as 'Swami'. 'What do you think of it?'

Velan looked quite pained at having to answer such a question. 'I don't know why you tell me all this, Swami. It's very kind of you to address, at such length, your humble servant.' (p.208)

The relationship between Raju and Velan (and Raju and the villagers), after Raju makes the confession, no longer remains simple. Raju is no more the hypocrite, the fraudulent holy man; nor is Velan any longer the naive peasant who mistook Raju for a holy man. But their relationship as swami and chela continues. Raju, instead of turning back to normal life, finds himself more involved in the role of the holy man and finally believes in his spiritual powers, and Velan remains throughout a devoted disciple of the Swami.

Narayan's treatment of the Velan-Raju relationship is as serious as it is comic. The whole episode of Raju's transformation into a holy man, and eventually, a martyr, may at first seem merely farcical. But the novelist's presentation of the Indian mind and values, in the Velan-Raju relationship and Raju's self-sacrifice, is quite profound. Velan's unflinching devotion to Raju, even after knowing Raju's past, is in the true tradition of the guru

cult, which emphasises 'faith' and not 'logic' as the criterion of choosing one's guru. A disciple is not supposed to scrutinise the guru's drawbacks, and Velan, as a true disciple, is not concerned with Raju's past life. It is not the strange development of circumstances as much as the values and attitude of Velan and the people of Mangal that transform Raju into a saint and a martyr. Obviously, Velan and the people of Mangal were waiting for the arrival of a saint, and a saint had a significant role to play in their life. Hindu philosophy recognises bhakti or 'devotion' as one of the ways to attain God, and the birth of a Godhead in every age.<sup>12</sup> The waiting of Velan and the villagers of Mangal for a saint is symbolically the waiting of the entire Hindu race for an avatar (incarnation) to destroy evil among them. Raju apparently fulfils such a role by sacrificing himself to bring rain. Although the villagers of Mangal may be mistaken in their belief in Raju's sainthood, such a possibility exists as long as one believes in devotion to a guru or Godhead as a way to salvation, and in the periodic emergence of avatars to eradicate evil.

Narayan often introduces characters who are very much involved in worldly affairs, but claim to live like holy men or show great enthusiasm for virtues like asceticism and renunciation. Such characters are neither hypocrites nor simple caricatures. In classical and puranic literature we meet characters who lead the life of the householder yet practise the virtues of asceticism. One such character is Janaka, who is both a king and a sage (rajarshi). Among the Vaishnava sect there is a sub-sect known as Grihi-Vaishnava, the members of which marry and live like ordinary men and yet practise asceticism. Even the ancient sages about whose life we learn from works like the Upanishads, lived with wives and children and yet practised asceticism. As I have pointed out earlier, Hinduism draws no line of demarcation between the life of the householder and that of the holy man. Participating in worldly affairs without being attached to them is a supreme virtue

in Hindu philosophy, and Narayan's treatment of characters like the old landlord in Mr. Sampath, the priest in The Dark Room and Jagan in The Vendor of Sweets should be viewed in this light.

The landlord in Mr. Sampath is an old man who lives away from all his children and is supposed to be in the fourth phase of life (sanyasa). He lives in a small room which belongs to one of his friends and his worldly belongings are scanty, Srinivas's chance meeting with the old man reveals the latter's character:

The very first time Srinivas met him he saw the old man bathing at a street-tap, while a circle of urchins and citizens of Anderson Lane stood around watching the scene. They were all waiting for the tap to be free. But the old man had usurped it and held his place. Srinivas felt attracted to him when he saw him spraying water on the crowd as an answer to their comments. The crowd jeered: he abused it back; when they drew nearer he sprayed the water on them and kept them off, all the while going through his ablutions calmly. Srinivas asked someone in the crowd: "What is the matter?" "Look at him, sir, this is the same story every day. So many of us wait here to fill our vessels, and he spends hours bathing there, performing all his prayers. Why should he come to the tap built for us poor people? We can't even touch it till he has done with it."  
"Perhaps he has no other place."  
"No place!" a woman exclaimed. "He is a rich man with many houses and relations!" (p.8)

The old man is selfish, greedy and has no love for the neighbours. We also learn from his conversation with Srinivas that he hates his own children and the children of others who call him 'grandfather'. His only human concern, however, is his granddaughter's marriage. In other words, he is as worldly a person as anyone else. Yet

"Home! Home!" he laughed. "I have no home. Didn't I tell you that I am a Sanyasi, though I don't wear ochre robes?...." (p.9)

The gulf between the ideal he preaches and his practice in real life makes the old man funny and ridiculous. But Narayan does not portray the character without sympathy. The old man's sudden death when the ball strikes his head heightens the pathos of his situation, lonely and alienated from everyone:

...The old man seemed to sit there in meditation, his fingers clutching the rosary. His little wicker box containing forehead-marking was open, and his familiar trunk was in its corner. Dusk had gathered and his face was not clear. The boy's ball lay there at his feet. (p.148)

In both the novels, The Dark Room and The Financial Expert, Narayan introduces the character of a priest, who, though not a holy man, is supposed to possess virtues like asceticism. The priest of the Maruga temple who in his miserliness resembles the landlord of Srinivas, agrees to employ Savitri in his temple if Mari repairs, free of cost, three old umbrellas and fixes up iron bands around the grain barrel. The priest in The Financial Expert also does not mind spending hours in puja in rich people's houses. Both the priests resemble each other so much that they do not emerge as distinct individuals. Both are arrogant and in the habit of bullying people who come to see them. The priest's encounter with Mari (The Dark Room) is an exact replica of the priest's meeting with Margayya (The Financial Expert):

"Who are you?" asked the old man, half closing his eyes in his effort to catch the identity of his visitor.

"I am Mari, my master, your humble slave."

"Mari, you are a vile hypocrite," said the old man.

"What sin have I committed to deserve these harsh words?"

"I sent my boy thrice to your place, and thrice have you postponed and lied. It was after all for a petty, insignificant repair that I sent for you."

"Nobody came and called me, master. I swear I would have dropped everything and come running if only the lightest whisper had reached me. Whom did you send?"

"Why should I send anyone? After all, some petty repair - I thought I might have a word with you about it if you came to the temple; but you are a godless creature; no wonder your wife is barren. How can you hope to prosper without the grace of Maruga?" (The Dark Room, pp. 122-123)

... ..

...He [Margayya] felt somewhat shy as he said: "I want to acquire wealth. Can you show me a way? I will do anything you suggest."

"Anything?" asked the priest emphatically. Margayya suddenly grew nervous and discreet. "Of course, anything reasonable". Perhaps the man would tell him to walk upside down or some such thing. "You know what I mean." Margayya added pathetically.

"No, I don't know what you mean." said the old man pointblank. "Wealth does not come the way of people who adopt half-hearted measures. It comes only to those who pray for it single-mindedly with no other thought." (The Financial Expert, p.29)

The conversations easily suggest the authority and importance the priests enjoy in traditional Indian society. In spite of their arrogance and high handedness, neither of the priests is devoid of kindness and sympathy. The priest of a Maruga asks Savitri to live with the womenfolk of his family instead of living alone in the courtyard of the temple. The priest in The Financial Expert is hospitable and offers food to Margayya.

In the character of Jagan (The Vendor of Sweets) Narayan portrays a prosperous widower, aged sixty, torn between the worldly interests of running a sweet shop and caring about a spoilt child, and the following of the philosophy of the Bhagabat Gita and Mahatma Gandhi. There may or may not be a contradiction between worldly interests and the teachings of the Gita and Gandhi, but to Jagan (and to every average Indian) the teachings of the Bhagabat Gita and Gandhi are not compatible with the pursuits of worldly pleasures. In India, Gandhi is popularly viewed as a holy man, and Jagan, who plans to enter the fourth stage of life (sanyasa) when the novel ends, considers Gandhi as his 'master'.

'CONQUER TASTE, and you will have conquered the self,' said Jagan to his listener, who asked, 'Why conquer the self?' Jagan said, 'I do not know, but all our sages advise us so.' (p.13)

The character of Jagan and his situation are amply suggested in these opening lines of the novel. The prosperous sweet vendor who claims to have 'the biggest sweet shop in the country' (p.42) quotes the advice of the sages not to succumb to the pleasure of the tongue. He is sincere in quoting the authority, and he himself takes neither sugar nor salt. He makes his tooth-brush out of the branch of margossa and does not drink any water except that boiled and reserved in a mud jug exposed to the sky. In other words, he lives like an ascetic and has 'conquered taste'.

But what Jagan has failed to conquer is his attachment to his only son, and to the sweet shop. Between the father and the son there is no



communication. Mali, Jagan's son, shows no interest whatsoever in establishing understanding between himself and his father; rather, he ignores him and all the values and morals he preaches. But Jagan's love for his son, in spite of the teaching of the Bhagabat Gita on non-attachment, remains an obsession with him. He even develops a liking for the half-Korean girl, Grace, who lives with his son without getting married to him. When Mali plans to send Grace back to America, Jagan feels unhappy: 'He had got used to the presence of Grace in the house and he felt desolate at the thought of losing her' (p.132).

Narayan treats the character of Jagan in a half-serious, half-comic way. Jagan clearly represents, in his beliefs and values, the generation of Indians who lived in the last phase of the British rule, and, under the influence of Gandhi, believed in charkha and nature cure, in contrast with the new generation of the post-independence period with their enthusiasm for modern science and technology. Jagan is alienated both from his only friend, the cousin, who visits his shop to devour sweets free of cost in return for listening to Jagan's philosophy of 'conquering taste', and from his son who plans to write with the aid of a novel-producing machine and lives with a Christian girl. His taking to the life of sanyasa, in his circumstances, is more an escape than a genuine withdrawal from the world. Escape in the face of a crisis is a typical Hindu attitude which, as we saw earlier, Narayan suggests in the character of Chandran turning a holy man after failing to marry the girl he loves. When Jagan finds it hard to live with his son, the advice offered by the cousin is: 'Don't be hasty; go on a pilgrimage to the temples and bathe in the sacred rivers' (p.99).

In the last chapter of the novel, we find Jagan planning 'to go to the forest', but still carrying the backdoor key with him and worrying about Grace's return to America. We have reason to believe that he will come back again to his house after a few days, through the backdoor, and again take

charge of his sweet-shop. Like Chandran's, Jagan's sanyasa will perhaps be temporary. Jagan is a portrait of those Indians who are committed to the life of a sanyasi, but unable to shake off the attachments of a grihastha (householder).

III

If R.K. Narayan portrays the holy man with sympathy and understanding, throwing light on his virtues as well as vices, Mulk Raj Anand's portraits are mere caricatures and arouse contempt and disgust. In his early novels dealing with the under-privileged classes of Indian society, Anand invariably introduces the holy man as belonging to the privileged class and exploiting the simple-minded religious villagers. In Untouchable (1935), Coolie (1936) and The Village (1939), Anand shows the temple priest, the Mahant and the Yogi in the same light. They are all greedy and obsessed with sex and they live as parasites on society.

In Anand's fiction, characterisation seems subservient to the message the novelist wants to preach. In all his novels, Anand identifies himself with one of his characters, through whom he expresses some of his favourite ideas about the human race, history, the class struggle and the future of man. These ideas he has clearly stated in the last chapter of his autobiography, Apology for Heroism; <sup>13</sup> and in novel after novel he repeats them. He uses the term 'Humanism' to describe these ideas and emphasises socialism, political freedom, science and technology as means to human happiness and progress. Man, according to him, is the supreme truth, and economics the first and foremost fact of life. This is how he shows one of his protagonists contemplating man in society:

Whether there were more rich or more poor people, however, there seemed to be only two kinds of people in the world. Caste did not matter. 'I am a Kshatriya and I am poor, and Varma, a Brahmin, is a servant boy, a menial, because he is poor. No, caste does not matter. The Babus are like the Sahiblogs, and all servants look alike. There must only be two kinds of people in the world: the rich and the poor.' (Coolie, p.56)

Anand believes in a society in which religion and the clergy (the Brahmins and the holy men) have no place. He has made his views clear regarding the place of religion in society, when he shows, in Untouchable, a poet maintaining that the emergence of the untouchables can be truly achieved not

by religion (conversion to Christianity, or Gandhi's doctrines), but by science and technology (sanitary system). In his authorial comments and the use of similes and metaphors, Anand often refers to religion as irrelevant and nothing more than a form of corruption:

He recited this [a verse from Nanak] in a high sing-song that gave the words a deep significance. But though the audience was impressed by the rhetoric, and believed the content to be the ultimate truth of the matter, they didn't relate its message in any way to the concrete issue in hand. (The Village, p.23)

THE TWILIGHT was falling as if the hand of God was throwing invisible dust into the open eyes of the world. (The Village, p.50)

By rejecting religion as irrelevant while writing about a society that is predominantly religious, Anand over-simplifies much of the complexity and tragedy of contemporary India. In Narayan, we have some glimpse of such complexity in his portraits of Raju and Chandran as holy men. Anand's depiction of the holy men as mere hypocrites and the people revering them as mere simpletons makes one feel that he fails to comprehend the fabric of values and systems of which traditional India is made up.

All the holy men portrayed in the three novels - Untouchable, Coolie and The Village - are frauds, and they appear as symbols rather than individuals with distinct characteristics. The purpose of introducing the holy man being to show the exploitation of the under-privileged by religious leaders or institutions, Anand does not concern himself with the human side of the holy man. The only exception, however, seems to be his portrait of Baba Sitalgar:

The ascetic had attached himself to the shrine some thirty years ago, when, as it was said, a moneylender in the Jammu hills had defrauded him of his worldly goods and attached his land. And he was the truest saint of the spirit in those parts. For although he seemed as simple as an idiot, the dog-like devotion, the tireless loyalty, the complete abnegation of himself in the service of others that he practised indicated a depth of character that had never been gauged. 'Sat bachan' and 'at your service' were the only accents that ever fell from his lips, except that at times, when he sat down to listen to the woes of the peasants who came from the outlying parts of the country, he said a sentence or two, repeating like a parrot the formulae he had heard, 'God is one. God is one. And all else is illusion.' After this, he invariably added, 'But, of course, you must ask Mahantji what is right and what is wrong, for I am not worthy of knowing the secret and of offering advice to anyone.' (The Village, p.38)

Clearly, Anand has some sympathy for Sitalgar, but not because of his asceticism or devotion to his guru (the Mahant). The author's sympathy is due to the fact that Sitalgar, deprived of his property by a moneylender and made to work like a slave for the Mahant, belongs to the class of the oppressed, as do Ialu, Bakha or Munoo. He suggests the understanding and affection between Ialu and Sitalgar, both exploited by the Mahant and the landlord. Sitalgar offers a rupee to Ialu to spend in the fair and Ialu asks Sitalgar to accompany him to the town. Anand refers contemptuously to Sitalgar in his role as holy man, and describes him as 'an idiot' and 'dog-like' in his devotion. Despite the fact that in his practice of asceticism and guru-bhakti (devotion to guru), virtues held high in Indian thought and tradition, Sitalgar is in some ways an ideal Hindu, Anand shows little understanding of such a character. His portrait is superficial and distorted.

Mahant Nandgir, in The Village, lives in a monastery at the end of Nandpur and leads a luxurious life on the offerings of the villagers. He stands in much the same relation to the villagers as the landlord and the police do. The author shows him talking affectionately to Ialu, but hastens to add,

...the Mahant wanted to guard against aspersions on his character, a character which, in spite of the disguise of his yellow robes, was transparent to those who knew of his loves and who had seen his women disciples sublimate the passion of his flesh by the constant massages of his body that the prettier of them were chosen to give when they came on anniversaries and fairs. (p.40)

The Mahant talks of brothels, shows his love for good Japanese silk, and discusses religion with the village-folk:

'...This is the true religion, that you should not envy your superiors, for if you did so, there would be no order in the world. And you can defile your own house with abuse of your enemy, but fear to spit in the house of the saints.' (p.43)

The Mahant is believed to cure a snake-bitten child by the help of Chandi, a possessed woman. Whether the child gets back consciousness by chance, or the

entire episode is pre-planned by the Mahant to trick the villagers, is not clear.

Pandit Balkrishnan, another holy man in The Village, is greedy, physically deformed, and keeps on talking of Kaliyug (the dark age) impending on earth. He advises Gujri, worried about her husband's prognostications, to offer a feast to the gods to save her husband.

Pundit Kali Nath, in Untouchable, is a temple priest; the author introduces him as 'an old-humoured devil' (p.16) and intends to prove it. Physically he is deformed, mentally, sick. Anand's description of the priest in his reaction to the appeal of the outcastes to draw water for them from the well is a good piece of caricature:

The Pundit hesitated, twitched his eyebrows and looked at the group, frowning with the whole of his bony, hollow-cheeked, deeply-furrowed face. The appeal seemed, even to his dry-as-dust self, irresistible. But he was an ill-humoured old devil, and had it not been that, as he stood and reflected, he realized that the exercise at the well might do some good to the chronic constipation from which he suffered, he would not have consented to help the outcastes.

He moved slowly to the brick platform of the well. His small, cautious steps and the peculiar contortions of his face showed that he was a prey to a morbid preoccupation with his inside. He took his own time to prepare for the task he had undertaken. He seemed to be immersed in thought, but was really engrossed in the rumblings of his belly. 'That rice', he thought, 'the rice I ate yesterday, that must be responsible. My stomach seems jammed. Or was it the sweet jalebis I ate with my milk at the confectioner's? But the food at the home of Iala Banarsi Das may have introduced complications.' He recalled the taste of the various delicacies to which he was so often treated by the pious. 'How nice and sweet is the milk-rice pudding sticking to the white teeth and lingering in the mouth. And kara parshad, the semolina pudding; the hot buttery masses of it melt almost as you put a morsel of it in the mouth. But the hubble-bubble usually keeps my stomach clean. What happened to this morning's smoke? I smoked for an hour to no effect. Strange!' During the time taken by these cogitations he had placed the brass jug in his hand to rest in a little hollow in the wooden frame of the well. The waiting crowd thought that it was the Brahmin's disgust at serving them, the outcastes, that brought such deep wrinkles on his face and made it look peeved and angry. They didn't realize that it was constipation and a want of vigour in his lanky little limbs. They soon realized this, for as, after a great many hesitant steps, he tied the iron can that lay near the frame to an edge of the hemp rope that skirted the pulley-wheel, and gently lowered it into the well, the handle slipped from his hand, because of the weight of the bucket, and revolved violently back, releasing

all the coils of the rope that were around it. He was a bit scared by the suddenness of the motion of the wheel. Then he pulled himself together and renewed his attack. But he was soon upset again. To draw out a can, full of water, required limbs which had been used to exercise more strenuous than the Pundit had ever performed, his whole life revolving round endless recitation of sacred verses and the writing of an occasional charm or horoscope with a reed pen. He exerted all his strength and strained to roll the handle on. His face was contorted, but not altogether unlit with pleasure, because already the exercise of his muscles made him feel much easier in the belly than he had done for days. (pp. 16-17)

One can see that Kali Nath is the image of Brahmin as non-Brahmins, particularly, sudras, would view it. The Brahmin's fondness for good food is a joke in India and Anand conforms to this popular idea in his description of Kali Nath.

Kali Nath's showing of favour to Sohini, the beautiful sister of Bakha, in giving her the water drawn from the well, ignoring the others, and later trying to seduce her when she comes to the temple courtyard to clean the latrines, seems rather a farcical episode. The priest's hypocrisy is over-obvious, and the innocence of the devotees (who are present in the courtyard but fail to understand the priest's motive) is implausible.

In the same novel, Anand refers to another holy man, 'an ascetic whose years were said to exceed ten thousand and who sat naked with shaven head in silent contemplation' (p.55). This holy man is believed to possess the magic trick by which a sahib can be turned into a black cat. Anand has two purposes in introducing this character: to show the Indians' superstition and reverence towards the holy man; and to suggest the position of the holy man in Indian society in contrast with that of the untouchable. The housewife who offers food to the holy man with great awe and reverence, throws a piece of bread at Bakha in return for his service of cleaning her drain.

In Coolie, Anand describes Bhagat Har Das's shrine which is supposed to be holy, but Munoo, when he enters it, soon discovers its 'oppressive spirit' (p.128). The Brahmin distributing free water to the poor is greedy and foul-mouthed. Munoo afterwards comes across a yogi who promises to accept him as a disciple, and asks him to follow him. The next moment the scales

fall from Munoo's eyes to reveal 'the voluptuary where he had seen the saint' (p.130).

All Anand's protagonists - Bakha, Lalu and Munoo - easily recognise the hypocrisy and corruption of the holy men, and protest vehemently against these custodians of tradition and religion. All of them belong to the lower order of the Hindu caste hierarchy and their contempt towards the holy men suggests the tension between the Brahmin and non-Brahmin communities of India. In Untouchable, Bakha's revolt against Pundit Kali Nath, after the latter's attempt to seduce his sister, is indeed symbolic of such age-old tension:

Bakha rushed back to the middle of the courtyard, dragging his sister behind him, and he searched for the figure of the priest in the crowd. The man was no longer to be seen, and even the surging crowd seemed to show its heels as it saw the giant stride of the sweeper advance frighteningly towards the temple. Bakha stopped still in his determined advance when he saw the crowd fly back. His fist was clenched. His eyes flared wild and red, and his teeth ground between them the challenge, 'I could show you what that Brahmin dog has done!' (p.48)

But with all its force, the passage does not seem quite convincing. How could Bakha, himself a part of the Hindu social hierarchy, be free from the fear of a Brahmin's curse? The novelist is rather more convincing when he shows Bakha's desiring to offer a gift to a holy man, but being an untouchable, unable to do so (p.55). In Narayan's The Dark Room, the relationship between Mari the blacksmith and the priest as revealed in their conversation quoted earlier, is closer to the actual relation between the low-caste Hindus and the Brahmins and is far more authentic than the relationship between Bakha and Pundit Kali Nath. Mari's attitude to the priest is almost a contrast to that of Bakha to Pundit Kali Nath.



IV

Raja Rao's Kanthapura is an authentic picture of rural India and it helps us to understand the place and importance of the holy man in traditional Indian society. I have pointed out earlier that the image of Moorthy, the protagonist of the novel, conforms more to that of a holy man than a politician, and that Moorthy in his relation to the village of Kanthapura is symbolic of Gandhi in his relation to India.

The religious motive is at the centre of all the social and political activities of Kanthapura society, and the two most influential men of the village, Moorthy and Bhatta, are Brahmins and are viewed by the villagers as holy men. Before being initiated into Gandhi's ideology, Moorthy is pre-occupied with various religious activities, and it is his image as a religious leader, 'who had gone through life like a noble cow, quiet, generous, serene, deferent and brahminic' (p.3), that helps him to lead the people of Kanthapura in the freedom struggle. The villagers accept his proposal to form a branch of the Congress Committee not because they understand the political or the economic implication of the freedom struggle, but because the proposal comes from a noble Brahmin, who is also a disciple of the Mahatma, 'a holy man':

All I know is that what you told me about the Mahatma is very fine, and the Mahatma is a holy man, and if the Mahatma says what you say, let the Mahatma's word be the word of God. (p.70)

In his following of Gandhism, Moorthy himself, interestingly, does not seem to be guided by any apparent logic. It is Gandhi's charismatic personality that convinces him about the soundness of the doctrines:

And as there was fever and confusion about the Mahatma, he jumped onto the platform, slipped between this person and that and fell at the feet of the Mahatma, saying, "I am your slave." The Mahatma lifted him up and, before them all, he said, "What can I do for you, my son?" and Moorthy said, like Hanuman to Rama, "Any command", and the Mahatma said, "I give no command save to seek truth," and Moorthy said, "I am ignorant, how can I seek Truth,"

and the people around him were trying to hush him and to take him away, but the Mahatma said, "You wear foreign cloth, my son." - "It will go Mahatmaji." - "You perhaps go to a foreign university." - "It will go, Mahatmaji." - "You can help your country by going and working among the dumb millions of the villages." - "So be it, Mahatmaji," and the Mahatma patted him on the back, and through that touch was revealed to him as the day is revealed to the night the sheathless being of his soul; and Moorthy drew away, as it were with shut eyes groping his way through the crowd to the bank of the river. And he wandered about the fields and the lanes and the canals and when he came back to the college that evening, he threw his foreign clothes and his foreign books into the bonfire, and walked out, a Gandhi man. (pp.33-34)

The relationship between Moorthy and the villagers, and Gandhi and Moorthy, as described by Rao's grandmother narrator, corresponds to that between a holy man and his disciples. The spiritual superiority of Moorthy and Gandhi is recognised by their followers by intuition rather than by logic. In a society in which the cult of bhakti (devotion) and atma-samarpana (surrender of one's self) are considered great virtues, at least by those not exposed to Western forms of knowledge and scholarship, Rao's portrait of such relationships is convincing. Against the backdrop of the mingling of religion and politics in the Indian freedom movement, the ideal political leaders are often portrayed, in Indian fiction, as holy men, or as conforming closely to the ideology of holy men. During the freedom movement, Gandhi and other leaders, invariably emphasised tyaga (literally, 'sacrifice'; but as popularly understood, 'asceticism') as the requirement of true leadership. Even in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Anand Math (1882), a novel written long before the Indian freedom movement started, it is the holy men (sanyasis) who are shown dreaming of India's freedom.<sup>14</sup>

Raja Rao portrays Moorthy as Indians think (or thought until recently) an ideal freedom fighter or a Congressman should be. But he does not make Moorthy a mere symbol, as Anand tends to make his holy men. Moorthy's psychological dilemma as to whether he should accept the food offered to him by a Pariah is vividly described (pp.71-72) to suggest the weaker side of this noble man (the passage is quoted later in this study).

As a rival to Moorthy, who is an ideal holy man (and perhaps the noblest character portrayed in Indo-Anglian fiction), Raja Rao introduces Bhatta, a disciple of the Swami, who claims himself 'a well-wisher of cows and men' (p.30). Like the Mahatma, the Swami appears in the novel only once and briefly; but his presence, like the Mahatma's, is felt throughout. The Moorthy-Bhatta rivalry, like the encounter between the Mahatma and the Swami, is symbolic of the conflict between traditional and modern India; and it is significant that the author suggests little bitterness in such conflict. Gandhi and the Swami, Moorthy and Bhatta are equally committed to the Hindu tradition. Moorthy, who differs in his views from Sadhu Narayan, another disciple of the Swami, shows his respect for him, and Sadhu Narayan blesses Moorthy (pp. 86-87).

In Kanthapura, Raja Rao offers us a portrait gallery of holy men, traditional and modern. Brahmin Seetharam who dies by the pistol of the Skeffington Coffee Estate sahib but does not 'sell' his daughter to the sahib, and Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, are two minor but memorable characters in the novel. Though the author has not hesitated to expose the flaws of the holy men and the Brahmins, he has shown them, generally, in a favourable light. They are wise and retain in them something of the ancient Hindu tradition. Interestingly, Kanthapura was not approved as a text in some Indian university allegedly because Rao has cast aspersions on the Brahmin community in the character of Bhatta.<sup>15</sup> In fact, Raja Rao, himself a Brahmin and a philosopher, seems to have love and reverence for the values which the holy men and the Brahmins symbolise. His portrait of Bhatta rarely suggests any contempt towards the Brahmin community. It is amusing, occasionally farcical, drawn with insight and sympathy:

The ceremony would begin. Bhatta is very learned in his art. It would be all over within the winking of an eye. Then the real obsequial dinner begins, with fresh honey and solid curds, and Bhatta's beloved Bengal-gram khir. "Take it, Bhattarē, only one cup more, just one? Let us not dissatisfy our manes." The children are playing in the shadow, by the byre, and the elderly people are all in the side room, waiting for the holy brahmins to finish their

meal. But Bhatta goes on munching and belching, drinking water and then munching again. "Rama-Rama-Rama-Rama." One does not have an obsequial dinner every day. And then, once the holy meal is over, there is the coconut and the two rupees, and if it is the That-house people it is five, and the Post-office-house people two eight. That is the rule. (p.21)

Portraits of Gandhi in Indo-Anglian and Indian fiction in general would be an interesting area of research.<sup>16</sup> Although many major Indo-Anglian novelists have introduced the character of Gandhi in their works - Narayan in Waiting for the Mahatma, Anand in Untouchable, and Bhattacharya in Shadow from Ladakh - their concern seems more or less confined to the popular myth. Perhaps novels dealing with the message of Gandhi, in which Gandhi as a person does not appear, are more Gandhian than those portraying Gandhi the man as a symbol or a myth. The Oriya novel Matira Manisha, referred to later in this study, showing a villager practising Gandhism as he understands it, is more authentically Gandhian than novels like Waiting for the Mahatma depicting a conversation between Gandhi and a Harijan boy, or Untouchable showing Gandhi lecturing about truth, non-violence and the Harijan welfare. By portraying Gandhi as a saint and a holy man, Indo-Anglian novelists seem to have failed, on the one hand, to comprehend the practical and earthy side of Gandhi's approach to socio-economic-cultural complexities; and on the other, they have shown a tendency to over-simplify all that Gandhi stood and fought for, making him a stereotype and a dull character, more traditional than dynamic.

However, in Kanthapura Raja Rao could not have portrayed Gandhi as anything other than a holy man, the narrator being a village grandmother. The following conversation between Moorthy and the villagers of Kanthapura clearly reflects Gandhism and the Gandhian cause as understood and interpreted by the Indian masses:

"May I ask one thing, Moorthy? How much has one to pay?"

"Nothing, sister, I tell you the Congress gives it free."

"And why should the Congress give it free?"

"Because millions and millions of yards of foreign cloth come to

this country, and everything foreign makes us poor and pollutes us. To wear cloth spun and woven with your own God-given hands is sacred, says the Mahatma. And it gives work to the workless, and work to the lazy. And if you don't need the cloth, sister - well, you can say, 'Give it away to the poor', and we will give it to the poor. Our country is being bled to death by foreigners. We have to protect our Mother." (p.16)

Even Moorthy being inspired by the charismatic personality of Gandhi is convincing. But had the author not shown Gandhi talking to Moorthy, in a brief encounter, about truth and non-violence, the novel would have been more realistic.

V

Kamala Markandaya, like Raja Rao, often deals with the East-West encounter as one of her major themes. While Rao strives for a synthesis of values represented by the East and the West, Markandaya seems content merely to point out the essential conflict that lies between them. The holy man or the Swamy in Markandaya's The Silence of Desire and Possession represents the Eastern value system. In both the novels, the Swamy is not a distinct individual but a shadowy mystical figure, symbolic of certain forces inherent in Indian tradition and culture. However, what exactly the Swamy symbolises is not clearly defined in these novels.

In Possession, Lady Caroline Bell is portrayed as a woman who wants to assert her hold over Val, a Tamil peasant boy. She discovers the artistic talent of Val (Valmiki) in the dark interior of South India, and takes him to England where he flourishes as an artist. Though there is always something of the Indian peasant sensibility in him, he lives in an unorthodox way and has sexual relations with three women, including Caroline, fourteen years his senior. He gets sex, gold and recognition but suddenly the Swamy arrives in London and Val, disenchanted with the West where alone his talent was recognised, returns to his own obscure village. He paints in the cave where as a child he painted under the guidance and patronage of the Swamy, and now his paintings become more mature than ever before.

Lady Caroline fails, in spite of all her efforts and claims, to possess Val. The Swamy makes no effort to possess Val, nor does he claim his right to do. Yet Val prefers the Swamy to Lady Caroline. The Swamy obviously represents a force more powerful than Caroline and the others. In the last chapter of the novel, there is an argument between the Swamy and Caroline, which in a way reflects the different values they stand for:

"They are seen," said Caroline. "They are not buried in a hole in a hill in a country which has forgotten the meaning of art. Here Valmiki creates and there is only you to glory it. That is not enough - except for you."

"Not only me, I am the least: there is also a divine spirit," said the Swamy gently, and the chasm between them widened, carrying them to different continents. "He works for that, and therein is the glory...it gives men a satisfaction so rich they cannot explain it, and mostly they do not even wish to." (p.232)

In his assertion that 'the divine spirit' is the sole inspiration of the artist, the Swamy represents the traditional Indian viewpoint which envisages the inseparability of art and religion.<sup>17</sup> The nature of the conflict between Caroline and the Swamy - in the concepts of possession and the relevance of art - may be a matter of interest to philosophers. The design of the novel is such that the conflict is over-obvious and the story itself is not very plausible. It seems more a parable than a story with a realistic treatment. The Swamy is always a voice, not a human being of flesh and blood.

FOOTNOTES

1. I have discussed this point in the chapter, 'The Novel as Purana'.
2. Anand writes, 'We belonged to a craft household of Amritsar. And, because of the family's loyalty to the Ismaili Aga Khan faith, we were considered a species of untouchables by most of the orthodox Hindu brotherhood (Roots and Flowers, Dharwar, 1972, p.22).
3. Hazari, Untouchable, London, 1969.
4. 'The Gandhis belong to the Bania caste and seem to have been originally grocers', is the first line of Gandhi's An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth (Boston, 1970, p.3). Referring to his ancestors, Rajendra Prasad starts his autobiography, 'In a village called Amorah in Uttar Pradesh live a large number of Kayasthas (Autobiography, Bombay, 1957, p.1). Jawaharlal Nehru, however, does not mention his caste in the opening chapter. But later he admits, 'A Brahmin I was born, and a Brahmin I seem to remain whatever I might say or do in regard to religion or social custom (Toward Freedom, Boston, 1967, p.105).
5. See Dorothy M. Spencer's Indian Fiction in English, Philadelphia, 1960, p.29; and M.E. Derrett's The Modern Indian Novel in English, Brussels, 1966, p.71.
6. 'London', The Overcrowded Barracoon, London, 1972, p.14.
7. The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation, The Hague, 1961, p.64.
8. Gods, Demons, and Others, New York, 1964, p.45.
9. In The Householder (London, 1960), Jhabvala has studied, in the character Prem, the psychology of an Indian married man who views sex as sin.
10. 'The Train Had Just Arrived at Malgudi Station', John is Easy to Please, London, 1971, pp.141 and 148.
11. In this context, I may quote Raji Narasimhan who recognises that the favourite setting of Narayan's novels is the one loved by hermits and holy men: '...there is a particular setting that seems to be constant in the Narayan imagination....A pond, blue lotus in it, a shrine, casuarina trees. The sum total of these ingredients, the overall feel of the landscape, is spiritual. It is a retreat ideal, the ashram refuge that every Sanskritically conditioned Indian dreams about: a berth from where to gain the sense of communion with the universe and the tranquility of mind lost in the wear and tear of everyday living' (Sensibility Under Stress: Aspects of Indo-Anglian Fiction, New Delhi, 1976, p.106).
12. In The Bhagabat Gita, Lord Krishna says to Arjuna:  
When goodness grows weak,  
When evil increases,  
I make myself a body.



FOOTNOTES (Continued)

12. (contd.)                      In every age I come back  
                                    To deliver the holy,  
                                    To destroy the sin of the sinner,  
                                    To establish righteousness. (Bhagabad-Gita,  
translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, London,  
1947, p.60.)
13.                      See Apology for Heroism, Bombay, 1957, pp. 93-143. Some of Anand's letters, written to friends and critics, show that he is more concerned with the message of his novels than with any other aspect (See for instance, G.S. Balarama Gupta's 'Anand in Letters', Kakatiya Journal of English Studies, II, 1, Spring, 1977).
14.                      Though the Congress party was formed as early as 1885, and many leaders were aware of the inferior political status of Indians in a colony, complete freedom from the British rule was not imagined until Gandhi's emergence as political leader in the early twenties of this century.
15.                      See C.D. Narasimhaiah's 'Raja Rao's Kanthapura - An Analysis', Critical Essays, Dharwar, 1968, p.283.
16.                      C.D. Narasimhaiah has discussed the image of Gandhi in Indo-Anglian fiction ('Mahatma Gandhi, as poets and novelists see him', (The Writer's Gandhi, Patiala, 1967)). Raji Narasaimhan has devoted one chapter to Indo-Anglians' portrait of Gandhi ('Perennials and Prototypes', Sensibility under Stress: Aspects of Indo-Anglian Fiction, New Delhi, 1976). But a study in depth of Gandhi's portrait in Indian fiction seems yet to be undertaken. I understand that Debjani Chatterjee, a research scholar in the University of Lancaster, has completed her Ph.D. thesis on 'The Image of Gandhi in the Indo-Anglian Novel.'
17.                      I have suggested earlier that in Hindu thought, art and religion were viewed as inseparable (See Footnote 3, 'The Hindu Tradition and the Novelist's World View').

## The Novel and the Folktale

### I

The two dominant forms of narrative in India, until the novel and the short story were adopted by Indians from the West more than a century ago, were the folktale and the purana. Though the two Western literary forms, the novel and the short story, have gained immense popularity since then, the folktale and the purana have survived in the rural communities, and interestingly, have even shown some flexibility in dealing with the new social and political themes.<sup>1</sup> The novel and the folktale - the the purana is, in some ways, a long folktale - exist side by side in India just as the Westernised and the traditional communities do.

Every country has or had the folktale as its most popular and perhaps most important form of narrative at a certain stage of its development and there is nothing extraordinary about Indian society having its own folktales. In the West, the folktale, which is essentially a part of oral literature, is practically extinct now, and the novel and other sophisticated forms of narrative have almost replaced the traditional forms. In India, where most of the people are still illiterate, the folktale is a living form and the novelist cannot ignore this vital cultural fact.

After the age of Sanskrit epics and kavyas, and with the emergence of the Prakrit languages, the folktale and the purana came to dominate the Indian cultural scene for centuries until Indians were exposed to English literature in the nineteenth century. The novel, and indeed all forms of prose literature in the modern sense, were imitated by Indians often with considerable success. But the abrupt transition from the traditional forms of literature to the modern ones has not always been smooth or convincing. Though India, as a result of its exposure to foreign political powers, had already witnessed the impact of alien cultures, no impact was as significant as the

Western, resulting in almost a total transformation in all areas of activities. Indian languages and literatures went through a sea-change under the Western impact and the traditional forms of drama, poetry and fiction were transformed almost unrecognisably.

A particular art-form is intimately linked up with the social, cultural and psychological ethos of the community from within which it grows, and in the nineteenth century the novel was certainly an alien art-form in India. Agricultural, intensely religious and dominantly medieval India seemed to find itself adequately articulated in her various folk-forms such as the folktale and the purana. The purana is a long narrative in verse, based on some episode of the Ramayana or the Mahabharata, or on some ancient Sanskrit classic, in which the natural and the supernatural, the real and the fantastic are hardly distinguishable. A folktale is either a debased or derived version of some Sanskrit fable from works like Panchatantra, Hitopadesha, Kathasarit-sagar, or an invention of some anonymous local genius. It is a prose narrative in the sense that it owes its form to the narrator who narrates it, but often particular proverbs, riddles and verses go with a particular folktale and remain unchanged and serve as an aid to memory. The purana is essentially a religious work, the folktale is not, though both are didactic and meant to be narrated or read out to a small audience to entertain and to instruct. Both these forms curiously reflect the thought pattern of the traditional Indian mind which does not always admit the Western sense of time, space and reality.

Though all indigenous forms of narratives may be divided into two categories, the folktale and the purana, we may easily recognise considerable overlapping between the two. One can always find within the purana (which is again closer to the folktale than to the Sanskrit epic on which it is based) a number of folktales prevalent in the language-area in which it is composed. On the other hand, many folktales may be based on puranic themes. The purana is distinct from all other folk narratives in the sense that it is a recorded

(not necessarily printed) thing and the puranakara (the reader of the purana) reads out of a printed book or a manuscript made up of palm leaves. The non-puranic folk narratives are narrated or recited from memory. Forms of narrative such as the Harikatha, the Burra Katha and the Ballad are not different from the folktale and the purana, and it is difficult to clearly distinguish these forms from one another. The Harikatha, or as the name indicates, the Story of God, has a religious theme, whereas the other forms may have socio-historic ones.

All these forms, though essentially narrative, resemble a dramatic situation in their narrator/reciter-audience context. It is not easy to say how much of the narrative is in prose and how much in verse. The purana is composed in verse, but the reciter's interpretation, which forms a part of the ritualistic reading of the purana, is in prose. The Harikatha and the Ballad are in verse, the interpretation being in prose. The folktale is narrated in prose, but the riddles, proverbs and verse in it are closer to poetry than to prose.

And until Indians were exposed to Western (mostly British) literature in the nineteenth century, these folk forms of narrative dominated the scene. A series of epoch-making events took place in India between 1830 and 1880 (the period which H.M. Williams rightly observes as the 'most exciting and decisive for the culture of the Indian sub-continent'<sup>2</sup>: the starting of the printing machine; the compilation on modern lines of grammars and dictionaries in Indian languages; the collection of folktales; the imparting of Western science and culture in the English language; the establishment of colleges and universities, and so on. This was also the period when the first Indian novel, the first Indian poem in blank-verse - almost all the modern forms in Indian literature - were composed. And in India, unlike England and the West, all these important events started simultaneously, not one after the other. The establishment of a grammar, for instance, a prerequisite for any modern prose writing, did not necessarily precede the writing of the novel.<sup>3</sup>

As happens in any period of transition - and this was the most significant period of transition in India's cultural history - the Indian authors in general and the novelists in particular were not very sure of the nature of the transition and the way the form and content of their writing would be affected in the years ahead. The novel form was more imitated than adopted, an Indian novel being often modelled on a British one.<sup>4</sup> Few seemed to realise that the Western form which had already had a century-old history and had evolved in a totally different social and cultural milieu, was perhaps not a very adequate form to articulate the prevailing Indian ethos.

The Indian novelist in the nineteenth century does not seem to have made any conscious effort to bring about a reconciliation between the folk form, or forms, of narrative with the Western novel. But the traditional folk form, much more than was then realised, did survive in the Indian version of the novel and the novelist supposedly imitating a Western form remained at heart no less traditional than Western. Like the Westernised Indian who read about the Theory of Evolution in English books in the university but meditated the mysterious significance of the sound 'Oum' at home, the Indian novelist practising a form which implies, above all, individualism as a value, was working in a society and value-structure which was oppressively communal. The conditions, at least some of them, which saw the rise of the novel in the West, such as, 'serious concern with the daily lives of the ordinary people', 'enough variety of belief and action among ordinary people', 'an ideology primarily based, not on the tradition of the past, but on the autonomy of the individual',<sup>5</sup> were hardly present then, and are hardly present now, in India, and understandably the English plant changed its colour under the tropical sun.

The nineteenth century Indian response to the novel form was manifest in a number of ways: in the selection of the English novels translated or adopted into Indian languages, in the preference of some English or Western novelists to others, and so on. Works essentially didactic or sentimental were generally preferred. An author like G.M. Reynolds for instance, who was

hardly a major figure in England then, was translated into Hindi and other languages and influenced the novel form in India.<sup>6</sup> Works like The Pilgrim's Progress and The Vicar of Wakefield (and not Robinson Crusoe or Sense and Sensibility) were translated and accepted as models for the new form. Though the leap from the folktale and the purana to the novel was long and unmistakable as a change from a verse or verse-ridden oral form of narrative to a prose and written one, in theme, characterisation and treatment of the material much of the folktale persisted. Themes like the prince and princess romance, or the intervention of the supernatural to resolve the human crisis, continued the folktale tradition in the Indian novel, and even when such themes were apparently discarded and the novelists preferred themes from contemporary life and situations, they often seemed to be guided, in their motifs and treatment of the reality, by the traditional folk forms.

It is not always easy to suggest the folk sources from which an Indian novelist of the nineteenth century drew his inspiration, consciously or unconsciously, unless it is categorically stated by the novelist himself; and it seems that Indian novelists were hardly aware of the rich folklore which went into the making of their literary personality. Indian critics even today do not seem to realise the impact of the folk forms on the Indian literary works as much as they do that of the Western masterpieces. In the mid-nineteenth century, when Bankim Chandra Chatterjee pioneered the novel form in India, he admitted his indebtedness to English masters like Scott and Lord Lytton.<sup>7</sup> But he does not seem to record how the popular forms of ballad, folktale etc., influenced or inspired him as a creative artist. The prevalence of folk literature in rural India, for centuries, was so much taken for granted that few Indians, until the advent of the Christian missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century, seemed to recognise the potentiality and relevance of such a literature. Chatterjee in his two essays on Bengali literature, 'A Popular Literature for Bengal' and 'Bengali Literature',<sup>8</sup> both written in

English, does not mention the folk literature which decidedly was much more dominant than the literature written and printed. The fact that he was born and brought up and spent most of his life as an administrator in rural Bengal makes it easy to see the encounter of a sensitive author with various folk forms. His intimate study of the puranas and the Hindu epics is of course well known. He himself though does not seem to be adequately aware of the influence of such medieval forms on him as a novelist. What is true in the case of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, is generally true of most of the nineteenth century Indian novelists writing in English or Indian languages.

Two factors make it difficult for critics to assess the influence of folk forms on modern literary forms: much of the folklore is lost and what survives is often distorted. For instance, the folktale which might have suggested to Bankim Chandra Chatterjee the character of Kapalaka in Kapala-Kundala or the plot of Rajmohan's Wife, may not have ever been noticed by any folklorist and consequently, may have been lost. Most of the folklorists in India like Dr. Verrier Elwin, by recording the folktales in the English language or by retelling them, have deleted, perhaps unintentionally, much of the oral element from the folktales. The recorded folktales, thus, may not always explain some of the motifs and themes of the Indian novel.

Rabindranath Tagore, incidentally, was one of the first important Indian authors to notice the literary potentiality of folk literature. He tried, consciously, to adopt the Baul songs, a form of medieval devotional poetry, as models for many of his lyrics; and collected some material for some of his prose works from folklore.<sup>9</sup> He compared the relation between folk literature and modern literature to that between the root and the branch of a tree:

As the roots of a tree are firmly bound together with the soil and its upper part is spread towards the sky, in the same way the lower part of a literature is always hidden, being to a large extent imprisoned in the soil of its mother-country.... There is a ceaseless inner connection between the lower literature and the higher one. The blossoms, fruits, twigs and sprouts

or that part which points to the sky cannot be compared with the lower roots in the soil; and yet those who know do not in the least fail to see their similarity and affinity. 10

Not that Tagore's observation is strikingly original. It may not even seem very significant to many now; but no Indian author seemed to realise before him, as much as he did, the intimate relation between 'the lower literature' and 'the higher one'. Particularly at a time when the Indian authors were yet to realise the full implication of their encounter with Western literature and the reconciliation that could possibly be brought about between traditional folk forms and modern Western ones, Tagore's emphasis had some importance.

Indian novelists of the nineteenth century apparently were not as much concerned with the folk tradition of the narrative as with the Western novel form. Nevertheless some of the motifs, themes and plot-structures of the folk forms did survive in their works and these seem to be the link between the traditional and modern forms of narrative in India. As suggested earlier, there is no clear line of demarcation between the epic, the purana and the folktale, there being always interdependence between these forms. Again, in different parts of the country owing to geographical and cultural variances, one may find differences in the folklorist material. But there is much similarity of themes, forms of structure and motif in the folktales prevalent throughout the sub-continent. Take, for example, two fairly typical collections of folktales: Mulk Raj Anand's Indian Fairy Tales (1966) and Prafulla Mohanti's Indian Village Tales (1975). Both the authors, in their Preface or Introduction, claim to have heard the tales in their childhood from their mothers. Hence the tales may be assumed to be authentic. Anand and Mohanti coming from two extreme corners of the sub-continent, one from West Punjab and the other from coastal Orissa, represent in a way two sub-cultural zones, and yet it is surprising to note the similarity of their material. Some recurring themes in their tales are the love between the prince and the



princess, the reward of true friendship, and the punishment that awaits the foolish or the wicked. Many of the characters are birds or animals, but they are no less humanised than the human beings themselves, and the human and social relevance of the tales is unmistakable. Such themes as love and friendship are, of course, universal, but there seems something typically Indian in the plot-structures and motifs of these tales.

Mohanti's 'The Two Friends' and Anand's 'A Love Story' both have friendship as the theme. In both, the king's son and the minister's son are great friends. The king's son happens to meet a very beautiful princess and wants to marry her. He asks the minister's son to help him to arrange the marriage. The task seems impossible to the minister's son but a series of miracles happen, all to the advantage of the king's son, and the minister's son succeeds in arranging the marriage. Thus true friendship is proved and the king's son and his royal wife live happily ever after. Mohanti's 'Benguli' and Anand's 'Radha and Krishna' are two love stories. The lover and the beloved in both the stories (the Brahmin and the Frog in 'Benguli', and Radha and Krishna in 'Radha and Krishna' are devoted to each other throughout but a wicked woman (the mother-in-law in 'Benguli') emerges as the villain and separates the lover from his beloved. But by miracle, the wicked woman's intrigue is revealed, the lover and his beloved are united again and live happily ever after. The wicked crane for deceiving the fish (in Mohanti's 'The Wicked Crane' and Anand's 'The Crane and the Fish') in the guise of a holy man is mortally punished by the crab. Similar punishment falls on all the wicked and foolish creatures, the tiger, the crocodile and the tortoise.

It is indeed interesting to note the blending of the real and the fantastic, and the way this blending is accomplished in almost all the tales recorded in the two collections. All the tales begin realistically, with the hunting expedition of two friends, a chance meeting between a prince and a princess, or even a Brahmin marrying a Frog (metaphor for an ugly woman?).

But in the middle, the trend tends towards fantasy, the gods and supernatural beings often being called upon to resolve the crisis, invariably in favour of the deserving - that is, in the conventional sense, in favour of the beautiful, the noble and the good. All the tales end either with the hero and the heroine living happily ever after, or with the wicked being punished and the virtuous rewarded. In their endings, the tales seem convincing and natural enough in the context of the Hindu view of the world; and all that happens in the middle, brutal murders or merciful resurrections, seems as natural as the end. After all, for the Hindu, the ultimate reality could only be the triumph of the truth, and every human action could ultimately be related to a much greater frame-work of action that is universal, supernatural and predestined.

The didactic note marks the ending of most of the tales and although the tale, particularly in the middle, is more of a fantasy than of a realistic one, the narrator often ends the tale realistically. 'When I went to see him, he did not want to talk to me', is a conventional ending of the folktales narrated by Mohanti.<sup>11</sup> The narrator sometimes narrates the tale with a suggestion that she herself (or he himself) has witnessed the event or participated in it. In many of the retold versions of the folktales, this ending note is missing. In Indian epics and puranas, and of course in many of the folktales, the narrator and the narrative are not viewed as separate entities - that is, the narrator does not view the narrative objectively, but as a part of his or her own being. The classic example is Valmiki who himself is an important character in the story of the Ramayana which he composes. Sita, after her separation from Rama, lives in the hermitage of Valmiki, and Lava and Kṛṣṇa are brought up by Valmiki. The sequence of time in the Ramayana, significantly, is different from that of modern fiction forms. The Eternity seems a more relevant concept of time to Valmiki than the Past, Present and Future. Valmiki has the prophetic vision of Rama's birth and his activities

in this world before Rama is actually born. The narrator Valmiki seems to be eternally present and his conception of the narrative through dream or vision comes to be a reality in which he finds himself participating. The Hindu idea of rebirth, karma and incarnation which are important motifs in Indian art and literature are intimately related with the Hindu idea of time and action. All the actions seem predestined, and hence, symbolic, and Time is present only in its totality, the Eternal.

The folktales in some way contain the Hindu view of Time, particularly, the narrator and the narrative being viewed as inseparable. Novelists like R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao have emphasised this aspect of the traditional forms of narrative and have, in some of their works, treated time-sequence traditionally.

Some recurring motifs and situations may be noticed in the tales in the collections. A favourite situation is a beautiful woman under the cruel authority of an ugly man or woman ('Benguli', 'The Two Friends', 'Kanchan', 'Ta'poi', 'The Seven Sisters' in Indian Village Tales, and 'A Cruel Stepmother' and 'The Princess who loved Her Father like Salt' in Indian Fairy Tales). Beauty and Cruelty are generally shown as incompatible. The immortality of the soul and the intervention of the supernatural to put worldly affairs straight seem to be two of the most important motifs. The soul can easily move from body to body and a holy man or a divine being can always recreate a dead body and make the soul return to it. In 'Radha and Krishna', though Krishna kills Radha out of misunderstanding, Radha's soul continues to live in the body of a dove and tells Krishna about his mistake. Later on of course Krishna does not find it a problem to bring Radha back to life. In 'Kanchan', the merchant's daughter of the same name lives in the form of a Kanchan tree after being killed by her brothers until God Ishwara takes pity on her and brings her back to life.

II

When Bankim Chandra Chatterjee started writing, he undoubtedly broke away from the traditional narrative in a significant way. Though he is not the first Indian to experiment with the novel form - and even in Bengali prose-narratives were already available - he is the first Indian novelist who took his craft seriously. In consequence, he considerably influenced the Indo-Anglian and Indian-language novelists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In two ways - and they were much more important than might appear to the modern critic - Chatterjee's works differed completely from the traditional narrative forms: he wrote all his narratives in prose (The first Tamil literary work called 'novel' was published in 1875 and it was in verse);<sup>12</sup> and he expressed a deep social concern. Because of these two characteristics Chatterjee is a novelist, and not an author of folktales or romances. He was a conscious artist and was aware of the historical role he as a novelist was playing in the country. He realised that the conventional themes had already outlived their utility and that the possibilities of the new forms such as the novel should be explored. The way he criticises the authors of the traditional school (the 'Sanskrit school' as he terms them) reveals his dissatisfaction with the conventional themes and techniques:

It is characteristic of the Sanskrit school that they seldom venture on original composition.... When they do venture on original composition, they are rarely caught straying beyond the beaten track, beyond a reverential repetition of things which have been said over and over again from time immemorial. If love is to be the theme, Madana is invariably put into requisition with his five flower-tipped arrows; and the tyrannical king of Spring never fails to come to fight in his cause, with his army of bees, and soft breezes, and other ancient accompaniments. Are the pangs of separation to be sung? The moon is immediately cursed and anathematized, as scorching the poor victim with her cold beams. The Kokila is described as singing him to destruction; and bees and soft breezes and sweet flowers are enumerated in the order in which they were marshalled in prehistoric times. No lovely woman in the pages of these writers has any other form of loveliness than a moon face, lotus eyes, hair that is a cloud, and a nose that resembles Garuda's beak.

In point of style these writers hardly shine more than in ideas. Time-honoured phrases are alone employed and a dull pompous array of high sounding Sanskrit words continue to grate on the ear in perpetual recurrence. Anything which bears the mark of foreign origin, however expressive or necessary it may be, is jealously excluded. (B.R., p.108)

In spite of Chatterjee's sharp reaction against many of the conventional themes and techniques in literature, he himself, at his best, was somewhere in between the modern and the conventional, and many critics rightly hold that the novel form with its true implication had to wait for another half a century to find its genuine manifestation in India. It was Tagore and not Chatterjee who wrote the novel with its interplay of character and situation, its exploration of psychology and human motives. As Mulk Raj Anand observes:

The revolution in the technique from the epic, bardic and the three dimensional recital to the novel was inaugurated in our country, by Rabindra Nath Tagore. As against Bankim Chander Chatterjee, who was addicted to the historical novel à la Scott and preached a moral in almost every chapter, Rabindra Nath, especially in his novel, *The Wreck*, contrives to make a dramatic representation, in space and time,....This novelist still bases himself on the story with a plot in the 19th century sense of the term, but he is certainly not a recitalist in the sense of the Puranic story-teller and his predecessor in Bengal. 13

Both Chatterjee and Tagore, however, belong to Bengali literature and are not major Indo-Anglian authors themselves. But both of them have played a decisive role in the growth of the Indian novel in general, and the study of these authors is essential for any evaluation of Indo-Anglian fiction. Incidentally, almost all Indo Anglians of the nineteenth century were Bengalis and could have been directly influenced by the Bengali works of Chatterjee.

Rajmohan's Wife is Chatterjee's first novel and the only novel he wrote in English. It seems, at least when he wrote the novel, that he not only tried to adopt the Western form of the novel, but that he perhaps thought the form to be possible or plausible only in the English language. This was more or less a part of the Indian author's problem of the choice of language in the mid-nineteenth century and Chatterjee was not the only pioneer in

Indian literature who had to face the problem. When the Indian authors of the mid-nineteenth century encountered the new literary forms like the novel, for some time at least it was not easy for them to conceive of these forms in any language other than English. Later on, of course, the dichotomy in the Indian choice of the language, Indian languages for creative and English for referential purposes, became manifest. But the Indian author, since the days of Chatterjee, has remained a split personality, culturally and linguistically. It is remarkable to notice the similarity of situation between Chatterjee and many of his modern counterparts. Here is Mulk Raj Anand describing his literary situation:

I tried to analyse very early in my own writing of the English language, the creative process involved. I found, while writing spontaneously, I was invariably translating dialogue from the original Punjabi into English.... I also found that I was dreaming or thinking or brooding some of the prose narrative in Punjabi or in Hindustani, and transforming it into the English language. This happened usually when I was writing my stories and novels. In the essays, I could control myself and write almost entirely in the English language, as it is written. 14

There is every reason to imagine that Chatterjee would have spoken about his own creative process, much in the way Anand does. While writing his novel (Chatterjee might have said), he was thinking of the Bengali folktale and purana, ballad and brata-katha. He was deeply rooted in Bengali culture but observed, 'It is a fact that the best Bengali books are the productions of Bengalis who are highly cultivated English scholars' (B.R., p.100). In language and theme, technique and point of view, the Indian novelist in the last one hundred years has been operating simultaneously in two worlds, the Indian and the Western, and the modern novelist such as Raja Rao or Mulk Raj Anand seems more conscious of this Indian predicament than a nineteenth century novelist such as Chatterjee apparently was.

Rajmohan's Wife is one of the earliest Indo-Anglian novels and though it may not seem particularly remarkable as a work of art, it helps us to understand much nineteenth century fiction writing in India. It can safely be

taken as a representative novel of the nineteenth century, in respect of form and language, characterisation and point of view. The Indo-Anglian achievement in fiction in the nineteenth century was by no means significant and the total number of novels published in the nineteenth century does not seem to be more than twenty five.<sup>15</sup> Many may even object to the inclusion of historical tales and romances which form almost half of this number. All these works broadly may be termed prose-narratives and some of them, depending on their treatment of the theme and the characters, may be said to be closer to the novel than others.

There are however two important reasons why these prose-narratives cannot be termed folktales or puranic tales in spite of their close resemblance to the latter. All of them are in prose, and some of them unmistakably reveal the author's concern for contemporary society in themes like the emancipation of Hindu housewives and the national awakening. In folktales and puranas, the social concern is universal and allegorical, and not contemporary, topical or obvious.

Rajmohan's Wife deals with the suffering of a Hindu housewife, a recurring theme in Indian fiction in the nineteenth century, and even in the twentieth. Chatterjee, in this novel, is realistic enough to focus upon the gloomy and morbid aspect of the zenana. He is a very contemporary author, deeply involved in the social problems of his time, and one of his favourite themes is the emancipation of Hindu housewives from their age-old suffering and superstition. It is not in the theme as much as in the treatment of the theme that Chatterjee's novel is traditional and closer to the folktale. The predicament of the Hindu woman in the nineteenth century was undoubtedly the most important of the social issues, and Chatterjee does not always romanticise or idealise the traditional life of the Hindu housewife in the manner of the narrator of the folktale or the purana. His picture of the zenana as described in the chapter, 'A Letter - A Visit to the Zénana', is

no less accurate and realistic than a similar description, say, in a twentieth century novel:

...Madhav therefore immediately hurried into the inner apartments where he found it no very easy task to make himself heard in that busy hour of zenana life. There was a servant woman, black, rotund and eloquent, demanding the transmission to her hands of sundry articles of domestic use, without however making it at all intelligible to whom her demands were particularly addressed. There was another, who boasted similar blessed corporal dimensions, but who had thought it beneath her dignity to shelter them from view; and was busily employed, broomstick in hand, in demolishing the little mountains of the skins and stems of sundry culinary vegetables which decorated the floors, and against which the half-naked dame never aimed a blow but coupled it with a curse on those whose duty it had been to prepare the said vegetables for dressing.

A third had ensconced herself in that corner of the yard which formed the grand receptacle of household filth, and was employing all her energies in scouring some brass pots; and as her ancient arms whirled round in rapid evolutions the scarcely less active engine in her mouth hurled dire anathemas against the unfortunate cook, for the mighty reason, that the latter had put the said vessels to their legitimate use, and thus caused the labours which excited the worthy matron's ire. The cook herself, far removed from the scene where both her spiritual and her temporal prospects were being so fiercely dealt with by the excited scourer of the brass pots, was engaged in an angry discussion with an elderly lady, apparently the housewife and governess, the subject of debate being no less interesting and important than the quantity of ghee to be allowed her for the culinary purposes of the night. The honest manufacturer of rice and curry was anxious to secure only just double the quantity that was necessary, wisely deeming it advisable that half should be set apart in secret for her own special benefit and consumption. In another corner might be heard those sounds so suggestive of an agreeable supper, the huge bunti severing the bodies of fishes doomed to augment the labours of the conscientious cook aforesaid. Several elegant forms might be seen flitting, not often noiselessly but always gracefully, across the dalâns and veranda with dirty earthen lamps lighted in their little hands, and occasionally sending forth the tinkling of the silver mal on their ankles or a summons to another in a voice which surpassed the silver in delicacy. A couple of urchins utterly naked and evidently excrescences in the household, thought the opportunity a fitting one for the display of their belligerent propensities and were making desperate attempts at tearing each other's hair. Some young girls were very clamorously engaged in playing at Agdum Bagdum in the corner of a terrace. (B.R., pp.17-18)

This chapter alone, if no other in the novel, describing the filth and confusion of the Indian zenana reveals the novelist's clear bias towards realism. The tone is detached, occasionally ironic, but not condescending or unsympathetic. The novelist's familiarity with the Bengali zenana scene



is obvious and he creates the atmosphere of the scene by employing a set of Indian words which apparently have no suitable equivalents in English. But the language and style in general do not seem appropriate to suggest a domestic ethos. The sentences are long, clumsy, literary and heavy; and one cannot help being reminded of Chatterjee's prose style in Bengali. In Bengali, Chatterjee preferred a Sanskritised heavy style (sadhu bhasha) to colloquial style (chalit bhasha). When Chatterjee wrote, Bengali prose writers were divided in their opinion as to which of the two forms of language and style, Sanskritised or colloquial, was to be preferred for literary writing. Though Chatterjee is recorded as saying that he was not against colloquial style,<sup>16</sup> in his Bengali novels he preferred to use the Sanskritised one. His Bengali abounds in Sanskrit loan and compound words (samas), long verb and pronoun forms which did not correspond to those in the spoken language, and so on. The unidiomatic style of the passage quoted above (and the novel in general), thus, seems due to Chatterjee's general attitude to language and style, though it is safe to guess that he would not have succeeded in employing an idiomatic style in English. It is interesting that unlike Indo-Anglian novelists who succeeded him, Chatterjee makes no attempt to interpret or explain the Indian words he uses and seems to write exclusively for his Bengali or Indian audience. However, one does not come across many passages in the novel, like the one quoted above, suggesting Chatterjee's attempt to portray a realistic picture of society.

The plot is very well-contrived, and the message is made obvious by the authorial comments from time to time and in the 'Conclusion' in the end of the novel. One character is clearly contrasted with another; thus, if one is a noble man, the other is a rogue and so forth. The situations in which characters find themselves seem predestined and conventional (a beautiful and virtuous woman married to a very cruel husband, for instance).

Whenever there is a crisis, it is resolved by some supernatural agent or as a matter of chance. Many of the images are hackneyed and much-used in Indian folktales and puranas. Throughout the novel the author is conscious that he is telling a story to his readers and the novelist-reader relation from time to time reminds one of the narrator/reciter - audience situation in an Indian village when a folktale is narrated or a purana is read out. All these characteristics of this novel suggest its closeness to the folktale form of narrative.

Rajmohan's wife, Matangini, is the central character in the novel. The novelist, after describing the small village on the bank of the river Madhumati, the locale of the story - a conventional way of beginning a folk or puranic tale - proceeds to introduce the heroine and her companion at length. 'Let us describe them both at this place' (B.R., p.2), he tells us as a folktale narrator or a puranakara would have done before describing a goddess or a mythical beauty:

It has already been mentioned that the visitor was thirty years of age. She was neither dark nor exactly olive; her face was not quite pretty yet there was no feature which displeased the eye; she had a sort of restless charm, and her smiling eyes heightened the effect of it. The ornaments on her person were not large in number, but constituted a fair load for a porter. The conch-shell worker who had made her shell bracelet was no doubt a descendant of Visvakarma himself. The woman adorned with these ornaments had only a coarse sari on her plump figure. There was evidently no love lost between the sari and the washerman, for it had not visited the laundry for a long time.

The dainty limbs of the woman of eighteen were not burdened with such abundance of ornaments, nor did her speech betray any trace of the East Bengal accent, which clearly showed that this perfect flower of beauty was no daughter of the banks of the Madhumati, but was born and brought up on the Bhagirathi in some place near the capital. Some sorrow or deep anxiety had dimmed the lustre of her fair complexion. Yet her bloom was as full of charm as that of the land-lotus half-scorched and half-radiant under the noonday sun. Her long locks were tied up in a careless knot on her shoulder; but some loose tresses had thrown away that bondage and were straying over her forehead and cheeks. Her faultlessly drawn arched eyebrows were quivering with bashfulness under a full and wide forehead. The eyes were often only half-seen under their drooping lids. But when they were raised for a glance, lightening seemed to play in a summer cloud. Yet even those keen

glances charged with the fire of youth betrayed anxiety. The small lips indicated the sorrow nursed in her heart. The beauty of her figure and limbs had been greatly spoilt by her physical or mental suffering. Yet no sculptor had ever created anything nearly as perfect as the form half-revealed by the neat sari she wore. The well-shaped limbs were almost entirely bare of ornaments. There were only churis on the wrists and a small amulet on her arm. These too were elegant in shape. (B.R., p.2)

In these two passages, one can see the conventional portraits of the princess and her companion as described in Indian folktales, puranas and kavyas. The heroine of a folk-narrative, a princess or a merchant's daughter, is usually not supposed to be seen without her companion. When Kalidasa in his famous kavya, Abhigyanam Shakuntalam, describes Dushmanata's meeting with Shakuntala, the latter is in the company of her friend (sakhi) Anusuya. Usually the hero and the heroine prefer to have their communication through the sakhi, until they feel intimate enough to talk directly. Kanak, Matangini's friend, does in some way play the role of a sakhi. In some of the folktales referred to earlier, the sakhi or the sakhis do play a decisive role in bringing lovers together, sometimes though the sakhi is not a beautiful woman but an old wise woman who cannot be called a sakhi in the strict conventional sense. In Anand's story 'Radha and Krishna', the sakhis play a role to bring Radha and Krishna together, and in 'A Love Story', the union of the prince and the princess is made possible by the help of an old wise woman.

Chatterjee follows the convention by describing Kanak as less beautiful than Matangini, and Matangini as a perfect beauty who is oppressed by a cruel husband. All the phrases he employs to describe Matangini's physical beauty such as 'the land-lotus half-scorched and half-radiant under the noonday sun', 'faultlessly drawn arched eyebrows', 'lightening seemed to play in a summer cloud', 'yet no sculptor had created anything as perfect as the form' etc., are conventional and literary. It is interesting to note that Chatterjee, who objected to the literary conventions of the authors of the

traditional school, was by no means free from conventions himself.

The rays of the setting sun had vanished from the tops of the cocoanut palms. But night had not yet descended on the earth. It was at this time that Kanak and her companion were returning home,..... (B.R., p.5)

This is how the second chapter opens, again, a conventional way of starting a tale or an episode, by referring to nature. Chatterjee opens several chapters by referring to the natural surrounding. Five of his twenty one chapters in the novel begin with an elaborate description of the natural surrounding, and the human action described against such surrounding seems to be in perfect harmony with it. The assumption of such harmony is a convention in folk literature and is based on the Hindu view of the world. In the second chapter, under the cool evening sky Matangini meets her lover and admirer, Madhav. The chapter, 'The Friends and the Stranger' opens with the description of the sunny morning which has already witnessed a heavy shower, and Matangini has just escaped from the severe danger of being caught by the dacoits. The chapter 'Consultations and Council' opens with the description of the bank of Madhumati as a 'dark habitation of venomous reptiles' (B.R., p.62) and one can easily anticipate that the novelist intends to describe something cruel. He does in fact describe the activities of the dacoits in this chapter.

Matangini's suffering at the hands of Rajmohan, her cruel husband, is the central theme of the story. Matangini's suffering and Rajmohan's cruelty are described unequivocally and the characters, in their extreme virtuosity and cruelty, tend to be more symbolic than real. The plot is ingeniously contrived and the characters are made to fit into the plot. Rajmohan is thoroughly wicked, a member of the gang of the dacoits that plans to rob his brother-in-law Madhav. Matangini is thoroughly honest and a perfect feminine creature. Neither of the characters seems to grow in the course of the events though many significant events follow one after another

in the novel. The novelist's tone of resignation often suggests that characters could not be otherwise, a suggestion very compatible with the Hindu idea of karma or rebirth. (Did Matangini commit some sin in her previous birth to deserve such a cruel husband?)

Matangini lay in her bed brooding over the sufferings she was doomed for ever to bear (B.R., p.20)

The novelist, of course, does not refer to Matangini's previous birth for her suffering of the present, as a folktale narrator might have done, but he clearly views her heroine's suffering as predestined in a phrase like 'doomed to suffer'. The purana and the folktale, confirming the Hindu tradition, view human action and predicament as a part of the cosmic and the universal design. Man is hardly viewed as a free or a liberated being, the possibility of his individual growth thus being almost denied. Such a view is detrimental to the art of the novel form. The interplay of character and situation to make a character grow assumes that the individual is to a large extent a product of his environment. In folktales and puranas, characters are 'born' and not 'made' by circumstances. In classical as well as puranic narratives characters are often categorised as Gods (Suras) and Demons (Asuras), the narrative invariably taking the form of allegory. Chatterjee, though concerned with a contemporary issue, does not portray Matangini as a living woman with her human flaws, but as a Devi or Goddess. All the rest of the characters are portrayed similarly, in broad outlines, either as good or bad; and the conflict between the characters seems to be the conventional conflict between two clearly defined opposite forces. The situation as a factor in determining the personality of the individual is hardly taken into account, and no ambivalence is suggested anywhere. How could Matangini remain so good in spite of the constant torture she received at the hands of her husband? Why does Rajmohan never feel tender towards his wife though she is so beaut-

iful and so good? The novelist does not provide any satisfactory answer for all these questions. He takes too many things for granted.

It seems logical in the context of the idea of predestination that the virtuous would be protected and the wicked punished in this world. And Chatterjee follows this logic which brings his work closer to the folktale than to the novel. To get his point through, Chatterjee makes recourse to the conventional device of introducing miracles and chance elements which at once makes the story improbable and even fantastic. Destiny is an important character in Rajmohan's Wife playing a determining role through various agents, though Chatterjee does not attribute a human form to this character as the classical and folk narrators sometimes do in the form of Niyati or some supernatural being. When the dacoits plan to plunder Madhav's house, Matangini overhears this and runs to Madhav's place to warn him of the impending danger. The dacoits and even Rajmohan, who is in their midst, fail to recognise Matangini. One of the dacoits who sees her, soon gets reconciled to the idea that he has seen an apadevata, an evil spirit. This is how the novelist describes Matangini escaping the view of the dacoits. Matangini is shown trying to hide herself in the waters of the pool and the dacoits are on the bank:

...Footsteps could now be distinctly heard and voices whispered on the other side of the bank. She gently sank the bundle in the water, taking care that the water might not splash. Then as gently gliding into the water at a spot where the spreading branches of the Bur cast a deep shadow, she sat down immersed to her chin, so that nothing but her head was visible, if indeed it could be seen where the dark water of the pool was made darker by the sombre shade of the tree. But still apprehensive lest the fair complexion of her lily face [should] betray her, she unloosed the knot of her hair and spread the dark luxuriant tresses on all sides of her head, so that not even the closest scrutiny could now distinguish from above the dark hair floating over the darkened pool. (B.R., p.28)

Matangini, though she dodges the dacoits, is not sure of the location of Madhav's house. But just when she is desperate, she notices a tall

devdaru tree which happens to stand in front of Madhav's house. When she returns home from the house of Madhav, after saving him from the disaster of the dacoits' attack, 'the growing blackness of the sky announced that a storm was near' (B.R., p.39). Nature indicates the calamity Matangini is to face soon, and Rajmohan, on suspecting his wife's secret contact with Madhav, proceeds to attack her. But when he is on the verge of attacking her, a miracle happens and Matangini is saved:

"My mother, O mother! and you father! where are you now?" were the only sounds that escaped the lips of the doomed girl, as she sunk about lifeless on the floor. The ruthless weapon gleamed high, as it was about to descend on the lovely bosom of the trembling victim, when the purpose was suddenly arrested by a violent noise at the window. Rajmohan turned round to see the cause of the unexpected noise. The jhamp flew open and two dark and athletic forms sprang one after another into the chamber, dripping with rain and bespattered with mud, but shooting sparks of fire from their red and fierce glances. (B.R., pp.41-42)

On another occasion, when the dacoits are just on the point of making Madhav hand over the much cherished 'will' to them, a miracle happens. Tara, a close friend and admirer of Madhav, arrives and the dacoits bolt away mistaking her for some supernatural being. Madhav and Tara release Matangini whom they accidentally meet in a dark chamber. Miracles frequently take place in all forms of medieval literature and gods or supernatural beings often take part in human affairs. Chatterjee does not introduce the gods and goddesses as the folk narrators do, but suggests enough to imply the divine interference in human affairs. It seems that Matangini's prayer to God (My mother, O mother! and you father!) is heard, as was Draupadi's, in the Mahabharata, when Duhshasana tried to insult her in the presence of her husbands and the courtiers.

David McCutcheon observes that the 'two dominant moods' of Indo-Anglian fiction are 'the tension between past and present, the tradition and modernity' and an 'escape into fantasy'.<sup>17</sup> What he thinks as an 'escape into fantasy' is, in fact, the tendency of the Indian novelist to press his

narrative in the traditional form. This 'escape' seems mostly an unconscious process, though many modern novelists admit the appropriateness of the puranic or folk form of narrative to present the Indian reality. It is important to note that the latest trend in Indian art and literature has been an attempt to synthesise the traditional forms with the modern ones, and, as Professor Shils notes, the emphasis on traditional folk media was not as obvious in India as it is to-day.<sup>18</sup> The Indian novelist is not only exposed to the traditional forms like the folktale from his early childhood, but it can even be said that the indigenous forms and the reality as perceived by Indians seem to be inseparable, and the novelist, partly because of his own literary and artistic upbringing, and partly because of the necessity of presenting the story from the perspective of his character or characters, is consciously or unconsciously dragged into the situation of the traditional folktale narrator.

The didactic note is palpably obvious throughout the novel, and through his comments and addresses to the 'dear reader', the novelist makes his presence felt from time to time, thus making the narrative appear as personal as a folktale might be. Instead of carrying the reader with the movement of the story and leaving him alone to see and judge things for himself, the novelist, like the village grandmother-narrator who keeps a vigil eye on the children lest they fall asleep, makes sure from time to time that the reader learns his lesson well:

The reader need not be informed that with much of the subject of this interesting dialogue, he is already acquainted. (B.R., p.48)

Mathur Ghose, as our reader had no doubt guessed in the course of the previous chapter, had the good fortune or misfortune of being blessed or incommoded by double ties of matrimony and was the master or slave of both of [his] two wives. (B.R., p.56)

Tara related in her turn the purpose of her visit. That need not be detailed to the reader. (B.R., p.80)

The scoundrel was preaching philosophy to the great man! And, dear reader, was he very wrong? (B.R., p.86)



Such novelist-reader dialogues make the reader feel the presence of the novelist, and this situation is not very different from that of the folk narrator sitting beside his or her listeners and narrating the story. The novel and the folktale being two different modes of communication, one in the printed page and the other in the human voice, need entirely different techniques of narration. Novel-reading is a lonely activity, the reader finding his own world and discovering his own meaning in the pages of the novel. The novelist does not stand between the reader and the novel. But the narration of the folktale is essentially a communal affair assuming at least the involvement of two human beings - the narrator and the listener - and it hardly provides scope for the listener to discover his own meaning in the story. The narrator matters in every possible way and the gestures and postures, the tone and personality of the narrator determine the form and meaning of the folktale to a great extent. In the mid-nineteenth century the novel did not mean much more than a prose-narrative to Indians, and the novelist did not fully understand how the change of medium from human voice to printed page meant different techniques of communication. Nor was the reader accustomed to reading a novel in the privacy of his own room. No wonder Chatterjee writing his novels continued in the printed page some of the narrator-listener dialogues, and the reader, accustomed to such dialogues, found Chatterjee immensely entertaining and instructing. Chatterjee's didacticism and moral preaching earned for him the title of a rishi (a sage or learned teacher) which a modern novelist would hardly think desirable.

Chatterjee closes Rajmohan's Wife with a 'conclusion' which demonstrates his attitude to the novel form, and the relation in which he thought he stood with his readers. This is the full text of the final chapter, 'Conclusion':

And now, good reader, I have brought my story to a close. Lest, however, you fall to censuring me for leaving your curiosity unsatisfied, I will tell you what happened to the other persons who have figured in this tale.

The sardar successfully escaped - not so Rajmohan. He had been implicated deeply in Bhiku's confession, - was apprehended, and under the hope of a pardon confessed likewise. They were however wise by half and made only partial confessions. The pardon was revoked, and both he and Bhiku transported.

Matangini could not live under Madhav's roof. This, of course, they both understood. So intimation was sent to her father and he came and took her home. Madhav increased the pension he allowed the old man, on her account. History does not say how her life terminated, but it is known that she died an early death.

Tara mourned in solitude the terrible end of a husband who had proved himself so little worthy of her love. She lived a long widowhood in repose, and, when she died, died mourned by many.

And to Madhav, Champak and the rest, some are dead, and the others will die. Throwing this flood of light on their past and future history, I bid you, good reader, FAREWELL. (B.R., p.88)

When Chatterjee ends the novel with 'The Last Chapter in Life's Book - and in This', the message is already made obvious. The innocence and goodness of Matangini and Madhav have been proved, and the police have arrived on the scene to take care of Rajmohan and the dacoits. Mathur, a zamindar who plotted against his noble counterpart, Madhav, has already hanged himself and the novelist has brought the story to a neat ending. The stability has already returned to the bank of Madhumati and the human episode has once again confirmed, as it always had, in innumerable folktales and puranas, the sanctity and wisdom of the conventional morality and belief.

But at the end of the narration of a folktale or reading out of a purana, a listener might ask questions if his curiosity is not satisfied. The folk narrator is as much a narrator as an interpreter, and Chatterjee proceeds in his Conclusion to answer the possible questions of the 'good reader'.<sup>19</sup> What he could not incorporate in the main story - was not the novel form adequate enough for him to say all that he wanted to? - he adds in the Conclusion. He leaves not a shadow of doubt that Rajmohan was punished; and Matangini, though loved by Madhav, did not live under Madhav's roof lest it should violate the social propriety. The novelist breaks away from neither the folktale narrative form nor the conventional code of morality completely.

When the story ends, it is the novelist who bids 'farewell' to the reader and the reader closes the book with a sense of separation not from the story, but from the storyteller who has done his job well.

III.

Between Chatterjee's Rajmohan's Wife and the twentieth century novels of Rao, Anand, Narayan, Bhattacharya and Ghose there has been a gap of half a century and, as is to be expected, the change in the Indo-Anglian novel, meanwhile, in theme and technique, has been considerable. The Indian novelist, like his counterpart anywhere in the world, under the pressure of forces both from within and without, has shown an increasingly greater bias towards realism. If the nineteenth century Indian novelist concerned himself with issues such as the emancipation of womanhood and the glorification of Indian history, the twentieth century novelist finds himself concerned more with issues like the attainment of political freedom, the communal riots that both preceded and succeeded the Partition, the unsurmountable task of removing poverty, the clash between tradition and modernity in all spheres of activities and, above all, with the century-old question of whether the twain, East and West, shall ever meet. If the nineteenth century novelist wrote about the predicament of Hindu housewives or the glorious past of the Hindus, the twentieth century novelist writes about the change that is taking place in contemporary Hindu society in political, social and other spheres of activities, and analyses the nature of such change.

This awareness of the Indo-Anglian novelist of contemporary twentieth century reality has not resulted, however, in any substantial change in the novel form in India; that is, novelists like Chatterjee and Narayan in spite of their concern for two different sets of issues, have remained surprisingly close to each other in the treatment of their form. The form of the novel has not changed as much as its theme, and this fact clearly shows the lingering impact of the traditional folk-narrative forms on the modern novel. And the impact of which Chatterjee was hardly aware has not only been obvious to modern novelists, but almost all of them have emphasised,

in their own ways, the appropriateness of the folk forms in the modern context, and have suggested perhaps the blending of the folk form and the Western novel. Rao's Kanthapura, the most deliberate and the most important attempt made so far in Indo-Anglian fiction to incorporate a folk form in the body of a novel, has this in 'Author's Foreword':

There is no village in India, however mean, that has not a rich sthala-purana, or legendary history, of its own. Some god or godlike hero has passed by the village - Rama might have rested under this pipal tree, Sita might have dried her clothes, after her bath, on this yellow stone, or the Mahatma himself, on one of his many pilgrimages through the country, might have slept in this hut, the low one, by the village gate. In this way the past mingles with the present, and the gods mingle with men to make the repertory of your grandmother always bright....

...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. And our paths are paths interminable. 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 "ons" 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 still is the ordinary style of our storytelling....

It may have been told of an evening, when as the dusk falls, and through the sudden quiet, lights leap up in house after house, and stretching her bedding on the veranda, a grandmother might have told you, newcomer, the sad tale of her village. (pp. vii-viii)

In the 'Foreword', the characteristics to which Rao is referring as 'the ordinary style of storytelling' in India, are those of the folktale or the purana. There is no clear line of demarcation either between the world of gods and the world of men or between the past and the present. As suggested earlier, Time in folk narrative forms, as in Hindu epics, is usually presented in its totality, the Eternal; and human action is not viewed as separate from divine action. All the tales are a flow, like Time itself, and they do not have the conventional beginning, middle and the end. There is no pause, episode following episode. (It is not clear what Rao means by 'punctuation'. Punctuation is meant for the printed page, and he is referring here to the folk narrative which is an oral form.)

It is not difficult to suggest the folk elements of Kanthapura, since the novelist has deliberately tried to approximate the novel to 'the ordinary style of storytelling'. If Chatterjee, in Rajmohan's Wife, was not aware of the closeness of his novel with the folktale, in Kanthapura, Rao makes conscious attempts to blend the two forms - the novel and the folktale. 'The telling has not been easy', Rao admits in his 'Foreword' and thinks the English language, not the language of 'our emotional make-up' (p.vii) standing between the narrator and the narrative. We see later in this study how the English language often fails to provide the novelist with appropriate idiom for his purpose. The milieu of Kanthapura in which the folktale is the natural form of narrative, is not supposed to possess a language like English which in its present form has shed almost all medieval thought. Perhaps one could narrate the Kanthapura story more successfully in an African language like Igbo.

Rao does not succeed in making Kanthapura a convincing folk narrative just as Chatterjee did not succeed in writing a satisfactory novel in Rajmohan's Wife. It is not the alien nature of the English language alone, but also the author's failure to blend the two forms, the folktale and the novel, that makes Kanthapura unsatisfactory. Rao seems much more successful in blending the folktale and the short story in works like 'The Cow of the Barricades' than in blending the folktale and the novel in Kanthapura. In fact, several of the stories besides the title one, in Rao's only story collection published so far, The Cow of the Barricades, suggest unmistakably Rao's concern for narrative form from the beginning of his literary career. One can safely say that Rao did realise the inappropriateness of the short story, again a very sophisticated Western form, for his purpose, and did try in some of his stories to portray contemporary reality the experience of which undoubtedly encouraged him later to make a similar experiment in Kanthapura. Rao's greater success in the short stories than in the novel might have some-

thing to do with the span of the narrative; that is, Rao perhaps succeeds in bringing the short story more than the novel close to the Indian folktale. It is interesting to note here that Mulk Raj Anand has made explicit his attempt to make his short stories approximate to the Indian folktale but is not on record as suggesting a similar attempt on his part at the novel form. In his 'Preface' to Indian Fairy Tales, (Bombay, 1966,), Anand writes:

... I must confess that although I have taken in much new psychology into my own writing of the short story, I have always tried to approximate to the technique of the folk tale, and the influence of these fairy stories has always been very deep on my short fiction.

Rao's 'The True Story of Kanakapala, the Protector of Gold' is a folktale and here Rao makes no attempt to create a new form by blending the short story and the folktale, or to present a contemporary theme in a folk narrative. Thus 'Kanakapala' has all the flavour of a folktale. It is narrated by an old woman; the story involves human beings and God Shiva; and in the end the conventional morality is preached in the wicked being punished. The story is about a snake, the devotee of Shiva, that protects the gold of a Brahmin who goes to Benares and never returns, and whose sons do not follow the sacred duty of their birth but even try to kill the snake, and are ultimately punished. Neither is the theme contemporary nor has the technique of the narrative anything to suggest the modern element of the short story. There is no focal point; there are a lot of digressions and repetitions. The story starts realistically with a Brahmin taking a pilgrimage to Benares, but turns into a fantasy when suddenly the Brahmin meets Shiva on the way and gains fabulous wealth, and finally ends with a conventional note of didacticism. Rao's awareness of the time-sequence and viewing the narrator and the narrative as inseparable indeed make the form authentic and convincing:

Over a hundred years have now passed, and things have changed in Kashipura as all over the world. People have grown from boys to young men, from young men to men with children, then to aged grandfathers, and some too have left for the woods to meditate, and others have died a common death, surrounded by wife and children. Others have become rich after having begged in the streets; while some have become villains though they were once the meekest of the meek. And some - Shiva forgive them! - are lying eaten by disease though they were strong as bulls and pious as dedicated cows. 20

And this is how the village woman-narrator views the movement of time, there being nothing particular to mark a spot of time as the invasion of the British or the surrender of the emperor Tipu Sultan, since these do not matter much to her. Rao further catches the spirit of the folk narrative by suggesting at the end of the story:

I too dreamt of it, believe me - or else I wouldn't have written the story. 21

This device for attesting the authenticity of the story is in the tradition of the folktale.<sup>22</sup> The author suggests that he conceived the story in his dream as much as the old woman narrator who claims to be related to the Brahmin family about whom she is narrating and significantly, she too has conceived the narrative in her dream.

'Kanakapala' which M.K. Naik considers to be 'the first draft of Kanthapura',<sup>23</sup> is a successful folktale. In 'The Cow of the Barricades', Rao moves a step further and tries to present a contemporary theme in folktale form. It is the story of a cow which falls victim to a local riot between the Indian freedom fighters and the British army. This story seems much closer than 'Kanakapala' to Kanthapura. In both the works, 'The Cow of the Barricades' and Kanthapura, the narrative strategy of the author is the same, that is, he fuses the folktale and the short story or the novel. The narrator in both the works is an Indian who is also a participant in the freedom movement, and hence, the narratives are presented from the Indian viewpoint. Gauri, the cow, even before falling victim to the riot, is viewed as a semi-divine creature suggesting perhaps that the narrator is of the same bent of mind as the village grandmother of Kanthapura. All the activities of the cow are described as significant and people look upon her as an avatar:

They called her Gauri for she came every Tuesday evening before sunset to stand and nibble at the hair of the Master. And the Master touched her and caressed her and he said, 'How are you, Gauri?' and Gauri simply bent her legs and drew back her tongue and, shaking her head, ambled round him and disappeared among the bushes. And till Tuesday next she was not to be seen. And the Master's disciples gathered grain and grass and rice water to give her every Tuesday, but she refused it all and took only the handful of grain the Master gave. 24



...But people heard of it here and people heard of it there, and they came with grain and hay and kumkum water saying, 'We have a strange visitor, let us honour her.' And merchants came saying, 'Maybe she's Lakshmi, the Goddess, and we may make more money the next harvest,' and fell at her feet. And students came to touch her head and to touch her tail, saying, 'Let me pass the examination this year!' And young girls came to ask for husbands....<sup>25</sup>

The narrator, after referring to the rather supernatural behaviour of the cow (coming only on Tuesday, the day sacred to Goddess Durga; eating from no one's hand but the Master's) and the response of the religious or superstitious crowd to the cow, describes the freedom movement. The movement is viewed as a struggle between Mahatma Gandhi and the Redman's Government and is as symbolic as the struggles described in epics or puranas. For the narrator the freedom movement has neither political nor economic implication. The struggle seems to be a total violation of the natural order, such as a puranic struggle could be. Apart from the narrator's reference to Mahatma Gandhi (which is more to a saint than to a political leader) and to the Radman's Government ('Redman' implies more of a myth than a real people), there is nothing to suggest that the struggle is contemporary or political. A contemporary theme, thus, is treated in the manner of a folktale and turns into allegory and fantasy.

And, though Gauri had neither the blue card nor the red card she now came every evening to the Master; she looked very sad, and somebody had even seen a tear, clear as the drop of the Ganges, run down her cheeks, for she was of compassion infinite and true.<sup>26</sup>

One day Gauri is seen running to the Barricades, where the British soldiers stay, and people follow her believing that the Goddess in her means to protect them from the evil. Confusion follows and a soldier shoots the cow.

But they said blood did not gush out of the head but only between the forelegs from the thickness of her breast.<sup>27</sup>

The cow finds a place in the Hindu pantheon of Gods and then a temple is built in her honour and she becomes a part of the local folklore.

This is an excellent example of contemporary reality being presented in the folktale form, and this is how an average Indian would perhaps narrate his experience. This narrative can well be an episode in the line of episodes in the Indian folk tradition. The contemporary ceases to be contemporary in the way it is treated and turns into the universal. The two important characters, the Cow and the Master, are treated as mystical semi-divine beings, the narrator failing to discriminate between the real and the fantastic. And when the narrative ends, there is nothing that strikes the reader as particularly novel. He feels he can add one more to his old stock of folktales which he has heard from his grandmother.

In the first chapter of Kanthapura the old woman-narrator talks about a Harikatha man, Jayaramachar. The Harikatha narrated by Jayaramachar seems to be a short version of the story of Kanthapura which is also a folk narrative in the Harikatha manner. Even in the brief reference to the Harikatha man the novelist skilfully suggests the inseparability of the narrator from the narrative. 'They say he had done Harikatha even before the Mahatma' (p.10), and the Mahatma himself is an important character in his Harikatha. He twists the Harikatha form, like the old woman-narrator twisting the puranic form, to narrate the story of the freedom movement and the Mahatma, and his Harikatha ends when he is arrested by the police and thus he himself forms a part of the story he narrates.

As a folktale, Jayaramachar's Harikatha is as successful as 'The Cow of the Barricades.' It is obvious that the birth of the Mahatma is described exactly in the manner the birth of Rama or Krishna is told in the purana. Gandhi's birth, like that of every incarnation of God, is described as designed in heaven by the Great Brahma himself. It is the sage Valkimi who enters heaven and informs Brahma about the evil that has fallen on her daughter, Bharatha; Brahma, the Supreme God, informs Shiva, the destroyer of evil, and Mohandas is born.

The story of Mohandas is dovetailed into the story of Harikatha,

the story of God. The freedom movement is made predestined and allegorical, one more episode in the line of episodes narrated by sages, poets and folk-narrators. The birth of the Mahatma is hardly different from the birth of Rama or Krishna described in folktales and puranas:

And lo, when the Sage was still partaking of the pleasures Brahma offered him in hospitality, there was born in a family in Gujerat a son such as the world has never beheld! As soon as he came forth, the four wide walls began to shine like the kingdom of the sun, and hardly was he in the cradle than he began to lisp the language of wisdom. You remember how Krishna, when he was but a babe of four, had begun to fight against demons and had killed the serpent Kali. So too our Mohandas began to fight against the enemies of the country. And as he grew up, and after he was duly shaven for the hair ceremony, he began to go out into the villages and assemble people and talk to them, and his voice was so pure, his forehead so brilliant with wisdom, that men followed him, more and more men followed him as they did Krishna the flute-player; and so he goes from village to village to slay the serpent of the foreign rule. (pp.11-12)

For the Harikatha man the myth and the reality are the same; Brahma and Krishna are as real as Valmiki and Mohandas. Time does not stand between Valmiki and Mohandas and people who remember the baby Krishna fighting the demons do not find it difficult to understand Mohandas fighting foreign rule.

Pariah Siddayya's narrative, like that of Jayaramachar, has all the elements of a folktale; but the two narratives have some significant differences due to the difference in the character and background of the narrators as well as of their audience. Jayaramachar is a Brahmin, and his audience, presumably consists mostly of high caste Hindus (Pariahs and other low caste Hindus generally live outside the village, though they are not debarred from attending religious ceremonies such as the Harikatha); but Siddayya is a Pariah, and his audience, the coolies, are mostly low caste Hindus. As stated earlier, the form and content of the folktale are largely determined by the narrator. Whereas Jayaramachar's sensibility is essentially Brahminic and he attributes a religious and puranic flavour to his narrative, Siddayya's narrative is a folktale,

pure and simple, making no obvious reference to Hindu myths and puranas. Later in this study I have suggested that the differences in the world view of the narrators of the two first person narratives, Rao's Kanthapura and Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve, is partly due to the fact that Rao's narrator is a Brahmin whereas Markandaya's is a peasant. If Rao's narrator is more or less in the situation of Jayaramachar, Markandaya's narrator is in the situation of Siddayya.

Siddayya finds the appropriate theme and occasion for his narrative when one of the coolies shouts that he has seen a huge snake and all other coolies leave their work and gather at one place. Siddayya, 'who has been in these estates for ten years and more' (p.47), is more experienced than all other coolies, and easily assumes the role of a folk narrator. He narrates stories about snakes, and his audience listens to him spell-bound, without any interruption. In the midst of hard work, Siddayya's narrative provides some recreation to the coolies, though for a brief period.

Siddayya's narrative, as the story of 'Kanakapala' referred to earlier, is full of repetitions and digressions, without any focal point. Siddayya narrates episode after episode on different species of snakes: cobra, dasara haya, water snake, green snake, Father Naga, and so on:

And so he goes on, Siddayya, telling story after story,...  
and they all lime their betel leaves and twist the tobacco leaves  
and munch on,... (p.49)

It is the maistri's arrival that brings an abrupt end to Siddayya's narrative, when he was referring to Father Naga, the mightiest of snakes (and what an anti-climax!).

Siddayya's narrative has 'serpentlore' as its theme (in Rao's 'Kanakapala' too the serpent plays an important role). No other creature seems to fascinate Indian folk narrators more than the serpent or the snake (naga). According to myths and puranic literature, the under-world is inhabited by serpents (nagaloka); and many Indian families believe that their ancestors

were nagas (nagasya gotra). Heinrich Zimmer, in his Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization,<sup>28</sup> has elaborately discussed how the serpent has been an important theme and motif in Indian art and literature, down the centuries. In popular and folk literature, understandably, the serpent is a recurring character. Durga Bhagawat tells us that one of the two important motifs in Indian folk literature is the 'brother serpent' (the other motif being 'pilgrimage').<sup>29</sup>

In the manner of the folk narrators, Siddayya attributes both human and supernatural qualities to the serpent. It is harmless ('...cobras never harm anyone unless you poke your fuel chip at them;...' p.47); silly and wicked ('..."now, as for water snakes, take my word, they are as long as they are silly, like the tongues of our village hussies..." p.48); understanding but revengeful:

... but then he went and poked his stick into the hole, poked and poked, saying he had the eagle-mark on his hand and never a snake did harm him, but within six months Father Naga slips right into his hut, and, touching neither his grown-up daughter nor his second child, nor his suckling brat nor his wife who lay beside him, it gives him a good bite, right near his bloody throat, and slips away God knows how or where. (p.49)

It is mysterious and majestic, endowed with supernatural qualities:

...when the sahib goes to the bathroom, a lamp in his hand, and opens the drawer to take out some soap, what does he see but our maharaja, nice and clean and shining with eyes glittering in the lamplight, and the sahib, he closes the drawer as calmly as a prince; but by the time he is back with his pistol, our maharaja has given him the slip. And the sahib opens towel after towel to greet the maharaja, but the maharaja has gone on his nuptial ceremony and he will never be found. (pp.47-48)

The form of the two brief narratives, one by Jayaramachar and the other by Siddayya, are not different from the form of the novel itself. But the old woman narrator, being a Brahmin like Jayaramachar, is closer, in her manner of storytelling, to Jayaramachar than to Siddayya. She frequently refers to religious myths and puranas; and her form of narrative is significantly close to that of the purana. It is easy to see that some of the puranic characteristics of the novel, suggested in the next chapter, could be present in the folktale as well. A lot of digressions and repetitions;

frequent references to topical and personal matters; mingling of the myth and the reality; these are as common in the novel as a whole as in the two brief narratives of Jayaramachar and Siddayya:

- (a) He's the age my Seenu is, and he and Seenu were as, one would say, our Rama and brother Lakshamana. They only needed a Sita to make it complete. (p.5)
- (b) Of course you wouldn't expect me to go the Pariah quarter, but I have seen from the streetcorner Beadle Timmayya's hut. (p.5)
- (c) But it was Moorthy, the youngest, whom Narsamma loved the most-- the youngest is always the holy bull, they say, don't they?-- (p.32)
- (d) There, in the streaming starlight, Kanthapura floats like a night procession of the gods over still waters,.... (p.72)

Whether the old woman narrator is referring to a character (as in a and c) or drawing a simile (as in d), she frequently mingles the myth and the reality, the natural and the supernatural. Her personality and background are unmistakably reflected in comments and observations she makes in the course of the narrative (as in b).

Though Rao's success in imparting a folk narrative flavour to his novel is considerable, it cannot be said that Kanthapura is as successful a folk narrative as some of his stories in The Cow of the Barricades, or the two brief narratives of Jayaramachar and Siddayya. Rao sometimes fails, in Kanthapura, to sustain the folk narrator's world view that hardly admits a line of demarcation between the realistic and the fantastic:

- (i) For ten years deaths and births and marriages have taken place, and no one that came from the Godavery has ever gone back to it. And the old sahib is dead, and the new one, his nephew, has not only sent away many an old maistri and man, but he has bought this hill and that, and more and more coolies have flowed into the Skeffington Coffee Estate. He is not a bad man, the new sahib. He does not beat like his old uncle, nor does he refuse to advance money; but he will have this woman and that woman, this daughter and that wife, and every day a new one and never the same two within a week. Sometimes when the weeds are being pulled or the vermin killed, he wanders into the plantation with his cane and pipe and puppy, and when he sees this wench of seventeen or that chit of nineteen, he goes to her, smiles at her, and pats on her back and pats on her breasts. And at

this all the women know they have to go away, and when they have disappeared, he lies down there and then, while the puppy goes round and round them, and when the thing is over he takes her to his bungalow and gives her a five-rupee note or a basket of mangoes or plantains, and he sends her home to rest for two days. (pp.54-55)

(ii) They say the Mahatma will go to the Red-man's country and he will get us Swaraj. He will bring us Swaraj, the Mahatma. And we shall all be happy. And Rama will come back from exile, and Sita will be with him, for Ravana will be slain and Sita freed, and he will come back with Sita on his right in a chariot of the air, and brother Bharatha will go to meet them with the worshipped sandal of the Master on his head. And as they enter Ayodhya there will be a rain of flowers. (p.181)

The opening of the first passage, describing the passing of time by referring to births, deaths and marriages, is unmistakably traditional (in 'Kanakapala', Rao adopts similar device when referring to time). The second passage, again, when the narrator views the Mahatma's struggle for freedom against the British, as not different from Rama's fight against Ravana to restore Sita, the present mingles with the past, the myth with the reality. But the last few lines of the first passage, describing the sahib's act of rape, do not fit into a folk narrative, particularly one narrated by a Brahmin widow. The old Brahmin widow, obsessed with the idea of 'pollution', is not supposed to describe, realistically, an act of rape. It is difficult to understand how the old woman, who has not even been to Pariah quarters, has so accurate knowledge of rape scenes. Even if she is aware of the sahib's act, she could have said something like this: 'Being an old Brahmin widow, I am not supposed to describe what the sahib did to the young girls, am i?'

IV

Narayan has been in some ways the most Indian of Indo-Anglian novelists. Unlike his other contemporaries such as Rao, Anand, Ghose, Bhattacharya and Markandaya, Narayan has neither received any formal education in the West, nor was he exposed to the Western world for a long time. He is generally free from the nostalgic sentimentality or condescending patriotism of some of the Indo-Anglians who live in the West and write about the East. Narayan has almost uninterruptedly lived in South India and written about it.

Narayan has generally given the impression of a writer who dislikes crowds and propaganda and does not bother much about his craft. He greatly admires the Indian tradition in which the authors and artists preferred to remain unknown:

In the Indian tradition, no sculptor, dramatist or poet ever wrote down his name first, and their compositions or products, let us call them, were none the worse for it, and have survived for centuries. 30

The authors of Indian folk narratives including some of the puranas, following the Indian tradition of anonymity, have remained unknown.

In the introductory chapter to Gods, Demons, and Others, 'The World of the Storyteller', Narayan makes certain observations about the traditional Indian storyteller:

The Pandit (as he is called) is a very ancient man, continuing in his habits and deportment the traditions of a thousand years, never dressing himself in more than two pieces of cotton drapery.... He bathes twice daily at the well, and prays thrice, facing east or west according to the hour of the day; chooses his food according to the rules of the almanac, fasts totally one day every fortnight, breaking his fast with greens boiled in salt water. The hours he does not spend in contemplation or worship are devoted to study.

His children could not, of course, accept his pattern of life and went their ways, seeking their livelihood in distant cities.... He is completely at peace with himself and his surroundings. He has unquestioned faith in the validity of the Vedas, which he commenced learning when he was seven years old....

Even his daily life is based on the authority of the Vedas, which have in them not only prayer and poetry, but also guidance in



minor matters. For instance, whenever he finds his audience laughing too loudly and protractedly at his humour, he instantly quotes an epigram to show that laughter should be dignified and refreshing rather than demonstrative. 31

This image of the Pandit is not very different from that of Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, or any of the folk narrators of rural India. He is ancient; he lives in the world of his narratives and hopes to find in reality what he reads in the ancient works; and he is distant from his children, this distance though is more the result of economic necessities than any other factor. The situation in which Narayan finds the storyteller and his audience is symbolically that of the storytelling and the storylistening traditional India. Narayan's Pandit and rao's narrator in Kanthapura resemble one another significantly in regard to their situation, their method of narrating the story, and so on. Narayan's analysis of the context and form of the stories he narrates from the epics and puranas suggests their similarity with the folk narratives about which Rao talks in his 'Foreword' to Kanthapura. Narayan writes:

Even the legends and myths, as contained in the puranas, of which there are eighteen major ones, are mere illustrations of the moral and spiritual truths enunciated in the Vedas....Everything is interrelated. Stories, scriptures, ethics, philosophy, grammar, astrology, astronomy, semantics, mysticism, and moral codes - each forms part and parcel of a total life and is indispensable for the attainment of a four-square understanding of existence. Literature is not a branch of study to be placed in a separate compartment, for the edification only of scholars, but a comprehensive and artistic medium of expression to benefit the literate and the illiterate alike.

...The characters in the epics are prototypes and moulds in which humanity is cast, and remain valid for all time. Every story has implicit in it a philosophical or moral significance, and an underlining of the distinction between good and evil. To the storyteller and his audience the tales are so many chronicles of personalities who inhabited this world at some remote time, and whose lives are worth understanding, and hence form part of human history rather than fiction. In every story, since goodness triumphs in the end, there is no tragedy in the Greek sense; the curtain never comes down finally on corpses strewn about the stage. The sufferings of the meek and the saintly are temporary, even as the triumph of the demon is; everyone knows this. Everything is bound to come out right in the end; if not immediately, at least in a thousand or ten thousand years; if not in this world, at least in other worlds. 32.

Narayan's introduction, 'The World of the Storyteller', explaining the situation of the puranakara and his world, can serve in some way as an introduction to his own world of fiction as well. His moral vision and expression of concern for the contemporary in relation to the eternal, as we saw earlier, are clearly puranic. Apparently one can fail to see in India the India Narayan presents in his novels and the puranakara refers to in his recitations. It is the traditional concept of timeless India (about which Ramaswamy talks in Rao's The Serpent and the Rope), the India that is more a moral than a geographical concept. The poverty, the distress and the contemporary reality presented in the context of that vast timeless India may not seem significant in Narayan's pages. The individual action may seem trivial and futile. The following two quotations, one from a critic, and the other from a novelist, present in a way the image of Narayan, and one can see that the image of Narayan is not very different from that of the Pandit about whom he writes with sympathy and affection:

- (A) Narayan is in short a happy novelist. In the eyes of his devotees the radiant quality of his imagination proceeds from an essentially Indian serenity and detachment; indeed the cult of the novelist is closely associated with the larger cult of oriental otherworldliness that draws Western youth in its hundreds along the overland route to India. The judicious reader, however, as distinct from the devotee, is likely to be less than happy in Narayan's happiness. Confronted by the magnitude of Indian distress, he may even wonder if Narayan does not outdo the complacency of his own characters. 33
- (B) ...He was middle-aged, the best of his work done, his fictional world established, before he had traveled out of India; and, when I met him in London, this late travel seemed to have brought him no shocks.

He had just been visiting the United States, and was returning happily to India. He said he needed to go again for his afternoon walks, to be among his characters, the people he wrote about. In literature itself he was not so interested....He seemed a man at peace with his world, at peace with India, and the fictional world he had abstracted from the country. 34

The qualities attributed to Narayan in the above two passages - the Indian serenity and detachment, his being at peace with the world, and uninterested in literature as such - could safely be attributed to Narayan's folk

narrator in 'The World of the Storyteller'. All these qualities affect Narayan's craft considerably and make his novels close to the folktale and the purana. His world view (which he makes explicit in The Man-eater, that is, evil has in it, buried subtly, the infallible seeds of its own destruction) immediately places some of his works in the tradition of the folktale and the purana. Except in his early novels, Swami and Friends and The Bachelor of Arts, this world view is reflected in almost all his works. Characters like Vasu and Mr. Sampath, Dr. Pal and Santa Bai who disturb the calm of Malgudi society represent the evil in varying degrees. In each of the novels in which these characters appear, the story ends either with the elimination of the character representing the evil or the elimination of the evil from the character, and the return of normalcy to Malgudi society. Vasu smashes his own head with the palm of his hand; Mr. Sampath bids farewell to his cousin and the film industry; Margayya's son forsakes the company of Dr. Pal and returns to his father. Narayan ends all his novels with a suggestion of the triumph of the traditional values, whatever that may mean, over the 'modern' ones vaguely symbolised in the tourist trade (Vasu's interest was the export of stuffed animals); the emancipation of women (Santa Bai was one of the first women to get employment in the Engladia Insurance Company); film industry (Mr. Sampath started it in Malgudi); or sex education (Dr. Pal wrote a book on sex). It cannot be said that Narayan's treatment of the theme of conflict between past and present is not ambivalent or complex, but invariably it is the past and the traditional values that seem to triumph, and that is where Narayan conforms to the folk or puranic world view.

The characters that Narayan sets against those representing the evil, like Vasu or Mr. Sampath, are unmistakably conformists and traditionalists. Narayan would perhaps have disturbed the traditional Indian mind if he had shown the triumph of Vasu over Nataraj, or, of Mr. Sampath over Srinivas. He however does not do that. In the ultimate triumph ('triumph' may not be quite the right word) of Srinivas, one may notice the triumph of Nataraj, the dancing

god who destroys evil, the god that Srinivas worships. The Bhasmasura in Vasu is destroyed, and significantly, the character set against him bears the name, Nataraj. Narayan's world view makes his characters symbolic, and one may even notice his traditional device of naming the characters symbolically, a device adopted by folk narrators and the authors of the puranas. It cannot perhaps be comprehended that the names of the two persons, Nataraj and Vasu, be interchanged. The change of names might affect the puranic character of the novel.

In form as much as in point of view and characterisation, Narayan is quite close to the folktale. His characters like Krishnan and Nataraj, though they are educated and live in the town, do not differ in their world view from the Kanthapura narrator who is illiterate and lives in the village. Krishnan, Nataraj and the Kanthapura narrator are equally firmly rooted in the Indian tradition and perceive the contemporary reality in relation to the eternal as the folk narrators and the authors of the puranas do. The narrator of The Man-eater adopts the form of a folktale or a purana. The English Teacher, with its theme of intimacy between a living human being and a ghost, is obviously very close to the fantastic. Even novels dealing with themes as contemporary and prosaic as the accumulation of money (The Financial Expert) or the making of a film (Mr. Sampath) have much in them to suggest their closeness to the folktale.

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Of all Narayan's novels, The Financial Expert has perhaps the most prosaic theme - the accumulation of money. The novelist with his usual sense of irony, understatement and humour describes the rise and fall of Margayya's financial status in Malgudi society. Two important sub-themes interwoven with this main theme of the accumulation of wealth are Margayya's relation with his son, and with his brother and his family. This human relation is determined according to Margayya's financial status. Money, thus, is the central focus of the novel.

One can hardly miss the authenticity of Narayan's portraits of the two families - Margayya's, and his brother's. Margayya's wife, Balu, and several other minor characters like Arun Doss, Kanda and the priest are portrayed realistically too. But there is something in the way Margayya accumulates money that does not seem quite comprehensible and realistic. Margayya, though a very shrewd and practical man, has a strange and mysterious vision of money, and acquires it in a mysterious way, and this sort of relation between money and Margayya makes the novel close to the fantasy and the folktale (and one is reminded of the story of Midas).

The opening chapter in which we meet Margayya sitting under a banyan tree and carrying on his business of moneylending is convincing and real and equally convincing is the reason why he finds it difficult to continue the business. But from the time Margayya meets the priest, the narrative tends towards the fantastic and essence of folk element of time and reality creeps in. Instead of sitting in front of the Central Co-operative Bank, in the midst of needy villagers, Margayya finds himself in the company of a priest in a temple, and in a small room offering puja to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth. Margayya's meeting with the priest, the custodian of religion and tradition, is as it were his encounter with a reality different from the one he dealt with under the banyan tree in front of the Bank:

It was nearly nine o'clock when they came out. Margayya followed the priest mutely through the streets. The town had almost gone to sleep. The streets were silent.

"It's so late!" he murmured.

"What is late?" asked the priest.

"We are so late."

"Late for what?"

Margayya fumbled for a reply. He said clumsily: "You said you'd be kept there only for a short time. I thought you would be kept only a short time--that's why--"

"In holy business can we be glancing at a wrist watch all the time?..." (p.26)

And from here, in his acceptance of the priest's timelessness, we encounter a different Margayya belonging to a world of mystery, red lotus and ghee made of the milk of a smoke-coloured cow. The Margayya of the solid

earth under the banyan tree turns into a strange figure partly by his mystic vision of money and everything around it, and partly by the consequences that follow his forty-day puja to Goddess Lakshmi.

A couple of days later, at the full moon, he began his rites. He sat before the image of Lakshmi. He shut the door, though his son banged on it from time to time. He kept only a slight opening of the window shutter, through which a small ray of light came in but not the curiosity of the neighbours. He wore a loincloth soaked in water. A variety of small articles were spread out before him in little pans. He inscribed a certain Sanskrit syllable on a piece of deer skin and tied it round his neck with a string. He had been in an agony till he found the deer skin. (p.48)

Margayya resorts to all the ascetic measures to gain the favour of Goddess Lakshmi as did the demons and other characters in the puranas and folktales. The novelist does not state categorically if it is Margayya's puja that ultimately brings him fabulous wealth. Even the priest who recommends the puja for Margayya does not commit as to its result:

"Will they produce results?"

"Who can say?" the priest answered. "Results are not in our hands."

"Then why should we do all this?"

"Very well, don't; nobody compels you to."

Margayya felt completely crushed under metaphysical explanation. He bowed his head in humility. The priest closed one door, held his hand on the other, and said: "The Shastras lay down such and such rituals for such and such ends. Between a man who performs them and one who doesn't, the chances are greater for the former. That's all I can say. The results are...you may have results or you may not... or you may have results and wish that you had failed" (pp.45-46).

In his treatment of the plot, the novelist gives the impression similar to that of the priest in his interpretation and understanding of the shastras. Margayya might have gained the wealth purely by accident, and not by the Goddess's favour, but had he not set himself on the puja and searched for the red lotus, he wouldn't have met Dr. Pal and got his book on 'sociology'. And when he decides finally to buy the book from Dr. Pal, he has his mysterious logic. Margayya has five minutes to make up his mind, and just before the last second, there is the sound of a bell which to Margayya is 'the sound of God' and he makes up his mind to buy the book.

Margayya's success with the book is not as plausible as his success with the illiterate village people. Margayya handles Madan Lal, the owner of the Gordon Printery and a North Indian businessman, the same way he handles the villagers and with the same success. The novelist does not seem to have the same grasp of reality while dealing with the Margayya-Madan Lal relationship as he has when he portrays Margayya's handling of the village people under the banyan tree. The narrative turns farcical in its main aspect, Margayya's sudden rise in financial status; in other aspects, in Margayya's relation with his wife, son and brother, though, the realistic note is maintained. Margayya, a self-made practical man, views his success in the book-trade as a pure gift of the Goddess, and this is how he reprimands his son:

"Learn to talk with more reverence about the gods....Do you know where I was, how I started, how I earned the favour of the Goddess by prayer and petition? Do you know why I succeeded? It was because my mind was concentrated on the Goddess. The Goddess is the only one who can - " (p.92)

After his astounding success with the book-trade, the reason Margayya is disgusted and switches over to banking is not very clear. Apart from suggesting that he is a 'financial mystic', and does not like the office, the furniture and the atmosphere of the Gordon Printery where he works, the novelist does not offer us any clue to understand Margayya's mind. Suddenly we find Margayya selling the book to his partner and moving to another business - banking. We find Margayya handling the manager of the Town Bank exactly the way he used to handle the villagers and he succeeds in impressing him. When he meets Guru Raj, the blanket merchant, and tells him about his new banking business, Guru Raj immediately hands over five thousand rupees to him. Margayya's explanation of the utility of money and how to use it convinces Guru Raj instantly:

"Guru Raj, money is the greatest factor in life and the most ill-used. People don't know how to tend it, how to manure it, how to water it, how to make it grow, and when to pluck its flowers and when to pluck its fruits. What most people now do is to try and eat the plant itself ." (p.108)

The secret of Margayya's success in the banking business remains a mystery not only to the people of Malgudi, but even to Margayya himself. He gives twenty percent interest which is hardly sound economics. He plans to get twenty thousand rupees deposit every day and disburse fifteen thousand towards interest. The dream becomes a reality and he needs a car to carry every day old mail sacks full of notes of all denominations to his house. He becomes so rich that

it was no longer possible to count the currency notes individually. He could only count and check up the bundles---and even that took him beyond midnight. (p.163)

All the rooms in Margayya's house are filled with currency notes and his wife even does not have enough space to move about. But suddenly Margayya's fortune turns dramatically. Dr. Pal spreads a rumour that Margayya is on the verge of bankruptcy and all his clients demand their money in return and Margayya within hours finds himself a poor man.

In the end of the novel, we find Margayya planning to start his banking business again under the banyan tree, with his old asset - a small box with a pen and an inkpot in it. We recognise, in the last chapter, the Margayya we met in the opening of the novel. All that happened in the middle, seems a fantasy. We can neither fully comprehend, in realistic terms, Margayya's mysticism

It was something like the ripening of corn. Every rupee, Margayya felt, contained in it seed of another rupee and that seed in it another seed and so on and on to infinity. It was something like the firmament, endless stars and within each star an endless firmament and within each one further endless.... (p.95)

nor can we understand what exactly was the secret of Margayya in acquiring such immense wealth unless, like the priest, we say:

..."How can we question? How can we question the fancies of Gods? It's just there, that's all...it's beyond our powers to understand." (p.41)



FOOTNOTES

1. Dr. Shyam Parmar, a leading folklorist, in his Traditional Folk Media in India (New Delhi, 1975), points out how several folk forms of art have proved, particularly after Independence, to be flexible enough to suit the modern purpose. Thus, the life-story of Gandhi has been very effectively told to the village people in the Harikatha (a form of folk-narrative).
2. H.M. Williams, Studies in Modern Indian Fiction in English, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1973, p.1.
3. K.M. George's article 'Western Influence on Indian Literature' (Indian Literature, edited by A. Poddar, Simla, 1972) offers some valuable insights into the nature of Western influence in the nineteenth century.
4. From The Novel in India (edited by T.W. Clark, London, 1970) one can get a clear idea of the starting of the novel form in some of the Indian languages. And in English and other Indian languages the development seems not to be very different. The first Malayalam novel, Chandu Menon's Indulekha, was modelled on Disraeli's Henrietta Temple, and Ratannath Sarshar's The Tale of Azad, considered to be the first Urdu novel, was modelled on Don Quixote. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee admits his indebtedness to Lord Iynton's The Last Days of Pompeii for writing Rajani and so on. In several Indian languages the first novel was a translation from English, as The Pilgrim's Progress in Tamil. Such translations considerably influenced the Indian-language novelists.
5. Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel, Pelican, 1972, p.66.
6. See The Novel in India, edited by T.W. Clark, London, 1970, p.58.
7. *ibid*, p.70.
8. Both these essays are included in Bankim Rachanavali, edited by Jogesh Chandra Bagal, Calcutta, 1969.
9. See Dusan Zbavtel's 'Rabindranath and the Folk Literature of Bengal', Folk-lore, I, 6, January-February 1961 and 'Tagore's 'King of the Dark Chamber and its Folk-lore Background', Folk-lore, November-December, 1960.
10. Quoted, Dusan Zbavtel, 'Rabindranath and the Folk Literature of Bengal', Folk-lore, II, 1, January-February 1961.
11. Indian Village Tales, London, 1975, p.71.
12. See The Novel in India, edited by T.W. Clark, London, 1970, p.14.
13. 'Old Myth: New Myth Recital Versus Novel', Indian Literature of the Past Fifty Years, edited by C.D. Narasimhaiah, Mysore, 1970, pp.117-118.

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

14. 'Pigeon-Indian', Studies in Australian and Indian Literature, edited by C.D. Narasmhaiah and S. Nagarajan, New Delhi, 1971, p.239.
15. This observation is made on the basis of the list of novels and their dates of publication recorded in A Bibliography of Indian English, Hyderabad, 1972.
16. See The Novel in India, edited by T.W. Clark, London, 1970, p.72.
17. The Miscellany, 29, 1968, pp. 32-33.
18. The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernists: The Indian Situation, The Hague, 1961, p.72.
19. Authorial intrusions are common in Dickens and other Victorian novelists. The ending of Rajmohan's Wife exactly parallels that of Great Expectations. Obviously, Chatterjee was brought up on the works of Victorian novelists, and in his narrative style, was influenced by Victorian novelists as much as by Indian folk narrators.
20. The Cow of the Barricades, London, 1947, p.59.
21. *ibid*, p.61.
22. This device seems to be misunderstood by some critics. 'This addition', says M.K. Naik, 'perhaps gives a rude jolt to the sensitive reader rapt in listening to the old world eloquence of old Venkamma' (Indian Writing To-day, 17, 1971, p.54).
23. 'Narrative Strategy of Raja Rao's The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories', Indian Writing To-day, 17, 1971, p.54.
24. The Cow of the Barricades, London, 1947, p.174.
25. *ibid*, p.175.
26. *ibid*, p.177.
27. *ibid*, p.181.
28. New York, 1962, pp.59-90.
29. An Outline of Indian Folklore, Bombay, 1958, p.37.
30. R.K. Narayan, 'Speaking as a Writer', ACIALS Bulletin, 1974, p.28.
31. Gods, Demons, and Others, New York, 1967, pp.3-4.
32. *ibid*, pp.4-5.
33. M.M. Mahood, The Colonial Encounter, London, 1977, p.94.
34. V.S. Naipaul, 'The Wounds of India', The New York Review of Books, XXIII, 8, May 13, 1976, p.8.

The Novel as Purana

I

The impact of the Hindu tradition on the Indo-Anglian novel is as obvious in its form as in its point of view. We have already seen how novels like The Man-eater and Kanthapura retain the Hindu world view as manifest in the purana. But it is not possible for a novelist to assume the world view of the purana abstracted from its structure, nor for that matter to isolate the components of any art form without destroying its essential nature and significance.

Critics, both Indian and Western, have generally failed to notice the impact of traditional forms like the purana (and the folktale) on the Indian novel, and this has led to unfavourable comments both on the Indo-Anglian and the Indian-language novel. Besides V.S. Naipaul and A.L. Kroeber, whose comments are quoted earlier, several critics have complained about the aimlessness and lack of organisation of the Indian novel. Bhupal Singh, the first Indian critic of Indo-Anglian literature, complained that

...they (Indo-Anglian novelists) do not seem to realize that prose fiction, in spite of its freedom, is subject to definite laws. In plot construction they are weak, and in characterization weaker still. Their leaning towards didacticism and allegory is a further obstacle to their success as novelists. 1

M.E. Derrett observes:

Borrowing from the West is more obvious in form...than elsewhere.... Form, at least initially, must conform to the general current usage in the West if the work is to be read outside India so that a taste for this fiction can be cultivated. Although the majority of these authors have chosen to write in the traditional (i.e. 19th century) form of the novel one feels that an apparent formlessness may be more natural to the Indian.<sup>2</sup>

Dorothy M. Spencer thinks that 'some considerable degree of reorientation in the Indian world view would have had to precede or accompany the appearance of the novel in that country'.<sup>3</sup>

It is not my intention here to suggest that Indian novelists are

masters of the novel form, or that they have already succeeded in blending their indigenous forms of narrative with the Western ones. However, I would emphasise that comments on the form of the Indian novel must take into account the impact of the purana and the folktale, and that the Western novel form need not always provide the standard by which an Indian novel is judged.

Several Indian novelists have realised the inadequacy or inappropriateness of the Western novel form for expressing an Indian ethos and sensibility. As I have shown earlier, novelists like Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan have made attempts to incorporate traditional forms of narrative in their works. It is interesting that Ruth Praver Jhabvala, though with her Polish and British background she may not be in a position to realise the inappropriateness of the Western novel form to present an Indian reality as much as Rao and Narayan do, is aware that the novel in India to reflect faithfully an Indian reality must embody certain Indian characteristics:

[The Indian novel] would be bits of prose-poetry, anecdotes, lots of philosophizing and musing, and oblique kind of wit, and an ultimate self-surrender, a sinking back into formlessness, into eternity...something like Indian music. 4

Many Indian-language novelists have perhaps made similar attempts, though our information regarding their experiments in the novel form is scanty. In an article, Meenakshi Mukherjee has recently suggested that three Bengali novels, Bibhutibhushan Banerji's Pather Panchali (1929), Manik Bandopadhyaya's Putul Nacher Itikatha (1936) and Tarashankar Banerjee's Hansuli Banker Upakatha (1947), which are considered classics in modern Bengali fiction, clearly imply their authors' concern for the form of the novel.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the titles of these novels suggest the novelists' awareness of the traditional forms: Panchali (a traditional devotional song); Upakatha and Itikatha (legends or folktales). Translators of the UNESCO version of Pather Panchali have so misunderstood the form of the novel as to delete completely the last of the

novel's three sections. The novel, which conforms to a panchali or religious song, corresponds to the mythical journey of Krishna to Brindavan. By failing to recognise this, the translators have distorted the basic theme and form of the novel. (Many translators have taken similar liberty with Indian-language texts.) K.C. Panigrahi's Oriya novel Matira Manisha (1931), as rightly pointed out by a reviewer in Quest, reads more like a folktale than a novel in the Western sense.<sup>6</sup>

The Indo-Anglian novelists' indebtedness to Hindu myths has been suggested by several critics. In her essay 'Myth as Technique' (The Twice Born Fiction), Mrs. Mukherjee has analysed a number of novels by Rao, Narayan, Anand and Ghose to suggest their mythical structure. The structure of a myth, as that of a folktale, may not be very different from the structure of a purana. Narayan's The Man-eater, modelled after the myth of Bhasmasura, is significantly close to the structure of the purana. In his article on Narayan, Edwin Gerow aptly suggests the similarities between the story of Shaktideva in Dashakumar-acharita and The Man-eater: 'Point of view aside, the plot structures are fundamentally similar.'<sup>7</sup> He even suggests that Narayan is closer to the Indian narrative tradition than Indian-language novelists like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Tagore.<sup>8</sup> A south Indian critic presumably having access to Tamil, Narayan's mother-tongue, recognises the similarity in technique, between The Guide and a Tamil epic:

The narrative technique of The Guide reminds us of that employed in the mythical Tamil epic, Manimekalai, a technique that takes us backwards and forwards through time.<sup>9</sup>

Even Mulk Raj Anand, who with his Marxist bias often shows religious organisations and custodians of traditional values as corrupt, has modelled the plot structure of his novel The Old Woman and the Cow, after the myth of the banishment of Sita.

II.

I will examine here The Man-eater and Kanthapura, which retain to a considerable extent the traditional form of the purana. Raja Rao himself in his Foreword to Kanthapura suggests that he has followed, in his style, the tradition of sthala-purana<sup>10</sup>; critics have justifiably emphasised Kanthapura as an experiment in the novel form, some even going so far as to suggest that Rao's is the form most suitable for Indian fiction.<sup>11</sup> Rao adopts the puranic form more obviously than Narayan does, following the literary devices of the purana such as the invocation to gods and goddesses, the employment of religious images and metaphors, and the retention of the stylistic features of the oral form of storytelling; and Kanthapura is perhaps closer to the purana than The Man-eater.

But The Man-eater is also an experiment in the puranic rendering of a story of modern India. Though critics like Edwin Gerow<sup>12</sup> and Meenakshi Mukherjee<sup>13</sup> have suggested the mythical structure of the novel, and M.M. Mahood<sup>14</sup> and M.K. Naik<sup>15</sup> have studied it as an ellegory, both political and social, they have not emphasised adequately the fact that The Man-eater should be primarily appreciated and understood in the context of the puranic tradition. We have seen earlier how Kanthapura is an attempt at blending the two forms, the novel and the folktale; and there being a great deal in common between the purana and the folktale, it is not difficult to see that some of the puranic elements of Kanthapura suggested in this chapter would not be very different from the folktale elements suggested earlier.

Narayan's method of employing the puranic devices in his work is more subtle than Rao's; and Narayan seems to aim at retaining the spirit and essence of the purana rather than its extrinsic formal and stylistic features. Narayan does not claim, like Rao, that he is adopting a puranic form or world view; for that matter, no other Indo-Anglian has made such a claim in regard to any

of his or her work. But puranic elements are not rare in Narayan's works, or in Indo-Anglian fiction in general. We can study The Man-eater and Kanthapura with reference to any of the puranas to see where and how the novelists retain the puranic tradition. My purpose here is to analyse both the novels with reference to the Vishnu Purana, to show the affinity between the novels and the purana, and to suggest how Rao, in Kanthapura, follows the puranic tradition more closely than Narayan does in The Man-eater.

Narayan's puranic approach to theme, structure and characterisation in The Man-eater is evident from the opening passage of the novel:

I could have profitably rented out the little room in front of my press on Market Road, with a view of the fountain; it was coveted by every would-be shopkeeper in our town. I was considered a fool for not getting my money's worth out of it, since all the space I needed for my press and its personnel was at the back, beyond the blue curtain. But I could not explain myself to sordid and calculating people. I hung up a framed picture of Goddess Laxmi poised on her lotus, holding aloft the bounties of earth in her four hands, and through her grace I did not do too badly. My son, little Babu, went to Albert Mission School, and he felt quite adequately supplied with toys, books, sweets, and any other odds and ends he fancied. My wife, every Deepavali, gave herself a new silk sari, glittering with lace, not to mention the ones she bought for no particular reason at other times. She kept the pantry well-stocked and our kitchen fire aglow, continuing the traditions of our ancient home in Kabir Street. (p.1)

A number of important points may be noted in the passage: the stability and continuity of the Malgudi world and its ancient traditions are emphasised; Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, is referred to; the narrative starts in the first person, and so on. One can see the similarity between the opening passage of a purana and that of this novel. The puranas, being religious in nature, invariably invoke gods and goddesses in the beginning. The Vishnu Purana, for instance, starts with 'OM! Glory to Vāsudeva - Victory be to thee,...'<sup>16</sup> and as H.H. Wilson, whose translation and commentary of the said work is considered authentic, notes, 'An address of this kind, to one or other Hindu divinity, usually introduces Sanskrit compositions, especially those considered sacred'.<sup>17</sup> Narayan introduces his narrator, Nataraj, as a

worshipper of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth (and the wife of Vishnu), and suggests a puranic beginning. The reference to the framed picture of Goddess Lakshmi is not incidental to the theme of the novel. In fact Nataraj, being a businessman, is a worshipper of Lakshmi (a famous Sanskrit proverb says, Lakshmi presides over business)<sup>18</sup> and we may remember that in the opening passage of The Vendor of Sweets, Narayan introduces Jagan as a worshipper of Lakshmi: 'Jagan sat under the framed picture of the goddess Lakshmi hanging on the wall, and offered prayers first thing in the day ...' (p.13). The very first sentence of The Man-eater showing Nataraj is not very businesslike in not renting out the little room in front of his press suggests the flaw in his worship of the Goddess of Wealth; and later, when his suffering starts with Vasu's arrival in Malgadi, we can see the Hindu view of karma being reflected in the course of the story as Nataraj is punished for this flaw.

Narayan retains the spirit of the puranic device of eulogising a god or goddess by praising his or her virtues and powers. This is how Vishnu is eulogised in the beginning of the Vishnu Purana:

May that Vishnu, who is the existent, imperishable, Brahma, who is Iswara, who is spirit; who with the three qualities is the cause of creation, preservation, and destruction; who is the parent of nature, intellect, and the other ingredients of the universe; be to us the bestower of understanding, wealth and final emancipation. 19

And Narayan eulogises Lakshmi in two ways. Firstly, Nataraj's prosperity is attributed to the kindness of Lakshmi. 'Laxmi poised on her lotus, holding aloft the bounties of earth in her four hands' symbolises the stability and prosperity of the world, the Malgudi world, that is. And Nataraj is sure that he did not do too badly 'through her grace'. Secondly, 'the blue curtain', which is a recurring symbol in the novel, is employed to suggest the ocean, the citadel of Lakshmi. Lakshmi, according to myth, was born out of the ocean when gods and demons churned the ocean by Mount Meru<sup>20</sup> (another name of



Lakshmi is Sindhu-suta, the daughter of the ocean). In traditional Hindu paintings, Lakshmi is usually shown against the background of the ocean. The blue curtain that divides the parlour and the press in a way marks the difference between the two worlds - the world of mundane reality, the world of Sens preoccupied with Nehru's foreign policy, the Heidelberg machine, and the endless mad crowd of the Market Road; and the world of peace and wisdom, the world of Nataraj at peace with himself, and Sastri, more interested in sacred Sanskrit texts than in printing K.J.'s labels. When Vasu stirs the curtain and the 'unusual thing' happens, it is in a way a violation of the natural order of keeping the two worlds apart. Vasu, by stirring the blue curtain, intrudes into the world of Lakshmi and Vishnu; and it is but natural - and again we see karma at work - that he be punished by Vishnu, the God with whom rests the preservation of the world order.

If the invocation to Goddess Lakshmi in the opening passage of The Man-eater is suggested rather than overtly stated, in Kanthapura, the invocation to the Goddess Kenchamma is clearly made in the manner of the Vishnu Purana:

Kenchamma is our goddess. Great and bounteous is she. She killed a demon ages, ages ago, a demon that had come to demand our young sons as food and our young women as wives. Kenchamma came from the Heavens - it was the sage Tripura who had made penances to bring her down - and she waged such a battle and she fought so many a night that the blood soaked and soaked into the earth, and that is why the Kenchamma Hill is all red. If not, tell me, sister, why should it be red only from the Tippur stream upwards,..... (p.2 )

The myth of Kenchamma descending down from the heaven in response to the penance of a sage is obviously in the tradition of puranic myths. Several Hindu myths suggest the descending down of gods and goddesses as the result of the penance of sages, to save humanity from demons. The Goddess Durga (or Devi, who is adored in the Devi Purana) came down to earth to destroy the demon Mahisha<sup>21</sup> and the Goddess Ganga descended to earth as the result of the penance of Bhagiratha, the noble king (and Ganga is also known as Bhagirathi, after

that king).<sup>22</sup> In fact in most of the puranas we can see this conventional pattern of the descent of gods and goddesses, as the result of the penance of sages, to save humanity. This puranic motif, as we saw earlier, is very important to a full understanding of Kanthapura as well as The Man-eater; and the invocation to Goddess Kenchamma has far greater significance in the novel than simply to give a puranic flavour to the story. But it is necessary to be aware, at this point, of two facts: first, in the puranas and myths gods and goddesses are also shown descending to earth to bestow boons on demons if the demons undergo the necessary penance and suffering. Thus, all the powers of the demons are also derived from divine sources. Demons like Mahisha and Ravana derive their great strength and power from Brahma, the Supreme God, though later they are killed by Durga and Rama, incarnations of Devi and Vishnu, who come down to earth. To forget that both the demon and the sage in the purana are shown as deriving their power from the same source, is to misunderstand the philosophy behind the puranas, and to see novels like Kanthapura and The Man-eater, which are so immersed in the puranic setting, in the wrong perspective. Secondly, Rao, in Kanthapura, combines both the puranic and folktale elements. As I have shown earlier, it is not always possible to distinguish one element from the other; and Rao in the Foreword to his novel talks not of purana but of sthala-purana. The story of Kenchamma's descent to earth to kill a demon is puranic; but when the narrator connects that story with the colour of the Kenchamma hill, the elements of legend and purana get blended together as to make the story a sthala-purana (sthala means local). A sthala-purana can be said to be the local version - and therefore a considerably debased form - of a purana. The innumerable digressions in the narrative ('If not, tell me, sister,...' etc.) are clearly part of oral forms of storytelling, and belong to the folk rather than the puranic tradition. The puranakara, in his interpretation, does digress from the main theme, but usually he does so to preach a moral.

In his introduction to Gods, Demons, and Others, Narayan writes about the setting of the purana:

Most narratives begin in a poetic setting, generally a cool grove on the banks of a river or a forest retreat, in which are assembled sages at the end of a period of fruitful penance. A visitor comes from afar. After honouring the guest, the sages will ask, "Where are you coming from? What was noteworthy at such-and-such a king's sacrifice? Tell us whatever is worth hearing." And the visitor will begin his tale. 23

And thus two important motifs are suggested in the opening of the purana: firstly, the world seems peaceful and tranquil to the sages until the visitor arrives and disturbs that peace by narrating stories of demons and so forth; secondly, the narrative invariably assumes the form of a dialogue. In the opening lines of the Vishnu Purana, Maitreya is shown adoring Vishnu and the world seems peaceful and glorious. The narrative begins when the sage Parasara arrives and Maitreya asks metaphysical questions about creation and destruction, good and evil, time and history, gods and others, such as:

...I am now desirous, oh thou who art profound in piety! to hear from thee, how this world was, and how in future it will be? What is its substance, oh Brahman, and whence proceeded animate and inanimate things? Into what has it been resolved, and into what will its dissolution again occur? How were the elements manifested? When proceeded the gods and other beings?...What are the families of the gods and others, the Manus, the periods called Manvantaras, those termed Kalpas, and their subdivisions, and the four ages: the events that happen at the close of a Kalpa, and the terminations of the several ages.... 24

Parasara replies:

...I had heard that my father had been devoured by a Rákshasa employed by Viśvāmitra: violent anger seized me, and I commenced a sacrifice for the destruction of the Rákshasas: hundreds of them were reduced to ashes by the rite, when, as they were about to be entirely extirpated, my grandfather Vasishtha, thus spake to me: Enough, my child; let thy wrath be appeased: the Rákshasas are not culpable: thy father's death was the work of destiny....Every man reaps the consequences of his own acts.... 25

The purpose of quoting the above two passages is not only to show how the narrative, from the beginning, takes the form of dialogue, but also to suggest the nature of its theme.

The emphasis on the stability and continuity of the ancient traditions - the observance of the Deepavali, for instance - in the opening passage of The Man-eater is puranic; and we realise the significance of this emphasis only when we see this stability and ancient traditions shaken to their roots by the arrival of a traveller from afar, Vasu. Vasu, like Parasara in the Vishnu Purana, is not of course the narrator of the story; he is the protagonist of the story. But this is not uncommon in the puranas and epics that the narrator becomes a participant, sometimes a major participant, in the action of the story. Thus, as we can see in the brief passage quoted earlier, Parasara narrates the story in which he is the hero. The classic example is of course Valmiki who is the narrator of the Ramayana, and is one of the characters in the narrative. Narayan retains the puranic tradition by making Vasu, who travelled to Malgudi from Junagadh, the protagonist of the narrative. Had he made Vasu rather than Nataraj the narrator of the story, he would not have retained its puranic nature; for, all the puranas are narrated by sages who symbolise ancient Hindu wisdom (the term 'purana' literally means 'ancient'), and never by demons. It is however possible that a demon is the most important character in a purana, and such a purana is called the Purana of Darkness (Tamasa Purana).<sup>26</sup> Nataraj, the South Indian Brahmin (like Narayan himself) owes his ancestry to Hindu sages and it is apt that the novel to be presented from a puranic stand point be narrated by him.

Raja Rao, in the opening paragraphs of Kanthapura, both invokes Goddess Kenchamma and emphasises the stability and ancient traditions of Kanthapura, much more elaborately than Narayan does in The Man-eater:

Our village - I don't think you have ever heard about it - Kanthapura is its name, and it is in the province of Kara. High on the Ghats is it, high up the steep mountains that face the cool Arabian seas, up the Malabar coast is it, up Mangalore and Puttur and many a centre of cardamom and coffee, rice and sugarcane. Roads, narrow, dusty, rut-covered roads, wind through the forest of teak and of jack, of sandal and of sal, and hanging over bellowing

gorges and leaping over elephant-haunted valleys, they turn now to the left and now to the right and bring you through the Alambè and Champa and Mena and Kola passes into the great granaries of trade. There, on the blue waters, they say, our carted cardamoms and coffee get into the ships the Red-men bring, and, so they say, they go across the seven oceans into the countries where our rulers live.

Cart after cart groans through the roads of Kanthapura, and on many a night, before the eyes are shut, the last lights we see are those of the train of carts, and the last voice we hear is that of the cartman who sings through the hollows of the night. The carts pass through the main street and through the Potters' lane, and then they turn by Chinnayya's pond, and up they go, up the passes into the morning that will rise over the sea. Sometimes when Rama Chetty or Subba Chetty has merchandise, the carts stop and there are greetings, and in every house we can hear Subba Chetty's 350-rupee bulls ringing their bells as they get under the yoke. "Ho", says Subba Chetty, "hé-ho", and the bulls shiver and start. The slow-moving carts begin to grind and to rumble, and then we hear the long harsh monotony of the carts' axles through the darkness. And once they are on the other side of the Tippur hill the noise dies into the night and the soft hiss of the Himavathy rises into the air. Sometimes people say to themselves, the Goddess of the river plays through the night with the Goddess of the hill. Kenchamma is the mother of Himavathy. May the goddess bless us! (pp.1-2)

It is clear that Kanthapura is viewed as a prosperous, peaceful and noble place. The first passage with its minute description of the setting of Kanthapura, in the midst of mountains, the cool Arabian seas and the tropical forest, reminds us of the forest retreat and the poetic setting invariably described or suggested in the opening of the puranas. The second passage describes the wealth and commerce of the villagers, and the Goddess Kenchamma (who, in the past, killed a terrible demon) is in a smiling pose, much like the Goddess of Wealth on the wall of Nataraj's printing press - 'poised on her lotus, holding aloft the bounties of earth in her four hands'. Though there is a reference to the 'Red Man' and the alien rule, and we later see that Gandhi's message which violently disturbs the peace and prosperity of Kanthapura is meant to end this alien rule, no bitterness is implied in the reference to the 'Red Man' in the opening passage. The river is the source of all the wealth and prosperity of Kanthapura; and Kenchamma presides over the moral destiny of Kanthapura and protects it from evil. The harmony between the Goddess

of the river and the Goddess of the hill (that is, Kenchamma), suggests absolute peace, prosperity and stability.

Rao repeatedly emphasises the stability and continuity of Kanthapura traditions by referring to various religious rituals and ceremonies such as the Sankara-Jayanthi, the Ganesh-Jayanthi, and so on; and only when Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, arrives on the scene and narrates the story of Mohandas, and is himself arrested by the police, do we realise that the stability of Kanthapura is at stake. (Policeman Bade Khan comes to live in Kanthapura two days after Jayaramachar's arrest.) Jayaramachar is closer to the sage-narrator of the puranas than Nataraj or Vasu. Jayaramachar, like Parasara of the Vishnu Purana, is both the narrator and a participant in the narrative; he is wise, and as his name and occupation suggest, is a Brahmin. (He was to perform the camphor ceremony at the end of the Harikatha, which, in his absence, was performed by Moorthy, another Brahmin.) Though Rao retains the puranic pattern by suggesting that the Brahmin-narrator coming from afar (Jayaramachar, apparently, did not belong to Kanthapura, for, he was 'invited' to perform the Harikatha) disturbs the peace and stability of the village, he deviates from the pattern in the sense that the narrator is a woman - a Brahmin woman, and not a peasant woman as some critics mistakenly believe -<sup>27</sup> and as a result, the narrative tends rather to the form of a folktale.

Both The Man-eater and Kanthapura are first person narraves; and this stylistic device clearly resembles the puranic form of narrave. About the stylistic devices of the purana, H.H. Wilson observes:

The invariable form of the purānas is that of a dialogue, in which some person relates its contents in reply to the inquiries to another. This dialogue is interwoven with others, which are repeated as having been held on other occasions between different individuals, in consequence of similar questions having been asked. 28

In narrating the story in the first person, Narayan is closer to the puranic style than he would have been had he adopted an impersonal narrative method. As stated earlier, the choice of Nataraj as the narrator rather than Vasu is

significant; and the story is presented through the perspective of puranic world view. The character of Nataraj is roughly that of the sage-narrator, Parasara, who is undoubtedly a participant in the action of the story he narrates. Sastri and the Poet may be considered the two other sage-companions of Nataraj. The dialogue that takes place between Nataraj and Sastri, like the dialogue between Parasara and Maitreya in the Vishnu Purana, occasionally seems to aim at understanding the metaphysical nature of reality, and makes us feel that the Nataraj-Vasu conflict is symbolic and significant:

'How can I do any work with a wolf and a whatnot staring at me? And there's a python hanging down the handrail of the stairs.' (p.94).

...Every rakshasa gets swollen with his ego. He thinks he is invincible, beyond every law. But sooner or later something or other will destroy him. (p.96)

Nataraj's innocuous questions, when answered by the learned Sastri in puranic terms, no longer seem so. We identify Vasu with the puranic demon, Bhasmasura; Rangi, the temple prostitute becomes associated with the Mohini incarnation of Vishnu; Nataraj, Sastri, Sen the journalist and Kumar can be seen as innocent beings under the oppression of a demon. We do not find any significant difference in the world views of Nataraj and Sastri, and long before Sastri compares Vasu with a rakshasa, Nataraj is aware of Vasu's demonic qualities. The Poet is innocent, religious, among Nataraj's 'constant companions', preoccupied with writing the life of Lord Krishna in monosyllabic verse; and thus he belongs to the world of Nataraj and Sastri, the world of sages and Brahmins. Sen the journalist, the forester, Muthu the tea-seller and Kumar belong neither to the world of Vasus nor of Natarajs; they belong to the mundane world of humanity. They are mostly victimised by the demon, and saved by the God. They are hardly aware of their predicament.

In Kanthapura, Rao's method of storytelling is much more puranic than Narayan's in The Man-eater. The old Brahmin woman who narrates the story is

shown as a guest in a neighbouring village, Kashipura; and she starts narrating the story (in which she herself is a participant), when the women of Kashipura gather around her in the evenings and ask her about Kanthapura and all that happened in that village:

...And Timmamma and I, we live in Jodidar Seetharamiah's house, and they say always, "Are your prayers finished, aunt? Are your ablutions finished, aunt?" before every meal. "Aunt, aunt, aunt," they always call us for this and that, and the children say, "The Mahatma has sent us his relations. There is the aunt who tells such nice stories", and that is me, "and the aunt of the pancakes", and that's Timmamma, and they all laugh.

In the afternoons we all gather on the veranda pressing cotton wicks and hearing the Upanishads....They say Rangamma is to be released soon. And maybe my poor Seenu too, though they have sent him to a northern jail.... (pp.179-180)

Both the narrator-audience situation and the atmosphere in which the story is related are puranic. The narrator is a traveller from Kanthapura to Kashipura, and is treated hospitably in Kashipura. She starts her narrative when Kashipura women show interest as to what happened in Kanthapura, and the narrator starts: 'Our village - I don't think you have ever heard about it - Kanthapura is its name ...' (p.1). The last chapter in Rao's novel when the narrator is shown as a guest among Kashipura women and is asked questions is parallel to the opening passage of a purana when sages (or a sage, as Maitreya in the Vishnu Purana) ask the traveller about good and evil etc. Rao starts the novel where the sage-narrator of a purana would start narrating the story in reply to the questions asked by the host-sage or sages. Thus, the puranic method of narrating the story in the form of a dialogue is retained in Kanthapura with considerable skill.

The atmosphere no less than the situation is puranic. We may compare R.K. Narayan's description of the atmosphere in which a purana is read out in a village, with that in which Rao's narrator starts her story:

...All day the men and women are active in the fields,....At seven o'clock (or in the afternoon if a man-eater is reported to be about) everyone is home.



Looking at them from outside, one may think that they lack the amenities of modern life; but actually they have no sense of missing much; on the contrary, they give an impression of living in a state of secret enchantment. The source of enchantment is the storyteller in their midst, a grand old man who seldom stirs from his ancestral home on the edge of the village, the orbit of his movements being the vegetable patch at the back and a few coconut palms in his front yard, except on some very special occasion calling for his priestly services in a village home. Sitting bolt upright, cross-legged on the cool clay-washed floor of his house, he may be seen any afternoon poring over a ponderous volume in the Sanskrit language mounted on a wooden reading stand, or tilting towards the sunlight at the doorway some old palm-leaf manuscript. When people want a story, at the end of their day's labours in the fields, they silently assemble in front of his home, especially on evenings when the moon shines through the coconut palms.

On such occasions the storyteller will dress himself for the part by smearing sacred ash on his forehead and wrapping himself in a green shawl, while his helpers set up a framed picture of some god on a pedestal in the veranda, decorate it with jasmine garlands, and light incense to it. After these preparations, when the storyteller enters to seat himself in front of the lamps, he looks imperious and in complete control of the situation. He begins the session with a prayer, prolonging it until the others join and the valleys echo with the chants,..... 29

Both Narayan's Pandit (the reader of the purana, literally meaning 'wise') and Rao's narrator find themselves and their audience in the same sort of atmosphere. The time is evening; the villagers, after their days' work, gather to listen to the story; and the villagers look to the storyteller with a sense both of affection and religious reverence. Narayan's Pandit is a 'grand old man', a Sanskrit scholar, the 'source of secret enchantment' to the villagers and is 'in complete control of the situation' in the midst of his audience. He is immensely religious and starts his puranic reading only after elaborate prayers are offered to the gods. Rao's narrator, similarly, is an old Brahmin woman (of the 'Veda Sastra Pravina Krishna Sastri's family'); she is referred to as 'aunt' by the villagers and is reverentially asked if her 'prayers' and 'ablutions' are finished; and she narrates the story only after the Upanishads are recited. The time of course is the evening, when Kashipura women, after their days' work, gather around her.

We can further extend the puranic parallelism in Kanthapura by

dividing the characters into two groups: the narrator and her audience, on the one hand, and the participants in the freedom struggle, on the other. The first group of characters to some extent resembles the sages of the purana who gather in the forest retreat and discuss gods, demons and the nature of their conflict. It is interesting that before the narrator in Kanthapura starts her story the Upanishads are read out. The Upanishads (literally meaning, sitting down the opposite) are a series of dialogues among sages, and sometimes women participate in such dialogues. The narrator-audience situation in Kanthapura, is, in some ways, Upanishadic. The second group of characters considerably resembles the gods and demons of the purana. The conflict between the opposite forces - between Moorthy and Bade Khan, Moorthy and his mother, Gandhi and Sadhu Narayan, the Skeffington Coffee Estate sahib and the Brahmin Seetharam - is suggested throughout the novel with complexity and ambivalence as is the conflict between the gods and demons in the purana. The two groups of characters, 'the sages' and 'gods and demons', however, are not mutually exclusive.

While I would emphasise the puranic situation and atmosphere in Kanthapura, it is also important to suggest where and how Rao deviates from the puranic norm. As stated earlier, Rao intends to write a sthala-purana rather than a purana in Kanthapura, and the puranic and the folktale elements are skilfully inter-blended throughout the novel. Comparison of the situation and atmosphere in which Narayan's Pandit narrates his purana, with the situation and atmosphere in which Rao's narrator tells her story, can give us a clue to understanding the difference between the two important literary forms, the purana and the folktale. The most important difference in the situations of the two narrators is that the Pandit reads out a written or printed text, while the old woman tells us the story from memory. Though the Pandit does interpret the story in his language and sometimes makes topical references and entertains his audience ('The films have taken away all the fiddlers and crooners, who have no time nowadays to stand at the back of an old storyteller'<sup>30</sup>,

the Pandit often comments), generally he has to follow the text and cannot take too much liberty with it. On the other hand, Rao's narrator, because she is narrating the story from memory, is free to make as many digressions, repetitions and distortions as she likes. Thus, though conforming generally to the puranic pattern, Rao liberally introduces elements of oral storytelling in Kanthapura. We may also notice that the reading of the purana by the Pandit is purely a ritual (he smears sacred ash on his forehead) whereas the old woman - narrator, though she starts with prayers, views the storytelling act as outside the religious duty, and starts her story after the 'prayers' and 'ablutions' are finished; the Pandit is a Sanskrit scholar, and the old woman, though she belongs to a family of Sanskrit scholars ('Veda Sastra Pravina' means 'expert in the Vedas'), is not a scholar herself; and the audience of the old woman consists only of women whereas that of the Pandit consists of men and women, or presumably, of men only. All these factors must help determine the form and content of the narratives. Kanthapura, though generally puranic, does deviate from the puranic norm in being less religious, less scholarly, more intimate and informal - sometimes not different from feminine gossip - and thus, considerably resembling the folktale.

FOOTNOTES

1. A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction, London, 1974, p.310.
2. The Modern Indian Novel in English, Brussels, 1966, p.91.
3. Indian Fiction in English, Philadelphia, 1960, p.10.
4. Quoted, M.E. Derrett, The Modern Indian Novel in English, Brussels, 1966, p.94.
5. See 'Form in 'The Puppet's Tale', The Literary Criterion, XII, 2-3, 1976. Pather Panchali and Putul Nacher Itikatha have already been translated into English, under the sponsorship of UNESCO; Hansuli Banker Upakatha has been approved for translation by UNESCO, but not yet translated.
6. See Leena Mayadas's review of A House Undivided (translation of Matira Manisha), Quest, 85, November-December, 1973, p.91.
7. 'The Quintessential Narayan', Literature East and West, X, 1-2, 1966, p.9.
8. Ibid, p.17.
9. K.S. Ramamurthy, 'The Puranic Tradition and Modern Indo-Anglian Fiction', Indian Writing Today, 11, January-March, 1970, p.45.
10. 'Author's Foreword', Kanthapura, p.vii.
11. 'Indian fiction in English can, it seems to me', writes C.D. Narasimhaiah, 'make headway by continuing the Raja Rao line... (Critical Essays, Dharwar, 1968, p.294).
12. Edwin Gerow, 'The Quintessential Narayan', Literature East and West, X, 1-2, 1966.
13. The Twice Born Fiction, New Delhi, 1971, pp.150-155.
14. M.M. Mahood, 'The Marriage of Krishna', The Colonial Encounter, London, 1977.
15. M.K. Naik, 'Theme and Form in R.K. Narayan's 'The Man-eater of Malgudi'', JCL, X, 3, April, 1976.
16. The Vishnu Purána, p.1.
17. Ibid, p.1.
18. Vanijye Vasati Lakshmi.
19. The Vishnu Purána, p.2.
20. The churning of the ocean is the Hindu myth of creation. Lakshmi was born when the gods and demons churned the ocean to get nectar. (See Hindu Myths, Penguin, 1975, pp.273-278).

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

21. See 'Devi', Gods, Demons, and Others, New York, 1967.
22. See Heinrich Zimmer's Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, New York, 1962, pp.110-114.
23. Gods, Demons, and Others, New York, 1967, pp.7-8.
24. The Vishnu Purāna, p.3.
25. Ibid, p.4.
26. Traditionally, the puranas are classified according to the predominance of one of these qualities: satva (purity), raja (passion), and tamasa (darkness). See The Vishnu Purāna, p.xii.
27. Among others, C.D. Narasimhaiah mistakes the village woman narrator for a peasant woman. 'Here is a distinctive Indian sensibility, a peasant sensibility, to be precise,...', he says (Critical Essays, Dharwar, 1968, p.290). The caste of the narrator is not a minor fact in the novel, as it might appear to some. The puranic nature of the novel derives largely from the fact that the novel is presented through the perspective of a Brahmin widow, a member of the 'Veda Sastra Pravina Krishna Sastri's family' (Kanthapura, p.5). Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve, on the other hand, is a novel in which the story is narrated by a peasant woman, and there is almost no element of purana in it. It is not difficult to see that the religious world view of Rao's narrator is hardly shared by Markandaya's narrator.
28. The Vishnu Purāna, p.x.
29. Gods, Demons, and Others, New York, 1967, pp.1-2.
30. Ibid, p.2.

## The Search for an Idiom

### I

The English language in India, in spite of its two hundred years of existence in the country, has remained confined, almost solely, among academicians, teachers and administrators and is still alien to the social and cultural ethos of the masses. This linguistic phenomenon has created complex problems for the Indo-Anglian novelist. Obviously, it means a novelist has to translate or transcreate the dialogue of the common folk which is invariably in the Indian language and he cannot always reproduce the subtle nuances of such dialogue. A lot of critics and authors have been concerned with this problem. How authentically can the Indian-language speech be reproduced in English? The Indo-Anglian novelist has, at his disposal, neither the pidgin form of English that the African author can draw upon nor the dialects the West Indian author may use. He can either literally translate Indian-language dialogues as Mulk Raj Anand does,<sup>1</sup> or 'paraphrase' and/or interpret as Narayan suggests.<sup>2</sup> He may, of course, evade the dialogue situations as much as possible - and he often seems to. At any rate, the Indo-Anglian novelist can hardly claim to reproduce in his dialogues the vigour and vitality of the West Indian dialect or the ruggedness of the African speech. English is not a spoken language in India among the masses, and most of the dialogues one finds in an Indo-Anglian novel do not correspond to actual language-speaking situations.

Unfortunately, the use of the English language creates much more complex problems than the problem of reproducing Indian speech adequately. As suggested earlier, the English language in India has been associated with a set of values, attitudes and life-styles which is often radically different from the one associated with an Indian language. In short, an

Indian who knows English and an Indian innocent of English not only read or converse in two different languages, they live in two different worlds. The linguistic gulf is only the outward manifestation of a much deeper cultural and social gulf that has been created in India in the last two centuries, and the Indo-Anglian's problem is often the problem of interpreting one world in the language of another.

The crux of the problem lies perhaps in the manner in which English was introduced in India. It was introduced as the medium of higher education to expose the Indian scholar to Western science, technology and philosophy. Thus, modern education in India meant Western education and the language of education became English. For all practical purposes, an educated Indian meant one who had some Western education and who knew English; and modern education and the English language became inseparable in India. Had Indian scholars, as T.B. Macaulay expected,<sup>3</sup> replaced the English language, in due course, with their mother-tongues, the situation might have been different. One could have shared the knowledge of the English-knowing scholar without knowing the English language. But English remained the sole language of scholarship and the English-knowing Indians alone were exposed to Western and modern forms of knowledge. The rest of the community continued to live in the traditional way. The Indian society, consequently, was split into two distinct groups - socially, culturally, and linguistically.

This split of the Indian society into two groups in the last two hundred years has led to complex cultural and literary consequences, one of which has been the choice of language for the Indian author. In which language would he compose poetry? And in which language would he discuss parliamentary affairs or nuclear physics? After a lot of trial and error, he has turned to English (or rather has retained the language in which he was originally introduced to Western scholarship) for all referential

purposes, and to mother-tongue for all creative purposes. It may be noted here that like almost all forms of modern knowledge, all forms of modern literature too were introduced to India through the English language and for some time at least the Indian creative writer was not sure if the Indian languages were suitable enough for modern literary writing. But after initial experiments like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's attempt at writing the novel in English, or Michael Madhusudan Dutt's at composing poetry, the creative genius in India has turned to mother-tongue, while the scholar, almost exclusively, has retained the use of English as his medium of expression.

A creative writer in English or a scholar writing in the mother-tongue are exceptions rather than the general rule in India, and this is important to remember for any assessment of Indo-Anglian literature. Toru Dutt and Aru Dutt, Aurobindo, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Kamala Markandaya, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Khushwant Singh and B. Rajan - most of the important poets and novelists of the nineteenth and twentieth century, it may be noted - had or have little or no knowledge of their mother-tongues; or have been cut off from the creative centres of their mother-tongues. Thus their choice of the English language might be more due to the compulsion of circumstances than to their natural inclination. Derozio, the first important Indo-Anglian poet, incidentally, is a Eurasian, and we do not find another Eurasian on the Indo-Anglian scene until Ruskin Bond, who has come into the limelight recently.

The scholar's search for a vocabulary and idiom in the Indian language to convey Western forms of knowledge and the Indo-Anglian's search for the same in the English language to communicate Indian social and cultural ethos have created problems of which critics and scholars do not seem sufficiently aware at the moment. The difference between those who know English and the rest of the community is too wide to be bridged by a



common language. The traditional community with its religious and medieval world view has its own language and idiom to express it. The English-knowing Westernised community, on the other hand, operates simultaneously in two worlds, the Western and the Indian, and uses two languages according to necessity and convenience. The business executive of Calcutta, for instance, talks and thinks in English in his office and about official matters, but in his mother-tongue in intimate personal, social and religious situations.<sup>4</sup> To write about such a hybrid community a novelist perhaps needs a hybrid form of language like Anglo-Bengali. However, such a language does not yet exist, although scholars like Nirad C. Chaudhury do not rule out the possibility of its emergence in future.<sup>5</sup> Until such a language is born, as was Urdu as the result of the Indo-Persian encounter, the Indian novelist writing in English or in an Indian language about a mixed community has to face the problem of finding the appropriate language and idiom for his purpose.

Ever since they first began attempting to educate the masses in Western ideas, Indian scholars and leaders have faced the problem of finding a suitable language and idiom. It seems worth emphasising that the educated Indian and the Indian without any formal education, even when sharing the same language, do not always share the same idiom and world view. When an educated Indian speaks and writes in an Indian language, an illiterate villager, speaking the same language, may not always follow him. The educated Indian not only makes liberal use of English words, phrases and even sentences in his speech or writing, but also twists the syntax of his language in imitation of English. In the written form, however, English phrases and words are avoided as much as possible, but the language remains considerably Anglicised and different from the language used among the villagers.<sup>6</sup> Thus, an educated Indian is not likely to convey his ideas to

the masses unless he uses the idiom accessible to them.

Political and social leaders like Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan have no doubt tried to convey some of the Western ideas to the village community. But one suspects they have not always succeeded in doing so. Interpreting secular ideas in religious terms, as Gandhi often did, has given rise to new dogmas and rituals in place of the old. Gandhi's call to boycott British-manufactured clothes and to weave clothes by charkha, for instance, was essentially an economic move, but when he asked people to perform sutra-yagna (yagna is a Sanskrit word meaning a Hindu ritual performed before the fire to destroy the evil and to invoke the ancestors), people accepted the act as a ritual without understanding the economic implication of using the charkha. Now the British no longer rule the country and the economic move has lost its relevance, but some people still perform the sutra-yagna. Significantly, leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru who, deliberately or not, did not use such expressions to convey their ideas to the masses, were never accepted by them. Nehru repeatedly said that he felt an alien in India, and the masses never accepted him as they did Gandhi or Jayaprakash Narayan.

A simple example will illustrate this point. Here is Jayaprakash Narayan, a Communist turned Socialist, and later a Sarvodayi, a great intellectual who had all his higher education in the U.S.A., reported to be explaining to a group of villagers the advantages of land-reform:

"We live," Jayaprakash started by saying, "in an age of moral corruption. Why is this so? This is so because God made man to be happy but man has departed from the path of dharma, which is to be happy in another's joy, and sad in another's sorrow." Jayaprakash then compared the behaviour of human beings with that of dogs scrapping for a bone, each for himself. He would refer to the recent kumbh mela at Allahabad to which some people from

Gaya district had gone: "Some people go to the Ganges to wash off their sins and get purified. But the Ganges is right here and suddhi (purification) can be had at home also. If you wish to be purified, you do not have to go all the way to Allahabad."

...

...

...

"Certainly let laws be passed to redistribute the land fairly. But what merit is there for the man who waits to be dispossessed by virtue of law? What merit is there for the zamindar who had been expropriated by the law? Does anyone remember his name or sing his praise? Do you need a law to be passed before you desist from theft? Of course not. Self-redemption cannot come from above or without. There is little difference between sword and the law. Both are coercive." 7

In this translation, obviously, we miss some of the nuances and suggestiveness of the original, but all the key-words in the passage, it may be noted, have a religious and ritualistic flavour. The use of such an idiom is likely to convey that land-reform is primarily a religious act. By attempting to explain an economic fact like land-reform in an idiom accessible to the masses, the speaker creates, intentionally or not, a religious flavour around it. The movement of redistributing land among the villagers by persuading the owners of vast areas of land to transfer some of their possessions to the landless again is described as Bhoodan-Yagna, and both dana and yagna are terms of Hindu rituals.

The Indo-Anglian's problem of finding the appropriate idiom in English for communicating the ethos of rural India is not very different from the Indian scholar's attempt to convey Western ideas in rural idioms. If an economic fact, interpreted in the mass idiom, seems hardly distinguishable from a religious sermon, a religious dialogue, interpreted in English, may look like a secular or political speech. I wish now to examine two important Indo-Anglian novels, Raja Rao's Kanthapura and Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve, to see how the novelists in their treatment of the theme of village life face the problem of finding an appropriate language and idiom in English.

II

Both novels, Kanthapura (1938) and Nectar in a Sieve (1955), are set in South Indian rural society of the twentieth century, and both have been generally considered authentic and 'Indian'. In Kanthapura Raja Rao deals with the impact of the freedom movement on a tiny Indian village, and in Nectar, Markandaya examines the hard realities of peasant life. As stated earlier, the English language is completely alien to the ethos of the society dealt with in these novels, and what is more significant and what provides scope for an elaborate comparison of these works is that the narrators in both the novels are old women without any knowledge of the English language or values associated with that language.

Here indeed is a test of the writer's skills. The novelist has to face a number of problems in the handling of such a theme: first, the characters he deals with do not speak English; secondly, the mode of perception of life and reality of the characters in general and the narrator in particular is different from that of the English-educated Indians; and thirdly, the novel as an art-form has evolved in the West where the social and cultural situations are very different from those of traditional India. These problems are of course not mutually exclusive or peculiar to the Indo-Anglian alone. The Indian-language writer dealing with a similar theme has to face the last two, if not the first one. The characters he deals with of course speak the language of the author. But the author with his education in and through the English language may not perceive reality as the characters do, and the novel form itself is equally alien, or at any rate, not a form of expression like the folk painting or gossip in which the characters feel at home.

Both the novelists, Rao and Markandaya, are conscious of the enormous difficulty of rendering a very native and traditional theme in an

'alien' language like English. Rao in his 'Foreword' to Kanthapura suggests his difficulty in regard to the form of the narrative as well as the language. (We have already examined Rao's attempt to cast his narrative in the form of a sthalapurana.) Regarding the language, Rao says:

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. I use the word "alien", yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up - like Sanskrit or Persian was before - but not of our emotional make-up. (p.vii)

By adopting the form of the sthalapurana rather than of the Western novel to narrate a story of village India, Rao shows his understanding of the social and cultural background of the narrative as well as of the narrator (the old Brahmin woman). But he seems to fail to recognise the intimate relation between the form and the language of the narrative. On the one hand, he rejects the Western 'novel' as an alien form to narrate a village story; on the other, he suggests the Western language, English, not to be an 'alien' medium for such a story. The old Brahmin woman for whom sthalapurana is the appropriate form of narrative, does not have English as the language of her 'intellectual make-up'. While discussing the form of the narrative, Rao identifies himself with the village-woman narrator, but while discussing the language, he talks as an Westernised Indian intellectual. Rao, however, makes the narrative more plausible by emphasising that it is a tale told by an old woman, and not written down, as Markandaya claims Nectar to be. Markandaya's heroine, a peasant woman, is supposed to write down the narrative with her knowledge of reading and writing she had as a child. Her father was even capable of realising that writing could be a solace to his daughter at the time of grief:

With the leisure I now had I took up writing again. It was my father who taught me to read and write. People said he did it because he wanted his children to be one cut above the rest; perhaps so, but I am certain that he also knew that it would be a solace to me in affliction, a joy amid tranquillity. So he taught his six children, myself the youngest by ten years, with the patience he brought to all things. 'Practise hard', he would say, watching me busy with slate and pencil. 'For who knows what dowry there will be for you when you are ready!' And I, with the thistledown of childish care upon me, would listen lightly and take up my pencil again. (p.11)

There is hardly any evidence in India of any peasant woman writing down her experience in any Indian language, not to speak of English or any foreign language. This is Anita Desai, another important woman novelist, speaking about Indian women writers (Markandaya's Rukmani is supposedly one of them):

In a largely illiterate country, women have had, till recently, even less chance of an education than men and so, in a country with a strong oral tradition in storytelling, women have been the chief upholders of this tradition. The less educated a woman, the less the printed word would signify to her and the larger her hoard of myths, legends, songs, lullabies, fables and tales. The act of writing them down must still seem manifestly comic and mysterious - because so unnecessary - to a large percentage of Indian women.

Secondly, if women did watch, observe and discover curious, interesting or significant things in their world of home, friends and family, their instinct did not lead them to write a letter to a friend about it, or to note it down in a diary, or to compose this raw material into the form of a novel or a short story - their natural instinct was gossip, the favourite pastime of Indian women for untold generations. 8

Had Markandaya, like Rao, made her narrator tell rather than write down her experience, the narrative would have seemed as plausible as Rao's. While it is possible to imagine an Indian woman narrating a tale in the puranic mould, for every village woman is exposed to the purana from her childhood, it is difficult to imagine a peasant woman writing down her experience and particularly in the form of a novel.

By narrating the story through village women, both the novelists have tried to convey an Indian experience from within the local context, and

interestingly, neither seems completely successful in identifying himself or herself with the narrator or finding the appropriate idiom for his or her purpose. The story of Kanthapura is narrated by an old woman of Kanthapura before the women of Kashipura and there is enough evidence to make one believe that Kanthapura and Kashipura are villages very close to each other. In the last chapter the episode of a carter bringing the news of Kanthapura to Kashipura suggests the closeness of the two villages and the carter's intimacy with both the villages. If it is so, why does the narrator start the story thus?

Our village - I don't think you have ever heard about it - Kanthapura is its name, and it is in the province of Kara. High on the Ghats is it, high up the steep mountains that face the cool Arabian seas, up the Malabar coast is it, up Mangalore and Puttur and many a centre of cardamom and coffee, rice and sugar cane.... (p.1)

And the narrator goes on, describing the geographical location of the place, the flora and fauna, the local produce and the merchandise, the cattle and the bulls and so forth. This description, so detailed and graphic, neither seems intended for the women for Kashipura nor for the villagers of any district of Kara where the flora and fauna and other details are hardly different. The English language does matter from the beginning and the novelist is perhaps trying to suggest the local colour of the village with an eye on the readers unfamiliar with the Indian scene. The fictitious audience, the women of Kashipura, and the real audience (the American and the British - the 'Notes' of the edition at hand are clearly meant for Western readers) are getting mixed up, and many episodes and references, though they are very authentic and inserted in the novel in a very ingenious way, could not convincingly be narrated by the village woman. The uniformity of style - and this is no small achievement - gives the impression of the story being narrated by the same woman. But at certain

moments the outlook and perception of the narrator do not seem in character. The novelist would have been more convincing had he started two paragraphs later: 'Kenchamma is our Goddess. Great and bounteous is she. She killed a demon ages, ages ago,... (p.2). For, Kanthapura and Kashipura, though they are very close to each other in every respect, are each supposed to have their individual goddess.

The English language, one suspects, makes the author uncertain about his audience. 'I don't think you have ever heard about it' seems not to be meant for the women of Kashipura, and there are the details which do not seem worth emphasising if a villager is narrating the story of his or her community to her fellows in a neighbouring village. 'Our village had a Pariah quarter too, a Potters' quarter, and a Sudra quarter' (p.5), she tells them. Or, concerning the month of Kartik, she explains:

Kartik has come to Kanthapura, sisters - Kartik has come with the glow of lights and the unpresed footstep of the wandering gods; white lights from clay trays and red lights from copper stands, and diamond lights that glow from the bowers of entrance leaves; lights that glow from banana trunks and mango twigs, yellow light behind white leaves, and green light behind yellow leaves, and white light behind green leaves; .... Kartik is a month of the lights, sisters, and in Kanthapura when the dusk falls, children rush to the sanctum flame and the kitchen fire, and with broom grass and fuel chips and coconut rind they peel out fire and light clay pots and copper candelabras and glass lamps. (p.81)

The social organisation and the month of Kartik in Kanthapura are not supposed to be anyway different from that of Kashipura. All these details, and many more, relating to the social and religious rituals sometimes seem redundant for a village woman to emphasise repeatedly. One would not expect her capable of imaginatively distancing herself so much and so often from her own social and cultural setting. If the narrator was telling the story in Kannada, why would she have referred to the cultural and social facts common to all Kannada-speaking people?

And quite often the narrator seems to talk with an insight which,



with her outlook and upbringing (she is an old Brahmin widow of Veda Sastra Pravina Krishna Sastri's Family) does not seem convincing. She is, rightly, not expected to be closely acquainted with the Pariah quarter ('Of course you wouldn't expect me to go to the Pariah quarter...p.5). She can possibly be well-informed about Moorthy's activities among the Pariahs, but to understand the psychological dilemma of Moorthy and to describe in detail about the Pariah house and its smell are out of character for her:

But Rachanna is out mowing at the river-eaten field, and Rachanna's wife is pounding rice, and she says, "Come and sit inside, learned one, since you are one of us, for the sun is hot outside", and Moorthy, who had never entered a Pariah house - he had always spoken to the Pariahs from the gutter-slab - Moorthy thinks this is something new, and with one foot to the back and one foot to the fore, he stands trembling and undecided, and then suddenly hurries up the steps and crosses the threshold and squats on the earthen floor. But Rachanna's wife quickly sweeps a corner, and spreads for him a wattle mat, but Moorthy, confused, blurts out, "No, no, no, no," and he looks this side and that and thinks surely there is a carcass in the backyard, and it's surely being skinned, and he smells the stench of hide and the stench of pickled pigs, and the room seems to shake, and all the gods and all the manes of heaven seem to cry out against him, and his hands steal mechanically to the holy thread, and holding it, he feels he would like to say, "Hari-Om, Hari-Om". But Rachanna's wife has come back with a little milk in a shining brass tumbler, and placing it on the floor with stretched hands, she says, "Accept this from this poor hussy!" and slips back behind the corn-bins; and Moorthy says, "I've just taken coffee, Lingamma..." but she interrupts him and says, "Touch it, Moorthappa, touch it only as though it were offered to the gods, and we shall be sanctified"; and Moorthy, with many a trembling prayer, touches the tumbler and brings it to his lips, and taking one sip, lays it aside. (pp.71-72)

It is not credible for the narrator, again, to describe in vivid realistic details the rape scene in the Skeffington Coffee Estate. One realises that the novelist fails in viewing the scene from the consciousness of an old Brahmin widow. Expressions such as 'I will sleep with your wife' (p.59) and 'He gave her a very warmful bed' (p.15) seem too vulgar for an old Brahmin widow to utter.

If Rao's narrator seems over-occupied with the sociological and religious details of her village, Markandaya's Rukmani seems completely unaware of these. The undefined nature of the audience does create the problem of cultural transmissibility and very often makes the novelist uncertain of the idiom. Should he suggest or interpret? If he suggests, he may be unintelligible, and if he interprets, his art will suffer. In these two novels, the situation of the narrators should naturally have expressed itself more or less in the same idiom. Rao, overconscious of the Indianness of the story, hardly interprets. As a result, to a Western critic, Kanthapura is not a book that is easy to read - not surely a successful novel in ordinary terms'.<sup>9</sup> Nectar, on the other hand, is significantly free from any Indian flavour. Leaving apart the names of persons and a dozen references to Indian customs, there is hardly anything in the idiom of the novel to suggest that it is an Indian story. If Rao is too conscious of the Indianness of his theme, Markandaya is equally conscious of her cosmopolitan audience. Nectar is certainly more intelligible to a Western reader.

Markandaya rarely describes the local colour or refers to rituals and ceremonies; her heroine uses a language hardly suggestive of Indian idiom or image, legend or song. Rukmani is a peasant woman who seems to face reality as a simple fact of life; religious belief or racial prejudice, superstition or myth do not seem to affect her attitude or outlook in any way. She has the understanding to perceive her environment, custom and situation with the eyes of one who is aware of other social realities and settings:

Half way there we stopped and ate a meal: boiled rice, dhal, vegetables and curds. A whole coconut apiece too, in which my husband nicked a hole with his scyth for me so that I might drink the clear milk. (p.3)

It was my husband who woke me - my husband, whom I will call here Nathan, for that was his name, although in all the years of our marriage I never called him that, for it is not meet for a woman to address her husband except as 'husband'. (p.4)

Across the doorway a garland of mango leaves, symbol of happiness and good fortune, dry now and rattling in the breeze. (p.4)

We called our daughter Irawaddy, after one of the great rivers of Asia, for of all things water was most precious to us;....(p.15)

Yet in the midst of her pain she could still think of me, and one day she beckoned me near and placed in my hand a small stone lingam, symbol of fertility. (p.18)

These passages occur in the first three chapters of the novel and obviously are not likely to be spoken by one who is not exposed to another cultural situation and means to be heard by outsiders. In all these passages the narrator interprets her statements: a hole is nicked on a coconut so that the milk can be drunk out of it; a wife is not supposed to call her husband by name; mango leaves symbolise happiness and good fortune; the Irawaddy is a river in the continent of Asia and water is precious to Hindus; a lingam is a symbol of fertility, and so forth. An alien language presupposes an alien audience and considerably affects the mode of expression of the novelist. Markandaya is either trying to strip her material of Indian flavour, or, if she has to refer to anything Indian, she proceeds to interpret it for the convenience of the Western reader. As a result, the story does not seem to be narrated by the peasant-woman, Rukmani.

To write about the Indian village to which the English language and all the values associated with the language are alien, involves a great deal of complexity, and, as C.D. Narasimhaiah puts it, it is 'a complexity of the kind to which readers of fiction in the English language have not been accustomed'.<sup>10</sup> The Indian novelists who have indeed written

classics of Indian village life - Premchand, Banerji or Panigrahi - have done so in their own languages, and the Indo-Anglian has yet to evolve the idiom to do so. Critics may be right in recognising Markandaya's lack of inwardness with the village peasant life and Rao's authenticity over his theme. But is it not the English language that partly determines the nature of their work? And, if Markandaya is obvious and fails to evoke an Indian ethos, Rao often seems unintelligible or comic or ironic which the old woman narrator supposedly does not intend to be when she is narrating the story before the women of a neighbouring village.

We hastily pushed rice onto the leaves of the young  
and came back for the evening prayers. (p.8)

'Pushing rice onto the leaves' is to suggest that one is in a hurry, and Rao's narrator, as natural in her case, talks in an idiomatic language. But such suggestive expressions, of which there are many in Kanthapura, cannot be comprehended by one, who not only does not know intimately the Indian setting, but also the Indian language. That is, the reader is supposed to relate this idiom to its Indian-language equivalent to understand its real implication. That is why perhaps Kanthapura has not been received in the West as enthusiastically as it has been in India. It is easy to agree with the South Indian critic Uma Parameswaran who observes regarding the language of Kanthapura that the reader 'who knows the author's vernacular recognizes and enjoys this style, but others might find it confusing and laborious'.<sup>11</sup> C.D. Narasimhaiah, himself a Kannada-speaker, describes Kanthapura as 'a minor classic'<sup>12</sup> and observes, '... I know I can't think of another authentic account of village life among novels written in the English language'.<sup>13</sup> Village life is not among the favourite themes of Indo-Anglian novelists, and significantly, not even of Indian-language writers, but when C.D. Narasimhaiah reads innumerable literal

translations of Indian-language idioms, presumably Kannada idioms, does he not hear in Kannada what he reads in English? An English reader is supposed to have the rural ethos conveyed to him through the language in which he reads the work, and not in relation to any other language. This may remind one of the Indian scholar's method of discussing science or commerce in an Indian language, but, when it comes to key-words, using the English equivalents to be intelligible. If one is expected to search for Kannada in English to understand the full implication of the story, it cannot be said that English has served the purpose of conveying the Kanthapura ethos.

Here, for example, are a few passages which may sound comic or ironic, or at least odd, in the English language. However, the effect of these expressions in Kannada or in any Indian language, and from the mouth of a grandmother, would have been quite different.

(a) ... "Today is the eleventh day of the bright fortnight of Sravan. Tomorrow, twenty seconds after the sixteenth hour, Mercury enters the seventh house, and Ekadashiday begins". (p.21)

(b) She is twelve and a half years old, and in a year's time Bhatta can have someone to light his bath fire at least. (p.22)

(c) ... and that Moorthy was a good fellow and if only he would get married and settle down, nobody would be happier "than this poor Bhatta, well-wisher of cows and men...." (p.30)

(d) People came and people went; they banged the bell and touched the bull and took the flowers....(p.62)

(e) ... and then he gets down, and the bulls ring their bells and yawn. (p.131)

Had Bhatta talked in Kannada about astrology (a), he would have used Sanskrit words for terms like 'the eleventh day of the bright fortnight (shukla-ekadashi), 'the seventeenth hour' (saptadasha ghatika), 'the seventh house' (tula) etc. which at once would have been archaic, pedantic and full of significance. Similarly, for expressions like 'well-wisher of cows and

men' (go-brahmanevya shuvamastu) (c) and 'bull' a Sanskrit phrase or word would have been used. Thus, in situations where the Indian-language writer would have used two languages, Kannada and Sanskrit, the Indo-Anglian has to use only one language. The effect, to say the least, is bound to be different. The novelist uses the same word, 'bull', in both cases (d) and (e). In (e), the bull in the temple is the brushava, the devotee of Mahadeva; but in (d), the bull is an ordinary one, and the narrator is supposed to refer to it in a Kannada colloquial word. Occasionally, the novelist adds a prefix to some such words to suggest their situational significance. Thus, he uses 'noble cow', 'holy bull', 'holy ash', 'kitchen ash' and so on which of course sound unnatural from the mouth of a village woman. There are two different sets of words in Indian languages for 'holy ash' and 'kitchen ash' with radically different associations. (For 'holy ash' the Sanskrit word bibhuti or bhashma is used; for 'kitchen ash', each language has its colloquial word: rakh (Hindi), chhai (Bengali), paunsa (Oriya), and so on. In English, no such difference exists, and one who cannot refer to the original Kannada and Sanskrit equivalents of 'ash', instead of finding the expressions significant and natural, may find them comic and ironic.

In (b), the narrator justifies Bhatta's second marriage. 'Lighting the bath fire', the English expression, perhaps does not convey what it does in an Indian language. It refers to the ritual of aupasana which is supposed to be performed by the married Brahmin householder early every morning. It is part of his daily rituals (nitya karma anusthana) and the presence of the wife as sahadharmini (one who participates in the act of dharma) is necessary for such a ritual. The novelist translates aupasana as 'lighting the bath-fire' presumably because this ritual is performed after the bath in the morning and before the fire. When 'fire'

is referred to in a religious or ceremonial situation, the appropriate word is agni which again is the name of a god symbolising Truth. In English it is difficult to find two different words for 'fire' to suggest two different associations. Objects like fire and ash, which are a part of the Hindu religious ethos, as well as of the day to day life, are usually referred to, in two different kinds of vocabulary in Indian-language literatures. Rao is certainly conscious of this problem, and whenever language permits, he uses the archaic instead of modern usage:

"Oh, learned sire, what brings you into this distant world?" (p.10)

But Moorthy had little strength to answer her, and he simply smiled back, saying, "Nay". (p.65)

"I shall speak that which truth prompteth, and truth needeth no defence". (p.86)

When C.D. Narasimhaiah praises Kanthapura because 'there is even a tinge of irony in his description which surprisingly makes for authenticity of the thing he describes',<sup>14</sup> one may feel that the tinge of irony is suggested, unintentionally, by the use of the English language to convey a Kannada ethos. A tone of irony suggests a sense of detachment, but in this story the narrator is very much a part of the theme, and is not supposed to be aware of other social and cultural realities.

Since Rao is attempting a purana in Kanthapura, at least two obvious aspects of the purana are supposed to prevail throughout the work: a religious flavour and a rhythm of folk poetry. The narrator in Kanthapura refers to innumerable religious episodes, and the analogies and images she employs to explain even political and social events are religious too, suggesting her vision of the world. Thus, the term 'pollution' which occurs a number of times in the novel is a key motif of the story, and 'cow' or 'calf' is a central symbol. The narrative begins with the invocation of the goddess, Kenchamma, and at the end of important episodes, the narrator,

in the puranic manner, offers a prayer, saying, 'Chant the name of Siva Lord' (p.108), 'Siva Siva' (p.123), 'May the three-eyed Siva protect us' (p.140), and so on.

C.D. Narasimhaiah refers to Rao's indebtedness to the works of the Vachanakaras.<sup>15</sup> The Vachanakaras are medieval Kannada poets (tenth to twelfth century), who rejected the tradition of Vedic religion and started a movement of protest. They wrote in their mother-tongue, instead of classical Sanskrit, as in fact did all the poets of the Bhakti Movement. Their use of the colloquial Kannada for expressing religious views (Sanskrit would have been the natural vehicle, then) is not very different from Rao's attempt to write a purana in English (Kannada being the natural medium in this case). But what sort of language did the Vachanakaras employ for their purpose? And how far is it possible to employ in English the linguistic devices of the Vachanakaras?<sup>16</sup> Here we may quote a Kannada-speaking teacher of English who records his experience of the American reader's response to the vachanas in English translation. This is what he has to say about the language of a particular vachana or poem:

The poem exploits the three strands of the Kannada vocabulary - native words, derivations from Sanskrit and Sanskrit loan words. The non-Kannada speaker might learn that the poem employs words from all these three categories but I do not think he can respond as a Kannada speaker would to the interplay between these three strands of the vocabulary and the way in which the different words isolate concepts and experiences and finally bring them together. For, this aspect of the poem assumes an inwardness with the language, an awareness of the roles the three strands of vocabulary play in the language, written and spoken. 17

Raja Rao cannot employ in English the three strands of vocabulary which a Kannada poet might use to convey a religious ethos. We may take a simple clause like this: 'the goddess danced over the corpse of the Red Demon' (p.139). The most important term of the sentence, 'Red



Demon', fails to convey what it might have, in Kannada, in two ways.

(i) Linguistically, the term is not distinct from the other words of the sentence. In Kannada, the term would have been Sanskrit or Sanskritic, and thus, different from the rest of the words in the sentence, presumably, native. (ii) The adjective 'red' emphasises only one aspect of the Demon and nothing else of the Demon is suggested. In the passage quoted earlier about the month of Kartik, again, we may note that it hardly suggests any religious flavour. There is abundant suggestion of colours in phrases like 'glow of lights', 'white lights from clay trays and red lights from copper stands' etc.; and there is no doubt a sense of mystery in the reference to the gods - 'the unpressed footstep of the wandering gods', 'and gods walk by lighted streets', and so forth. But the passage hardly conveys anything of the religious significance of the month. Translating Krishna as the 'blue god', the novelist undoubtedly tries to convey the literal meaning of the word. But a Hindu widow is hardly aware of the derivation of the word, and it is difficult to see how the image of Krishna is suggested by the 'blue god'. Many Indo-Anglians render Ganesha as the 'elephant god' and Hanuman as the 'monkey god' not realising that the association of the elephant and the monkey with Ganesha and Hanuman as prominently suggested by such renderings, distorts the hallowed image of these gods. Rao successfully suggests a sense of harmony between the lights from banana trunks and mango twigs with the colours of the gods. But it is hard to imagine a Hindu Brahmin widow referring to the gods in this secular vein.

The language of Kanthapura, more than that of any other Indo-Anglian novel, has been discussed to suggest how the English language can be moulded to convey an Indian ethos. Professor Desai has made an elaborate list of Rao's linguistic devices in Kanthapura - translations of Kannada

words, phrases etc.; the moulding of the English syntax after the Kannada, such as the repetition of the verb, adjuncts, clauses; the use of historic present, and so on.<sup>18</sup> While all Indo-Anglians have used, particularly in dialogue situations, translations of words and phrases from their mother-tongues, no one has taken so much liberty with the syntax of the English language as Rao has done. Obviously it is easier to experiment in the area of lexis and morphology than in the area of grammar and syntax; and Rao's experiment in the latter area deserves special attention. While Rao's bold experiment with the English language is commendable, his achievement is a matter of proof. The language (or perhaps we should call it the dialect, since Rao talks about an Indian dialect of English in his 'Foreword') used in Kanthapura, supposedly a spoken form, does not exist in India, as there exists a pidgin form of English in Africa or a dialect in the West Indies. He is also not modelling this 'Indian dialect' after any dialect, English or American, spoken by people in a situation corresponding to that of Kanthapura. This form of English is Rao's own invention designed to convey a puranic idiom, and naturally one would expect this to be very close to folk poetry in its rhythm. We may examine a few passages taken at random from the novel:

(a) So Bhatta began to loan out one hundred and two hundred and three hundred rupees. (p.20)

(b) ... But Bhatta goes on munching and belching, drinking water and then munching again. "Rama-Rama. Rama-Rama." (p.21)

(c) ... And Timmamma and I, we live in Jodidar Seetharamiah's house, and they say always, "Are your prayers finished, aunt? Are your ablutions finished, aunt?" before every meal. "Aunt, aunt, aunt", they always call us for this and that.... (p.179)

In (a), the narrator refers to Bhatta's greedy nature and the phrase 'Rama-Rama, Rama-Rama' is meant to add an ironic dimension to what has been said earlier. The holy word 'Rama' does not go with the act of

greed. This is fairly comprehensible to an English reader. But, what is not comprehensible - and what only a native reader may understand - is that the phrase 'Rama-Rama, Rama-Rama' is supposed to be uttered in the same rhythm as the sentence uttered before it. It is the way in which the phrase is uttered that warps the meaning of Rama. In (b) 'one hundred and two hundred and three hundred' - and the elaborate use of the conjunction 'and' is a recurring stylistic device in Kanthapura - is mannered and may even give rise to misunderstanding. It means Bhatta loaned out different amounts to different people according to their needs. In English, such expressions are artificial, and instead of suggesting a sense of fluency and colloquialism, seem unnatural. In (c) again we have a sentence which sounds artificial in English. In Indian languages, such expressions are natural and spontaneous. What seems significant in making this difference is that the rhythm of English is so unlike that of the Indian languages. The accent-pattern is totally different, for whereas English is a non-syllabic language, the Indian languages are syllabic. Far from being poetic, the language of Kanthapura often produces a jarring effect on the reader attuned to the rhythm of the English language. What Rao seems to forget, while making experiments with the lexis and the syntax, is the phonology of the English language. Both the passages, for their appreciation (the irony of (a); the colloquial speech-rhythm of (c)), need the reader's awareness of the phonology of Kannada or an Indian language.

Kanthapura is supposed to be a long sequence of dialogues between the narrator and the women of Kashipura. There are passages in which the narrator faithfully reproduces the talk of other characters, but generally the story reads like a form of monologue. The narrator, rarely interrupted by her audience, describes the past events vividly. Hence we may say that the English language is used in two contexts, the narrative

(when the narrator describes events) and the dramatic (when the narrator reproduces the conversation of others). The narrator, of course, aims at a poetic effect in her use of the language in both the contexts, in keeping with the purana form. We may note that her language is closer to poetry in some of the narrative situations than in the dramatic. The passage describing the month of Kartik, though lacking in religious flavour, does create a poetic effect, and here is another passage which is close to poetry:

The day dawned over the Ghats, the day rose over the Blue Mountain, and churning through the grey, rapt valleys, swirled up and swam across the whole air. The day rose into the air and with it rose the dust of the morning, and the carts began to creak round the bulging rocks and the coppery peaks, and the sun fell into the river and pierced it to the pebbles,..... (p.39)

However, in dramatic situations as in (c), quoted above, the language far from being poetic, seems mannered.

Rao and Markandaya seem to encounter considerable difficulty in finding the English equivalent of Indian idioms, proverbs and forms of mannerism. Markandaya tries to avoid the difficulty by making her narrator talk in a language almost free from idiomatic and proverbial usage. The result is unconvincing. Rao often literally translates such native idioms and proverbs which, as suggested earlier, not only need the reader's awareness of the Indian cultural context, but often of the linguistic, to be fairly comprehensible. It is hard to say where exactly the reader's cultural awareness is enough, and where it is not, language and culture being interdependent facts. With this problem in mind let us examine the following two passages:

... And they began to ask for his horoscope when he was hardly sixteen. (p.32)

"... Well, well, one has to close one's eyes and ears, or else the food will not go down one's throat these days...." (p.42)

The first passage is a compliment to Moorthy whose horoscope is called for even when he is sixteen. In the context of the traditional society and the village-woman narrator, no irony is supposed to be intended by the fact that marriage is suggested even at the age of sixteen. In the second passage, 'to close one's eyes and ears' is an Indian-language idiom meaning to remain indifferent to pollution. If, while eating the food, one saw or heard someone associated with irreligious acts, the food would be polluted too.

Sometimes Rao tries to adapt the English proverbs or idioms to Indian settings, such as:

- (a) Go and ask the squirrel on the fence. (p.40)
- (b) Well, well,... every squirrel has his day,.... (p.77)
- (c) A cock does not make a morning or a single man a revolution,.... (p.118)

These are basically English expressions, but Rao has substituted 'squirrel' for 'dog' in (b) and 'cock' for 'swallow' in (c). No English reader can help being reminded of the original when the linguistic pattern is the same. Where the sensibility is different, the linguistic expression should also be different to convey the experience. The cock and the squirrel are not as significant anyway in the Indian setting as the swallow and the dog are in the Western.

Rao's literal translations of the Indian forms of mannerism often distort their original meaning and implication. In the sentence, "As you like, says the licker of your feet" (p.23) the phrase 'the licker of your feet' seems so startling and fresh that the reader might think it much more significant than it really is in the Indian context. Expressions of mannerism in the Indian context do not always mean more than 'hello' or 'good morning', whatever may be their literal meaning. Rao occasionally uses an English word like 'bloody' (p.49) which is already part of city

slang in India and sounds incredible in the mouth of an old village woman.

Indian critics like C.D. Narasimhaiah, Srinivasa Iyengar and C. Paul Verghese have rather overrated the success of the English language in conveying the Indian rural ethos in Kanthapura. C.D. Narasimhaiah even goes to the extent of saying, 'Indian fiction in English can, it seems to me, make headway by continuing the Raja Rao line'.<sup>19</sup> The above analysis is not meant to deny the considerable success of Raja Rao in evoking an Indian ethos, but to suggest also the ways in which an alien language often acts as a hindrance to such an evocation.

Markandaya does not seem to make any significant attempt to mould the English language or the novel form to convey an Indian ethos. The alien nature of the language and the narrative form, therefore, considerably distorts her idiom. If Rao is unintelligible or mannered at places, Markandaya seems too cosmopolitan or Westernised. Her narrator, as I pointed out earlier, does not seem to narrate the story from within the context. The form of her narrative, with its distinct characterisation and neat chronological sequence of events is hardly plausible. A peasant woman with her vision of the world is not likely to view the reality as she does in Nectar. It is always not easy to say whether it is the English language or the novelist's lack of actual experience of Indian peasant life that obscures her narrator's view. Here are a few passages which reflect Rukmani's attitude to life and reality:

(a) Nature is like a wild animal that you have trained to work for you. So long as you are vigilant and walk warily with thought and care, so long will it give you its aid; but look away for an instant, be heedless or forgetful, and it has you by the throat. (p.39)

(b) Deepavali, the Festival of Lights, approached. It is a festival mainly for the children, but of course everyone who can takes part. I twisted cotton into wicks, soaked them in oil and placed them in mud saucers ready to be lit at night. To the children I handed out two annas apiece, to be spent on fireworks. I had never been able to do so before - in previous years we had contented ourselves with watching other people's fireworks, or with going down to the bonfire in the village, and even now I felt qualms about wasting money on such quickly spent pleasures; but their rapturous faces overcame my misgivings. 'It is only once', I thought, 'a memory'.

As it grew dark we lit the tapers and wicks and encircled our dwelling with light. A feathery breeze was stirring, setting the flames leaping and dancing, their reflections in the black glistening oil cavorting too. In the town and in the houses nearby, hundreds of small beacons were beginning to flash, now and then a rocket would tear into the sky, break and pour out its riches like precious jewels into the darkness. As the night went on, the crackle and spit of exploding fireworks increased. The children had bought boxes of coloured matches and strings of patthas and a few pice worth of crackers, like small nuts, which split in two with a loud bang amid a shower of sparks when lit. The last were the most popular - the boys pranced round shrieking with laughter and throwing the crackers about everywhere, yet they were nimble enough to skip out of harm's way. All except Selvam, the youngest. He stood a safe distance away, legs apart and obviously ready to run, holding a stick of sugarcane nearly as tall as himself which he had bought instead of fireworks.

"Go and play", I said to him, "Deepavali comes but once a year and this is the first time we have bought fireworks. Do not lose the opportunity". (pp. 54-55)

(c) Thereafter we fed on whatever we could find: the soft ripe fruit of the prickly pear; a sweet potato or two, blackened and half-rotten, thrown away by some more prosperous hand; sometimes a crab that Nathan managed to catch near the river. Early and late my sons roamed the countryside, returning with a few bamboo shoots, a stick of sugarcane left in some deserted field, or a piece of coconut picked from the gutter in the town. For these they must have ranged widely, for other farmers and their families, in like plight to ourselves, were also out searching for food; and for every edible plant or root there was a struggle - a desperate competition that made enemies of friends and put an end to humanity.

It was not enough. Sometimes from sheer rebellion we ate grass, although it always resulted in stomach cramps and violent retching. For hunger is a curious thing: at first it is with you all the time, waking and sleeping and in your dreams, and your belly cries out insistently, and there is a gnawing and a pain as if your very vital were being devoured, and you must stop it at any cost, and you buy a moment's respite even while you know and fear the sequel. Then the pain

is no longer sharp but dull, and this too is with you always, so that you think of food many times a day and each time a terrible sickness assails you, and because you know this you try to avoid the thought, but you cannot, it is with you. Then that too is gone, all pain, all desire, only a great emptiness is left, like the sky, like a well in drought, and it is now that the strength drains from your limbs, and you try to rise and find you cannot, or to swallow water and your throat is powerless, and both the swallow and the effort of retaining the liquid tax you to the uppermost. (pp. 87-88)

In (a) Rukmani refers to Nature as a wild animal. A peasant woman living in an Indian village can hardly view Nature as a distinct entity outside the human world. The peasant's way of life is so intimately linked up with the monsoon, the sun and the harvest that he can hardly be aware of his exact relation with Nature. It is even difficult to imagine what would be the Indian-language equivalent of 'Nature' when a peasant refers to it. Such a vision of life, as reflected in this passage, suggests Markandaya's lack of understanding of peasant life rather than the incapacity of the English language to convey such vision.

In (b) the passage referring to the Festival of Lights is a detailed description of the ceremony which creates some visual impressions on the reader. There is hardly anything to suggest that it is a religious festival - the most important religious festival of South India - much more than 'lights' and 'fireworks'. Rao is nearer to the spirit of the Festival than Markandaya, with his reference to innumerable gods and to a sense of mystery pervading the night atmosphere. Rukmani, a Hindu widow (when narrating the story) strangely seems unaware of the religious significance of the month of Deepavali. Markandaya either fails to understand the implication of the Festival in the rural situation or deliberately abstains from trying to convey the religious significance of the Festival fearing that the English language would fail to convey clearly and



idiomatically, the mysterious and religious flavour of the Festival. Had the passage been written in an Indian language, simple words like 'wicks', 'mud saucers' and 'bonfire' perhaps would have suggested a religious atmosphere.

In (c) Rukmani views poverty as a simple economic reality and hunger as a palpable physical experience. Such a view of poverty and suffering is unconvincing in the Indian situation. Poverty is an accepted way of living in India and is hardly viewed as a simple economic fact. The Hindu's religious view of rebirth and karma makes his attitude to poverty and suffering rather complex. It may be noted in passing that in Pather Panchali, Banerji treats the theme of poverty with complexity and ambivalence. Although Banerji adopts an impersonal form of narrative and does not present the story through Sarbojaya or any other character, a comparison of Pather Panchali with Nectar is not inappropriate.

In Kanthapura, of course, the theme of poverty is not dealt with explicitly, but there are a number of references which imply the complex manifestation of Indian poverty:

Our Patwari Nanjundia had a veranda with two rooms built on to the old house. He had even put glass panes to the windows.... (p.3)

He knows how much there is in it. Something around three hundred and fifty rupees. Already a little had been loaned out; just ten rupees to Rampur Mada. (p.22)

Obviously in these passages the narrator refers to the prosperity of Patwari and Bhatta, and it is easy to understand the poverty of the villagers if this be their prosperity.

Expressing the Indian peasant's attitude and vision in a language which operates in a radically different social milieu than his, is by no means easy. But even in simple situations Markandaya seems unaware of the Indian setting. Her language, closer to English English than perhaps that of any other Indo-Anglian, anglicises her idiom and makes it clearly un-Indian:

- (a) There was something in his voice, a pleading, a look on his face such as a dog has when you are about to kick it. (p.4)
- (b) "It is nothing", I said, "I am tired - no more. I will be all right in a minute." (p.4)
- (c) Ira had been given in marriage in the month of June,.... (p.39)
- (d) "Yes," I said sheepishly. (p.107)
- (e) The hospital is no more than a few months old and a few feet high when people began attempting to stake their claims. (p.124)
- (f) "Yes, of course, darling," Ira cried, and all the guilt of her efforts to have an abortion was in her voice. (p.127)
- (g) ... "We must be careful."  
He smiled wryly. "After the horse had bolted?" (p.149)
- (h) "Of course, you are anxious about your son. I am afraid I cannot help you, .... (p.156)
- (i) "Take care of yourselves," she called. "Godspeed and may you get home safely." Her lips were smiling, she brought the boy to the door to wave to us. (p.165)

A Hindu widow bringing in an analogy of a dog being kicked (a) is unusual. The idiomatic expressions in (d) and (g) are peculiar to the Indian setting neither the sheep nor the horse being a part of the domestic ethos of the story. Linguistic forms like 'I am afraid...(h) and 'Godspeed' (i), and gestures like waving (i) are Western mannerisms and absurd in the context of the novel. 'Darling', like 'bloody', is a part of urban slang in India and does not seem appropriate in the mouth of a peasant woman. Terms like 'June', 'minute' and 'foot' (b, c and e) do not reproduce the villager's sense of time and space. Rao in similar situations remains closer to the Indian spirit. His reference to 'squirrel' instead of 'dog' suggests his awareness of the sociological setting in which he is using the English language. "'Take it, Bhattarè, only one cup more, just one?"' (p.21) says one of the villagers of

Kanthapura to Bhatta, which in idiomatic English means, 'Would you care to have a second cup, Bhatta?'. Instead of saying 'my darling', a villager refers to her son as 'my little mosquito'. (p.92) And significantly, Rao does not refer to the English calendar or the Western units of measurement of time and space. The Festival of Lights is in the month of Kartik; and the narrator tells her story after her prayers and ablutions are finished. Markandaya's idiom is decidedly un-Indian; Rao's is un-English; and neither is fully satisfactory.

FOOTNOTES

1. '... I literally translate all the dialogue in my novels from my mother-tongue and think out the narrative mostly the same way', writes Mulk Raj-Anand (The King Emperor's English, Bombay, 1948, p.23).
2. In an article, 'English in India', Narayan writes, 'English has proved that if a language has flexibility any experience can be communicated through it, even if it has to be paraphrased sometimes rather than conveyed, and even if the factual detail... is partially understood' (Commonwealth Literature, edited by John Press, London 1965, p.123).
3. While recommending in his famous Minute the introduction of English into Indian schools and colleges, a century ago, T.B.. Macaulay expected that the English-educated men would 'refine the vernacular dialects' and 'render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population' (See 'Indian Education: Minute of the 2nd of February, 1835, Macaulay: Prose and Poetry, selected by G.M. Young, London, 1967, p.729).
4. Satyajit Ray's film, Company Limited, portrays the life of the business executives of Calcutta and one can see how they use Bengali and English in different situations.
5. 'No Indo-English equivalent of the Indo-Persian Urdu has made its appearance as a written language', writes Nirad C. Chaudhury, 'although we may expect its emergence with the disappearance of British rule in India just as Urdu made its appearance with the decline of Mogul power which brought in its train the decline of Persian - the pure language of the politically dominant element. In India bastard languages are the offspring of political interregnum' (The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian, Bombay, 1966, p.492).
6. Nirad C. Chaudhury's observations about the recent changes in Indian languages under the influence of English are significant: '... in writing, modern Indians have been using vernaculars which have been modified both semantically and syntactically by English. In the first place, current words have assumed meanings which they never bore formerly. Secondly, new words have been coined which are Indian only in appearance, whereas in reality they are only the etymological Indian equivalents of English words and become intelligible in the Indian languages only when referred back to their foreign originals. Sometimes collocations are used which are mere literal translations of English phrases, and have no idiomatic associations in themselves. The syntax of all modern Indian languages has also been profoundly affected by English, so that with their changed construction and new vocabulary the Indian languages of today are hardly intelligible to those who are familiar only with the older and purer forms' (The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian, Bombay, 1966, pp. 492-493).

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

7. Quoted, Encounter, XLV, 6, December, 1975, p.18.
8. 'Women Writers', Quest, 65, April-June, 1970.
9. The Saturday Review, January 11, 1964, p.62.
10. Critical Essays, edited by M.K. Naik et al, Dharwar, 1968, p.271.
11. A Study of Representative Indo-English Novelists, New Delhi, 1976, p.90.
12. Critical Essays, edited by M.K. Naik et al, Dharwar, 1968, p.294.
13. *ibid*, p.271.
14. *ibid*, p.272.
15. *ibid*, pp. 290-291.
16. A.K. Ramamujan's 'Introduction' to Speaking of Siva (Penguin, 1973) may be seen. Ramamujan, in this work, translates some of the vachanas of three leading Vachanakaras.
17. M.G. Krishnamurthi, 'Foreign Literatures and Problems in Response', Literary Criticism: European and Indian Traditions, edited by C.D. Narasimhaiah, Mysore, 1965, p.206.
18. Experimentation With Language in Indian Writing in English, edited by S.K. Desai, Kolhapur, 1974, pp. 6-15.
19. Critical Essays, edited by M.K. Naik et al, Dharwar, 1968, p.294.

Language as Barrier

I

Important Indo-Anglians like R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Kamala Markandaya have not written much in their own languages, and there is no way of knowing how they would have differed had they written in Indian languages. However, Raja Rao has written a few stories in Kannada and one of those stories, 'The Little Gram Shop', translated by the author, is included in his collection, The Cow of the Barricades (1947). Mulk Raj Anand has written a few stories in Punjabi and in the introduction to his The Power of Darkness and Other Stories (1954), Anand writes, 'The five short fables, The Dove and the Crow, The Butterfly, The Golden Cockerel, The Peacock, The Leaf in the Storm, have been freshly rendered from the writer's original in Punjabi language'. Anand has more than once expressed his desire to write in Punjabi or Hindustani<sup>1</sup>, but does not seem to have published anything significant in either of those languages.

The little that Anand and Rao have written in Punjabi and Kannada may not help us understand how the choice of language matters in determining the nature and quality of the work of the Indian author. But almost all Indo-Anglians seem to be aware of the alienness of their medium in regard to the nature of their work. Anand observes:

...I am not suggesting that the experience of most Indians who are accustomed to writing in English tallies with mine; but, I think that, fundamentally, all of them, more or less, translate from their mother tongue into English, and that the intrusion of the idiom and metaphor of the Indian languages makes their writing different from the various styles of English writing in Britain and America. 2

Anand obviously views Indian writing in English, at least his own writing, as a literature in translation. In the essay from which the above passage is quoted, he refers to his apprenticeship in writing in English and says that his writing in English started when he translated passages from Hindustani into English, and he considers his later writing in English to

be 'mainly a translation from Punjabi or Hindustani'<sup>3</sup>. He hopes to write, in future, first in his mother-tongue and then to translate 'more realistically'<sup>4</sup> into English. He also refers to Indo-Anglian literature as 'an interpretative literature of the most vital character'.<sup>5</sup>

R.K. Narayan, though unlike Anand he had all his education in India and had never been abroad until he had established himself as a writer in English,<sup>6</sup> seems to consider English a more natural medium than Anand does. This is how Narayan reacted when he was asked, in 1968, on a B.B.C. broadcast, if he felt it a strain to write in 'another tongue':

Until you mentioned another tongue I had never any idea that I was writing in another tongue. My whole education has been in English from the primary school, and most of my reading has been in the English language. The language and literature of this country (7) flourished in the Indian soil until recently. It still remains a language of the intelligentsia. But English has been with us for over a century and a half. I am particularly fond of the language. I was never aware that I was using a different, a foreign, language when I wrote in English, because it came to me very easily. I can't explain how. English is a very adaptable language. And it is so transparent it can take on the tint of any country. 8

Narayan's reply, suggesting his total lack of awareness of the English language being at least in some way a problem in the handling of Indian themes, seems too naive for an author of his understanding and perception. It could be Narayan was over-simplifying, for the convenience of B.B.C. listeners, a very complex problem, the problem of choosing a language other than one's mother-tongue, or the language one hears all around. The language Narayan was so fond of and the language that came to him so easily was of course the right language for him to use as his creative medium. But it is not convincing that while writing in English, his mother-tongue Tamil, or the language in which the cultural ethos of his fictitious town of Malgudi is articulated, or all the literatures he read in Indian languages did not create any strain for him as a writer, and English was always the natural medium.

Narayan has of course admitted subsequently the limitations that the English language imposes on Indian authors:

The time has come for us to consider seriously the question of Bharat brand of English. So far English has had a comparatively confined existence in our country chiefly in the halls of learning, justice, or administration. Now the time is ripe for it to come to the dusty street, market place and under the banyan tree. English must adopt the complexity of our life and assimilate its idiom. 9

How does an author write about the people of the market place or the dusty road in a language that is spoken only in the halls of learning? The answer may be simple. He has to translate or interpret the language and idiom in one situation into the language and idiom in another, and this process of translation or interpretation is likely to interfere with communicating adequately and idiomatically. The following passage from R.K. Narayan's paper presented in a Commonwealth Writers' Conference suggests the complexity of the problem, a complexity which Narayan apparently denied in the passage quoted from his B.B.C. broadcast:

English has proved that if a language has flexibility any experience can be communicated through it, even if it has to be paraphrased sometimes rather than conveyed, even if the factual detail...is partially understood. In order not to lose the excellence of this medium a few writers in India took to writing in English, and produced a literature that was perhaps not first class; often the writing seemed imitative, halting, inept, or an awkward translation of the vernacular rhetoric mode or idiom; but occasionally it was brilliant. We are still experimentalists. I may straightway explain what we do not want to do. We are not writing Anglo-Saxon English. The English language, through sheer resilience and mobility, is now undergoing a process of Indianization in the same manner as it adopted U.S. citizenship over a century ago, with the difference that it is the major language there but here one of the fifteen listed in the Indian constitution...

English has been with us for over a century, but it has remained the language of the intelligentsia, less than ten per cent of the population understanding it.... I feel, however, it must reach the market place and the village green if it has to send down roots. 10

Narayan's observations on the suitability and adequacy of the English language in the Indian situation, like those of many in India and abroad, lack clarity and even consistency. On the one hand, he praises English as a flexible language, an excellent medium for Indian authors, and on the other, he says that in spite of its use in India for over a century, it has remained the



language of the intelligentsia, and has yet to travel to the market place. The literature produced in this medium - and Narayan compares this wrongly with the English used in the U.S. a century ago - is imitative, stilted, and so on. The flexibility of the English language or the fondness Narayan has for this language, fortunately, does not make him totally overlook the limitations it imposes on Indian authors who want to use it as creative medium. His preference for English for its flexibility, again, does not sound very meaningful in the context of creative writing in a language. A language is or can be adequately flexible in the context in which it is evolved, and an author can always help in making a language flexible. For creative literature of a high standard, some of the minor languages of India, like Maithili (in which Vidyapati composed his poetry),<sup>11</sup> could be as adequate as the language of Shakespeare; and Narayan's mother-tongue Tamil and the language of his home state, Kannada, known to possess great literary traditions, cannot be said to lack flexibility so as to compel Narayan to adopt English.

If Narayan is not far from Anand in admitting the Indo-Anglian's methods of at least occasionally translating or paraphrasing into English, the original experience absorbed through his mother-tongue, Rao is close to Narayan in realising the necessity of an Indian dialect of English which alone can serve the author adequately. 'Our method of expression has to be a dialect', says Rao, 'which will some day prove to be distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American'.<sup>12</sup> Rao's phrase 'has to be' and Narayan's 'English must adopt...' etc., perhaps suggest the urgency which these novelists feel to see the English language in perfect harmony with the Indian situation.

The purpose of quoting at length from these authors is not to suggest that all these authors view their problem of conveying their Indian experience the same way, or write in English for the same reason. Good

creative writers are not always good literary critics and none of these authors' views in regard to the choice of the medium explains their situation satisfactorily. Often one comes across views expressed by Indo-Anglian authors and critics in regard to the choice of the medium which suggest bias, prejudice or non-literary reasons as the motive behind the choice; and instead of helping to explain the suitability of the English language as a creative medium for Indian authors, such views show the creative potentiality of Indian languages as against English in a wrong perspective. For instance, this is how Anand, who considers Indo-Anglian writing not very different from a literature in translation, justifies his choice of the English language as his creative medium: 'It was the only language that came to hand in a difficult transitional period. And we wanted to say our say, immediately, notwithstanding the political and moral censorship that inhibited our own languages'.<sup>13</sup> If a Premchand could flourish in Hindustani in spite of 'political and moral censorship', why not an Anand? And once political and moral censorship is removed, does Anand suggest that Indo-Anglians should switch to their mother-tongues?

The realisation of major Indo-Anglians like Anand, Rao and Narayan that the English language is not always the natural medium for creative writing by Indians may help us see more clearly the nature and quality of Indo-Anglian writing. Other Indo-Anglian writers and critics do not seem to be as much aware of the inadequacy of their medium as Anand, Rao and Narayan are. Bhattacharya, for instance, does not seem to think that the medium he prefers, English rather than Bengali, makes any difference in the quality of writing:

A cynical voice asks, "How could an Indian peasant speaking English convey reality?" The answer lies in a counter question, "How does Shakespeare convey reality since people in everyday life do not speak blank verse?" The problem is not one of tape recording just as it is not one of photography. The problem is to create the semblance of life, the illusion of truth. In fiction truth alone counts. All literary devices, the words and the gestures, the delving into the mind and the steady dramatic build-up, serve one inward purpose. 14

There is certainly no precise way of judging how the English language determines the nature and quality of Indo-Anglian writing. Though Indo-Anglian authors and critics may not have failed to realise the complexity of reconciling their Indian experience with an alien idiom, they have not always comprehended their situation adequately. It is necessary to distinguish clearly the advantages of writing in English from the achievement in English writing; and to realise the adequacy and potentiality of Indian languages, in the Indian context, as the natural and appropriate creative mediums. A clear perspective in the assessment of the achievement of Indo-Anglian literature cannot emerge as long as English as a creative medium is assumed to be superior to Indian languages because literature in English is so rich; or commercial or non-literary success is confused with literary achievement.

Much of the nature and quality of Indo-Anglian literature as determined by the English language can indeed be explained by comparing it with Indian-language literatures. Had Indo-Anglians preferred their mother-tongues as well (Had Raja Rao, for instance, written Kanthapura in Kannada along with, in English), comparative study of the same material in two languages, English and an Indian language, would have been very appropriate. But, as Indo-Anglians have written little in their mother-tongues, one can only guess what form and shape a work like Kanthapura might have taken had it been written in an Indian language. Professor Narasimhaiah tells us that Rao's Kanthapura is not as successful in its Kannada translation as it is in English. Other critics have affirmed the lesser success of Indo-Anglian works when translated into the authors' mother-tongues. H.Y. Sharada Prasad who has translated Swami and Friends and The Dark Room into Kannada confirms that the latter was not appreciated in Kannada.<sup>15</sup> But Narayan in an interview is reported to have said that The Dark Room was popular with Indian housewives.<sup>16</sup> This fact, whatever may be the reason for it, testifies to the difference in the nature of the works in English and Indian languages. About Kanthapura Narasimhaiah writes:

It is an Indian story, the story of a village told by a village woman, in the lingo of a village and rendered perfectly credible in English, so much so that efforts to translate it into Kannada, Raja Rao's mother-tongue, have met with poor success. It has been admitted even that it is better done in English. Well, what is the criterion of originality, or the adequacy of medium for such intimate purposes of presenting Indian village life. 17

Narasimhaiah seems to think that the success of Kanthapura in English and its failure in the Kannada translation have something to do with the superiority of the English language as a creative medium. On the one hand, he admits that the story of Kanthapura is told by a village woman in the 'lingo' of the village, and on the other, he feels that this 'lingo' is rendered in English so 'perfectly' that its translation into Kannada meets with poor success. The statement is self-contradictory. Perhaps the author of Kanthapura in his 'perfect' rendering of the original dialect of the rustic woman narrator makes the dialect so different from the original that when re-translated, it does not resemble the original. There is no reason why a perfectly rendered text from one language to another cannot be successfully re-translated into the original, unless the original text was considerably changed in translation. Narasimhaiah's analysis of the elaborate devices which Rao adopts in rendering the village 'lingo' into English obviously suggests that Rao has done much more in Kanthapura than merely translating the 'lingo' faithfully.<sup>18</sup> Rao has perhaps acted more as an interpreter of culture than a translator of a tale supposedly narrated in Kannada by a village woman. Narasimhaiah's statement would be sound if by 'perfect rendering' he means the perfect interpretation of the original dialect. It is difficult, then, to see how the English language proves a better medium, if the interpretative version of a narrative, when translated into the language in which it is supposed to be originally written, is not successful.

A comparison of the two texts of Kanthapura, the original in English and the translation in Kannada, might reveal many interesting points: the local colour, the elaborate references to local customs and religious ceremon-

ies, etc., might seem redundant in the Kannada version; the phrases and idioms which are fresh and startling in English, might seem hackneyed in Kannada; and passages which are poetic in English might be dull in the Kannada rendering. Even the attempt to narrate the story in the puranic mode may not appeal in Kannada. The comparatively smaller success of Kanthapura in the Kannada translation could derive from complex causes or simply from the possible inadequacy of the translation. Some Indo-Anglian works apparently have been translated very well and met with success in Indian languages. According to Mulk Raj Anand, Untouchable has translated very effectively into Punjabi: 'The novel was translated into my mother-tongue, Punjabi, with an ease which startled me'.<sup>19</sup> (The Oriya translation of the novel, however, makes poor reading and gives the impression that it is not a work which translates well into Oriya. Untouchable seems to have been translated into several Indian languages more for its message than for its literary merit.) G.S. Amur tells us, 'Three of Malgonkar's novels have been translated into Marathi. They have been widely read and have received some critical attention....'<sup>20</sup> Since works in English and an Indian language by the same author are rarely available for comparison, we might compare Indo-Anglian works with Indian-language works, and some critics have made such comparisons and arrived at certain conclusions. V.S. Naipaul in a casual observation has found R.K. Narayan a more consummate artist than Premchand.<sup>21</sup> M.E. Derrett, comparing Indian-language with Indo-Anglian novels, observes that 'the latter show more awareness of India as related to the outside world, while the former reflect more intimate facts, assuming a definite link between author and reader'.<sup>22</sup> Dorothy Spencer in her long introductory essay to Indian Fiction in English does not find substantial differences between Indian novels written originally in English, and those written in Indian languages and translated into English:

A few writers must be considered exceptions, but for the most part I do not see marked differences between the works on the list published in translation, which is approximately one fourth of the total, and those written in English.<sup>23</sup>

Comparison of an Indo-Anglian with an Indian-language work is hampered by at least three factors: firstly, the two works are meant for two types of audience; secondly, most of the Indian-language works are not yet translated into English; and thirdly, the critic generally has access to both types of works only in the common language of English. Non-availability of Indian-language texts in English is a fact which is easy to discern and critics like Derrett and Spencer who have no access to any Indian language believe that their comparison between Indo-Anglian and Indian-language fiction at the moment may be imbalanced.<sup>24</sup> Almost no critic seems to realise fully the futility of comparing an Indian-language work in English translation with a work originally written in English. There is obviously no way for most of the critics, except to find access to both Indian-language and Indo-Anglian works in English, but, the pertinent question is, how faithful or authentic is, or can be, the translated version of an Indian-language work in English? Does not the Indian-language work in translation differ from the original for the same reason the Indo-Anglian work differs from the Indian-language work? Both Indo-Anglian works and Indian-language works in English translation are meant for the same type of audience and it may well be that an Indian-language work in translation is closer to an Indo-Anglian work than to its original? Do not the Indo-Anglian author and the translator of Indian-language works into English have a great deal in common?

Comparison of Indian language literature and Indo-Anglian literature can best be made by comparing Indian-language and Indo-Anglian works in their original texts, and as much as possible, by confining our study to authors who have written the same work in English and the mother-tongue. Though Indo-Anglians have not written much in their mother-tongue, there are some important Indian-language authors, Tagore being the most prominent of all, who have rendered their original texts into English. Comparison of the Indian-language text with its English equivalent, particularly when the translation is done by

the author himself, might suggest the problems the Indian author faces in conveying his Indian experience in English, and the devices he adopts to solve these problems. Indo-Anglians, at least occasionally, act as translators or interpreters of their culture; and it is significant that Indian-language authors like Tagore are even considered to be Indo-Anglians by some critics though they have only translated into English what they wrote in their mother-tongue.

II

K.C. Panigrahi's novel, Matira Manisha (1931) generally acclaimed as a classic in modern Oriya literature, is a portrait of traditional Indian village life in the pre-independence India, and in some way is similar to Raja Rao's portrait of village life in Kanthapura. The novels have some palpable affinities; both deal primarily with Indian peasants who are innocent of modern education and the English language, and for whom hardly anything matters except the moneylender and the temple. Both the novels were written and published in the thirties and show unmistakably the authors' inclination towards Gandhism and Socialism. Panigrahi does not refer to Gandhi or the Congress in his novel, but writing at a time when Gandhi and Gandhism dominated the Indian political and even literary scene, Panigrahi makes his protagonist, Baraju, practise Gandhism in his domestic life much the same way as Moorthy does, in Kanthapura, in political life. Panigrahi makes Baraju participate in the freedom movement and join the Congress party in the second novel of his trilogy (Matira Manisha is the first of the trilogy) and leaves no doubt as to his intention of making Baraju a Gandhian hero.<sup>25</sup> Both Panigrahi and Rao are contemporaries, both are in their seventies now, and presumably both have been exposed to similar literary and political influences.

Though the similarities between the two novels are great in regard to their theme and even in their message, for the reader who has access to both the texts in the original (in Oriya and in English) the differences are vast. My purpose here is to compare the Oriya text of Matira Manisha with the text in English to see if and when the English text differs from the original; and to refer to Kanthapura, in the light of this comparison, to explain some devices Rao adopts to retain the Indian-language flavour in his English in Kanthapura.

Unlike the two novels referred to later, Gora by Tagore and Steps in Darkness by K.B. Vaid, Matira Manisha is not translated by the author. Gora and Steps in Darkness, being translated by the authors themselves, may



not be far from the authors' original writing in English, and K.B. Vaid does not even state that Steps in Darkness is translated from his Hindi original.<sup>26</sup> One may reasonably argue that Tagore and Vaid, with the anticipation of translating their works into English later, might have written the originals keeping an eye on their translatability into English. Panigrahi clearly writes for his Oriya-reading public, and does not seem to have thought of translating his text into English for a wider audience. Until recently, he was a writer hardly known outside his language-area.

Once a writer is known outside his language-area by the help of translators or by writing in more than one language, he becomes conscious of the translatability of his text into languages other than the one in which he writes. Authors like Tagore and Premchand (who wrote almost all his texts in Hindi and Urdu) tended, in their career, to be more and more cosmopolitan and less and less local as a result of their consciousness of a potential heterogeneous audience. Panigrahi is apparently more local, more provincial and more down-to-earth than Tagore and Vaid, and he has never travelled abroad to be directly exposed to other cultures or situations.

And the translation of Matira Manisha into English as A House Undivided seems far less successful than that of Gora or Uska Bachpan (Steps in Darkness). It could be Tagore and Vaid are better translators, or, being translators of their own works, are better placed to take liberty with their originals than Lila Ray, the translator of Matira Manisha. But Lila Ray's qualifications as a translator are impressive. She is a native speaker of English; she has translated several Bengali novels into English successfully; and she is married to the Bengali novelist Annada Sankar Ray who has also written fiction and poetry in Oriya, and is an intimate literary associate of Panigrahi. Lila Ray presumably has translated Matira Manisha from its Bengali version, but Bengali and Oriya as languages are so close that the Bengali translation is not likely to be substantially different from the original; and Lila Ray, as the wife of an Oriya poet and literary associate of Panigrahi,

can be said to have certain additional advantages while translating a work of Panigrahi.

The nature of the languages more than any other factor seems to create problems in the translation of the Oriya novel into English, so much so that the English text is unrecognisably different from the Oriya; and the artist who has drawn the cover design for the English translation perhaps had no way of knowing that the novelist has portrayed a set of characters hardly resembling the ones he has drawn on the cover. Indian languages, as suggested earlier, differ from English in several general ways; in syntax, in semantics, in matters of cultural associations and so forth. It is possible to suggest how the syntactic structure of an Oriya passage differs from the same in English. But it is not easy to explain how and where Panigrahi changes conventional syntax patterns to add a sense of novelty to his style, how exactly by the use of a single word or phrase he reminds the reader of Oriya folklore, or where he is closer to poetry in his style, and so on. Many of the linguistic experiments, achievements or failures in an Indian-language work are not likely to be carried over to the English translation; and the greater the merit of an Indian-language work for its linguistic achievement, the less its possibility of success in English translation. Panigrahi's work, written in colloquial idiomatic Oriya, is almost impossible to translate into English. Here is the first passage from the opening chapter of the novel, first in word-for-word translation, and then in literal translation:

Our this very intimate very old sun like crore crore  
sun universe in everyday rise everyday set. One one sun around  
crore crore planet satellite chaka chaka bhaunri play-day, night,  
season, month, year create. Them out of one very small planet  
our this very ancient mother-earth, that in Bharatabarsha still  
smaller one country. That in Orissa. That in again (of) Cuttack  
district Birupa on the bank Padhanpara - very small very tiny (of)  
human settlement one. Of Sham Pradhan very tiny cottage that  
village in. His place in universe what - atom or a fragment of  
an atom - who will calculate.

That land which generation first coming set foot, of that no footstep left. That land who first coming seeds sowed, fruits ate, that story might this Birupa river tell, this sun-moon might tell. But today that land in paddy hay is smiling; that land today in human noise has come to life. That on road many children games playing have gone - Sham Pradhan his father grandfather seven generations. Birupa on the bank village oseities joyous huluhuli has rung; village of dead people's flames have burnt; in the ritual for the ghost to bathe coming many widows' bitter weeping of Birupa this dry sand in tears wet has been many years for, who knows.

Literal translation:

Like this very intimate, very ancient sun of ours, crores and crores of suns rise and set everyday in the universe. Crores and crores of planets and satellites play the game of chaka chaka bhaunri around their suns and create days, nights, seasons, months and years. This ancient mother-earth of ours is one of those planets and Bharatabarsha, still smaller, is a country in that. And inside that, Orissa. Inside that, again, Padhanpara, in the district of Cuttack, on the bank of Birupa, a very small very tiny human settlement. The tiny cottage of Sham Pradhan is in that village. What is his place in the universe? Is it an atom or fragment of an atom? Who can tell.

There is no mark of the footsteps of the generation that first stepped into that land. River Birupa and the sun and the moon might tell who first sowed seeds in that land and ate the fruits. But today that land is smiling in paddy and hay; that land has come to life in the noise of human beings. Countless children have played on that road - Sham Pradhan, his father, grandfather and seven generations. Who knows for how long, on the bank of Birupa, the joyous huluhuli of village oseities has resounded; the pyres of the countless dead of the village have burnt high; and the dry sand of the river has been drenched by the bitter tears of widows coming to bathe in the ceremony of the ghost? (Matira Manisha, pp.1-2)

Had Panigrahi written in English, he might have rendered his thoughts in English approximately as I have done in the above passage. He might, while rendering his narrative presumably thought out in Oriya, have observed that the syntactic structure of English sentences being different from that of the Oriya, the emphasis on words and ideas in his narrative was being distorted in the process of the rendering; that the words and images which were meant to convey the subtle cultural nuances of the life of the characters or the locale of the story had often no equivalent in English, and so forth.

How the syntax of a language determines the emphasis on words and

images is of course difficult to explain. The syntactic structure of Indian-language sentences is often different from that of English sentences and that perhaps suggests a variation in thought-process, sense of proportion etc., between Indian-language and English speakers. The Oriya sentence in the word-for-word translation begins with 'Our this very intimate, very ancient sun...' etc., and the English sentence in the translation with 'Like this very intimate very ancient sun of ours' etc. It could be that in the Oriya sentence the word 'our' is more emphasised than 'of ours' in the English sentence. One can perhaps change the English sentence so as to start it with 'our' or to suggest a greater emphasis on 'our', but one cannot continually change the English syntax to fit into the Oriya sense of syntax without making the English unreadable. The second Oriya sentence in the word-for-word translation begins with emphasis on each individual sun ('One one sun...'etc.) that is the centre of crores of planets and satellites whereas in the English rendering the emphasis shifts onto the planets ('Crores and crores of planets...'etc.). To make the English rendering of Oriya sentences readable and intelligible, it is impossible not to violate the Oriya syntactic pattern and the emphasis on words and images however skilfully the rendering is done.

In Lila Ray's translation of Matira Manisha, the first two sentences of the opening chapter go like this:

Suns in hundreds of millions, suns like the Sun we know so well, the familiar Sun of our earth, rise regularly and set as regularly in the larger world of the cosmos. Planets ring them round, circling in an unending game of blind man's buff, a mighty game in the course of which nights and days, months, years and seasons come into existence. (p.5)

In Ray's translation of the first sentence, the reference to the word 'sun' is made four times while in the Oriya sentence, 'sun' is referred to only twice. The Oriya sentence starts with 'Our this....sun' etc., but in Ray's translation the sentence starts with 'Suns in hundreds of millions...' etc., and 'our this sun' becomes 'the familiar sun of our earth'. In the Oriya sentence there is no mention of the word 'earth'. The second English

sentence starts with 'Planets ring them round' etc., and the word 'sun' which occurs once in the Oriya sentence, is not mentioned in the English at all. The individuality and importance of each one of the suns ('One one sun..!') as the centre of crores of planets and satellites ('Crore crore planet satellite...etc.') as suggested in the Oriya sentence is hardly carried over to the English in a phrase like 'Planets ring them round'.

The shift of emphasis on words and images seems almost inevitable in the rendering of Indian-language text into English, and this might lead to several other changes, that is, the change of syntax might lead to addition and deletion of words, variance in the length of the sentence and so forth. All these changes might mean a style entirely different from that of the original.

Among the Indo-Anglians, Raja Rao alone seems to be aware of the shift of emphasis that is caused while rendering Indian-language sentences into English, and in Kanthapura, he twists the English syntax considerably to suggest the Indian emphasis on words and images. The first two sentences of the opening chapter of Kanthapura can serve as examples:

Our village - I don't think you have ever heard about it -  
Kanthapura is its name, and it is in the province of Kara.  
High on the Ghats is it, high up the steep mountains that face  
the cool Arabian seas, up the Malabar coast is it, up Mangalore  
and Puttur and many a centre of cardamom and coffee, rice and  
sugarcane. (p.1)

'Kanthapura is its name' instead of 'Its name is Kanthapura' is perhaps closer to an Indian-language sentence than to an English one and suggests greater emphasis on the identity of the village. 'High on the Ghats is it, high up...' etc., may be closer to the rhythm of the Indian language than to that of English.

At least two other changes, besides the change in the emphasis on words and images as the result of the change in word order, are likely to happen in any rendering of an Indian-language work into English: firstly, the change of tense; secondly, the change of voice. What is known as sequence of

tense in English grammar is not so significant a fact in the context of Indian languages. An Indian-language passage might apparently contain verb-forms of the past, present and the future tense and yet be quite consistent.<sup>27</sup> It is the context more often than the form of the verb that indicates the tense. One can for instance use the past or the present form of a verb to indicate the past tense. In the English rendering both may look alike, but in Indian languages, the use of the two forms of verb though indicating the same tense might suggest a subtle difference unlikely to be carried over to the English rendering. One may compare an Oriya passage with its English translation to see the difference in the tense of verb-forms. An Oriya passage from the first chapter, translated faithfully retaining the original verb-forms, would go roughly as follows:

The old woman's attention is a little more on the younger of the two daughters-in-law. There is no other reason for that, except that she is the younger. People take a little more pity on those who are small and weak. That is why the old woman would always see whether the younger daughter-in-law had had her bath and had the meal, had done her hair and put on the haldi. The elder daughter-in-law cannot tolerate all this. Her feet do not touch the floor as she is the mother of four children. She claims to be the favourite of the mother-in-law, father-in-law and the husband. (pp. 8-9)

In Ray's English translation, among other differences, the difference in the tense of the verb-forms may be noted:

Old Mother Pradhan kept an eye on Chakri's wife, Netramoni. Netramoni was new to the family and she was the youngest. Those who are weaker and younger usually get more attention than others. Mother Pradhan always asked her if she had rubbed herself down with tumeric paste, taken her bath, had her meal or dressed her hair. Barju's wife didn't like such partiality. She was the mother of four children and considered herself entitled to the most attention for that reason. She was very proud of her motherhood, so proud that she was virtually puffed up with conceit. (p.12)

In the Oriya passage, all the verb-forms except in one sentence ('That is why the old woman would always see...' etc.) are in the present tense, whereas in the English, all the verb-forms with the single exception ('Those who are smaller and weaker usually get more attention...' etc.) are in the past tense. That is, in the two passages, except in one sentence, the verb-

forms change in all the sentences. It is possible to point out such difference in the tense of verb-forms throughout the two texts. And how does it matter? Apparently it makes only a minor difference and many readers and critics would not think it important. This difference is perhaps less important than the difference in the syntax. One can even argue that the verb-forms in the Oriya and the English passages are really in the same tense (the past tense), and the verb-forms in the Oriya passage, though in the present, are indicative of the past. Without exaggerating the way the change in the tense matters in making the English text different from the Oriya, it might be said that the tense, being indicative of time, might have something to do with the concept of time of the narrator, or the context of time of the narrative. Narrating a story in the present tense, however distant and old the story might be by implication, is suggestive of a sense of contemporaneity which a story narrated in the past tense might not carry. The predominance of the verbs in the past tense in the English rendering of Matira Manisha might suggest greater consistency and coherence in the time sequence but less sense of contemporaneity than the Oriya text does with its predominance of the verbs in the present tense. Because of the change in the tense the tone and mood of the narrative might not remain the same. The Indian concept of time, with its emphasis on the eternal rather than the concrete and the transitory, might have something to do with the verb forms Indians use to indicate their sense of time. In puranas and folktales the narrative is often in the present tense to indicate a sense of relevance and nearness. Raja Rao has tried in Kanthapura to capture the Indian mode of time-sequence by narrating the story mostly in the present tense:

So Moorthy goes from house to house, and from younger brother to elder brother, and from elder brother to grandfather himself, and what do you think? - he even goes to the Potters' quarter and the Weavers' quarter and the Sudra quarter, and I closed my ears when I heard he went to the Pariah quarter. We said to ourselves, he is one of these Gandhi-men, who say there is neither caste nor clan nor family, and yet they pray like us and they live like us. Only they

say, too, one should not marry early, one should allow widows to take husbands and a brahmin might marry a pariah and a pariah a brahmin. Well, well, let them say it, how does it affect us? (p.9)

To an English ear the narrating of the Kanthapura story in the present tense might seem unusual. Had Lila Ray tried to capture the exact sense of time as indicated by the verb forms in Matira Manisha, her work would have considerably resembled Kanthapura. One of the reasons why many English works make poor reading when translated into Indian languages is the translator's lack of understanding of the difference in the use of verb forms for indicating time in English and Indian languages. It may be noted in passing that Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable is hardly readable in its Oriya translation, Achhaba,<sup>28</sup> and the translator's failure to change the English verb forms adequately to make them consistent and natural in Oriya is one of the reasons for its being so.

Voice is another significant factor that differentiates English from Indian languages. In English, speakers perhaps take more liberty in changing the voice, and quite often it may not matter whether the sentence is in the active or passive voice. In Indian languages, however, the active voice is much more common than the passive and the change of voice may be quite significant.<sup>29</sup> Here are some sentences from Matira Manisha literally translated with the original voice retained. Lila Ray's translation follows each of them:

(A) Between the two daughters-in-law, the old woman's attention is a little more on the younger. (lit. tr., p.8)

Old Mother Pradhan kept an eye on Chakri's wife.... (Ray, p.12)

(B) Call Sham Pradhan if there is a quarrel inside or outside the village; if someone is sick or has any trouble, call Sham Pradhan; if a list of purchases for someone's household is to be made, call Sham Pradhan. (lit. tr., p.4)

...when a dispute arose between two of the villagers Shyam Pradhan was called in to settle it. Pradhan was consulted when shopping lists had to be drawn up for weddings and purchases made and it was to him anyone in trouble turned for help. (Ray, p.8)

(C) Old Sham Pradhan thinks, the naughty boy will be all right when the yoke falls on the shoulder. (Lit. tr., p.14)

Shyam Pradhan had hoped the boy would lose his restlessness and steady down when he became accustomed to the yoke. (Ray, p.17)



In (A), in the Oriya sentence, it is 'attention' (the Oriya word for 'attention' is najar which literally means 'eye-sight') which is the subject whereas in the English rendering, 'Old Mother Pradhan' is the subject. The author could have made 'Old Mother Pradhan' instead of 'the old woman's attention' the subject of the Oriya sentence and without making much difference in the meaning. But by making 'the old woman's attention' the subject of the sentence, he adds a suffix to the Oriya synonym of 'attention' (ta) and this makes the sentence a little different from the one with 'Old Mother Pradhan' as the subject. The Oriya sentence suggests both the seriousness with which the old woman keeps an eye on the younger daughter-in-law and the sense of irony which is implied in the situation that the younger daughter-in-law is not as weak as the old woman thinks her to be.

In (B), the Oriya clause 'Call Sham Pradhan' and the English rendering 'Shyam Pradhan was called in' or 'was consulted' show not only a difference in the voice, but also in the 'person'. In the Oriya clause, the subject is 'you', whereas in the English it is 'they' (by them). The English clause suggests the popularity and importance of Sham Pradhan as much as the Oriya clause. But, by using the Oriya expression 'Call Sham Pradhan', the author refers to Sham Pradhan exactly the way a villager might do in his conversation, and the Oriya reader might feel as if he was hearing a villager praising a co-villager, Sham Pradhan.

In (C), the meaning of the two idiomatic expressions 'when the yoke falls on the shoulder' and 'when he became accustomed to the yoke' might not really differ much although there is perhaps a little more emphasis on 'the yoke' in the Oriya sentence than in the English.

Clearly Raja Rao is aware of the subtle change in meaning that takes place by changing the voice when an Indian-language sentence is translated into English, and in Kanthapura he often retains the voice of the original Indian-language sentence even when it sounds awkward in English:

(A) Three days later, when we were just beginning to say Ram-Ram after the rice had been thrown back to the rice granary, the cradle hung back to the roof, and the cauldron put back on the bath fire, and the gods put back in their sanctum, and all the houses washed and swept and adorned and sanctified.... (p.157)

(B) ...and he says, "Never mind. Is everything ready, for soon must the conch be blown," and we all say, "Who will blow it? Who?" (p.163)

(C) ...and they say always, "Are your prayers finished, aunt? Are your ablutions finished, aunt?" before every meal. (p.179)

The sentences in the passive voice in the above passages are as they would be uttered normally in an Indian language. By translating what is presumably a bit of dialogue in Kannada as "Are your prayers finished, aunt? Are your ablutions finished, aunt?" instead of "Have you finished your prayers, aunt? Have you finished your ablutions, aunt?", Rao perhaps tries to retain in English the importance attached to 'prayers' and 'ablutions' by Indians as suggested in their language. The importance of rituals and customs in Indian society is reflected in Indian languages. Since the conch is not simply an Indian bugle, and it has great religious and ritualistic significance, "Must the conch be blown?" instead of "Should we blow the conch?" All the acts like throwing back the rice into the granary, the hanging the cradle back onto the roof, putting the cauldron back on the bath fire and putting the gods back in their sanctum are significant as religious rituals and are to be performed ceremoniously. They are perhaps more important than the persons who perform them. 'After the rice had been thrown back' and 'after we had thrown back the rice' may suggest an altogether different relation between the rice and the people who throw the rice back into the granary. Rice, for Indians, is symbolic of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth and many Indians treat rice or paddy with reverence. 'The rice had been thrown back into the rice granary' and 'the gods put back in their sanctum' are uttered in the same mood of awe and respect.

The changes in the syntax, the tense and the voice matter if one is to

adequately render an Indian-language work into English. But they seem far less significant when it comes to transmitting cultural nuances of the Indian people as expressed in their languages to an alien language like English. Indo-Anglians apparently tackle this problem of cultural transmissibility by translating Indian-language idioms and proverbs literally into English, interpreting Indian rituals and customs, or simply avoiding the cultural details likely to be unintelligible to the reader. There is of course always the possibility of the Indo-Anglian's lack of inwardness with the Indian cultural and social ethos, the Indo-Anglian being often an expatriate or Westernised Indian.

Comparing the literal translation with Ray's translation of the first passage of Matira Manisha (given earlier), we can notice considerable difference between the two. In the Oriya passage, the planets and satellites are described as playing the game of chaka chaka bhaunri. Chaka chaka bhaunri literally means 'circling round and round'. It is also the name of a game which children play in the village street. In the game, a number of children circle round and round one child, singing a popular song which opens with the words, chaka chaka bhaunri. The novelist by bringing in the image of the game suggests a sense of playfulness and ordinariness though referring also to the profound significance of the planets circling round the sun. The circling of the earth and planets around the sun is an image which is repeated in the novel a number of times. For instance, in the third chapter, the novelist describes the death of Old Mrs. Pradhan thus: 'The old woman died. The earth did not change, not even a thread. This old earth of ours went on circling round the familiar sun, as usual, with its usual speed' (literally translated from Oriya, p.21). And this is how, in chapter ten, the novelist refers to the fact that human nature has not undergone any change even though modern man is living in cities instead of jungles:

Jungles were transformed to cities. Human nature remained what it was. Jealousy, envy and vanity continued to thrive. The earth is circling round the sun creating days, nights, months and years. The human race is flowing like a current. Kings, emperors, wars, acts of jealousy, pride and vanity have vanished from this earth... etc. 21 (literally translated from Oriya, p.122).

Ray deleted the image of chaka chaka bhaunri from the first passage presumably for the fear of making the image unintelligible to the reader. Since there is no equivalent in the English language of the phrase chaka chaka bhaunri, the translator had one choice - to retain the original expression and add a couple of words to explain the phrase. Instead, Ray introduces the phrase 'an unending game of blind man's buff' which is not in the original and is rather against the spirit of the image of chaka chaka bhaunri.

The passages in the original Oriya and in Ray's translation differ in several other ways. In the Oriya, the universe is referred to as bishwa-brahmanda. Brahmanda, meaning the 'universe', is a term of religious significance implying something like the manifestation of Brahma. In the Oriya Bhagabata, the most popular and widely read religious work in Oriya villages, from which the novelist has quoted several times, one famous couplet describes God as one in whose hair-roots exist innumerable brahmandas. Ray's phrase 'the larger world of the cosmos' does not quite correspond to brahmanda with its Hindu association. Again, Oriya terms like pruthibimata (mother-earth) are considerably distorted by Ray's use of words like basundhara. Basundhara is a Sanskrit word which is not there in the original and which, being a much-used and hackneyed expression, the novelist has taken care to avoid.

Besides deleting expressions or changing expressions suggesting social and cultural nuances, Ray goes on interpreting facts which are just mentioned in the original, and such interpretation makes the translated text significantly different from the original. Here are some of the sentences translated literally and then translated by Ray:

(A) ...and the dry sand of the river has been drenched by the bitter tears of widowed women come to take bath in the ceremony of the ghost. (lit. tr., p.2)

The dry sand is flooded with the wild weeping of widowed women who came to take the cleansing ritual bath as required by custom on the conclusion of their husbands' last rites. (Ray, p.6)

(B) From ancient times all the dharma of Padhanpara has been accumulated at the shrine of Mother Mangala made up of black stone, under that Mandara plant. (lit. tr., p.3)

Since time immemorial the faith of the people of Pradhan Para has centred around the black stone image of goddess Mangala which was set up long ago in a shrine at the base of a spreading tree. (Ray, p.6)

In (A), the novelist uses the term preta-kriya (ghost-ceremony) which means the ceremony performed for the dead, and the bathing of the women in the river is a part of that ceremony. Ray translates the term in a long phrase, 'the cleansing ritual bath as required by custom on the conclusion of their husbands' last rites'. In (B), she adds a phrase 'image of goddess' which is not there in the original, and translates the Mandara plant as a spreading tree. The Mandara plant with its bright red flowers is associated with Goddess Mangala with the red vermillion pasted upon her, and the omission of the name of the tree distorts the original idea. The Mandar plant is not a spreading tree and the translator moves away from the original still further. Explanatory words like 'custom', 'ritual' and 'image' which are a part of the anthropologist's or the literary critic's jargon are simply not to be found anywhere in the original.

As suggested earlier, it is not always possible to explain how several subtle linguistic devices of a work in an Indian language cannot be carried over to the English translation. Panigrahi's achievement in Matira Manisha, more than anything else, is in the way he uses the Oriya language; and it is not easy to convince a reader acquainted with the English translation alone that Matira Manisha is a perfect work of art. The linguistic innovations which seem significant in the context of an Indian-language literature may even seem trivial to an English reader. And as Adil Jussawalla in his 'Introduction'

to New Writing in India (1974) rightly points out, linguistic innovations are among the major preoccupations of contemporary Indian writers.<sup>30</sup>

Two examples might suggest Panigrahi's supple use of language which cannot be reproduced exactly in English translation. In the first passage referred to earlier, the novelist brings in the image of crores and crores of planets and satellites playing the game of chaka chaka bhaunri around their suns. In the Oriya passage, the contrast between 'one one sun' and 'crore crore planet satellite' (literal translations of the Oriya phrases) creates a poetic effect in the sense that the Oriya equivalents of 'one' and 'crore' (Gotie and Kotie) alliterate. Panigrahi presumably prefers the numerical adjective 'crore' to 'million' or 'thousand' to create a poetic effect. Ray replaces 'crore' by 'million' as the English reader might find an easier number to comprehend.

Panigrahi, referring to the various dynasties that have ruled over the country leaving Padhanpara unaffected, introduces the image of the grass and the giant tree. The Oriya sentence can be literally translated thus: 'As if Padhanpara, in all times, is the humble grass. Big trees tumble down in storms, but the news does not reach the grass' (p.2). The contrast between the grass and the big tree is a hackneyed image in Indian literature. Panigrahi renders it fresh by contrasting the two terms at a linguistic level. He uses the colloquial word for grass (ghasa) and the Sanskrit word for big tree (druma). He could have referred to 'grass' and 'big tree' in several other ways - by using colloquial words for both, Sanskrit words for both or by using a Sanskrit word for 'grass' and a colloquial word for 'big tree'. He prefers a particular combination for a particular effect. Any of the combinations perhaps could be translated in the same way in English.

While trying to reproduce in English a story supposedly narrated in Kannada, Raja Rao, in Kanthapura, follows the devices of literally translating Kannada idioms and proverbs, and interpreting situations peculiar to the Kannada country. As discussed in the previous chapter, Rao in his literal

rendering of Kannada proverbs etc., has been sometimes unintelligible and he has often deliberately loaded his writing with sociological and other information. He has not, perhaps could not, always succeeded in carrying over to English linguistic devices such as the interplay of Sanskrit and colloquial words so significant in the context of Indian-language literature. Raja Rao's rendering of an imaginary Kannada narrative in English has its parallel in Ray's translation of an Oriya novel into English. If the difference between the Oriya novel and its English translation is considerable, might there not be the same gap between Rao's imaginary Kannada narrative and its English counterpart?

III

The changes in syntax, tense and voice as well as the non-availability of English equivalents of Indian words and idioms suggesting complex cultural nuances of Indian life often make the English rendering of Indian works different from the original. One could argue that the difference between the two texts of Matira Manisha is partly due to incompetent translation; and several English translations of Indian works are closer to the original. That is, the difference may vary from case to case. The translator and the material translated are two important factors in determining the quality of translation, and it is true in the case of translation from Indian languages to English as much as from any one language to another. But in the case of translation from Indian languages to English, however skilful the translator is, the difference between English and the Indian language in regard to syntax, etc., and, more importantly, in regard to cultural associations, can hardly be eliminated. It is possible, however, to translate an Indian novel dealing with city life or university life - that is, the Westernised India - more satisfactorily than a novel dealing with rural India.

Before comparing the original and the translated version of the same work when the translation is done by the author himself, I should mention that many of the Indian novels translated into English, though appreciated and acclaimed in translation by critics having no access to the original, have often been disparaged by local critics as inadequate and poor representations of the originals. Professor Naresh Guha, a Bengali speaker, expresses his disappointment at the translation of the Bengali novels, Pather Panchali and Putul Nacher Itikatha, both sponsored by UNESCO and acclaimed by some Western critics as masterpieces.<sup>31</sup> Meenakshi Mukherjee fails to recognise, reading the novels in English translation, why Thakazhi's Two Measures of Rice and The Unchaste are considered important works in Malayalam.<sup>32</sup>



Most of the critical opinion about Indian literature in English translation suggests the translator's poor command - most of the translators being Indians - of the English language. But little heed has been paid so far to the fact that adequate command of English would not solve all the problems of such translation. Translation takes place at the level of language and at the level of culture. For a translator of an Indian work into English, both these levels matter considerably, and affect the nature and quality of the translation.

K.B. Vaid's translation of his Hindi novel Uska Bachpan (1957) into English as Steps in Darkness (1962) might explain how the Indian novelist writing in an Indian language and English might differ in the style of his language, in the treatment of the material and so forth. Vaid does not mention that Steps in Darkness is a translation from his Hindi original, and the two versions, the Hindi and the English, may be accepted as equally original writing. In that case, one might see this as an example of an author writing the same work in two different languages. Though Vaid cannot be said to be an Indo-Anglian according to the definition of the term stated in the introduction of this study, Vaid's own claim that Steps in Darkness is an original work adds special significance to the comparison of the two texts to understand how an Indo-Anglian might differ from an Indian-language writer.

It is interesting that Vaid, unlike Panigrahi and like most of the Indo-Anglians, has been educated and has lived in the West for a long time. He has done research on James Joyce for a doctorate at Harvard University and has taught for some time in the U.S.A. Thus he has come in contact with the West directly. Besides translating his own works, he has also translated Nirmal Verma's Hindi novel, Ye Din, as Days of Longing (1964).

Comparing the two novels, Steps in Darkness and Uska Bachpan, at once makes the impression that Steps in Darkness is a simplified, slightly abridged

version of Uska Bachpan. Both the novels are equally readable and the English version can be recognised as a work of some merit. But the superiority of the Hindi version in the matter of style, particularly in the way Vaid manipulates the Hindi language to create the appropriate idiom for his theme, is indisputable.

Vaid in these works deals with poverty, hatred and domestic unhappiness in a lower middle class Hindu household. The world Vaid deals with, like the world of Matira Manisha, is the traditional India in which neither the English language nor the values imbibed through Western education have made much impact. Vaid is apparently conscious of the inadequacy of the English language for dealing with such a world and makes the two versions considerably different to cater to the two kinds of audience.

There is ample evidence from the two texts that Vaid wants to retain the original flavour of the Hindi version in his English rendering, and there are passages in both the texts which are very close to each other. One can get some idea of Vaid's Hindi style from such passages as this:

He knows the meanings of ~~these~~ expressions and can use them very aptly. Mother is a she-devil. She doesn't give water to Granny. Smoke is all her creation. ~~Damp~~ faggots are just an excuse. She is always quarrelling with everybody. Her loaves are uneatable, either underdone or overdone. That's why Father beats her so often. (But he beats her even otherwise?) She has no respect for the old. She wants Granny to die. She has often said so.  
(Steps in Darkness, p.13)

This passage consists of twelve short sentences and all the sentences are simple, unidiomatic, direct statements. The equivalent Hindi passage consists of eleven sentences and the sentences are of similar nature. The first two short sentences in the Hindi passage are in fact made into one in the English by the conjunction 'and'. Except for the syntactic changes that are inevitable in any rendering from Hindi to English, the two passages correspond to each other in every other respect, and the reader can get the same idea by reading the passage in either language. Here is another example:

The door is closed. Beero begins to stare at the golden hornets studded on the slimy surface of the drain. He counts them, makes mistakes, is vaguely conscious of having done so, thinks of catching them, squeezing out their stings and tying their legs with a piece of thin thread and flying them like kites. Exhausted by these fancies, he sits down and begins to draw lines on the ground with a piece of straw. His attention is arrested by an ant. He blocks its way, then offers his straw as a stair, picks it up between his fingers, puts it on his palm and blows at it; the dust is blown off and the ant clings to his palm. He jerks his hand vigorously, the ant is lost and he realizes he is hungry. (Steps in Darkness, p.16)

This passage consists of seven sentences while the Hindi equivalent has nine. The novelist has tried to retain the original style by translating the long Hindi sentences consisting of a number of short sentences (grammatically speaking, clauses) exactly the same way in English ('He counts them, makes mistakes,...' etc.); and the English and the Hindi passages do not differ noticeably in their style. But this English passage is not as close to the Hindi as the previous one is. In the Hindi passage the novelist employs a series of colloquial expressions to describe the activities of the boy, of which the English fails to communicate the connotations fully. Hindi words such as Dhakalne, Pakalne, Jhatak, Chutki, Chapat as employed in the passage suggest a sense of innocent mischief along with a rusticity neither easy to explain nor to carry over to the English rendering.

While some English passages like the ones referred to earlier are very close, or not very different from the Hindi equivalents, others are quite different, sometimes unrecognisably so; and one may reasonably ask if the difference is due to the novelist's intention to change the original or due to the non-availability of English equivalents of Hindi words, phrases, idioms, etc. In view of the fact that several English passages are quite close to their Hindi equivalents, the latter seems more plausible. We can take the first sentence of the opening chapter of the novel. The literal translation of the first Hindi sentence is something like this:

Granny is lying on the mat, dirty, withered, cramped, as if she is an unshapely bundle of some villager, that can open and be scattered anytime. (Uska Bachpan, p.5)

The punctuation marks in the above translation are as in the original. The Hindi word employed for 'mat' is charpai which is a mat most probably made of hay or straw and used as bed by poor people. There are other Hindi words for 'mat' suggesting superior quality of texture. The Hindi equivalents of words like 'dirty', 'withered', and 'cramped' are compound words which individually and collectively suggest an idiomatic usage not likely to be done by 'dirty, withered and cramped'. So the novelist compares Granny with a villager's unshapely bundle or gathri. Gathri is a term which has no exact English equivalent and 'bundle' is far too sophisticated a word to suggest the stinky smell and dirty look of the gathri. This is how the novelist renders the above passage into English:

Granny is in her bed, cramped and withered, her knees touching her chin, swaddled in a dirty quilt - an unshapely bundle, ever on the verge of a total collapse. (Steps in Darkness, p.7)

Charpai is translated as 'bed' and the Hindi expression for 'dirty, withered and cramped' consisting of six words (three compound words, that is) suggesting the image of Granny so felicitously is rendered in English as 'cramped and withered'. And what is more significant, the novelist changes the original image of 'an unshapely bundle of some villager' to simply 'an unshapely bundle'. If he did not find in English the exact equivalent of Hindi words like charpai and maili-kucheli (dirty) etc., he probably thought that the reference to the villager would not suggest to the English reader what it did to the Hindi reader. Thus the two passages differ significantly.

Here is another Hindi passage literally translated, which retains the original forms of punctuation:

The door of the hallway is the mouth of the house, if it opens sometimes, it closes sometimes. When it opens, smoke from the kitchen, like a prisoner, released, walks slowly towards the

lane, but from its slow walk one suspects that it is unhappy about being released from this prison, as if it is not a prisoner, but an inhabitant of this house. And when the door closes, the smoke like the son of a Devil whirls about the hallway. And Granny coughs and coughs and gets tired. (Uska Bachpan, p.5)

And this is how Vaid renders the Hindi passage into English:

The door of the hallway is the mouth of this house. It opens and shuts with a creaking noise. When it is open, smoke from the kitchen moves through the hallway towards the lane like a prisoner just released but either too tired or too reluctant to quit the dungeon at a greater pace. And when it is closed the smoke begins to whirl about in the hallway like a spoilt child showing off before strangers. And Granny is gripped by a horrible fit of coughing. (Steps in Darkness, p.8)

The two passages are obviously similar in their description of the smoke, the way it moves in the hallway and the effect it creates on Granny, except that in the Hindi, the smoke is referred to as 'as if it is not a prisoner but an inhabitant of the house', a phrase deleted in the English, and instead, a new phrase, 'a spoilt child showing off before strangers', is introduced. This deletion and addition do not seem to have anything to do with the problem of translating from Hindi to English, and seem to be the novelist's attempt to change or improve upon the original text. But what makes the two passages different is the sense of style, and though the English passage contains the same idea as the Hindi, it does not quite create the same effect.

The Hindi passage consists of four sentences, whereas the English has five. Each Hindi sentence consists of a number of small sentences (Grammatically, of course, 'clauses' should be the right word to describe such components of a sentence). The first Hindi sentence, for instance, is made up of three short sentences: 'the door of the hallway is the mouth of the house', 'it opens sometimes' and 'it closes sometimes'. Each of these small sentences with the Hindi verb-form hai, could be easily given the status of a grammatical sentence (Now, they are clauses being parts of a long sentence), only by changing the punctuation marks and dropping the preposition 'if'. The novelist combines the three potentially independent sentences into one to suggest a

particular style. In the English rendering, 'The door of the house is the mouth of the house. It opens and shuts with a creaking noise', consists of two sentences with a different style from the Hindi original.

In the Hindi, the second small sentence of the first long sentence (If it opens sometimes) is the first small sentence of the second long sentence (when it opens, smoke from the kitchen... etc.); and the third small sentence of the first long sentence ( it closes sometimes) is the first small sentence of the third long sentence (when the door closes, the smoke like the son of a Devil... etc.). Thus, in the Hindi passage, the second sentence repeats one part of the first sentence, and the third sentence repeats another part of the first sentence. Thus, the three sentences are closely integrated. In the English passage the sentences are not integrated in quite the same way. The sense of rhythm suggested by combining a number of small sentences - in fact, the Hindi passage consists of thirteen small sentences - and the repetition of some of the sentences is not carried over to the English rendering. Here are two other examples which might suggest the difference in the style when presenting a similar idea:

(a) (i) The Hindi passage in literal translation retaining the original punctuation marks:

Sometimes he looks at Mother, sometimes at Granny; sometimes he is irritated, sometimes he is calm. When he is irritated, all the pulses of his body throb and he feels as if his body is bursting. And when he is calm, he feels as if his body is melting away, as if someone has sucked all the pulp off his body. (Uska Bachpan, p.10)

(ii) The author's English rendering:

Beero alternates his glances between the two, feeling irritated and amused by turns. In fits of irritation all the pulses of his body throb and his head seems to be on the point of bursting. (Steps in Darkness, pp.14-15)

(b) (i) the Hindi passage literally translated retaining the punctuation marks:

...Granny goes on listening to the foot-steps of people coming and going, and goes on guessing as to who is going where. (Uska Bachpan, p.5)

(ii) The author's English rendering:

She keeps herself busy guessing as to who is going where. (Steps in Darkness, p.8)

The novelist in his rendering of the Hindi text into English sometimes retains the original style by translating the Hindi passage sentence by sentence; and at other times, as in the cases suggested just now, takes liberties with the original passages by combining several sentences into one, or by omitting sentences and phrases. Having read both versions of the novel, I feel that the novelist does not succeed in sustaining the uniformity of style of his Hindi work in his English rendering.

The idioms, proverbs and swear words - and they are abundant in the Hindi version - seem to have been considerably minimised and transformed in the English version. If the non-availability of English equivalents of colloquial Hindi words such as charpai and gathri changes the flavour of the Hindi novel in its English rendering, the omission and transformation of idioms, proverbs and swear-words make the change still more significant. The world of poverty, hatred and domestic unhappiness as conveyed in the novelist's idiomatic Hindi style, is not carried over to the English rendering. We can once again compare the literal translation of the Hindi with its English rendering by the author:

(A) Literal translation:

Granny's ears are very thin. But Mother's are perhaps more so, and she comes out, leaving behind all her works, making dhum dhum and goes back pressing her teeth when she sees Granny moving her hand on the back of the man or woman sitting nearby and giving blessings. (Uska Bachpan, pp. 5-6)

Author's rendering:

Granny's ears are very sharp but Mother's are even sharper perhaps, for she never fails to rush to the spot as soon as she hears someone responding to the call of Granny. At her approach, Granny's whispers are at once transformed into loud blessings for the sinner. (Steps in Darkness, pp. 8-9).

In the Hindi passage, the author employs a number of idiomatic expressions, such as 'ears are very thin' (ears are sharp), 'pressing her teeth' (getting angry), 'making dhum dhum' (making noise out of anger), 'moving her hand over the back' (caressing) etc. In the English rendering, none of the original idioms are retained. One might of course argue that the Hindi 'ears are thin' is not very different from the English 'ears are sharp'.

(B) Literal translation:

-Are you asking for water? Are you blind, don't you see, I am crying at the name of fuels. I don't have four hands, go away, go away from this place. (Uska Bachpan, p.9)

Author's rendering:

"Water! Are you blind? Have I ten hands? Run away." (Steps in Darkness, p.13).

'Crying at the name of fuels' means that the fuel is so bad that it makes one weep. The novelist omits this idiom in the English rendering.

(C) Literal translation:

- He who will act,  
will get the profit.

- She makes a hole in the very pot she eats from. (Uska Bachpan, p.10).

Author's rendering:

"As you sow so shall you reap".

"Ungrateful". (Steps in Darkness, p.14)

The Hindi idiom 'to make a hole in the very pot one eats from' is



rendered as 'ungrateful' in the English. The Hindi proverb 'He who will act, will get the profit' is changed to 'As you sow so shall you reap' in the English.

(D) Literal translation:

- Clapping, after all, is made by two hands! - Mother demonstrates by making a clap. (Uska Bachpan, p.13).

Author's rendering:

"It takes two to make a quarrel just as it takes two hands to clap." (Mother demonstrates her proverb by clapping.) Steps in Darkness, p.18).

In the English rendering the author explains the meaning of the proverb, and thus the proverbial quality and form are lost.

(E) Literal translation:

- Why are you getting angry with him? Ask me, I sent him.

- Do I ask you, my shoe. (Uska Bachpan, p.15)

Author's rendering:

"Why are you shouting at him? Talk to me. I sent him."

"You did! Why! Is he your servant?" (Steps in Darkness, p.22).

The swear-word 'shoe' is dropped from the English rendering as it is not likely to convey the sense of contempt it does in Hindi.

IV

Before suggesting how Tagore's English translation of his novel, Gora, differs from his Bengali original, it seems relevant to note a few facts about Tagore's literary achievement and the critical appraisal he has received in India and abroad. Tagore is decidedly the most important poet and author of modern India; and though there is no literary genre in which his achievement is not significant, he is first and foremost a lyric poet who combines, harmoniously, the English Victorian and Romantic traditions as expressed by Tennyson and Shelley, and the Indian Bhakti tradition as expressed by the Upanishads, the Vaishnava poets and the Bauls of Bengal. In his diction and form he is as close to the English Romantics as he is in his tone and mood to the Vaishnava poets. His novels deal with themes of great contemporary relevance, themes such as the encounter between the East and the West, never dealt with so elaborately by any Indian novelist before him - with the message of universal brotherhood and cosmopolitanism rather than of Hindu revivalism as preached or suggested by his distinguished predecessor, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. His novel form is surprisingly modern; and he is the first Indian novelist who shows depth in character portraits by studying characters as individuals and as psychological beings (Anand's observation in this regard is quoted earlier). His plays are less contemporary than his novels and are mostly based on Hindu myths and classics. His essays reveal him as a very enlightened mind who dreamt of a vital world culture with the happy blending of all that is best in the East and the West.

To read Tagore in English translation - and no Indian author has translated into English as much of his works as Tagore has done - is to miss much of his genuine greatness. The successful experiment in Bengali of adopting the diction and form of the English Romantics, and the closeness of the rhythm, tone and mood of his songs to those of the Bauls of Bengal,

cannot be carried over to the English translation. Poems remarkable as experiments in diction might seem hackneyed rather than fresh and original when translated into English. The praise given to Tagore for his craftsmanship or form in the novel may seem extreme when his novels are translated into English, since the novel, in the West, was already a developed form when Tagore wrote his novels, and while appearing a pioneer in Bengali, he was mostly imitating a form that was conventional in the West.

One who can read Tagore in Bangali and in English translation cannot perhaps help asking these questions: Why did Tagore spend so much time and energy in translating into English what he wrote in Bengali? Didn't he realise that much of his original was lost in translation? How could Tagore get world recognition - the Nobel prize and so on - for translations of his works which look like mediocre stuff in English? What makes Indian critics who have no access to Bengali admire and appreciate Tagore so emphatically?

The answers to these questions can not only help us understand Tagore and much of the critical tribute to him, it can in a way explain the odd situation of the Indian-language as well as the Indo-Anglian author. The simple fact that a major literary figure like Tagore, writing in a major Indian language, felt the necessity to translate so much of his works into English, is a unique fact in literary history. Tagore himself seems to have left no record as to why he did so; interestingly though, he increasingly realised, while translating his works into English, that he was doing injustice to his works and to his own language.<sup>33</sup> Tagore's purpose in translating so many of his works into English does not seem to be purely a literary one. Like so many of his age, he intended to reach an audience wider than the Bengali-speaking one, and particularly, the English and the Western. To impress upon the English-reading public the greatness of Indian literature,

philosophy and tradition, was a motive for many in India then, and even now after Independence, to write in the English language. This motive was particularly strong in Bengal and almost all Indo-Anglian writers of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century came from Bengal. As Nirad C. Chaudhury writes in reference to Michael Madhusudan Dutt's advice to Indian authors to write in their mother-tongue:

It [writing only in Bengali] was not a very easy decision to take; for our political status was always imposing bilinguality on us, and the lurking hope of making literary reputation in the English-speaking world was a strong temptation. 34

Whatever the reason, writing in English as well as Bengali was almost a century-old tradition in Bengal when Tagore started his literary career, and it is no surprise that Tagore did not deviate from this tradition. Romesh Chunder Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Michael Madhusudan Dutt, some of the distinguished predecessors of Tagore, wrote in two languages, or wrote in Bengali and translated their works into English (as Romesh Chunder Dutt did). Other important Indian authors including Premchand and Iqbal, did write in more than one language to get wider acclaim.

Tagore's recognition in the West still baffles many in India and abroad. Since many Bengali critics admit that Tagore's literary achievement can be appreciated only in Bengali, and his translations do not show much of his greatness, why was it that the West was so enthusiastic about his works? Perhaps there were complex reasons for the West's interest in Indian literature in general, and in Tagore in particular, in the period when Tagore's translations were much admired. The apparent novelty of the content of Tagore's prose and particularly of his verse ('apparent' because Tagore is really not original in most of his ideas which he borrows from the Upanishads and Vaishnava poetry; his originality lies primarily in his experimenting in form and diction); the West's interest in Indian philosophy, culture, and particularly, in mysticism; the support of W.B. Yeats and the West's

inclination to recognise Indian art and literature; these are perhaps some of the reasons why Tagore got so much acclaim in the West. It is also important to note that Tagore's reputation in the West has declined steadily since he received his Nobel prize for literature.

Tagore's recognition in the West, particularly his being awarded the Nobel prize for literature, seems to have done great harm to Tagore criticism in India. On the one hand, it has resulted, in Bengal, in the almost blind worship of Tagore as the greatest master in all literary genres - in fiction, for instance, novelists like Sarat Chandra Chatterjee and Bibhutibhushan Banerji, though no less important than Tagore, get or got until recently, less attention. On the other, critics who have no access to Bengali and are not in a position to judge Tagore's creative writing unequivocally testify to Tagore's greatness without feeling the need to give much evidence for it. Tagore's achievement in Bengali and the one-sidedness of Tagore criticism in Bengal are not our concern here. But the following passage is an example of Tagore's appraisal by Indian critics who have no access to Bengali:

He [Rabindranath Tagore] is not of Bengal, or even of India only, but of the world. As a writer of lyrics, Rabindranath's achievement is probably without a parallel in the whole range of world literature.... After Rabindranath appeared on the literary scene, modern India could once again boldly and proudly look the civilised world in the face. 35

Critics having access to Bengali and English ought to help demonstrate that Tagore's achievement lies in his Bengali works, and not in the translations, however competent they may be. Unfortunately, such critics often disappoint us. Tagore's contribution to English literature is often exaggerated:

It is a far cry from 'Babu English' to the wonderful composition that heralded the award of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. The distance is a measure of the progress made by Indians in English studies, in command of the foreign language as medium of expression and in literary craftsmanship. 36

And the difference between Tagore's original works and translations are either not understood, or not admitted (the following statement is made with regard to 'almost all the translations done by the poet'):

These translations are fresh creations and they have an independent standing of their own. Even if they are not literal, they truly convey the spirit of the original compositions. Wherever his works have been abridged, they have been done to facilitate better understanding on the part of the foreign reader. The unnecessary details have been dropped out. In paraphrasing the poet was always careful to select those words which are not alien to the English-speaking people. 37

Fortunately, unlike many of his critics, Tagore himself was not very enthusiastic about his translations in English. It may also be noted that many of his predecessors - Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Michael Madhusudan Dutt and the authors of the Dutt Family Album (Govin Dutt and Shoshee Chander Dutt, two of the earliest Indo-Anglian poets) did realise that the quality of their works was not high. The joint authors of the Dutt Family Album, for instance, write in their preface that 'they venture on publication not because they think their verses good, but in the hope that their book will be regarded, in some respects, as curiosity.'<sup>38</sup> Michael Madhusudan Dutt's advice to Indian authors to turn to their mother-tongue has already been mentioned. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee makes similar suggestions in an essay, 'A Popular Literature for Bengal':

... And we Bengalis are strangely apt to forget that it is only through the Bengali that the people can be moved. We preach in English and harangue in English and write in English, perfectly forgetful that the great masses whom it is absolutely necessary to move in order to carry out any great project of social reform, remain stone-deaf to all our eloquence. To me it seems that a single great idea, communicated to the people of Bengal in their own language, circulated among them in the language that alone touches their hearts, vivifying and permeating the conceptions of all ranks, will work out grander results than all that our English speeches and preachings will ever be able to achieve. 39

Tagore did not seem to have any ambition to write in English or to translate his works into English until he became quite famous in Bengal. In his translation of Gitanjali, we are told, Tagore was quite uncertain of

himself:

Even when he came to be known as a talented young writer, he persisted in avoiding English composition.... He always openly expressed his inability to write in English, and when pressed by a friend for a contribution in English, he flatly declined....

The translation in the Gitanjali involved strenuous work by him. Yet he would not think of publication before the manuscript had been read out to competent critics at the London residence of Rothenstein, although Yeats was full of admiration and could hardly think of any alterations. 40

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Gora is significantly different from the other two novels, Matira Manisha and Uska Bachpan, discussed earlier in this chapter. It is the earliest of the three novels (first serialised in Probasi during 1907-1909); it concerns itself with the East-West encounter; its characters are Westernised upper-class Indians, and its setting is Calcutta and the Brahmo society. Thus, Tagore wrote this novel long before Gandhian ideas of return to nature, social work, and socialist ideas of economic equality influenced the Indian novelists in their theme, language, characterisation, and so on (novelists writing in the thirties and the forties often combined, as Premchand did, the Gandhian idea of 'return to village' with the socialist ideal of a 'classless society'). Tagore was very much a part of the intellectual tradition of nineteenth century India, a tradition nourished by Rammohun Ray and Vivekananda, which envisaged a harmonious blending of all that is best in the East and the West. Tagore himself was born and brought up in Calcutta and in a Brahmo family (his grandfather was one of the founders of the Brahmo Samaj); he was concerned with issues such as social reform, the encounter between the East and the West, rather than with poverty, social injustice and political freedom of India. Tagore had not the intimate understanding of the village Bengal that Bibhutibhushan Banerji had, and he portrays village Bengal (as a landlord, he had to go to villages to look after his estates) as a land of exquisite natural beauty, and the home of simple hard-

working peasants.

City life; the divided loyalty of upper-class Westernised Indians to the Eastern and Western values and cultures; the problem of maladjustment in a joint family: these are themes of Tagore's novels; and he employs a language and style appropriate to his themes. One notices that the language and idiom his characters use in their conversation do not differ from those employed by the novelist to narrate the story. The language is sophisticated, polished, as much Anglicised as Sanskritised, as should be the language used in upper-class Indian homes, particularly under the Brahma influence.

Comparison of the Bengali with the English text of Gora makes one feel that the difference between the original and the translation is not as obvious as it is in the cases referred to earlier (Matira Manisha and A House Undivided; Uska Bachpan and Steps in Darkness); and this confirms my earlier observation that a novel dealing with Westernised India is more translatable into English than one dealing with village and traditional India. Nonetheless, the difference between the two texts is quite marked in at least three ways: (i) in the use of words and phrases which have particular effect and association in the context of Tagore literature in particular and Indian literature in general; (ii) in the use of idioms and proverbs suggesting cultural nuances of Bengali life; (iii) in the manipulation of three sets of vocabulary - Sanskrit, English and Bengali - to create a particular effect. The following examples, which I have taken from the first ten chapters of the novel, might suggest the difference.

The opening sentence of the first chapter, in a close translation of the Bengali, might go something like this:

One morning in the month of Shravana, the clouds being scattered away, the sky of Calcutta has been filled with clear sunlight. (p.1)



Tagore translates the sentence thus:

It was the rainy season in Calcutta; the morning clouds had scattered, and the sky overflowed with clear sunlight. (p.1)

In his translation of the sentence, Tagore differs from the original in a number of ways - in syntax, in tense, and even in meaning. One sentence in Bengali is broken into two in English (marked by a semicolon). The Bengali tense, present perfect (has been filled) is changed to past indefinite (overflowed). And more importantly, Shravana is changed to 'rainy season', and 'morning' is used as the adjective of 'clouds'. The change of syntax and tense, as we have seen earlier with reference to Matira Manisha and Uska Bachpan, is inevitable in any rendering of an Indian-language work into English, and a corresponding change in the style of the text is unavoidable. The difference in syntax and tense of the sentences of the Bengali version of Gora from those in the English is easy to see. Here I want to discuss the difference between the two texts in the use of words and phrases.

The key word employed in the Bengali sentence is Shravana. It corresponds roughly to July in the sense that in calendar, both the months coincide. But July is devoid of all that is associated, in the Indian mind, with Shravana. Shravana is the most intense period of the rainy season, which consists of four months known as chaturmasya; it is the month, more than any other, which has been used as theme and motif in Indian poetry, painting and music; it is intimately associated with Radha and Krishna, the archetypal lovers (Krishna always painted blue, the colour of the clouds; Radha fair, the colour of the lightning) and with themes of love and separation. The classic example is Kalidasa's Meghadoota (the Cloud-Messenger) in which the lover's pain at the separation from his beloved becomes most intense at the sight of a cloud and he asks the cloud to take his message to his beloved.

The word Shravana has much significance in the context of Tagore's literature. Tagore has written a number of rain songs in which the key word

could be Shravana (See for instance, 'Barsharo Dine', 'Meghadooto', 'Sanar Tori', 'Barsharo Rupo' in Sanchayita, Calcutta, 1961) and one familiar with Tagore literature cannot help being reminded of the poetic association of Shravana while encountering the word in the novel. Obviously, 'rainy season' is not an adequate substitute for 'Shravana'. 'Rainy season', instead of bringing in the association and suggested meanings of Shravana, might remind one of July, and the umbrellas, rubber shoes and wet pavements that go with it.

In the Bengali sentence, the words employed for 'cloud' and 'sunlight' are megh and raudra respectively. Whereas it is not easy to find, in English, synonyms for 'cloud' and 'sunlight', it is possible to find several synonyms for each of these words, in Bengali. Megh is a colloquial word whereas raudra is a Sanskrit word, and Tagore uses the words to suggest a contrast at the linguistic level. Raudra, which is derived from rudra, <sup>Agni, the God of Fire,</sup> meaning/as well as 'terrible', could not give the same connotation as any other synonym of 'sunshine'. The sunshine, particularly in Shravana, when the atmosphere is generally expected to be cool and pleasant, is terrible. The contrast is a fit metaphor for the situation of Binoy-bhusan who is terribly lonely in the season of love. In the first chapter of the novel alone, Tagore uses the word raudra three times, and each time he translates the word into English in different ways:

Bengali: ...the clouds being scattered away, the sky of Calcutta has been filled with clear raudra. (p.1)

English: ...the morning clouds had scattered, and the sky overflowed with clear sunlight. (p.1)

Bengali: ...the raudra of the rain became terrible. (p.5)

English: ...the sun's heat became intense. (p.3)

Bengali: ...the brightness of the raudra of this rainy morning entered into his head. (p.5)

English: The flaming radiance of the July sun burnt into his brain.... (p.4)

The rendering of raudra in three different ways in the same chapter (four and a half pages) suggests how the word can be employed in Bengali.

Bengal, being a land of sunshine, monsoon and rivers, almost all her poets and authors, including Tagore, draw their symbols and imagery from sunshine, monsoon, etc., and their originality is not as manifest in the choice of their symbols and imagery as in the language and idiom they employ to express them. Tagore, for instance, employs words and phrases which remind one of the Vaisnava poets and the Bauls. Raudra is such a word and is typically Tagorean. The following are some other significant expressions which are employed in the novel:

Bengali	English
(a) <u>kampasbhanga kandari</u> (p.12)	a pilot with broken compass (p.8)
(b) <u>jaladharapatala</u> (p.15)	thunder-clouds (p.10)
(c) <u>achin pakhi</u> (p.13)	unknown bird (p.16)
(d) <u>meghamandra sware</u> (p.40)	thundering voice (p.28)

Kandari and 'pilot' (d), though they literally mean the same thing, do not have the same effect as they are used in the Bengali and English texts. Kandari brings in the picture of the boatman on Bengal's vast and flooded rivers. The boatman, on whom so many people of Bengal depend for their movements, is a familiar and key figure in the Bengali countryside and is the theme of many songs and legends (the boatman's song is an important part of Bengali folk literature). A common motif in Bengali poetry has a lonely traveller at the approach of dusk request that the boatman take him to the other shore of the river where live his wife and children. Tagore and other Bengali poets use kandarito mean 'saviour', 'leader', and so on. 'Pilot', obviously, does not convey the image of a Bengal boatman or the symbolic significance the boatman has in the Indian literary context.

In (b), 'thunder-cloud' is not the literal translation of jaladhara-patala. Jaladharapatala, which literally means 'cluster of clouds', is a Sanskrit compound word and is conventionally used by poets to suggest the approach of heavy rain and thunder (jaladhara means 'one that holds water', the suggestion being the cloud about to burst). Tagore makes his character

use this word, while he is talking in colloquial Bengali, to suggest a sense of mock seriousness. 'Meghamandra sware' (d), again, is a phrase which literally means 'cloud-like voice', suggesting depth, sweetness and masculinity; and it is conventionally used by Sanskrit and Bengali poets (See for instance, Tagore's 'Maghadooto', 'Panchishe Baishakh', 'Gaan' in Sanchayita, Calcutta, 1961). The voice of the cloud, in tropical India, is the symbol of hope and harvest; and Tagore's translation of the phrase as 'thundering voice' betrays the poetic association it has in Bengali. While in the Bengali text, the phrase is used in an appropriate context (Gora addressing his mother), in the English, it seems not to be so:

As she spoke, Gora himself came into the room calling out in his thundering voice, "Mother!".... (p.28)

In the English sentence, the phrase might suggest that Gora is shouting at his mother.

Achin pakhi, which means literally 'unknown bird' (c), is a central motif of the story. In the opening paragraph of the novel, Tagore refers to a Baul song the central symbol of which is achin pakhi. The phrase has dual significance: firstly, pakhi has several meanings in Vaishnava literature; secondly, pakhi is one of the two words, out of many that are available in Bengali (the other being hansa), generally employed to suggest such Vaishnavite meanings. Pakhi in Vaishnava literature might mean human body, soul, dove, wisdom, and so on, God being suggested as Paramahansa, the Supreme Bird (this phrase is attributed to Ramakrishna). The reason for preferring pakhi and hansa to other synonyms of 'bird' is simple. 'Pakhi' which is a Sanskrit word, refers to one who has pakhya or wings and hence it suggests the attribute of flight; hansa which means 'bird', also refers to 'swan' which is white, the colour of purity. The Vaishnava concept of God-man relationship implies the flight of the human soul to the Divine and white is the colour of the sky (the citadel of the Divine). Thus, the symbolic and the linguistic meaning of the word pakhi cannot be separated. The Bengali phrase, reminding the reader of the Baul song, brings the Vaishnava suggestions to his mind.

In the novel, the situation of two central characters, Gora and Binoy, in some way corresponds to that of the achin pakhi as described by the Baul. Gora, the son of an Irish father and an Indian mother, is 'caged' in the dogma of Hinduism; the love between Binoy and Lolita is like the relation between the bird and the cage, and so on.

The setting of Gora being a Westernised Calcutta household, references to typical Bengali customs, ceremonies etc., are rare; it is mostly in dialogue situations that we get some glimpse of traditional Bengali life. Here are a few examples which might suggest how in the English translation, Tagore deletes, abridges or explains such references for the convenience of his English readers:

(A) Close translation from Bengali:

Anandamoyi: Well, is that so? Why, dear, I never ask you to eat [with us] - about such matters, your father is very suddhachari - wouldn't eat unless it is swapaka. My Binu is a Lakshmi child, not naughty like you, you are only preventing him. (p.16)

Tagore's translation:

"Don't be absurd, Gora," said Anandamoyi. "I never ask you to do so. And as for your father, he has become so orthodox that he will eat nothing not cooked by his own hands. But Binu is my good boy; he's not a bigot like you, and you surely do not want to prevent him by force from doing what he thinks right?" (pp. 11-12)

(B) Close translation from Bengali:

Rubbing and scrubbing the house and the door, washing and drying, cooking and serving, sewing, counting, keeping accounts, dusting, drying in the sun, caring for her own people and her neighbours - even then her time seemed not fully utilised. (p.16)

Tagore's translation:

In spite of her devotion to household work, from scrubbing the floors and doing the washing to sewing, mending, and keeping the accounts, and her practical interest in all the members of her own family as well as those of her neighbours, she never seemed too fully occupied. (p.11)

In (A), the Bengali passage contains two Sanskrit words, suddhachari and swapaka, which seem archaic and pedantic when uttered by a housewife in her conversation with her husband and sons; but nonetheless, they are approp-

riate to suggest the Hindu customs to which Anandamoyi is referring. 'Orthodox' is not the literal meaning of suddhachari; suddhachari consists of two words, suddha (pure) and achari (the adjective of achara which means 'conduct'). Roughly it means one who observes purity of conduct. But in a religious context, it suggests the observance of several rituals such as keeping to a vegetarian diet, taking a bath in the early morning, and so on. Swapaka, literally, 'self-cooking', similarly refers to a Hindu ritual. Tagore's translation of suddhachari as 'orthodox' and swapaka as 'to eat nothing not cooked by one's own hand' do not convey the original significance of the words employed. Anandamoyi's referring to Binoy as 'Lakshmi child' (Lakshmi chhele) is a colloquial expression in Bengali. 'Lakshmi child' generally means 'one who is with Lakshmi' (the poor and the spendthrift are sometimes referred to as Lakshmi-chhada or 'people without Lakshmi' or 'people forsaken by Lakshmi'). The Indian equivalents of 'Mr.' and 'Mrs.' are 'Shri' and 'Shrimati', and 'Shri' is a name of Lakshmi. In the context in which Anandamoyi uses the phrase, it means that Binoy, who knows how to honour Lakshmi, wouldn't turn down her request to eat at her place. Showing disrespect to food would mean disrespect to Lakshmi. (We may remember Margayya, in The Financial Expert, refusing to drink milk offered by the priest and later accepting it reverentially when reminded by the priest of his duty towards Lakshmi.)

The English passage not only fails to convey fully the original cultural nuances suggested by words such as suddhachari, swapaka and Lakshmi chhele, but it also differs stylistically from the original. The blending of the colloquial Bengali and literary Sanskrit creates an effect which is not carried over to the English passage.

In (B), the novelist refers to a number of household activities which keep Anandamoyi occupied. In Bengali, the language is idiomatic (randhiya badiya, dhuiya muchhiya) and is appropriate for suggesting a domestic ethos. In the English rendering, the idiomatic expressions are obviously missing.

In the English passage Tagore adds a phrase, 'her devotion to household work', which is not there in the original; in the Bengali Anandamoyi's devotion to household work is adequately suggested and needs no such explanatory note.

While discussing the language of Kanthapura in the previous chapter, I pointed out that had Rao narrated his story in Kannada, he would perhaps have used two strands of vocabulary, Kannada and Sanskrit, as the Vachanakaras did, to create a rustic and Brahminic ethos. In Gora, Tagore employs three sets of vocabulary - Bengali, Sanskrit and English, which are appropriate to a Brahma setting. Both in narrative and dramatic or dialogue situations, he uses these three sets of vocabulary. (It is necessary to mention here that all Indian languages generally consist of three sets of words - native (in the case of Dravidian languages, words of Dravidian origin), Sanskrit or Sanskritic, and foreign (European, Persian, Arabic, and so on). When I say that Tagore has used three sets of vocabulary, I do not include Sanskrit and English words, which are already a part of the Bengali language. A word like raud, derived from the Sanskrit raudra, is a colloquial Bengali word. While raudra is a Sanskrit word, megh is a colloquial Bengali word, even though it is a Sanskrit word as well. 'School' (or 'eschool' as they say in colloquial Bengali, and Tagore uses 'eschool' in Gora, p.8)

In the passage referred to earlier, suddhacahari and swapaka are Sanskrit words, and when they are uttered in a colloquial Bengali speech, they suggest a high seriousness, perhaps a sense of irony unintended by the speaker. The following two examples might further explain the point:

Close translation from Bengali (Sanskrit and English words used in the Bengali are underlined and shown in parenthesis):

You two jewels (ratna) have arisen out of the churning of the ocean (jaladhi manthana) of the university (university) - you have to write this letter carefully. You have to insert in it even-handed justice, never-failing generosity, kind courteousness (even-handed justice, never-failing generosity, kind courteousness) etc. etc. (p.28)

"...You two bright jewels of our University must help me to concoct a good letter, scattering broadcast such phrases as 'even-handed justice', 'never-failing generosity', 'kindly courteousness', etc., etc." (p.19)

Close translation from Bengali:

(D) Gora: Why, there is no reason to be offended. Her hand (shrihasta) is not one not to be seen by the sun (asuryampashya). She does not mind to shakehand (shakehand) with men, but you are not even prepared to tolerate the mention of her tender leaves of hands (kara-pallava). (p.12)

Tagore's translation:

"Why?" protested Gora. "I intended no insult. The fair lady in question does not pride herself on being 'invisible even to the sun'. If the least allusion to her tender petal of a hand, which any male person is at liberty to shake, strikes you as a desecration, then indeed you are as good as lost. (p.8)

In the Bengali passage in (C), the speaker (Mohinimohan) compares a university education with the mythical churning of the ocean (jaladhi manthana); and Gora and Binoy, who are the product of the university, with jewels (ratna) that were obtained as the result of the churning of the ocean. The Hindu myth is amply suggested by the use of the two Sanskrit words, ratna and jaladhi manthana. Tagore uses the English word 'university' and the Sanskrit word jaladhi to suggest the irony intended by the speaker. The speaker, while referring to values associated with Western and English education, uses expressions such as 'even-handed justice', 'never-failing generosity' and 'kind-courteousness', which are rather hackneyed; and these English phrases in a Bengali dialogue appropriately convey the speaker's disapproval of English education. In the English translation, Tagore deletes the allusion to the Hindu myth, and the first part of the English sentence ('You two...letter') does not convey any irony. In the second half, Tagore adds an explanatory note, 'scattering broadcast such phrases as'. Though the second half of the sentence containing phrases such as 'even-handed justice' suggests the speaker's disapproval of English education, the irony is much less effective. The device of employing two sets of vocabulary to suggest a strong sense of contrast and irony, which we note in the Bengali passage, is absent in the English.



In the Bengali passage in (D), Tagore employs three Sanskrit words, shrihasta, asuryampashya and kara-pallava, which were conventionally used by Sanskrit poets and Indian-language poets of the Classical period or the Reeti Yuga (seventeenth to nineteenth century, when Indian-language poets mostly imitated the Sanskrit masters), to describe the heroine (nayika) of a kavya. The heroine being charitable, the word for her hands (hasta) has the prefix shri which means 'Lakshmi'; being inaccessible to the ordinary eye (usually she is a princess), she is not even seen by the sun (asuryampashaya); and her palms are as delicate as tender leaves (kara-pallava). The speaker alludes to a medieval nayika while referring to Sucharita, a Westernised Brahmo girl, in an obviously mock serious manner. The irony becomes stronger when he refers to her as not being unwilling to 'shakehand' with men. Tagore does not make his speaker use the Bengali or Sanskrit equivalent of the word 'shakehand' (kara-mardana), but retains the English word to perhaps suggest the Englishness of the custom of shaking hands. The contrast between the nayika as described in medieval literature and the modern Brahmo girl is well suggested at the linguistic level by the two words - kara-pallava and 'shakehand'. In the English passage, the sense of contrast suggested by the juxtaposition of Sanskrit and English words in the original is absent, and the irony is much less effective.

FOOTNOTES

1. 'I, for one, would plump for the vernaculars and, though continuing to write in English, would like also to write in Punjabi and then render it into English more realistically and adequately than I do at the present,...' (The King Emperor's English, Bombay, 1948, p.23).
2. The King Emperor's English, Bombay, 1948, p.18.
3. *ibid*, p.17.
4. *ibid*, p.23.
5. *ibid*, p.16.
6. R.K. Narayan travelled abroad for the first time in 1956. (See My Days, London, 1975, p.166.)
7. England.
8. R.K. Narayan's reply to William Walsh. (See R.K. Narayan, published by the British Council, Essex, 1971, p.7.)
9. Reluctant Guru, Delhi, 1971, p.57.
10. Commonwealth Literature, edited by John Press, London, 1965, pp. 123-124.
11. The fourteenth century Maithili poet considered to be a major influence on Indian poetry in all languages. Recently, a translation of Vidyapati's songs has been sponsored by UNESCO.
12. 'Author's Foreword', Kanthapura, p.vii.
13. The King Emperor's English, Bombay, 1948, p.16.
14. 'Indo-Anglian', The Novel in Modern India, edited by Iqbal Bhakhtiyar, Bombay, 1964, p.45.
15. See Fiction and the Reading Public in India, edited by C.D. Narasimhaiah, Mysore, 1967, p.159.
16. V. Panduranga Rao, 'Tea with R.K. Narayan', JCL, VI, 1, June, 1971, p. 82.
17. 'Indian Writing in English: An Introduction', JCL, 5, July, 1968, p.13.
18. See 'Raja Rao's Kanthapura , - An Analysis', Critical Essays, edited by M.K. Naik et al, Dharwar, 1968, pp. 270-295.
19. Roots and Flowers, Dharwar, 1973, p.28.
20. Manohar Malgonkar, Delhi, 1973, p.147.
21. An Area of Darkness, London, 1968, pp. 226-227.
22. The Modern Indian Novel in English, Brussels, 1966, p.8.

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

23. Philadelphia, 1960, p.35.
24. See The Modern Indian Novel in English, Brussels, 1968, p.8; and Indian Fiction in English, Philadelphia, 1960, p.35.
25. Panigrahi's novels are discussed in M. Mansinha's History of Oriya Literature (New Delhi, 1962), pp. 249-250.
26. It is difficult to understand why Vaid does not mention that Steps in Darkness is a translation from the Hindi original. His Hindi novel was published in 1957 (Benares) and the English translation in 1962 (New York). Several bibliographies including A Bibliography of Indian English (Hyderabad, 1972) mention Steps in Darkness as a translation. Vaid might consider that an Indian-language work translated into English by the author is not different from a work originally done in English by an Indian. There are other Indian authors also, who, like Vaid, do not consider their translations from their originals as translations.
27. My observation here is based on my knowledge of Oriya, Bengali and Hindi; but I presume that this is true of all Indo-Aryan languages, if not of Dravidan languages like Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada. No systematic study seems to have been done so far comparing the tense of Indian languages with that of English, but some scholars have casually noticed the difference between Indian languages and English in regard to their tense. Nirad C. Chaudhury, interestingly, observes that in Sanskrit puranas the past and the future are very often not distinguishable (See The Continent of Circe, London, 1965, pp. 57-58).
28. Translated by L.N. Mohanty, Cuttack, 1951.
29. My observation here is again based on my knowledge of Oriya, Hindi and Bengali. S.R. Mokashi-Punekar, who writes both in Kannada and English, complains that by translating English sentences into Kannada, without changing the voice of the original, some translators working for A.I.R., Indian-language dailies etc., sometimes distort the meaning of the original. A sentence like 'National emergency was declared', translated in Kannada in passive voice, might change the meaning of 'emergency' to something like 'no danger at all' (See S.R. Mokashi-Punekar, The Indo-Anglian Creed, Writers Workshop, Calcutta, 1972, p.48).
30. 'A large measure of a contemporary Indian writer's relevance to his own people depends on what he does to language - the degree to which he may break out of a classical mould, the extent to which he may make his written language approach the spoken' (New Writing in India, Penguin, 1974, p.19). M. Mansinha suggests that the success of Matira Manisha can be understood in the context of the tradition of Fakiramohana Senapati [the first major Oriya novelist; a contemporary of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee]. Mansinha writes, 'The novel (Matira Manisha) has carried forward the tradition of Fakiramohana in being written in a fluent colloquial style, and in not giving an incorrect pen-picture of Orissa's rural society...' (History of Oriya Literature, New Delhi, 1962, p.250).

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

31. See 'In Praise of Two Bengali Novels', Studies in Australian and Indian Literature, edited by C.D. Narasimhaiah and S. Nagarajan, New Delhi, 1971.
32. See 'Indian Novels in Translation', Indian Literature, XV, 3, 1972.
33. See Amiya Chakravarty's 'On Translating from Bengali', Indian Literature, XV, 3, September, 1972, p.40.
34. The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian, Bombay, 1966, p.195.
35. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Literature and Authorship in India, London, 1943, p.28.
36. Mohinimohan Bhattacharjee, 'Tagore and English Literature', Rabindranath Tagore: Homage from Visva-Bharati, edited by Santosh Chandra Sengupta, Santiniketan, 1962, p.19.
37. B.C. Chakravorty, Rabindranath Tagore: His Mind and Art, New Delhi, 1971, p.20.
38. Quoted, Mohinimohan Bhattacharjee, 'Tagore and English Literature', Rabindranath Tagore: Homage from Visva-Bharati, edited by Santosh Chandra Sengupta, Santiniketan, 1962, p.22.
39. Bankim Rachanavali, edited by J.C. Bagal, Calcutta, 1969, pp.97-98.
40. Homage from Visva-Bharati, edited by Santosh Chandra Sengupta, Santiniketan, 1962, p.20.

### Conclusion

In a recent issue of The Literary Criterion devoted to 'Indian Writing in English', C.D. Narasimhaiah, who as an editor, critic, and professor has worked for years now to get Indo-Anglian literature recognised as an important branch of Indian literature, observes that during the past twenty-five years the attitude of Indian critics towards this literature has significantly changed:

... during these twenty-five years those suspected of strong reservations towards it [Indian writing in English] now pretend to be tolerant, even concede its validity. Writers in various Indian languages have softened towards it both because, far from obscuring their work, English has helped them to receive recognition through nation-wide reviewing in English papers and periodicals and through impeccable translations. Purists who were contemptuous of Indian use of English and referred to it pejoratively have now been taught to recognize its creative potential as small ethnic groups belonging to subcultures with no literary language or script of their own, and gifted individuals staying away from their linguistic mores under pressures of an emergent society have come to rely on English as their chief means of expression in places of work and at home. 1

In view of the number of books and articles written on Indian writing in English, and courses of studies offered both at undergraduate and postgraduate level of several Indian universities, Narasimhaiah's comment seems justified. But, unfortunately, the critics' softening attitude has not resulted, in recent years, in any substantial improvement in the criticism of Indo-Anglian literature, or in the literature itself. In the field of criticism, as I pointed out in the introductory chapter, much is yet to be done, particularly in placing Indo-Anglian literature in the context of Indian literary tradition as a whole, and in comparing it with other branches of Commonwealth literature. It is unfortunate that questions regarding the suitability of the English language for the Indian author and the definition of Indian writing in English still preoccupy the critics so much. In the same issue of The Literary Criterion, essays

on translated works of Kannada, Malayalam and Bengali are included along with discussions on the suitability of the English language for the Indian authors, Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Kamala Markandaya.

Though senior Indo-Anglians like Rao, Narayan, Anand and Markandaya are still writing, their recent works have not added much to their stature as authors. Almost all their significant novels seem to have been published between the late thirties and the sixties: Kanthapura (1937); The Serpent and the Rope (1960); Mr. Sampath (1949); The Financial Expert (1958); The Vendor of Sweets (1967); Untouchable (1935); The Village (1939) and Nectar (1954). Nagarajan, Malgonkar, Bhattacharya, Ghose and Khushwant Singh also published all their better-known works during this period: The Chronicles of Kedaram (1961); A Bend in the Ganges (1964); So Many Hungers (1947); Music for Mohini (1952); The Flame of the Forest (1955) and Train to Pakistan (1956). It is ironical that the expansion of English education, the widening of the market for English books in India (many English publishing houses have recently opened their branches in India), and the growing international recognition of Indian writing in English have not resulted in significant creative writing in English by Indian authors. It is beyond the scope of my work to examine in depth the cause of such curious development - or rather, lack of development, but these may be contributing factors: Indo-Anglians who belong to the older generation have no new themes to explore; many Indo-Anglians devote much of their time to editing (Anand editing Marg, Singh The Illustrated Weekly of India) or writing non-fiction (Narayan); the Central and State Governments patronise Indian-language literatures more than Indo-Anglian literature. It may of course be a matter of chance that the new generation of Indo-Anglian writers is less talented than the old, or the talent of the new generation is yet to manifest itself adequately.

In view of the fact that many Indo-Anglian authors of the present generation are expatriates (unlike those of the nineteenth and the early twentieth

century), it is appropriate to divide them into two groups: those who live in India (Narayan and Anand), and those who live abroad (Rao and Markandaya). While Narayan and Anand are still writing about Malgudi and Punjabi societies (Raman, the hero of Narayan's latest novel, The Painter of Signs (1977), is a modern Brahmin of Malgudi; Anand's Between Tears and Laughter (1973), contains stories set in Punjab towns and villages), Markandaya and Rao write mostly about British or American immigrants or the conflict of cultures between the East and the West. Rao's recent novel, Comrade Kirillov (1976) deals with a South Indian Brahmin, settled in England, who, as the back-cover states, is 'torn between his intellectual convictions and emotional pulls', and Rao may be now writing a novel on America.<sup>2</sup> Markandaya, in recent years, has been the most prolific of the authors of the older generation and her case is typical of an Indian author settled abroad and can explain much of the nature and quality of expatriate Indo-Anglian writing.

In the discussion on the language and idiom of Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve I suggested that sometimes it is not clear whether the novelist has no understanding of Indian village life, or whether it is the English language which fails her in her attempt to present Indian village life in its appropriate idiom and ethos. By writing another novel (Two Virgins), which the front page claims 'is set in a village in India', Markandaya has made it clear that she has little knowledge of Indian village life, and it is not the English language that prevented her from portraying Indian village life authentically in Nectar. Out of the three novels which Markandaya has published recently, The Nowhere Man (1973) and The Golden Honeycomb (1977) deal with the Indian immigrants in Britain and the princely India respectively, whereas, the third one, Two Virgins, deals with two Indian village girls. Two Virgins is the only novel, in recent years, claimed to be written about village India; but the plot, characterisation and the setting of the novel have nothing in them which suggests the ethos of village India. The novel starts with the arrival of a film director in a South

Indian village and the chance meeting of the director with the grown-up daughters of a villager. One of the daughters whose ambition is to be a film actress accompanies the director to the city, stays with him for a month, and returns to the village, pregnant. The story itself is implausible. Indian parents, particularly from a village, would never allow their daughter to spend a month with a stranger. Besides, several references to the family of the two girls do not correspond to actual facts anywhere in India. Grown-up girls in a middle-class family do not tend the buffaloes (p.69); village girls would not be heard repeatedly complaining about the lack of privacy (p.82), the absence of a refrigerator at home (pp. 26 and 84), the way the Indian society is organised (p.179) and comparing Eastern and Western values (p.192); a village home would not have a bathroom (p.241); conches are not blown at funerals (p.157); villagers in South India don't have apples to eat (p.166). Nor would one find a villager making ice-cream (p.170), a daughter congratulating her mother on the latter's pregnancy (p.52), or a grown-up girl riding a bicycle (p.56). The novelist, obviously, has tried to retain the Indian flavour of the story by using half a dozen Indian words, mostly Hindi, such as ladu, jutka, and so on; and by referring to Indian fatalism, monsoon, mangoes and parrots. These are stock devices employed by Anglo-Indian novelists as well. The references to the Indian monsoon etc., are in no way integrated in the theme or plot-structure of the story.

It is interesting that Markandaya's lack of understanding of Indian life, particularly of village life, has not always been a bar to critical acclaim either at home or abroad. Two Virgins has appeared both in the U.S.A. and England. About Markandaya's understanding of village India and India in general, an Indian critic writes in a reputable journal:

It deserves to be recognized that no matter where Markandaya's story is located, whether in a village or a metropolis, Indian folk life always keeps on bursting upon it. 3



Favourable comments have been made in TLS and elsewhere about Markandaya's grip on her material (See for instance, Eric Stokes' review of The Golden Honeycomb in TLS, April 29, 1977).

Kamala Markandaya's case suggests that expatriate Indo-Anglians, due to their distance from the social and cultural life of India, are not likely to be authentic in their treatment of Indian themes. They can of course be genuine when they refer to their childhood days, or the days which they actually spent in India; and when they write about their experience as expatriates. It is fair to assume that Raja Rao's account of village life in Kanthapura and The Cow of the Barricades is based on his childhood experience. Expatriate Indo-Anglian literature has a clear parallel in West Indian literature which is largely the product of authors settled in England, and Andrew Salkey's observation regarding West Indian literature that 'England and the West Indies must be held jointly responsible for the results of West Indian literary endeavour'<sup>4</sup> is also true in case of expatriate Indo-Anglian literature if we substitute 'India' and 'Indian' to 'the West Indies' and 'West Indian'. Childhood is an important theme in West Indian fiction (V.S. Naipaul's Miguel Street; Michael Anthony's The Year in San Fernando); and in recent years the novelists have started writing about their experience as expatriates (V.S. Naipaul's The Mimic Men; Samuel Selvon's Lonely Londoners). Two other areas of experience which the expatriate Indo-Anglians can explore are, the East-West encounter in some form, and historic India. The expatriate authors have first hand experience of Indians living in England and the U.S.A. and are in a favourable situation to write about them; and while writing about historic India, their lack of contact with contemporary Indian society or setting need not interfere significantly with the quality of their work. In fact, already several novels on immigrants in England or the U.S.A. have appeared: Anita Desai's Bye-Bye, Blackbird; Arun Jushi's The Foreigner; Reginald and Jamila Massey's The Immigrants and Chaman Nahal's Into the Dawn.

The expatriate Indo-Anglians, due to their distance from the mother country, are likely to show, <sup>as</sup> Kamala Markandaya's case suggests, little awareness of Indian literary and cultural traditions, and it is almost certain that they will draw themselves increasingly closer to the literary and cultural traditions of the West. In course of time, the native Indo-Anglians and the expatriate Indo-Anglians are likely to give rise to two distinct literary traditions. It is too early to say if already the two groups of authors have shown their individual characteristics. But Markandaya's latest novels, Two Virgins and The Nowhere Man, suggest that her idiom is so unmistakably Western that it is totally alien to an Indian thought-process and ethos. Here is a brief passage from Two Virgins:

Listening to them, Saroja was torn between her parents; both were right, both were wrong. She wondered wildly why they couldn't solve the problem simply by the two of them marrying, Mr. Gupta and her sister, since his seed and her egg were already mated and fused in a baby. In her heart of hearts she knew why, the truth was that although both were Hindus, which was the important thing, their levels were different, not beyond the pale as she and Chingleput were, but unequal socially, which was almost as big an impediment.

It sickened her a little to think of it, because in her mind the baby had become paramount and she could see it had no future in what Appa and the boys called society as it was organized. It made her rebel. She plucked out the reality and anathematized it as her brothers did, but could not dent it, the reality had a dreadful persistence. So she passed it on, hoped devoutly, prayed with as much fervor as she could command that society be reorganized to make room for the baby. (p.179)

Saroja is the younger of the two daughters, and here she is shown pondering over her sister's pregnancy and her father's dilemma as to what to do. Obviously, the pregnancy of an unmarried daughter in a traditional Hindu home is the worst possible crisis a family could encounter. Saroja's thoughts do not convey a bit of that crisis. Simplifying the issue of pregnancy as a biological fact and finding a solution in marriage are out of character for Saroja. Expressions such as 'his seed and her egg were already mated', 'levels', 'society as it was organized', 'plucked out the reality and anathematized it' are alien to the thinking of a rustic adolescent of the Hindu society. Saroja

is not supposed to know how a baby is conceived; and even if she knows, no source would teach her terms like 'seed' and 'egg'. 'Level' does not mean anything in a rural society. A villager would perhaps use 'village' and 'caste' to mean 'society' and 'organisation'.

Here is another passage, from the same novel, which shows how Markandaya's linguistic style betrays her purpose of presenting the narrative from the point of view of a Tamil girl:

It's barbaric, not having a fridge, said Lalitha. Saroja thought she must mean the school, she couldn't imagine them ever being able to afford a fridge at home, but Lalitha said everyone in the city had a fridge. She didn't specify which city. Amma said Just listen to Miss Millionaire, and since when had Lalitha become a film star, only film stars could afford such luxuries. Lalitha said it wasn't a luxury, it was a necessity in a tropical country, and she didn't like fishing insects out of the curd, which having a fridge would avoid. She said to Saroja, afterwards, it was pathetic the ignorance their parents were steeped in. Amma had something to say too, afterwards: she told Appa that Miss Mendoza was putting notions into Madam's head. Appa said notions were good things in anyone's head, the bad thing was having it rattle through emptiness, but Amma said Don't go riding your hobby horse, remember it is your daughter. Appa said he always bore it in mind, and Saroja knew it was true. She knew Lalitha was borne in Appa's mind more frequently than Saroja, from the number of times he brought home presents for her but forgot about Saroja. She didn't hold it against Lalitha, she understood Lalitha was nicer to give things to, being so beautiful and graceful, and with some winsome ways as well. She tried to copy Lalitha. Lalitha said Imitation is the best kind of flattery, but she said it kindly, took Saroja's face in her hands and said You're not bad, not bad at all, little waif. (p.26)

The two sisters are shown as talking in colloquial English which is absurd in their situation. 'Not having a fridge is barbaric' would perhaps be a more natural form of expression for an Indian than 'It's barbaric, not having a fridge' (with the compound word, 'it's'; a pause in the middle). A sentence like 'She didn't hold it against Lalitha....as well', in its rhythm and turn of phrase, is totally different from an Indian-language sentence and even from an English sentence uttered by a moderately educated Indian. In Indian-language equivalent of this sentence, one has to say 'more nice' rather than 'nicer'; the phrase 'being so beautiful and graceful' would be used before rather

than after the noun it qualifies, and so on. A normal Indian rendering of this sentence in English would be 'It was better to give things to beautiful, graceful, nice and winsome Lalitha'. Idiomatic expressions such as 'afford to', 'fishing insects', 'steeped in', 'to put notions to one's head' and 'hobby horse' do not apparently have equivalents in Indian languages. In other words, there is nothing in the language of the passage to suggest that the characters in conversation are Indian.

While expatriate Indo-Anglians are not likely to be authentic in their treatment of Indian themes, and may, ultimately, be indistinguishable from Anglo-Indian authors, the native Indo-Anglians of the new generation do not show as much awareness of Indian literary and cultural traditions as did the authors of the older generation. Anita Desai and Arun Joshi, perhaps the most prominent of the younger novelists, have almost written exclusively about that section of Indian society in which the English language or Western values are not alien and have hardly touched Indian village life. Both of them have written about Indian immigrants and about the middle-class family of the metropolis. (Joshi's The Strange Case of Billy Biswas is of course set as much against a city as against a small village; but, by presenting the story from the point of view of a Westernised Indian civil servant, the novelist has evaded an intimate account of village life.) By such choice of themes, Desai or Joshi has neither made significant experiments in moulding the English language to convey Indian speech or ethos, nor in the form of the novel to convey reality as conceived by traditional India. It is not easy to say whether they have avoided, so far, themes of traditional and rural India as the result of their lack of first hand experience of such India, or as the result of their choice of medium. Neither of the novelists, however, seems to have had contact with village India. (Desai is German on her mother's side, and was brought up and educated in Delhi; Joshi, educated in the U.S.A., heads an industrial research institute in Delhi.) Desai, who apparently knows Bengali and does not think English to be the natural

medium for Indian authors<sup>5</sup>, rarely conveys in her point of view or language, much awareness of the Indian background of her characters. Two passages from her latest novel can serve as illustrations:

- (A) The village pond, an artificial tank with broken stone steps, was full to the brim and could be differentiated from the pools and puddles of the fields only because its water was not brown with mud but green as spinach, thick, viscous. The woman disregarded its filth, its solid green layer of germs and disease, and thought it beautiful for there were women closely wrapped in saris of scarlet and crimson on the stone steps, dipping narrow-necked vessels of brass into it and squatting beside it to wash and beat mounds of coloured clothes with that crude, dark vigour of the Bombay fisher-folk. One muscular woman with an aubergine skin, wearing a mango-green sari, stood up and was the first on the island to hail them. She yelled to the other women, they paused - one with a brass vessel half-lowered from her head, another knee-deep in the spinach-water pulling at some sugar-pink water lilies, a third with her arms plunged into a mound of soapy washing. They laughed, hooted, white teeth and red gums like newly-opened gashes in their faces, and called out to Moses in voices that rang like jeers or taunts. Behind them was a grove of mango trees, their leaves in dark and glittering, and a flash of phosphorescent parrots suddenly shot out of them like so many rockets at a carnival, then sped into a sky of rose and orange, shrieking. (Where Shall We Go This Summer? p.14-15)
- (B) "Hey Moses," said Ali, the caretaker of the neighbouring house on the island. "All dressed up for the market, are you?"  
"Huh, the market," Moses belched in contempt. "Am I a trader? No, I am here on duty."  
"Drinking duty, eh?"  
... ..  
"Yes, that's a new lungi, isn't it?" remarked Joseph of the diesel-oil pump. "And it isn't even time for the big fair in Bandra. That's when Moses usually goes gay."  
Moses gave the lungi a careless flick. Its checks of rose and maroon had about them the glow of square-cut gems - therefore it was not only a careless but also a proud flick. "I was sent twenty rupees", he admitted. "I had to spend it on something."  
"Twenty rupees! Who would send you a present like that - your mother-in-law?"  
"My memsahib!" reared Moses suddenly, putting an end to the titters scampering around the table. "The memsahib is coming."  
"No!" they all cried in disbelief. (Where Shall We Go This Summer? p.4)

The first passage is typical of Desai's narrative style. It is loaded with information about Indian village scene, and undoubtedly serves as a colourful setting for her story. But the narrator essentially represents an alien

viewpoint not different from that in A Passage to India or other Anglo-Indian novels. The village pond which is the meeting place of village women and is the centre of much of village activities, has no such significance for the narrator. For him, it is a place of disease and ugliness (women 'closely wrapped' in saris). He notices facts such as the make of the vessels; the colour of mango leaves which indicates that the village has an exotic appeal for him.

In (B), Desai portrays some lower middle-class Indians, who obviously know little English, in conversation. Except for some stock Indian words like memsahib there is nothing in their speech to suggest any Indian-language flavour. Turns of phrase like '...that's a new lungi, isn't it?' even show that their English is more idiomatic than that of educated Indians.

Joshi's narrative style differs little from Desai's. He uses a language which is colourless and devoid of any suggestion of Indian life or culture. In dialogue situations, however, he occasionally shows that the conversation takes place in the Indian language:

- (a) ' "Bhaiya must have vilayati blood in his veins," says Bilasia. (p.114)
- (b) He listened for a while. Then he translated, 'Something like this: "I told my sojan: Sing to me all night. Life was meant to be sung and we were meant to be singers. But my sojan went away. O, my sojan went away." Something like that, anyway. It is hard to translate.' (p.117)
- (c) 'Ha.' He smiled indulgently. 'Bilasia is only a wife of this perishable world. It is Devi Mata who has been his companion for thousand years, from one life to another (Janam janam ki sathi). It is from Devi Mata that he gets his magic. (p.158)
- (d) 'That was his fate, Collector sahib. What are we but little mud dolls (mati ke putle) in the hands of fate. Who has ever succeeded in ironing the creases off his brow.' (p.163)
- (e) 'For God's sake, don't be a fool. I give you my word no harm will come to him (baal nahin banka hoga).' (p.230)

When using Indian words or phrases, Joshi either literally translates them into English or gives their meaning in English. In both cases, he gives

the original Indian-language expression to make the speech intelligible. Through Joshi's devices, an Indian reader can perhaps get some flavour of the Indian language in which the conversation is supposed to take place. But he neither follows any method consistently nor makes any significant experiment in conveying an Indian ethos in the English language.

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While it seems almost certain that the expatriate Indo-Anglians will draw themselves increasingly closer to Western literary and cultural traditions and concern themselves with themes such as the East-West encounter, it is difficult to foresee if the native Indo-Anglians will give rise to a literary tradition that is genuinely Indian. Authors of the new generation do not seem to have taken seriously the experiments in language and form made by Rao, Anand and Narayan; and by limiting their themes to city life and English-speaking situations, they have denied the possibility of the growth of a truly representative Indian literature in English. The fact that many of the themes of Indo-Anglian fiction are of pan-Indian nature in contrast with those in Indian-language fiction, suggests that Indo-Anglian literature is in danger of being nothing more than a tenuous expansion of Anglo-Indian literature. However indebted the Indo-Anglian novelist may be to Western literature, he has to work in close proximity to his own cultural traditions in order to be genuinely Indian (even Forster is reported as saying that if he had to write another Passage to India, he would live among the villagers and learn an Indian language),<sup>6</sup> and his main preoccupation, unlike the Western novelist's, must be portrayal of poverty, hunger and disease. The Indo-Anglian novelist, besides his alienation from traditional India which he shares with all Westernised Indians, has the enormous problem of Indianising the English language to make it a fit medium for such themes.

Although I have no doubt that English, for many years to come, will remain the most important medium for referential writing (works of scholarship, etc.) and translating Indian-language works for a pan-Indian and Western audience<sup>7</sup>, its significance as the medium for creative writing may decline. A genuine literature in English can hardly be possible unless English grows roots in India as it has done in West Africa and elsewhere. In spite of the expansion in the bulk of printed material in English, it shows no sign of becoming more than a 'library language' in India. That is why India so far has failed to produce <sup>an</sup> Amos Tutuola; and Indo-Anglian literature has remained the monopoly of the 'twice-born' - that is, the intellectuals and Westernised Indians - as was Sanskrit literature in the past. Like Sanskrit literature, Indo-Anglian literature may cease to grow unless the English language discards its confined existence and becomes a part and parcel of the life and culture of the masses.



FOOTNOTES

1. The Literary Criterion, XII, 2-3, 1976, p.4.
2. In an interview published in 1973, Rao is reported to have said that he might write a book on America (Elizabeth Wohl, 'Raja Rao on America', Span, January, 1973, p.37)
3. P.S. Chauhan, 'Kamala Markandaya: Sense and Sensibility', The Literary Criterion, XII, 2-3, 1976, p.145.
4. West Indian Stories, London, 1973, p.10.
5. Anita Desai, 'The Indian Writer's Problems', The Literary Criterion, XII, 4, Summer, 1975, pp. 30-31.
6. See Shiv K. Kumar's 'Some Indian Writers of Fiction in English', Literatures in Modern Indian Languages, edited by V.K. Gokak, New Delhi, 1975, p.282.
7. The recent publication figure shows that creative works translated from Indian languages to English almost equal the number of those originally done in English (See, for instance, JCL, XII, 2, December, 1977, pp. 88-96).

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