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人間文化研究機構　ネットワーク型基幹研究プロジェクト
地域研究推進事業　南アジア地域研究

FINDAS
The Center for South Asian Studies,
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies
東京外国語大学　南アジア研究センター

FINDAS International Conference Series 2

Literary Intervention and Political Culture in South Asia

Edited by
Toshie AWAYA and Maya SUZUKI

Center for South Asian Studies, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (FINDAS)

Literature, Social Movements, and Gender Issues in South Asia

The purpose of the Center is to deepen the understanding of structural changes in contemporary South Asia, using as axes the historical, political, social, and literary analyses of social movements as well as the perspective of gender. Regarding the targeted fields of research, we aim to become a repository of documentation within Japan through further systematic and conscious augmentation of the documents and historical materials in the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) collections.

Through the first phase during FY 2010–14 of our research activities, it became clear that the dramatic changes in personal awareness and gender relations on an individual, family, and community level have been brought about by structural changes in modern India accompanying economic liberalization and globalization. We also realized that complexity and variability of the issue of identity have been increasing, and that it would not be possible to understand the lively form of democratic politics that characterizes India without the vigorous objections of groups until now positioned on the social periphery. In the second phase FY 2015-19, along with focusing on the changes in human ties—particularly various aspects of social movements as well as aspects of emotions and sensitivities that support them—and further expanding the region of focus to South Asia, we will emphasize taking the lead in building a theory through consciously organizing comparative research with other regions, including China, Southeast Asia and Islamic nations. While the "politics of emotion" has recently gained attention, by no means has this deepened in the area of South Asia studies. Concerning South Asia, experimental studies and the positing of new theory in this field will serve as an effective opening to understand modern contemporary India. Furthermore, comparative research with other regions will also contribute to the understanding of global structural transformation.

Research Unit 1:
Practice and Theory of Crisscrossed Social Movements: With Emphasis on Human Ties and Sentiments
Research Unit 2:
Social Transformations and Literature

FINDAS International Conference Series 2

Literary Intervention and Political Culture in South Asia

Edited by
Toshie AWAYA and Maya SUZUKI

Assisted by
Mayu TAKADA and Minori YOSHIKAWA

The Center for South Asian Studies (FINDAS)
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

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PREFACE

The main research themes of FINDAS relate to social movements, literature, and gender. Over the last several years, we have been organizing seminars and international workshops related to these themes. For instance, last year's workshop focused on Women's Work in South Asia in the Age of Neoliberalism. This year we chose the particular theme Literary Intervention and Political Culture in South Asia as an attempt to bridge the gap between those scholars specializing in literature and those whose interests lie in social movements/changes.

The era of the Progressive Writers' Association may be long gone. This association was founded in 1936 (in London one year earlier) by those writers and intellectuals who believed the duty of Indian writers is "to give expression to the changes taking place in Indian life and to assist [the] spirit of progress in the country by introducing scientific rationalism in literature." Further, "the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness and political subjection. All that drags us down to passivity, inaction and unreason, we reject as reactionary." Though the Progressive Writers movement disintegrated in 1950s, the Dalit movement appeared on the Indian horizon in the late 1970s again, in which literature played and is still playing a crucial role. No one will deny that literature to them was and is one of "the weapons of the weak."

As a history student myself, I have found that literary criticism has been becoming increasingly complicated and hard to comprehend, partly because of excessive use of parochial jargon in the field, especially after the advent of postmodernism and post-colonial critique. One of the main issues seems to be regarding the concept of such as subject, subjectivity, agency and so on. It is ironic to notice that in the attempt to recover the voice of "subaltern" subjectivity suppressed by the dominant discourse most of these critiques seem to concentrate on the mechanism to suppress subaltern's voice. These

efforts often leave us with no clues to understand what the subalterns wish to say.

On the other side, in the world of orthodox mainstream literary criticism, as Sivakami pointed out in her paper, the focus is still on aesthetics; artistic skills are irrelevant of any social implications. Furthermore, J. Devika, one of the prominent gender studies scholars from Kerala, in her book Womenwriting = Manreading? (2013) condemned this mainstream criticism as being very much marked by patriarchal bias.

Needless to say, creative works or any writings (including historical writings) are born in the interaction between an individual and their society. Even so-called literature for literature cannot be separated from the social where such highbrow literature is conceived. Of course, we have to be sensitive enough to the changing conceptions of "individual" as well as "society" themselves. One of the focuses in this workshop is, therefore, on to train ourselves how we can hear "counter-narratives" in particular historical moments.

It is sometimes said that print media is now being replaced by other kinds of media such as the electronic media, including SNS. In this new information scape, readers choose only what they want to read and ignore the others. Furthermore, visual media is often considered more influential than print media, but as far as South Asia is concerned, print media will remain influential for a while considering the newly literate people who do not have access to electronic media.

Now we are living in a kind of "Age of Intolerance" in which there is a danger that any alleged critical stance against the mainstream is accused of as "anti-national." Let me return back to the Progressive Writers' Association's manifest. It begins by asserting that "Radical changes are taking place in Indian Society" In a sense, this understanding made about 80 years ago is again relevant now if we consider the global as well as the South Asian situations. This leads to the workshop's second focus, which is the exploration of the relationship between literature and politics in this radically changing world.

I need to add a few words regarding Dr. Sakasai's paper. Dr. Sakasai is not a South Asianist scholar, and his research field, is Japanese literature. I requested him intentionally to present a paper focusing on "ZAINICHI" (Korean people who live in Japan, who often become the target of discrimination in Japanese society, where discrimination is sometimes expressed bluntly but more often remains dormant.) believing this will bring a fruitful comparative perspective to our discussion.

I am happy this workshop gave us a chance to explore and exchange opinions on the meaning of Literature in this changing world from various viewpoints and to deepen our understanding of the present as well as the future social transformations.

FINDAS is part of the area study project of the National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU). In addition, we were provided financial support for this workshop from the FY 2017 Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) "Initiative for Realizing Diversity in the Research Environment (Collaboration Type)". We would like to express our deep gratitude to both agencies for their support.

February, 2018

Toshie AWAYA

Photos

Opening

Opening Address: Toshie Awaya

Hisae Komatsu

Amitava Chakraborty

Ajay Navaria

Palanimuthu Sivakami

Akito Sakasai

Asif Farrukhi

Discussion 1

Discussion 2

Chairs: Kyoko Niwa, Nobuhiro Ota
Discussants: Janaki Nair, Takako Inoue,
So Yamane, Toshie Awaya

Group photo

FINDAS International Workshop

Literary Intervention and Political Culture in South Asia

南アジアにおける文学的介入と政治文化

2017.12.9 (Sat) 10:30-17:00

東京外国語大学 AA研 大会議室303

Large Conference Room 303,
Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa,
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (http://www.tufs.ac.jp/access/tama.html)

※本研究会は予約不要で、どなたでもご参加できます。

Language: English

10:00 - 10:30 Registration

10:30 -10:40 Opening Addresses: Toshie Awaya (Director, FINDAS Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

Chair: Kyoko Niwa (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies), Nobuhiro Ota (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

1. Hisae Komatsu (Otemon Gakuin University)
   "Women's Narratives in Hindi Magazines of Early Twentieth Century India"
2. Amitava Chakraborty (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)
   "The Marginalized in the Construction of 'Indigenous' Theoretical and Literary Spaces in Bangladesh

Lunch (11:40 -13:00)

3. Ajay Navaria (Jamia Millia Islamia)
   "Dalit Literature as a Socio-Political Tool '"
4. Palanimuthu Sivakami (Dartmouth College)
   "Poetics to Political Transformation: Dalit Women Writings"
5. Akito Sakasai (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)
   "Fight for the Right to Live: Kim Tal-su's Novels and 'Third Country National' Discourse"
6. Asif Farrukhi (Habib University)
   "A New Harvest of Anger: Reading an Alternative Narrative of Pakistan's Society in Contemporary Urdu Literature"

Tea Break (15:00-15:15)

Discussants: Janaki Nair (Jawaharlal Nehru University)
Takako Inoue (Daito Bunka University)
So Yamane (Osaka University)

General Discussion (16:00-17:00)

主催 人間文化研究機構南アジア地域研究東京外国語大学拠点南アジア研究センター(FINDAS)
共催 平成29年度ダイバーシティ研究環境実現イニシアティヴ(牽引型)東京外国語大学
女性研究者による国際共同研究

[お問い合わせ先] FINDAS事務局 E-mail:findas.office@gmail.com

人間文化研究機構
基幹研究プロジェクト

FINDAS International Workshop
" Literary Intervention and Political Culture in South Asia"

Date： **December 9 (Sat), 2017**

Venue: Large Conference Room 303

Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Language: English

【PROGRAM】

10:00 - 10:30 Registration

10:30 -10:40 Opening Addresses: Toshie Awaya (Director, FINDAS Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

Chair: Kyoko Niwa (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies), Nobuhiro Ota (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

10：40 – 11:10　Hisae Komatsu (Otemon Gakuin University)

Women's Narratives in Hindi Magazines of Early Twentieth Century India

11:10 – 11:40　Amitava Chakraborty (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

The Marginalized in the Construction of 'Indigenous' Theoretical and Literary Spaces in Bangladesh

Lunch (11:40 -13:00)

13:00 – 13:30　Ajay Navaria (Jamia Millia Islamia)

Dalit Literature as a Socio-Political Tool

13:30 – 14:00　Palanimuthu Sivakami (Dartmouth College)

Poetics to Political Transformation: Dalit Women Writings

14:00 – 14:30　Akito Sakasai (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

Fight for the Right to Live: Kim Tal-su's Novels and 'Third Country National' Discourse

14:30 – 15:00　Asif Farrukhi（Habib University）

A New Harvest of Anger: Reading an Alternative Narrative of Pakistan's Society in Contemporary Urdu Literature

Tea Break (15:00-15:15)

Discussants: 15:15 – 15:30　Janaki Nair (Jawaharlal Nehru University)

15:30 – 15:45　Takako Inoue (Daito Bunka University)

15:45 – 16:00　So Yamane (Osaka University)

16:00 – 16:15　Toshie Awaya (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

General Discussion (16:15-17:00)

主催　人間文化研究機構　南アジア地域研究　東京外国語大学拠点南アジア研究センター（FINDAS）

共催　平成 29 年度ダイバーシティ研究環境実現イニシアティヴ（牽引型）東京外国語大学　女性研究者による国際共同研究

List of Contributors

Ajay Navaria is an Associate Professor in the Department of Hindi, Jamia Millia Islamia University, India. Dr. Navaria's publication includes two collections of short stories, Patkatha aur Anya Kahaniyan (2006) and Yes Sir (2012), and a novel, Udhar ke Log (2008). He has been associated with the premier Hindi literary journal, Hans. Navaria teaches in the Hindi department at Jamia Millia Islamia University in Delhi.

Akito Sakasai is a Senior Assistant Professor in World Language and Society Education Center at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. His research interest is Japanese history, Japanese film, and Japanese literature.

Amitava Chakraborty is a Visiting Associate Professor in Bengali at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. He has taught in Tripura University and University of Delhi in India. Apart from being a poet who has published in Bengali and English, he has translated from Tamil and Assamese into Bengali. His research interests include Literary and Cultural Theory, Cultural Policy, and Rhetoric. He is the founding General Secretary of the International Society of Bengal Studies and the founding editor of 'Bangabidya: International Journal of Bengal Studies'.

Asif Farrukhi is an Associate Professor at School of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and Director of the Arzu Center for Regional Languages & Humanities, Habib University, Pakistan. Dr. Asif Farrukhi's research interests are about Development of modern Urdu fiction; sociocultural aspects of historical events in 1947 and 1971 with contemporary literature; Post-colonial fiction; themes and trends in contemporary Urdu poetry; translation theory. His selected latest publications in English include *Look at The City From Here: Karachi Writings*, selected and edited by Asif Farrukhi, Oxford University Press, Karachi 2011; "Upon a Time: Cultural Legacies, Fictional Worlds of the Partition and Beyond," in *Quratulain Hyder and the River of Fire*, edited by Rakhshanda Jalil, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2011; and *Fault Lines: Stories of 1971*, co-edited with Niaz Zaman, University press, Dhaka, 2008.

Hisae Komatsu is a lecturer at Otemon Gakuin University, Japan. Her field of specialization is Hindi literature and Indian cultural studies. Her recent research interest is the self representation of Indian women, especially their narratives in Hindi magazines during modern period. Her recent publications include, "Tell me what Love is; a study of 'LOVE' in early twentieth century Indian women's narratives," in *Comparative Studies on Regional Powers* No.11, Hokkaido University 2012 and "Delineating contours; Portrayal of regional powers in British Asian immigrant literature" in *Eurasia's Regional Powers Compared-China, India, Russia*, edited by Shinichiro Tabata, Routledge, 2015.

Toshie Awaya is a Professor of the Institute of Global Studies and Director of the Center for South Asian Studies at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Tokyo. She has written extensively on history and gender of South Asia.

Palanimuthu Sivakami is an Indian writer writing in Tamil. She has published four novels and four short-story collections, and is a regular contributor to the literary magazine Pudiya Kodangi. As an independent researcher, she regularly writes on issues of gender studies. Currently she is a visiting scholar at Dartmouth College (USA) receiving a fellowship of Core Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program.

Let Me Tell You My Story[1]: Women's Narratives in Hindi Magazines of Early Twentieth Century India

Hisae KOMATSU
(Otemon Gakuin University, Japan)

This paper will focus on the various narratives of anonymous women in a number of Hindi magazines in early twentieth-century India. Hindi magazines, especially some women's journals from those days, gave women a voice and, as Francesca Orsini says, the "right to feel."[2] Many nameless women wrote letters or small notes to the editor requesting not to specify their name and address, and they expressed things about themselves, particularly their miserable situation. For most women, women's journals such as *Gṛhalakshmī* and *Cāṅd*, and their reader's columns, were invaluable spaces that allowed them to express their own feelings.

This paper has three aims: first, it attempts to illustrate the emergence and changing nature of women's magazines by studying various magazines from the gender perspective; second, it seeks to show how narratives by anonymous women expressed society and themselves; finally, it discusses the role played by women's magazines in improving the status of women. In this paper, the focus is on modern Indian women's narratives, where we can not only see women's ideals and duties but also hear their other voice discussing matters such as their new sense of individual worth and their emotions. The above-mentioned three points will be shown using these women's narratives as case studies.

OVERVIEW OF EARLY WOMEN'S MAGAZINES

During the social reform movement of the late nineteenth century, both missionaries and domestic reformers emphasized the idea of improving women's social status, and, therefore, the necessity of female education became a topic. This led to the initial

[1] Draft. Please do not cite or quote.
[2] Orsini, Francesca, *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-1940; Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.275.

publication of magazines aimed at women. In 1856, *Strī Bodh,* the first magazine for women, was launched in Gujarati.

Along with *Strī Bodh* (1856-1950?), several women's magazines in various vernacular languages began to be published in the late 19th century, such as *Bāmābādhinī Patrika* (1863-1923) in Bengali, *Bālābodhinī* (1874-1878) in Hindi*, Grihinī* (1877-?) in Malati, and *Akhbār un-Nissā* (1884-?) in Urdu. These magazines mostly had contributions from male reformers, and the contents were controlled and censored to underline the importance of women's traditional gender roles. Therefore, in those magazines, there was hardly any attention paid to the examination of women's issues or voices of women. Now we will examine *Bālābodhinī,* the first women's magazine written in Hindi, to see the distinctions of early women's magazines, as mentioned above.

Bālābodhinī made its first appearance in 1874. It was dependent on government funding and lasted four years. The editor, Bharatendu Harishchandra, was a highly respected reformist and educationalist, and he was also one of the most distinguished Hindi writers of his time. Together with him, male reformers wrote for the magazine as the main contributors. The aims of the magazine, Bharatendu claimed in the first issue of the magazine, were to spread female education, to show a role model of the "respectable woman," and to improve women's social status.

The magazine was only eight pages long. It contained advice for housewives and mothers in areas such as the management of children and the home, hygiene, pregnancy, etc. It also repeatedly mentioned the duties of housewives. The magazine did not include any prose, poems, popular songs, anecdotes, non-didactic tales, or jokes; such fiction was considered unsuitable for "respectable women." Since the goal of the magazine and its writers was to enlighten women to be "respectable women," it did not include any discussion about social reform related to women. Thus we see that the magazine could provide limited information and knowledge to women, and, contrary to what Bharatendu claimed as the aim of the magazine, there was no attempt to improve women's social status.

As we moved into the 20th century, the Hindi area experienced a new wave of women's movement. At that time, many organizations were led by women, and women's issues were discussed from the standpoint of women. This was when female education was being popularized, and the female literacy rate had risen significantly. Along with these

changes, the development of printing technology and transportation had a significant impact on the circulation of women's magazines. Literate women were now able to seek the space, and obtain the tools, to bring their voices into the public sphere.

Under such conditions, three important magazines for women were released from Allahabad. These three magazines, *Gṛhalakshmī, Strī Darpaṇ*, and *Cāṅd*, gained popularity and lasted around twenty years each. In the next chapter, we will examine each magazine closely.

POPULAR WOMEN'S MAGAZINES

Gṛhalakshmī (1909-1929)

Gṛhalakshmī (hereafter referred to as GL) was considered the first Hindi magazine with a woman editor, and there were several female writers who contributed articles to the magazine[3]. GL was 40 pages long and included a variety of content, both fiction and non-fiction, which were informative for women. It included a wide range of articles, on history, religion, women's issues, political issues and moral teachings, domestic and international news, editorial, a reader's column, and prose and poems. Additionally, GL used to publish photographs of active Indian women—writers, social activists, and Maharanis around the country.

Although the aim of the magazine was, as the first issued said, to spread female education and to free women's minds from various superstitions and traditions, most of the articles emphasized the traditional role of mother, wife, and daughter-in-law. Many articles contributed by women for women encouraged them to hold onto the traditional gender role, in order to be a respectable woman. We can see this mold in its reader's columns as well. Some letters gained pity, but when the writer of the letter was considered deviant, she gained no pity or sympathy, instead receiving admonishment from other readers. "Self-devotion," "sacrifice," "virtuousness," and "obedience to husband"—these are words we frequently see in GL.

Strī Darpaṇ (1909-1928)

[3] Though it is true that the magazine had several female writers, most of the contributions were from men. Even "the first female editor," Mrs. Gopaldevi, was, according to Orsini, an editor in name only, and the magazine was mostly written and edited by Thakur Srinath Singh. Orsini, 2002, p.262.

Strī Darpaṇ (hereafter referred to as SD) was first published in the same year as GL. The editors and main contributors to this magazine were women from the Nehru family: the editor was Rameshwari Nehru, wife of Jawaharlal's cousin, the manager was Kamla, Jawaharlal's wife, and one of the main contributors was Uma, wife of another of Jawaharlal's cousins. Aside from the Nehru family, several female reformers, educationalists, and novelists contributed articles to the magazine. In each issue, four to five articles were written by women.

SD was 60 to 70 pages long, and a quarter of the whole magazine was devoted to editorial commentaries. The magazine had various articles on history, religion, social issues, women's issues, political issues, moral teachings, etc. It had both domestic and international news, as well as book reviews. SD published both nonfiction and fiction, such as short stories, plays, poems, and prose. In contrast with GL, SD ran very few photographs, illustrations, or advertisements in each issue; there was no reader's column section either.

According to the editor, Rameshwari, the aim of SD was to spread female education and elevate the status of women as individuals. These words were well reflected in SD. Many articles were written by women for the upliftment of women, and they encouraged women to be individuals and members of society. Rameshwari herself used to write that a woman should not subordinate herself to a man; she should be respected as a human being. Several articles even questioned the traditional gender role—self-devotion, sacrifice, virtue, etc. In many articles we find words that are hardly seen in GL, such as "companionship," "independence," "awareness," and so on.

Cāṅd (1922-1949?)

In 1922, Ramrakh Singh Sahgal began *Cāṅd* (hereafter referred to as CD). Sahgal was a male social reformer and one of the most famous Hindi editors of that time. The articles in CD were also mainly written by men, but it had several female reformers, educationalists, and novelists as writers. The aim of CD was, as Sahgal claimed, to spread female education and to uplift women as individuals and as members of society. As per his statement, we find various articles dealing with women's education and their role as citizens.

CD was 80 to 100 pages long, and it devoted many spaces to both domestic and international news. Along with news, it contained various articles on history, religion, social issues, women's issues, political issues, moral teaching, home science, book reviews, and editorial commentaries. The magazine also published several pieces of fiction, such as prose, poems, short stories, and plays. Some of them were written by popular writers of the day. In sharp contrast to SD, CD had lots of photographs, illustrations, cartoons, and advertisements, and some of them were vibrantly colored.

In each issue, CD published various articles on women's and political issues. Sahgal, the editor of CD, always championed the elevation of women. He used to write in favor of women's rights, most notably the right of women to divorce and remarry. This was an extremely bold opinion in the 1920s. We can see Sahgal's sympathy for the weak in the reader's column section as well. Thanks to his attitude, each issue had plenty of letters, and therefore the reader's column section expanded. In terms of size and content, CD surpassed all previous women's magazines.

VOICES OF NAMELESS WOMEN

Now we will look at the reader's column sections of the above magazines. Since SD did not have this section, only GL and CD are covered here. Compared to CD, GL did not devote much space to the reader's column section. From 1923 to 1928 (not clear, though), GL published only one or two letters, but not in every issue. In response to the letter written by a reader, other readers wrote comments that were sometimes pitying, but sometimes harshly admonishing. Some letters did not receive a comment.

On the contrary, CD had plenty of letters in each issue under the editorship of Sahgal. Every issue had three to ten letters, and all letters from readers gained vocal support from Sahgal. In the late 1920s to early 1930s, CD had the most number of letters from its readers, but after 1935, as Sahgal left the magazine, this section gradually decreased in size and finally stopped around 1944.

Although the letters to the editor were written by both the male and female readers of each magazine, here I focus on letters by female readers. Most of them referred to themselves as young and not highly educated. They usually requested that their names

and addresses be withheld[4]. Various stories were written by women. Some women, especially child widows, were seeking marriage partners. Other women lamented about their own miserable situation, such as domestic cruelty and insecurity, repressed sexuality, poor health, or poverty. Several women lamented the lack of respect shown toward them. However, the main theme for women's stories was the expression of their emotional needs. Those letters contained bold and vivid emotions and voiced prohibited feelings; therefore, they were betraying high morals and social norms. In the pages that follow we will see some examples.

Letters for CD

In March 1930, a young married Kayasta of 16 from Bagarpur wrote about her extramarital affair with her cousin:

> I was delivered to one person with poor health. But I love my cousin. He loves me too. I do not want anything but my cousin. Is it crime to go away with him? Can I get remarried with him? I do not want to go with my husband. Tell me what to do? (CD1930 March pp860-862)

In his written response to this letter, Sahgal raised a concern about Hindu law:

> It's not love, just desire. We cannot solve this kind of problem until Hindu law admits the right to divorce. We should consider revisions to the Hindu Law. (CD1930 March pp861-862)

A daughter of an officer revealed the premarital affair she had been having with her neighbor since a couple of years:

> I love him and I gave my virginity to him. But now I am getting married to another man. Due to that my dharma will be corrupted. I am degrading myself further-more..... (CD 1930 Dec pp251-252)

Another young wife of 19 from Muzaffarnagar sought advice about her conjugal relationship:

[4] We should note that there is a possibility that writers used fake identity, especially male may write a letter in a female voice.

> When I got married, I was thirteen years old. After that I met someone and fell in love with him. Now my husband discovered our relationship and hates me. What can I do? (CD1930 Dec pp253-259)

In response to the above two young girls in love, Sahgal showed some sympathy and understanding:

> Nowadays countless young boys and girls are suffering for not getting married with their loved one. Why? Because there are strong restrictions to choose the partner. We should talk about this matter with calm mind. (CD1930 Dec pp259&261)

Letters for GL

Compared to those letters and responses published in CD, there are clear differences in GL, especially in each response to the letters.

A daughter-in-law of a zamindar revealed her illicit affair with her father in-law and made a confession:

> During my husband's absence, day by day my father-in-law and I were getting close. We were like husband and wife. One day my husband found out about our illicit relationship but he did not say anything and left us. When I gave birth to baby boy, my husband rejected him saying; "I am not his father, but his elder brother." Shortly after, he died. Now whenever I see my baby son, I cannot stop thinking about my husband. I am bothered by terrible guilt. Dear editor, please tell me. How can I expiate my guilt? Will God forgive me someday? (GL c.1925 Asharh pp230-232)

In a response to the daughter-in-law of the zamindar, one reader wrote without any pity:

> It is impossible for you to be forgiven in this life. Since your husband has already passed away, you cannot expiate your guilt. (GL c.1927 Savan pp283-284)

Another widow from Japarpur also revealed her illicit affair with her father-in-law. She was approached by him after the death of her husband:

> My father in-law made advances to me and our illicit affair began. Eventually I started to love him, but I needed to do good to enjoy the immoral act with him in a more safe and sound manner. I mean, the dirtier my soul got, the more religious acts I needed to conduct. (GL c.1927 Asharh pp188-190)

There were no responses to this letter, at least not in the next few issues. In contrast to Sahgal, the editor at GL usually did not reply to the letters by himself/herself, but asked other readers to send in their opinions.

ROLE OF HINDI WOMEN'S MAGAZINES OF THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

As we have seen above, in the early twentieth century, the culture of women's magazines was developing. Compared to the women's magazines of the late nineteenth century, in which the content was mostly controlled and censored to emphasize the importance of women's traditional gender roles, the magazines of the early twentieth century were no longer standardized. We find that they had their own distinctive characteristics, and therefore there are many types of stories by various women.

Take the visual appearance, for example. Each magazine had a different appearance in terms of size and volume. There were differences in the number of pictures, illustrations, and advertisements for each magazine—CD had lots and SD had very few. The percentage of pages dedicated to entertainment and useful articles was by no means uniform either. We also found wide differences in the responses of the editors of each magazine to their readers.

In addition to the differences in appearance and content, we found variations in the women's voices in each magazine. There were many kinds of narratives and stories told by nameless and faceless women (and also men), which challenged the norms forced by the male-dominated society. For most women, especially those who were non-celebrities, women's magazines and its reader's columns were the first and only space where they could express their own feelings freely, and gain some sympathy and support from the editor and readers.

The women's magazines meant a lot to many women of that time. First, magazines gave them a sense of unity. Many letters to the magazine from readers used words such

as “we” or “our sister” when mentioning other readers. On several pages in CD, we even find the word “Cāṅd parivār,” or “Cāṅd family,” and the editor, Sahgal, also used these words, especially in the reader’s column section. When he responded to women who were in trouble, he did not only blame them; instead, he suggested that “we” should deal with the problem to change “our” society. We can imagine that it aroused a sense of unity in readers with people outside their home and community.

Second, the magazines offered many kinds of information and knowledge to women, as a result of which many women may have increased their consciousness. The magazines gave women a new role and space beyond the household, and thus they were windows to the wider world for non-celebrity women.

What we need to realize is that even though the strict social backdrop of those times called for absolute obedience and virtue, there were, in fact, voices that challenged the system at that time. Such narratives, told by faceless and nameless women, illustrate the other dimension of women's lives at that time, which contributes significantly to the cultural history of India.

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The *Marginalized* in the Construction of 'Indigenous' Theoretical and Literary Spaces in Bangladesh

Amitava CHAKRABORTY

(Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Japan)

1.

In the middle of the 80s of the last Century, Bengali culture witnessed the emergence of a literary and theoretical movement known as 'Uttaradhunikatabad'[1]. The movement was initiated by poet and critic Amitabha Gupta, who in 1985 presented the concept in the little magazine *Janapada*. It was then nurtured by critics, literary theoreticians and litterateurs like Anjan Sen, Birendra Chakravarti, Uday Narayan Singha, Tapodhir Bhattacharjee etc. from India and Ezaz Yusufi, Sajidul Haq, Jillur Rahman and Khondakar Ashraf Hossain from Bangladesh. Little magazines from India and Bangladesh like *Gangeya Patra, Beej, Alochanachakra, Samprata, Lalnakkhatra, Chatimtala, Sanket, Anyastar, Drastabya, Bipratik, Sudarshanchakra, 1400, Ekabingsho* etc. nurtured the movement.

When Gupta first proposed the concept, it was centered on a new trend in poetry, which Gupta identified as a move beyond modernist literary culture. Following years, however, saw the movement developing its' unique corpus of theoretical postulations regarding poetry and other forms of literature, poetic language and ontology.

Gupta's article titled *Nibedan,* published as the appendix of an anthology of *Uttaradhunik* poems, titled *Uttar Adhunik Kabita*[2]*,* offers a comprehensive account of the theoretical understanding at its earliest phase. He posited the new movement against the Modernist

[1] Uttar = Beyond, Adhunikatabad = Modernism. (Adhunik= Modern, Adhunikata= Modernity) *Uttar* is also used to mean 'Post' which has led many scholars and thinkers in translating this term as 'Postmodernism', whereas a few others have used the term *Uttaradhunikatabad* as one of the translations of the term 'Postmodernism'. Such practices have at times led scholars into describing this school as a variety of Postmodernist movements. However, many scholars (e.g. Bhattacharjee 1995, Chakraborty 2008a) have shown in detail how such a position is not tenable given the oppositional Epistemological, Ontological and Aesthetic features of these two movement.

[2] Kabita= Poetry.

poetic movement of 1930s, which, he claimed, had delinked Bengali poetry from its thousand year old poetic tradition. Comparing between two anthologies of Bengali poem, *Bangla Kabya Parichay*[3] (1938) edited by Rabindranath Thakur, and *Adhunik Bangla Kabita*[4] (1940) edited by Buddhadeb Basu[5], Gupta notes that while the first one had included poems from medieval Bengali Hindu and Muslim poets, poets belonging to various folk-religious traditions and folk-semi-classical-popular performing traditions, the second one excluded all such poets. He observed that the reader of the first anthology could feel the acceptance of the medieval-folk-popular forms of Bengali poetry as an integral part of the lineage of contemporary Bengali poetic world- "Reading *Bangla Kabya Parichay'* confirms that Bengali poetry has a history, a tradition." (Gupta, 1989/1995, 5)[6] . In contrast, *Adhunik Bangla Kabita* represents a belief that "a rootless…modernism is enough." (Gupta, 1989, 5) It is in this context that Gupta quotes poet Arun Bhattacharya's request to young poets- "The turbulent years of 1930-80 is over now. Friends, now please return from Rimboud, Baudelaire or Eluard, Mayakovsky to mahajan padavali[7] and Ramprasads'[8] poems, Shreedhar kathak[9] and Nidhubabus'[10] songs." (Q, Gupta, 1989/1995, 67) Gupta felt that the *Uttaradhunik* poets were doing exactly that- "The memory of the whole tradition of Bengali poetry gets its imprint in the poems of the Uttaradhunik poets." (Gupta, 1989/1995, 2) He also noted how these new poets had broken the metropolis-centralism of modern and modernist Bengali poetic world and had added the geographical-linguistic-cultural experiences of satellite towns and villages in the corpus of contemporary Bengali poetry through the use of localized language and imagery and by adopting Little Magazines as the main medium of publication.[11] It would be useful to note here that Gupta was conscious

[3] Introduction to Bengali Poetry
[4] Modern Bengali Poetry
[5] The first addition was edited jointly by Buddhadeb Basu and Hirendranath Mukhopadhyay. However, since the second edition (1954) Buddhadeb Basu remained the lone editor.
[6] Quotations from Bengali texts have been translated by the author unless mentioned otherwise.
[7] Vaishnava lyrics of pre-modern Bengal.
[8] A Shakta poet of medieval Bengal.
[9] Performer of a folk-popular tradition.
[10] A nineteenth century semi-classical performer.
[11] It must be noted here that through the inclusion of folk-rural-popular genres within the fold of '*tradition',* by celebrating the breaking of metropolis-centralism and through prioritizing the emergence of multiple voices

about the possibility that his postulation might be interpreted as a revivalist aesthetics. That's why he stressed the point repeatedly that he was not arguing for a 'return' to the pre-modern tradition and rural experiences at the cost of the cosmopolitan Bengali literary tradition nurtured through its' two hundred years long engagement with western philosophical and literary sensibilities, rather he was arguing for and celebrating an engagement with the ancient-medieval and rural-folk-popular experiences in the formation of the contemporary poetic sensibility. (Gupta, 1989/1985)

Though Gupta talks exclusively about poetry in this article, he also expanded the conceptualization to the domain of fiction. In a 1986 article, titled *Bangla Upanyas: Ekti Prastab*[12], he traced back the roots of Bengali fiction in the medieval Bengali narrative tradition, contesting the understanding of an earlier historian of Bengali fiction who had traced back the roots of Bengali fiction only to Sanskrit-Pali narrative traditions. However, Gupta also noted how modernist Bengali fiction had effectively erased the tradition of medieval Bengali narratives and how, in opposition to them, a few contemporary writers have used the medieval narrative memories in the construction of their fictions, both in theme and form of narration. (Gupta, 1986)

As we have noted already, Guptas' ideas were nurtured and further developed by his contemporary litterateurs and theoreticians from Bangladesh and India. Anjan Sen argued that every literary tradition has a corpus of 'intracultural codes' which play a textual function in later productions. He shows that the post-Rabindranath modernist Bengali poets (excluding a few major poets like Jibanananda Das and Bishnu Dey) had somehow succeeded in erasing or marginalizing the corpus of Bengali 'intracultural codes' and promoted that erosion as an aesthetic position quite successfully. He also shows how a large number of poets from 70s and 80s broke out of that dominant aesthetics and started using the traditional Bengali 'intracultural codes' in their writings. Sen marks this as the salient feature of the *Uttaradhunik* aesthetics. (Sen, 1986; 1991) Birendra Chakravarti proposed an *Uttaradhunik*

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and Little Magazine movement, this group was show-casing the influence of Left movement in Bengal which had brought irreversible changes in the Bengali socio-cultural fields since 1940's and had witnessed a strong Naxalite (Maoist) movement in the 70s.

[12] Bengali Novel: A Proposal

ontology, which he named as *Uttarbyaktisatta,* taking the term from an article of Jibanananda Das, arguably the most important post-Rabindranath poet. He defines, again following Jibananada Das, *Uttarbyaktisatta,* as that self which is shaped through a continuous and fruitful engagement with space and time, taking the self beyond its' immediate surroundings. He posited that *Uttara*-self against the 'personal-self' antagonized to and excluded from spatial and temporal engagements, promoted in the creation and aesthetics of a few major authors from 30s like Buddhadeb Basu and 50s like Sunil Gangopadhyay. (Chakravarti, 1991) Tapodhir Bhattacharjee added theoretical momentum to the movement. Based on his long engagement with Indian and Western theoretical schools he gave the essay-based thoughts of early *Uttaradhunik* thinkers a strong theoretical base. Through a detailed study of various kinds of modernism in Bengal, he traced the evolution of the *Uttaradhunik* sensibility and offered an analysis of the current status of the movement. He also proposed to link other radical thoughts like Feminism, Post-Colonialism, Marxism, anti-Casteism etc. with *Uttaradhunikata* and proposed its' second phase as *Uttarayanbad* as a larger Marxist liberal humanist position. (Bhattacharjee, 1995) In the nineties itself Khondakar Ashraf Hossain and Ezaz Yusufi started introducing the *Uttaradhunik* concept in Bangladesh through their little magazines. Khondakar Ashraf Hossain played the most important role through *Ekabingsha,* a little magazine which he edited for twenty years. Though they didn't add much to the theoretical corpus of *Uttaradhunikata,* their writings prioritized medieval and folk traditions of Bengal further over the Sanskritic traditions. This seems natural in the context of the history of the composite Bengali culture that took shape during the medieval era through artistic-religious-social re-working of the pre-Muslim Bengali culture and the history of the formation of a primarily geographical-linguistic Bengali identity around the emergence of Bangladesh, a formation that remains contested, and hence relevant, in contemporary Bangladesh as well.

2.

As would be evident from references to earlier litterateurs in the discussion of the *Uttaradhunik*s themselves, as mentioned above, there are examples of writings in earlier and

contemporary Bengali literature that manifested the sensibility which the *Uttaradhunik*s tried to argue for. In pre-*Uttaradhunik* literature, Michael Madhusudan Dutta (1824-1873) engaged extensively with Indian mythical characters and Sanskrit epic form, Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay (1847 - 1919) used the traditional forms of storytelling in his fictional writings, Rabindranath Thakur (1861-1941) re-worked traditional and folk motives, philosophies and forms in many ways, Jibanananda Das (1899-1954) used medieval and folk Bengali motives in most of his signature poetic works, Jasimuddin (1903-1976) explored folk themes and forms in his poems, Satinath Bhaduri (1906-1965) used fold narrative technique very successfully in one of his novels, Bishnu Dey (1909-1982) used folk, Sanskritic and medieval motives extensively in his poems, Amiyabhushan Majumdar (1918-2001) experimented with folk and traditional theme and narrative techniques in his fiction. However, none of these authors, nor any critic before the emergence of the *Uttaradhunik*s, postulated any aesthetics around such engagements, nor did they prioritize such engagements as a counter-move to colonial modernity. In fact, Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay continued to be considered as a minor author pronouncedly for the very reason that the mark of medieval folk-narrative technique was so evident in his writings, Jasimuddin also faced the same fate for remaining 'restricted' to folk and rural themes and forms. The scenario since the 70s, however, would be rather different. A significant number of writers manifested their engagement with traditional and folk forms and motives. Fiction writers like Debesh Roy and Abhijit Sen prioritized experimentation with medieval and folk narrative techniques and themes. Poets like Gita Chattopadhyay, Al Mahmud, Jahar Sen Majumdar, Dilip Bandyopadhyay and many more started prioritizing their engagement with epic, medieval and folk forms and themes in their poetic works. Unlike the preceding era, these authors made that engagement the signature of their writings and critics also started considering that engagement as an important point of discussion. However, it was the *Uttaradhunik*s who identified this engagement as the marker of a new era in Bengali literature and offered a theoretical orientation to this sensibility.

We must also note that many critics tried to develop indigenous theoretical schools before and at the time of the emergence of the *Uttaradhunik*s. We can mention the attempts of

scholars like Narasimhaiah (1990, 1994), Mukhopadhyay (1988), Dharitriputra (1997), Dasgupta (1998), and Mukhopadhyay (1999) at re-inventing Sanskrit poetics in their search for an indigenous corpus of theories of criticism. Rajan & Daniel (1998) added the attempt to contemporize ancient Tamil poetics to this tradition. What, however, remains very significant about these attempts, in the context of *Uttaradhunikata,* is that though these attempts are important in the history of the search for a counter-position to the colonial-modernity, most of such attempts have taken the re-invention of ancient Sanskrit (and ancient Tamil in one or two exceptional instances) poetics as the most available option in that process, perhaps not giving deserved importance to the fact that those ancient schools evolved around literary cultures which were very different from medieval or contemporary Indian literary practices. Barring a few exceptions (e.g. Dharitriputra, 1997) their works provide valuable readings into how difficult it might be for critics if they center their postulations on thousand year old thoughts rather than taking cues from living literary traditions. In contrast to these attempts, the *Uttaradhunik*s have tried to postulate a literary and critical understanding which would take its' cues from existing literary practices, albeit prioritizing one over the others. In this sense, the *Uttaradhunik* school is more compatible with schools of thoughts like Nemades' *Desivaad* (see Paranjape, 1997), which he developed in the 80s based on creative re-appropriation of Linton's (1943) concept of Nativism in the context of contemporary Marathi literature, Devy's search for a Bhasa aesthetics through reading the histories of Bhasa literatures outside the Euro-centric or Sanskrit-centric models (Devy 1992), Barber's conceptualization of Yoruba Oral Aesthetics based on the living tradition of *Oriki* performances in Africa (Barber, 1993), or Nigerian critic Ogunyemi's conceptualization of 'African wo/man palava' based on a creative mixing of contemporary practices and terminologies taken from African myths (Ogunyemi, 1996).

The *Uttaradhunik*s, however, failed to engage with a very important aspect of the 'tradition' they proposed to prioritize. While their postulations underline that the *Uttaradhunik* sensibility celebrates the folk and popular traditions, hitherto marginalized in the elite Bengali literary space, while their formulation of 'tradition', through literary and critical writings, pronouncedly includes the culture of the socially-culturally marginalized groups

from ancient and medieval Bengal, while they note that the *Uttaradhunik* moment is marked by the presence of voices from rural locations, and while they note that 'tradition' has oppressive elements as well, their critical works do not deal with the very fact that Dalit and Feminist engagements with 'tradition' needs to be understood in their respective terms. In their journey for more than three decades, during which they remained very active through publishing, editing and compiling both literary and critical texts surrounding *Uttaradhunikata,* through which they gave the *Uttaradhunik* a specific shape, they remained totally silent on this particular aspect. Though Bhattacharjee (1995) pointed out that the new phase of *Uttaradhunik* movement would include Feminist and anti-Caste positions, he himself did not expand further on actual or possible structures of engagement with a 'tradition' which was predominantly patriarchic and casteist; neither did any other *Uttaradhunik* thinker. *Uttaradhunik*s from Bangladesh were neither any exception. While concentrating on the 'Bengali' identity, they remained unresponsive to Feminist and Dalit engagement with 'tradition'. Thus, as a whole, *Uttaradhunik* postulations nurtured a significant lacuna in their conceptualization of the 'tradition', subscribing to, perhaps unintentionally, the dominant patriarchic and upper-casteist model of a 'national culture' which prefers not to engage with possible alternative reception and engagement with 'tradition' from Feminist and Dalit positions.

Chakraborty (2008b) pointed out this lacuna in a paper published in a little magazine edited by Amitabha Gupta. Chakraborty explored the existing Feminist and Dalit writings in Bengali literature to reveal how those writers had created a different and complex mode of engagement with 'tradition'. Based on detail reading of women writers from nineteenth and twentieth century and Dalit writers from twentieth century, Chakraborty showed how those authors had invented alternative 'tradition' of women's history and writings and Dalit identity (Ashapurna Devi, Sulekha Sanyal, Mallika Sengupta, Mahashweta Mukhopadhyay, Anil Sarkar), left subversive cues for alternative readings in otherwise 'conformist' writings (Suramasundari Ghosh, Mankumari Basu), gave expression to suppressed voices through re-doing dominant mythical, epic and medieval characters and narratives (Sanjukta Bandyopadhyay, Sutapa Sengupta, Tapati Chattopadhyay, Chaitali Chattopadhyay,

Mahashweta Mukhopadhyay, Mallika Sengupta, Urmila Chakraborty, Anil Sarkar, Anil Biswas), and gave expression to the hatred felt towards the dominant 'tradition' (Chaitali Chattopadhyay, Tapati Chattopadhyay, Mallika Sengupta, Anil Sarkar, Anil Biswas). Chakraborty argued for developing a theoretical schema that could effectively accommodate such complex engagements with 'tradition'.[13]

Though Chakraborty (2008b) included a brief discussion of one prominent writer from Bangladesh (Selina Hossain), a more elaborate analysis of the works by Bangladeshi authors would reveal that Bangladeshi Bengali literature also has comparable complex engagement with 'tradition' which, again, has not been accorded due importance, even a passing mention, in the formulation of the *Uttaradhunik* position in Bangladesh.

3.

Selina Hossain's (1947-present) *Neel Mayurer Jouban* (1978)[14] re-created the world of 8th-10th century Bengali life taking cues from the life depicted in the hymns of *Charayapada,* an anthology of hymns composed by authors belonging to a Buddhist subsect during 8th – 10th century (Islam 2014). That sect had a special status for women and the lower-caste/out-caste, which is evident from the life the hymns describe, substantiated by the hagiographies of the leading personalities, some of whom composed those hymns, of that sect. (Chattopadhyay, 2010) Given this and the fact that *Charyapada,* was already a celebrated text being the lone specimen of ancient Bengali, the foregrounding of women and lower-caste life in the novel would not have been considered as any important intervention in the literary culture. This understanding, however, changes when one considers the political atmosphere in which the novel was written and how the author has also added the element of language-conflict in her novel. In her novel, the story turns into the narration of a conflict between the upper-caste and the lower-caste around the question of language. While the

[13] However, in a response published as a post-script in the next issue of the little magazine, Gupta maintained that *Uttaradhunikata* in its engagement with 'tradition' had already created space accommodating such voices. This argument cannot be denied so far as creative writing is concerned; however, our focus here is (as was in Chakraborty 2008b) on the theoretical corpus.

[14] Hossain has two more novels, *Chandbene* (1984) and *Kalketu O Fullara* (1992), which reconstruct characters and stories from medieval Bengali narrative tradition.

upper-caste protagonists prefer Sanskrit and hate the spoken language, the lower-caste protagonists prefer the spoken language over Sanskrit, compose poems in that language and fights for that language. Given that Bangladesh had by then witnessed large-scale rapes and killings during its' liberation war, had an almost three decades long fight for its' language, had witnessed the formation of a Bangladeshi identity based on geographic-linguistic features, and had witnessed the resurgence of the political forces which acted against that identity, Hossain's selection of a text that fundamentally foregrounds independent women, and re-constructing the narrative as that of a conflict between the dominant and suppressed languages could surely be read as a literary intervention both in the immediate political culture as well as in the age-old patriarchic Bengali culture. The fact that Hossain has been an active participant in defending the language-based secular Bengali identity in Bangladesh[15], because of which she had to face unfavorable consequences at politically turbulent times, and has contributed actively in the movement for women's rights in Bangladesh[16], provide substantial context to this reading.

Shaheen Akhtar's (1962-present) *Sakhi Rangamala* (2010), however, offers a less directly politically interventionist, yet more relevant for the *Uttaradhunik* movement thanks to its use of 'intra-cultural codes', example of Feminist and Dalit engagement with 'tradition'. Akhtar's narrative schema and language shows conscious engagement with medieval and folk narrative techniques and local language. She has creatively used the narrative techniques of various medieval and folk narrative genres like *Palagan, Itihas, Puthi, Kathakata.* She has used folk rhymes and songs within the narration. The language is a mix of the Noakhali dialect with imprints of the linguistic tropes of various medieval and folk narrative traditions. The story itself has been taken from a popular folk ballad, *Palagan,* titled *Chaudhurir Lorai*[17] from Noakhali region of Bengal. In addition to this, the author has also taken cues from narrations of the same story in a few other medieval historical writings and modern local histories. The original *Palagan* was centered on the folk-memory of the love affair of a local

[15] Hossain has many creative and critical writings celebrating the ethos of the liberation war of Bangladesh.
[16] Hossain has a large corpus of creative and academic writings (including a Gender encyclopedia) depicting/dealing with women's life, women's history and women's rights.
[17] *The Feud of the Chaudhuri*s

landlord and the family-feud surrounding it. Akhtar, however, prioritizes the women and lower-caste characters in her narration. This prioritization begins with the title itself. While the title of the source *Palagan* presented it as the story of the local landlords (Chaudhuri is the family name of the landlord), the novel, in its title, presents itself as the story of the lower-caste woman character Rangamala. Akhtar consciously and repeatedly uses this lower-caste identity in her narration and ascribes an irreversible power to this lower-caste woman. In the opening section itself, which narrates that Rangamala has been killed and the slayer is returning to the palace of the landlord with the head of the woman, as proof of the killing, the narrator describes an uncanniness in the surrounding, as if the nature was responding angrily to the killing, and interprets this uncanniness as an omen- "As if it is not the butchered head of that lower-caste woman that is being brought, rather a wildfire is approaching, which will extinguish the whole of the Chaudhari family." (Akhtar, 2010, 7)[18] Again, compared to the source stories, Akhtar has created and given voice to other women and low-caste characters like the mother and wives of the landlords, servants, slaves, performers and fighters.

In comparison to both these authors, Harishankar Jaladas (1955-present) represents a very different kind of identity and different kind of engagement with 'tradition'. Born in a Dalit Hindu family, he experienced double marginalization, that of a religious minority and a dalit. Jaladas belongs to the *Kaibarta* community, a lower caste community of fishermen. Jaladas has published quite a few fictional and academic (including his doctoral thesis) works surrounding the life of that lower-caste community. The fact that he named his memoir as *Kaibartakatha*[19] (2009) further testifies to his conscious positioning as a Dalit activist. It is from this Dalit perspective that he engaged with 'tradition' in some of his fictional writings. In his novel *Mohana* (2013), he has reconstructed the history of the Kaibartas. Medieval Bengal had witnessed a rebellion by the Kaibartas, led by the Kaibarta chief Divya, against the Pal king Mahipal II (c 1075-1080 AD). Mahipal II lost his life in the battle and the Varendra (Northern Bengal) region was ruled by three successive Kaibarta chiefs, Divya,

[18] This section is comparable to how the medieval woman Ramayana composer Chandrabati describes the curse of nature witnessed by the citizens of Ayodhya after Ram had abandoned Sita. (see Devsen 2002)
[19] The Story of the *Kaibarta*

Rudyok, and Bhim, until Ramapal (c 1082-1124 AD) re-established Pal authority in that region. (Chowdhury 2015) Though those Kaibrata leaders were landlords and local chiefs, belonging to a higher sub-caste amongst the Kaibartas, the memory of this rebellion has gained much importance in contemporary Dalit movement as an example of a glorious phase of Bengali Dalits.[20] Jaladas re-creates this story in his novel as a reconstruction of the Kaibrata 'tradition'.[21]

Continuing this project of the reconstruction of 'tradition', Jaladas has written an epic novel *Ekalabya* (2016), which narrates the life and time of the epic 'non-aryan' character Ekalabya. In the original story as narrated in the *Mahabharata,* Ekalabya was a *Nishad* prince. His skill at archery was better than that of the Pandav and Kaurav princes, leading Dron, the teacher of the princes, to demand Ekalabya's right thumb as *gurudakshina*[22]. Though hesitant in the beginning, Ekalabya paid *gurudakshina* by cutting his right thumb which ensured that he would never be able to excel further in archery. He continued to appear in the later sections of the *Mahabharata,* as an archer, as an alley to the Kaurava crown-prince Duryadhan, as a warrior against Krishna. The base story of offering his right thumb as gurudakshina has been used for long as the epitome of a student's commitment to the master. Later, this same story has been used by Dalit activists, re-interpreting Ekalabya as an iconic character representing the cruel suppression of the Dalits in Indian Brahminical culture. As a reconstruction of the Dalit 'tradition' on a grand scale, Jaladas narrates the whole life of Ekalabya, with detail depiction of the society, politics and personalities of that time.

It must be noted here that through his writings Jaladas has not only re-constructed a Dalit 'tradition', not only documented contemporary Dalit lives in Bangladesh[23], but has also foregrounded a long-avoided issue in contemporary Bangladeshi political culture. The Hindu community, being a shrinking minority community in Bangladesh, has mostly avoided

[20] e.g., Dalit poet Anil Sarkar has used this memory in a poem reconstructing the Dalit 'tradition'. (Sarkar 2002)
[21] Before Jaladas, Satyen Sen had also published a novel, titled *Bidrohi Kaibartya* (1969), on the same history.
[22] Payment students were supposed to make to their teachers after the completion of their training under the Brahminic education system.
[23] His first novel *Jaladas* (2008) and another novel *Dahankal* (2010) narrate the contemporary life of Kaibartays as a fishermen community, his novel *Ramgolam* (2012) narrates the life of *Methars*, another out-caste community.

dealing with the patriarchic and casteist practices within the community. While feminist interventions in larger Bangladeshi society have had some influence on the Hindu community as well, the question of caste never got much attention. Jaladas has brought back attention to the issue of caste through his writings, both creative and academic.

Thus, these authors have consciously created literary spaces where Bengali 'tradition' becomes less homogeneous, and the engagement with 'tradition' turns more complex, embedded with recorded instances of, and the potential of, intervening in the immediate political culture. It is interesting how the search for an 'indigenous' Bengali aesthetics visibly avoids those complexities, constructing a sense of 'tradition' that excludes conscious Feminist and Dalit interventions, creating a divided terrain, perhaps reproducing the divide in that process.

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Dalit Literature as a Socio-political Tool

Ajay NAVARIA
(Jamia Millia Islamia, India)

Every country has its own social distinctiveness which is also its social reality. This reality does not exist on a single plane, but is multi-layered. India is a diverse nation and various cultures simultaneously exist in both their appealing and misshapen forms. However, many cultures also exist in conflict with each other and therefore, a culture of mutual hostility is also visible here. And this reciprocal opposition is based not only on religion, language or region but also exists within the followers of even one religion. In the rest of the world, there are many forms of social reality that are based on class, race and religion but in a large nation like India, which is almost a subcontinent, its social reality rests on caste.

As we know, social and cultural activism in its constructive form can also influence active politics and is in fact, a form of politics itself. They are mutually beneficial. The caste system in India has also influenced active politics right from the beginning. The difference between Dr. Ambedkar and other political leaders and social reformers was clearly visible in pre-independence India and since independence this divide has only grown deeper in both social and political terms. Between the Dalits and non-Dalits, it is caste alone that creates a conflict of interest and especially, the issue of reservations granted as provision in the Constitution, has played a major role in creating this rift.

Government jobs and the policies made for the betterment of the Dalits led to the emergence of an educated group among Dalits that went on to form the middle class within the community. This middle class played an important role in creating an oppositional awareness and the Dalit community also began to organize itself to fight for its rights. Dr. Ambedkar had begun this on a large scale in Maharashtra by his social movements and political activities. After Dr. Ambedkar's *mahaparinirvan*, this struggle slowed down somewhat but soon enough in 1972, the rise of Dalit Panthers gave an important turn to Dalit

politics and movement. In this phase, Dalit writers recorded their suffering and their struggle in the form of autobiographies and also began to fight for their rights.

Raja Dhale, who is a committed Dalit thinker and a Dalit Panther leader, has critically reviewed Premchand's writings and also carried out an in-depth analysis of the social and political conditions of north India. He writes, "At the end of this deliberation, there is one question that comes to my mind. Maharashtra's Dalit literature has crossed over to the neighbouring states of Gujarat and Karnataka and is flourishing there, then why is the domain of Hindi silent?"[1]

Raja Dhale had written this piece in 1980, the year of Premchand's centenary and by then in the Hindi sphere, Dalit writing had not made a beginning. It was not as if caste atrocities were not being committed but that they were not finding a place in the domain of literature. Dhale adds, "Has not the time for such a movement come for Hindi? Has the taint of untouchability been wiped off completely from the map of Uttar Pradesh or is no part of Uttar Pradesh on the map of untouchability? Does the fault lie with the Hindi language or with untouchability? Are there no untouchables left in the Hindi belt? Have all their complaints been redressed?"[2]

The truth is that even at that time, untouchability was rampant in Uttar Pradesh. Several incidents of mass killings and gang rapes on the basis of caste continued to occur. It was not as if there were no protests against these incidents but these were political in nature, they had not taken a literary shape. They had yet to find literary expression. Raja Dhale refers to various incidents of caste violence in places like Beldhi, Agra, Almora, Jagdishpur, Muzzaffarnagar, Parasbigha, Muradabad and Bilaspur.

To his analysis of this situation, Dhale adds further questions, "So where does the fault lie? With life or with literature? Or with both? To reach a rational understanding one has to first learn to distinguish between life and literature. It is possible that sometimes literature may fail to represent or provide an insight into life but that does not mean we lose faith in life. Did Premchand misrepresent the social reality of Uttar Pradesh? Absolutely not! On the contrary, Premchand's literature was born out the social reality of Uttar Pradesh. Then why can the same not give birth to Dalit literature?"[3]

Raja Dhale cites two reasons for the delayed flowering of Dalit literature in the Hindi belt, he believes, “It is true that life creates literature but that does not mean that literature gives birth to a new way of life.”[4]

The first reason he believes was Dr. Ambedkar’s struggle which made a difference. He writes, “This a real question and the answer to it lies in understanding the differences between Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, especially in the context of the modes of existence of the untouchables. The backdrop against which Dalit literature emerged in Maharashtra was completely absent in Uttar Pradesh. The lone leader of Dalits, Dr. Ambedkar’s lifelong struggle for the freedom of untouchables from the slavery of the savarnas was carried out on the soil of Maharashtra. Even though this battle was fought in one region, its echo resounded all over India and Premchand too was not unaffected by it. Even then it did not find a place in the history of Hindi literature. This struggle that took place in one corner of India was striking at the root cause of untouchability that was being practiced all over India. However, those very parties and organizations that for political reasons embarked upon policies for abolition of untouchability became impediments in its execution and therefore the impact of this movement could reach this region only belatedly. It is for this reason that the lives of untouchables in Uttar Pradesh have not changed at the pace that it did for those in Maharashtra. That also accounts for why no movement like Dalit literature emerged in Uttar Pradesh.”[5]

Raja Dhale considers Buddhist Dhamma, that is, the new cultural movement to be the other reason for the absence of Dalit literature in Uttar Pradesh. He believes that it brought about a huge change in the lives of Dalits in Maharashtra because it led to the beginning of a cultural transformation and provided a cultural alternative to the Dalits. He argues:

Why was it that after 1956 the erstwhile untouchables of Maharashtra turned rebels in every sphere of life and gave birth to a new trend in literature? The answer to this lies in the change that came into their lives and not in literature. When Buddhist beliefs became the basis of their daily lives, it led to a cultural movement, which in turn brought about a social transformation. To understand this social transformation, one needs to understand the grammar of social change.

Social change cannot occur without change in the values of life and all studies in the field of social transformation have established that change always takes place first on the cultural plane, in the sphere of values and belief-systems and only then does it translate into principles of conduct. This runs contrary to the Marxian understanding of change being inspired by special circumstances or as a result of frustration with social conditions. Dr. Ambedkar's life and writings gave a new direction to the lives of Dalits in Maharashtra. On conversion to Buddhism, the lives of Dalits have completely altered and the erstwhile untouchables have adopted a new lifestyle. Today, their values have been radically altered and Dalit literature is part and parcel of that change."[6]

One cannot disagree with the two conclusions that Raja Dhale reaches. However, in the context of Dalit literature, his first conclusion seems more valid. The second conclusion, that is, on the role of Buddhism, may still be open to question. Therefore Dalit literature can draw its inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar's life but one cannot find in it an explication of Buddhist religion. Dr.Ambedkar's slogan-educate, organize and agitate-had a sweeping impact on Dalit communities but the same cannot be said about Buddhism.

In its very basic form, Dalit literature stands for the dignity and self-esteem of Dalits but it does not propagate the teachings of Buddhism. Any literature that preaches and proselytizes about any religion stands the risk of becoming orthodoxical and may even militate against the principles of democracy. It might also insult other religions and their followers. These possibilities may inhere in such a case. Therefore such literature can be called religious literature but it cannot be considered modern literature.

Dalit literature in any form is not religious literature, however, it can definitely be asserted that it gives expression to the movements and activities that go on in life and society. In the first convocation held in 1936, Premchand, as the president of the Progressive Writers Association, had rightly said—"Literature is a criticism of life." [7]

Dalit literature, too, offers a critique of Indian society and life. It opposes the *varna vyavastha* because this system is anti-human. It not only divides people of a religion from one another but also creates a hierarchy between the 'low' and 'high.' It impedes the forging

of a national unity and the development of society. It grants privileges to some castes while depriving many other castes of even their fundamental rights.

Premchand considers it the aim of literature to awaken both an aesthetic sense and moral responsibility in human beings and society.

He writes—"In ancient times, religion held the reins of society. Religious teachings were the basis of man's spiritual and moral development. It used to resort to fear or incentives and matters of sin and virtue were its tools.

Now literature has begun to fulfill this role and its tools are aesthetic pleasure. It tries to provide aesthetic pleasure and there is no human being who has not experienced aesthetic pleasure."[8]

Therefore I believe that though Dalit literature finds inspiration from Ambedkar's life-struggles but it does not propagate or preach Buddhism. It gives rise to feelings of anguish and resistance among the people. Dalit literature does not merely transform the lives of Dalits but also attempts to bring about a change in the life and world-view of non-Dalits too. It tries to make them more sensitive towards other communities.

I say this because Dalit literature pays its respects to Jotiba Phule in the same manner as it does to Ambedkar, and Phule never advocated Buddhism. He opposed the caste system and endorsed modern education. He was a staunch critic of the brahminical system. He has fiercely criticized this brahminical system in his book *Ghulamgiri.*

The dedication of his book read as follows—"Dedicated to the good people of the United States.

As a token of Admiration for their sublime, disinterested and self-sacrificing devotion in the cause of negro-slavery; and with an earnest desire that my countrymen may take their noble example as their guide in the emancipation of their Shudra brothers from the trammels of Brahmin thralldom."[9]

In telling us about his objective in writing *Ghulamgiri*, Phule lays emphasis on education —" My object in writing the present volume is not only to tell my Shudra brethren how they have been duped by the Brahmins, but also to open the eyes of Government to that pernicious system of high class education which has hitherto been so persistently followed and which

statesmen like Sir George Campbell, the present Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, with board and universal sympathies, are finding to be highly mischievous and pernicious to the interest of Government."[10]

Dalit literature, too, stresses the importance of education and the need to struggle for human rights. For the attainment of this goal, it opposes the brahminical system because it fosters casteism. Casteism destroys the unity amongst the citizens of India.

We must understand the caste system of India before analyzing Dalit literature any further.

Ostensibly, there are four *varnas* in India—Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras but castes run into thousands in number. The Shudra *varna* has many castes in it and all of these practice untouchability with each other. However, there are some castes, against which all the other castes practice untouchability. Dalit jatis/castes, which are known as Scheduled Castes in constitutional/administrative parlance—they too practice untouchability among themselves and discriminate against each other.

This is to imply that after independence, thanks to the implementation of the Constitution, the Scheduled Castes became a political community but could not become a cultural unit.

By converting to Buddhism on Oct 18, 1956, Ambedkar tried to knit the Dalits into a cultural unit but all the Dalit castes did not accept Buddhism. The Mahars in Maharashtra and the Chamars in Uttar Pradesh converted to Buddhism in large numbers. There are a lot of Dalit castes which do not accept Buddhism and still continue to worship Hindi gods and goddesses.

It is true that they benefit from reservation, get educated and also cooperate with other Dalits in their struggles and oppose the caste system too. However, the contradiction is that they still prefer endogamous marriages. In the cities, they have begun to eat with people of other castes but in the villages, they maintain social relations of commensality with members of their own castes alone.

It is pertinent to point out here that the backward castes are also committing atrocities against the Dalits. These are the same backward castes which were victims of atrocities by "upper" castes till 50 years back. Thus the caste-system has remained indestructible because of this.

Dr. Ambedkar had written about the caste-system using the following comparison: “Hindu society is like a multi-storeyed building, to enter into which there is neither a door nor a staircase. Whoever is born on which ever floor of that building, has to then die on that floor.”

However, it is pertinent to note that this tendency is not evident in a class-based society. There is social mobility in that system and it is flexible, while the caste system is ossified and unchanging.

Therefore, the caste system is still firmly entrenched in Dalit communities. They, too, maintain distance, practice hatred and abjure inter-dining and inter-marriage with other castes.

The main achievement of Dalit literature has been that it has managed to bind these various Dalit castes to a cultural and political identity without taking recourse to religion. Now religion is redundant to this unity.

While Dalit literature gave birth to the Dalit Panthers movement in Maharashtra, North India too witnessed the beginning of several small movements. Recently in Saharanpur, the emergence of a Dalit movement by the name of ‘Bheem Army’ was witnessed. Although this movement had its genesis in Dalits striving for education and self-respect, soon, it began to resort to violence. This was not right. Dr. Ambedkar always carried out all his struggles using non-violent means. There can be no place for violence in a democratic system. Dialogue and the ballot can be only chosen means of change.

Dalit literature made the Dalits recognize that they are divided solely on account of their occupation, otherwise they share one identity. In this struggle for identity, the majority and minority Dalit castes are gradually coming together. This is happening with great speed in Maharashtra but in North India, too, the extensive influence of Dalit literature has now become visible.

Dalit literature has offered different kinds of arguments in favour of reservation. Stories, poems and autobiographies have underlined the economic and psychological changes that have accrued from reservation in Dalit families. As a result of the economic and psychological changes, many changes have become visible at the social and political level too.

Omprakash Valmiki's autobiographical narrative *Joothan* and TulsiRam's life narrative *Murdahiya* have garnered a considered response not only by the Dalit community but also by the more sensitive sections of savarna society as well.

We should believe in the fact that social change will occur, not merely because of the awakening of Dalit communities but it is also important for other castes to be sensitive and aware too. Social transformation involves the active participation of all the different sections of society.

Dr Ambedkar writes — "Some of you may say that we need not bother about the cooperation of Brahmins or the lack of it in our struggle. But this perspective is indicative of the fact that such people want to undermine the impact of intellectuals on society. You may not be persuaded by the idea of history being made by great people but you will have to agree that the intelligentsia, in every country, influences society to a great extent, even if it does not control it. It is the intelligentsia which is visionary, and it alone can provide the correct direction and leadership." [11]

In conclusion, we may say that Dalit literature has emerged as an important means of social and political transformation. Dalit literature has supplanted the religious and priestly class which earlier carried out the task of consciousness building.

The caste system had played a role in fragmenting the concept of the nation, whereas Dalit literature is now playing a role in strengthening the nation, by empowering and awakening all the sections of society.

The participatory role of Dalits in the various political parties is increasing continuously, which is an indicator of the fact that no caste can remain neglected in democratic India.

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[1] *Dalit Sahitya ki Avdhaarna aur Premchand*, ed. Sadanand Shahi, first ed. 2000, Premchand Sahitya Sansthan, Premchand Park, Betiahaata, Gorakhpur, UP 273001. (*Premchand and Dalit Literature*—Raja Dhale, Translator Shanta Singh, pp. 152-3)
[2] Ibid, p. 153
[3] Ibid, pp. 153-4
[4] Ibid, p. 154
[5] Ibid, p. 154
[6] Ibid, pp. 154-55
[7] "Sahitya ka Uddeshya"—

[8] Ibid, p. 13

[9] Ghulamgiri, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, transalted by Anil surya, Gautam Book cetre, Chandan Sadan, C-263A, Gali no.-9, Hardevpuri, Shahdara, Delhi-110093, 1st edn-2015, Dedication

[10] Ibid, p.23

[11] Jati-bheda Ka Uchched- Dr. Ambedkar, translated by-Anil Kumar, Gautam Book Centre, Chandan Sadan, p.68-69.

Poetics to Political Transformation-Dalit Women Writings

P. SIVAKAMI
(Dartmouth College, USA)

Introduction:

What is the relationship between literature and politics? What are the governing principles of literature? Why should politics form part of literature? These questions had surfaced in the past and created controversies among writers and literary critics especially when the Marxian ideology based literature arrived in large numbers. Similarly the post Second World War era witnessed controversies between Postmodern and Marxist literary groups. They were essentially ideological controversies rather than literary discourses. Because society by itself gets defined by its political ideology it is inevitable for literature to stay away from the happenings in the society.

As a creative writer, I was invited to address in a workshop organized by Neidal (The coastal land and people), a literary forum of young writers belonging to fishing community. When I was introduced to them by Professor Vedasagayam, a leading literary critic in Tamil, he remarked, "Here is a lady who had written the first Dalit novel in the 1980s and by the year 2000, Tamil Nadu witnesses the emergence of a Dalit political party bargaining for its due share of power. Such is the connection between literature and politics".

It is also to be remembered here that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar started his political career with publication of a journal by name Mooknayak (The leader of the Speechless) in Marathi language. We have ample examples proving the strong ties between literature and socio political changes. Literary works are reflections and commentaries on society and its different cultural, economic and political manifestations. As they are written from the spectrum of writers' individual and collective experiences, scholarship, vision, and their understanding of the society and the world as a whole, the politics governing them naturally get discussed in their works. Moreover, literature as a discipline depends largely on history, geography,

sociology, psychology, anthropology and politics to draw its sources. Therefore it is necessary to take cognizance of the influence of all these disciplines over literature.

However, the very word politics, when associated with literature, discredits the latter from among the literary critics and common readers alike and it only shows how the layman's understanding of the term politics as a dirty power game has been bought by others too. Fictions carrying political ideologies are generally brought down by critics, especially from the contrary camps on the grounds of aesthetics. Whatever be the content or the core ideology, most literary critics are of the opinion that a literary work should be written aesthetically. Thus we find that the nature of literary criticism has undergone many changes and currently it has anchored on literary aesthetics as a measuring yard to assess the merit of a literary creation.

Aesthetics is somewhat an abstract term and appears to be elusive to any qualifying parameters. Any attempt to set standards will be futile as new fields of knowledge and their unique experiences emerge constantly. In the absence of any measurable standards, the critics tend to quote examples or to set models. This process has led them to assign labels to their favorite works as "ever green" or "best seller". There is no denial of the contributions of such labeled works towards literature in terms of its historical importance, contemporary relevance, lingua franca, conceptual framework and aesthetic execution. At the same time the institutional support, handsome endowments, scholarly perseverance and academic endeavor in promoting such works to retain their evergreen status are also worth examining. But the point here is that even such labeled works cannot be taken as benchmarks for determining another work of art.

To sum up, I would like to mention that in the absence of any fruitful theories or arguments against literature's engagement with politics and on governing principles of literary aesthetics, every work of art will have to stand on its own strength when it is read with the individual reader's realms of affairs and individual/collective experiences.

With the above brief but relevant introduction, in this essay, I would like to bring out the following issues concerning Dalit literature: namely, the transformation from untouchable to

Dalit, the current status of Dalits, the salient features of Dalit literature, Dalit women writings and their political consequences.

Untouchable to Dalit, Their Present Status:

Untouchability is a unique form of social exclusion practiced in India for more than one thousand years. It is an outcome of a social and economic structure based on caste. Permanency to this caste structure was systematically achieved by according religious sanction through Hindu religious scriptures and abstaining from inter-caste marriage. With the advent of Brahminical religious hegemony, what was originally a varna (color) system based on division of labor deteriorated as a caste system (based on birth). As the Dalits were never part of the fourfold (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and the Sudras) system of caste, they were treated as outcastes.

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar and Pandit Ayothi Dasar are of the opinion that the Dalits could be the ancient Buddhists who scrupulously opposed the supremacy of the Brahmins and the caste system. Tracing the origin of untouchability, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar attributed it to the rise of Brahmanical religion under the royal patronage of the Gupta emperors and the steady decline of Buddhism owing to internal factions and lack of royal and public support. As a result of the religious and political developments, the followers of Buddhism were gradually marginalized and condemned as untouchables.

The coinage of the word " Dalit " by the Dalits themselves in the later half of the twentieth century implies the assertion of their rights and their revolutionary struggle under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (who is commonly known as the father of the Indian Constitution) against the inhuman practice of untouchability. The Indian Constitution is enshrined on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity and affirms Dalits equal opportunities through reservation. But when atrocities were continued against them and economic and labor exploitation inbuilt in the basic feudal structure remained unaltered; the constitutional remedies proved to be far too inadequate. Even after seventy years of independence, untouchability is widely prevalent as the caste Hindus are actively promoting it.

Segregation of Dalit habitations, atrocities against Dalits, violence and nefarious killings of Dalits, rape and murder of Dalit women, arson, denial of access to common property resources, misuse of power and authority against the Dalits, ill-treatment of farm and household labor, engaging child and bonded (slave) labor, use of abusive language, adverse propaganda against Dalits and against inter caste marriage in popular media are some of the common practices of untouchability followed by the caste Hindus in modern India. The Caste-State nexus can be easily witnessed by the distorted and halfhearted policies of the government in agriculture, land reform, failure in proper implementation of special component plan meant for the empowerment of Dalits and the poor implementation of Protection of Civil Rights Act and The Prevention of Atrocities Act which are meant to provide safety to the Dalits and rehabilitate the lives of the victims of caste atrocities.

Under these present circumstances, Dalit women who are placed at the lowest in the caste ridden patriarchy seem to bear all the burdens. They are not only oppressed on account of their caste and poverty but also on the basis of their gender. The majority of the rural Dalits are landless agricultural laborers and depend on the dominant caste land holders for their livelihood. Further, as the Dalit villages lack basic amenities, they are literally thrown at the mercy of the caste Hindus even to avail the state provided facilities. A study of Human Security Issues of Dalit Women in India, by Win G India Network- 2013 points out that 91% of Dalit households in the rural area are either landless or operate what are termed as sub marginal or marginal holdings; 90% of women working in the unorganized sector are mainly from lower castes; Less than 10% Dalit households have safe drinking water; More than 80% of Dalit women in the reproductive age group (15 to 45) are anemic; According to National Commission for Scheduled Castes, approximately 75% of the girls drop out of primary school despite the efforts of Government of India which hold reservation for Dalit children; More than 70% of currently enrolled children in school from Dalit families are first generation learners. The above data are explicit on the deplorable condition of Dalit women.

Salient features of Dalit Literature:

Directionally speaking, there are two distinct set of writings that characterize modern Tamil literature. One is literature of the dominants and the other is that of the Dalits. The subaltern, Dalit literature is sometimes featured as counter writing in academic circles. Though the term counter writing is used as it subverts the attempts of others in imposing their cultural practices over the Dalits, Dalit literature is chiefly an effort towards conscious construction of casteless society based on modern liberal values. It exhibits and expresses dissent over the oppressive social structure, advocating the emancipation of Dalits and the subalterns. Further, Dalit literature draws inspiration from Dalit epistemology, which is based on the historical struggle and the life conditions of Dalits. At times, deconstructing the literature of the dominants is considered necessary only to make them and the readers realize how caste has permeated into the literary texts and in the very fabric of Indian languages in several ways.

Deconstruction of ancient Tamil literature, counter writing and rewriting were attempted even in the early 19th century by Pandit Ayothi Dasar. But his writings were brought to light only in the beginning of 21st century. Recently this tradition has been to an extent continued by Prof. Raj Gowthaman a writer and a critic.

Dalit literature differs from others in many ways. To begin with, the very perception of society and the categorization of people in a vertical hierarchy are the points of difference between them. Even if both agree to its unethical continuance there are disagreements on the notion of its origin and the reasons for its perpetration and the remedies against its practice. The mainstream writers of different kinds guided by the Hindu religious scripts, Gandhian thoughts, Marxist philosophy, Periyarism, etc. have not paid much attention to the problems of Dalits. Even if they did their approach to those problems is distorted and disoriented. Few examples are necessary at this stage.

Prem Chand is considered as the father of Indian short stories. ‘Kafan’ is one of his famous short stories woven around three Dalit characters. In this story, the author had let loose his imagination in reading the minds of his characters and their aspirations. The Dalit father and his son are busy roasting the stolen potatoes from neighbors’ fields in the fire that they have

created in front of their lowly hut, while the daughter in law moans and wails in labor pain inside the hut. The son is reluctant to go in and attend to her as he thinks the father will eat away all the potatoes in his absence. But he tells his father that he does not know anything about labor pain and child birth and he suggests his father to go in and attend to her. Father refuses for the same reason as the son's but says that he has not even seen the face of daughter in law as her face is always covered behind a veil and it is delicate for him to go in at this juncture. Thus they allow the daughter in law to die. Thereafter they go to the village of caste men to collect some money for her burial. There are some good samaritans in the village who give the money. Instead of going home, without a word spoken between them, they both go to the toddy shop and drink to the brim. Then they fall flat on the ground. Gazing at the stars they thank the dead soul for filling their stomachs full.

The above story reveals the author's perception of Dalit life and the characteristics of the Dalit people in the story. While the caste names of the Dalits are mentioned by him, he conveniently refrains from mentioning the names of the benevolent masters for reasons unknown. It appears that the binary of feudal structure is misconceived by the author. The landed gentry and the landless poor are equated to be benevolent master and lazy petty thieves respectively. The story is an unparalleled imagination in several respects. The readers are compelled to assume many things on their own. For example, as per the story there is only one Dalit family in the entire village. There are no neighbors to help the poor suffering woman. The Dalit village is located far away that no women of caste can hear her and even if they hear they may not come to her help. The poverty of the Dalits is their own making and nobody is responsible for it. If only they are hardworking and stop consuming toddy they would be like anyone else in the village. There are some good people among the caste men in the village but the Dalits do not deserve their sympathy.

Another example from Tamil novel Kurudhipunal (Bloodstream) by Indra Parthasarathy is worth discussing here. This novel was based on the horrendous Kilvenmani (a village in Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu) massacre on 25th December 1968 in which 44 Dalits including women and children were burnt alive. The protesting Dalits for a wage rise for their agriculture labor when chased by the henchmen of the landlord Gopalakrishna Naidu took

refuge in a small house. The house was locked from outside and was set on fire by the henchmen. But Indra Parthasarathy , in his novel, distorts the real incident and attributes this atrocity to the sexual perversion of Gopalakrishna Naidu undermining the pitiable conditions of feudal farm labourers and the importance of Dalits' united struggle for better wage conditions.

Madhavayya, one of the early writers in Tamil was of the opinion that some people are born as Pariahs because of their sins committed in the past and their salvation lies in their next birth. Similarly many writers are of the opinion that population explosion is chiefly responsible for poverty in India and prevalence of large scale corruption is due to general moral degradation in the society. Dalit writers on the contrary believe that absence of land reforms coupled with illiteracy are responsible for the induced poverty in India and unfair distribution of wealth based on caste is the root cause for corruption.

Pudhumaipithan, a celebrity among short story writers in Tamil, in one of his short stories describes the sexual molestation of a Dalit maid by his employer as an act of benevolence towards her i.e. she should consider herself to be lucky to be touched by caste master. Prof. Raj Gowthaman in his article presented during the World Tamil Conference 1995 had brought out at length the attitude of several mainstream writers towards Dalits through their writings in Tamil.

Many of the mainstream writers seem to be comfortable with their caste status and that of the protagonists that they have created. This is visible in the way in which they use the language in their literary works. In Tamil the syllable equivalent to "R" is used at the end of the word as a mark of respect to the person and "N" is used to mark disrespect. Most writers used "R" for their caste characters and "N" for their Dalit characters.

Reservation is a much discussed topic among the common public in India. This was in the context of constitutional provisions for affirming equal representation proportionate to the population of the Dalit, the tribal communities in education, employment and political representations. In all such discussions in the media the right wing mainstream intellectuals put forth arguments against reservation and insist on a merit based selection method. But they conspicuously refrain from emphasizing land reforms or Dalits' access to sources of

livelihood and common property resources as alternatives for reservation. Therefore in the absence of land reforms, empowering the Dalits with cultivable lands the responsibility of upholding the system of reservation automatically becomes the responsibility of the Dalit writers.

As the Dalits depend largely on the corrupt government and their agencies unlike the others for their livelihood, education and employment, their literary engagements are compelled to circle around those power structures as orphans. They have a lot of complaints against the very structuring and functioning of the government which make their writings political.

Thus we find Dalit literature in many ways stands unique in terms of its content, concept, characterization, aesthetics and the use of language. It is not merely a passive account of Dalithood demanding the sympathy of others but a lively engagement evoking the attention of the readers to the much neglected social change and modernity.

Dalit Women writing leading to Political Transformation:

There are more number of women autobiographers in Marathi language. Shantabai Kamble (Kaleidoscopic story of my life), Urmila Pawar (The Weave of my life), Babytai Kamble (Prisons we broke), and Kumud Pawade (Thoughtful outburst) had written their autobiographies in the 1980s. P. Sivakami (1986), Bama (1992), Sugirtharani (2000), Ku. Umadevi (2010) started writing in the Tamil language a little later. Bama has written her autobiography in Tamil though she has tried other literary genres. Vigil Chirappad (A home without a kitchen 2006), from Kerala, Gogu Shyamala (Father may be an elephant and mother only a small basket 2012) are notable writers in Malayalam and Telugu languages respectively. In terms of the number of books written, Tamil records the highest so far. Moreover, apart from autobiographies, quite a number of novels, short stories, critical essays and poetries are written in Tamil when compared to other south Indian languages.

The emergence of Dalit women writings is an outcome of their education and awareness created by the Dalit movements. Education and exposure to conditions in the work place and outside the family made them conscious of their caste status and this awareness found expression in their literary works. Though there may be many Dalit women engaged in

writing, for the purpose of this essay a brief account of at least few of the early writers' profiles are considered necessary to trace their inspiration to write.

Shantabai was born in a Mahar family in Maharashtra. She was not allowed inside the class and therefore sat outside the class and studied. After marriage she continued her studies and completed teacher training course. She was a well-known activist and on the lines of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar she embraced Buddhism.

Urmila Pawar was also born in a Mahar family in Maharashtra. Her family and ancestors were traditional bamboo basket weavers. She grew up in poverty and managed to complete her post-graduation in Marathi literature. She was a government employee. She was twelve years old when she was converted to Buddhism during the mass conversion in 1956 under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

Gogu Shyamala was born in a small village in Telangana State. Her parents were farmers and only she could get education among the three siblings in the family. Currently she is employed as a senior fellow in a government research institute.

Bama was born in a Dalit Christian family and became a nun after her education. After seven years of her humiliating life at the convent she came out of the institution to become a teacher. Her first work was an autobiography of her childhood as well as her life as a nun.

Vijila Chirappad, born at Perambara in Kozhikode in an average Dalit family, recalling her initial struggles, she says: "You see publishing in itself is an arduous process. And since I am not even an adopted child of the mainstream society, you can guess how hard it has been for me. Yet not even once I think of giving up."

Almost all Dalit women writers share common experiences of caste atrocities, poverty, and discrimination at work places; subordination and domination by others and they are marked for their hard work towards their present status amidst male domination in their families and outside their families.

What are the special features of their writings? In the autobiographies of Baby Kamble, Urmila Pawar, Bama and in the biography of Veeramma, the readers find overwhelming distress accounts of the life of untouchables. These autobiographies are notable in many respects. First of all, they are written with so much of self-esteem even though the contents

in their works are capable of shocking or disgusting any reader worth his/her conscience. Secondly the explicit hatred towards caste system as demonstrated in their writings exhibit their courage to stand up in protest against the caste majority. Thirdly these writings never followed any laid down principles governing literary aesthetics of the dominants' literature. The content and the language used in those works were so powerful like a ravenous flowing river after heavy rains. Fourthly they evinced two different reactions among two different readers; to the Dalit readers it was like a call for self-awakening and self-realization and to the caste Hindus it was like a warning necessitating introspection and change. Fifthly they directly as well as indirectly announced to the world that Dalits would not be passive onlookers to the evils of caste ridden Indian society and they in solidarity would fight tooth and nail to establish a just society on the lines of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and on what has been envisioned in the Constitution. Lastly, there were faint indications demanding the attention of Dalits towards Buddhist values following the footsteps of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. And some of them had set examples by their own conversion to Buddhism. All the autobiographers have critiqued not just the caste system but also its parent institution- Hinduism .

Dalit women writing exposed Dalit patriarchy and the male oriented politics mercilessly. P.Sivakami' s " The Grip of Change " and "The Taming of Women " are very good examples. Similarly while describing casteism Urmila Pawar and Bama in their works they always link it to patriarchy. Domestic violence or women beating, males addiction to alcoholism and other forms of female oppressions are regularly featured in their works.

One important aspect of Dalit women writings is its direct impact on the feminist movement in India. It had created broad minded intellectuals among non-Dalit women. The Dalit women writings and autonomous Dalit women voices led the feminist world to a new understanding. Prof. Gopal Guru (Dalit women Speak Differently), P. Sivakami (Body politics, Women and politics -in Tamil),Uma Chakravarti (Gendering Caste), and Sharmila Rege (Dalit women talk differently- A critique difference and towards a Dalit feminist standpoint position) are some of the important exponents of the Dalit feminist theory.

While the feminists and feminist critics had a narrow approach to feminism limiting its scope to only patriarchy and the class system, Dalit women writings expanded not only its

ambit to encompass the multiple women identities but also gave a new definition and explanation to Indian feminism. According to Uma Chakravarti, “Class, Caste and Gender are inextricably linked, they interact with and shape each other, the structure of marriage, sexuality and reproduction is the fundamental basis of caste system” She again says, “It is also fundamental to the way inequality is sustained, the structure of marriage reproduces both class and caste inequality and thus the entire production system through its tightly controlled system of reproduction.”

The new awakening was carried through the length and breadth of the country by Dalit women writers and Dalit women movements in each State. Articles were written in local languages in Dalit media and a number of seminars and workshops were arranged. Noteworthy Dalit publications in Tamil are Pudhiya Kodangi, Dalit Murasu, Ezhucchi, The Dalit, Kalam and Bodhi. There were other irregular Dalit periodicals and newsletters which also carried articles on Dalit Feminism. Some of us were fortunate to get opportunities in popular media. There were literary exchanges between different states through national Dalit networks on this subject. To name a few: National Federation of Dalit Women (Ruth Manorama), Women’s Front (P. Sivakami), Dalit Women Movement (Bernard Fatima), Center for Alternative Dalit Media (Rajni Tilak), Dalit women Association (Chhaya Khobragade) and Dalit Panchayat (Jothi Raj)worked on this concept in close contact with each other though they were located in different States of India.

While the mainstream feminist movements at the field level viewed Dalit feminism as a separate category, Dalit women on the contrary believed in Dalit feminism’s potential to reach out to all categories of women including women from the mainstream. And as partners in the shared destiny they expected all women to join hands in their fight against casteism. That did not happen. Instead Dalit women’s activities were considered as ambitious advocacies for leadership. In the process Dalit women started questioning the political efficacy of the mainstream feminist movements in their fight against patriarchy and also expressed their suspicion as to how women can remain or form part of caste oppressors' clans and at the same time revolt against patriarchy. Dalit feminists went one step ahead and suggested to others that if Dalit feminism is more an appropriate concept why not all women

accept it and lead others to liberation. Knowing well their caste privileges, deep rooted cultural practices and economic comfort level which are capable of corrupting even fair thinking persons, no mainstream feminist movement was expected to come forward to accept this proposal or for negotiating coalitions on this pattern.

However as far as Dalit women are concerned, the Dalit women writings coupled with activism have had far reaching impact on them. Primarily, Dalit women activists were strengthened in handling cases of atrocities and violence against Dalit women effectively. Dalit women associations and cultural organizations sprang up in major cities and in government institutions. Though their arrival created a split in the existing mainstream women organizations but they were helpless in stopping them as the existing ones failed to voice the grievances of Dalit women employees. Moreover, when it comes to sharing of power and importance in an organization it was natural for them to ignore the interests of Dalit women. The failure of existing women associations was thus exposed with the formation of Dalit women associations.

In the case of atrocities and violence, mainstream women organizations generally follow a differential attitude towards Dalit women. A concrete example is evident from the comparison of two notorious cases of rape and murder: namely the case of Seureka (Dalit) of Kheyerlanji village Maharashtra and that of Nirbhaya (so called upper caste) from Delhi. The politically dominant Kunbi caste paraded naked Surekha and her family members in the street on September 29, 2006 over a land dispute, sexually abused them and cruelly murdered them. The media coverage was weak, though Dalit men and women activists were protesting and only after Sabrina Buckwalter from USA wrote an article in The Times of India, the media gave coverage of the massacre. Nirbhaya was gang raped in the running bus in New Delhi on 16th December 2012 and subsequently died at the hospital in Singapore. The incident instantly pulled the angry mob (mostly women) to the main roads of Delhi blocking the entire traffic. Immediately all women movements and political leaders irrespective of caste condemned it in all possible ways. Special law was enacted soon after this incident.

In the absence of active support of the feminist movements towards Dalits and Dalit women cause, the Dalit women organizations viewed feminists' campaign for 33%

reservation for women in the assembly and the parliament with suspicion. The BSP chief Mayawati was in favor of reservation for women but insisted an additional and separate quota for Dalit women apart from the provision of reservation for Scheduled castes in the constitution. The political parties of Backward castes in the north of India like the RJD (Rashtriya Janata Dal), JD (U) (Janata Dal United) and Samajwadi Party though welcomed the move, opposed the Bill on the ground that there should be a quota for Backward class women. The rebel party leader (from the Congress) Sharat Yadav withdrew support to the Bill on the score that it should empower the poor and backward women. The mainstream women movements instead of accepting oppositions' conditional support or explaining the modalities of inclusion and Bill's potential benefits for all women, they viewed their proposal as a move to stop the Bill and an evil design of patriarchy. Therefore though the Bill was approved in Rajya Sabha of the parliament in 2010, it could not be passed in the Lok Sabha. All these developments go to prove among other adverse effects, the ability of Dalit women to negotiate political power with the dominants on equal footing.

In this essay, to assess the specific and direct impact of Dalit women writing, writings from Tamil have been selected for the simple reasons that as already stated, only in Tamil a large number of works are created and there are no published and translated articles available in other languages regarding their impact on polity and society. As far as Tamil Nadu is concerned, apart from Dalit women empowerment, the writings of Bama, Sugirtarani and Sivakami led to several changes in the cultural sphere and in government administration. Bama portrayed women's ability to stay independent of mainstream's exploitative culture and their spirituality and to find happiness in very many small ways of their community life and struggle. This is something unique to Tamil literature and culture. Similarly, Sugitarani is known for her engagement on women's sexuality and its myths in Tamil society besides her excellent Dalit poems. Both the above writers have written a number of books and they deserve separate examinations at length. P. Sivakami's journey from writer to politics is another story by itself. She has written a number of books on caste and gender in all genres namely novel, short story, poetry and prose. Her publication, a monthly magazine by name Pudhiya Kodangi and her involvements in Dalit land right movement, South India writers

and Artists' literary forum, National Dalit and Adhivasi land right movement and International school of Dalit studies also need elaborate study. In 2009 she started a political party by name Samuga Samatua Padai (Party for Social Equality) and the party's activities were widely recognized and she was invited for an alliance by DMK in 2016 State Election in Tamil Nadu.

The literature on Dalit land rights led to the formation of Dalit Land Right Movement in Tamil Nadu. Their activities compelled the DMK party to launch a free land distribution scheme to the poor in the year 2006. And what is interesting is that every political party in Tamil Nadu was compelled to talk about land which was a rare phenomenon in the political history of Tamil Nadu in the last 50 years. The Dalit Land Right Movement (P. Sivakami), followed by the efforts of VCK (Political Party led by Thirumavalavan) were primarily responsible for the announcement of the land distribution policy of the government. Fr. Marku's book on 'Panchami Land', Anandi's 'Land to Dalits', P. Sivakami's 'Dalit Land Right Struggle' are some of the important literature on the subject. Subsequently the same DMK government in the year 2011, appointed a commission to retrieve the panchami lands (land assigned to the Dalits by British between 1910 and 1930) which were illegally usurped by the caste Hindus and others.

P. Sivakami's article on 'Separate Budget for the Dalits in 2007' coupled by her activism and support by Christudas Gandhi IAS and others resulted in an open acceptance of the deficiencies in the financial allocation to the welfare of the Dalits in the past by the government and its declaration of increased allocation rectifying earlier deficiencies.

After much struggle by Dalit women writers, Sahitya Akademi (National Academy of Letters) agreed to hold literary workshops and seminars for Dalit writers.

It is not only P. Sivakami, invariably for almost all Dalits both women and men engaged in creative writing, literature is not an end by itself but a process to create a better world for the humanity. Most often a literary career for a Dalit means an indefinite struggle for democracy and human values.

Readings:

1) Politics and Poetics of Transgression By Peter Stallybrass and Allonwhite 1986 Cornell University Press. 1986

2) Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of otherness. By Michel Rolph Trouillot.2003

3)The force of what's possible: Writers on accessiblility and avant-garde. Edited by Lily Hoang and J. New York Nightboat Books 2015

4)The Politics and Literature Debate in Postwar Japanese Criticism, 1945-52, Edited by Atsuka Ueda,Michael K Bourdaghs-2017

5) Gendering Caste - Through a Feminist Lens By -Uma Chakravarti.2003

6) Dalit Panpaadu (Dalit Culture) By-Raj Gowthaman 1993

Fight for the Right to Live:
Kim Tal-su's Novels and the "Third Country National" Discourse

Akito SAKASAI

(Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Japan)

When the Empire of Japan surrendered to the Allied Forces in August of 1945, the Korean nation was finally liberated from 35 years of Japanese colonial rule. It was then reported that there were approximately 2.2 million Korean residents in Japan. Among them, 1.3 million returned to their homeland prior to the founding of the Japanese government's "repatriation program" for Koreans.[1] This program ran under the instruction of the occupation army, which consisted mainly of the Eighth United States Army known as the GHQ/SCAP (the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers). Many of the remaining Koreans wanted to return too; however, once the repatriation program began, only around 80,000 utilized the program. One of the factors which made them hesitant about returning was the GHQ's set of restrictions regarding money and goods that were allowed to be carried during departure. Thus, repatriation became a difficult choice for people who had lived in Japan for a long time and possessed assets. In addition, once the remaining Koreans learned of the political instability and economic crisis in the Korean Peninsula, their decision process was further complicated.[2] Eventually, many of them had to postpone their return, and the total number of those who remained in Japan became about 560,000.

As a result, the resident Koreans established the League of Koreans in Japan (在日本朝鮮人連盟), in short, *Choren* (朝連), and developed an independent movement. One of *Choren's* most important initiatives was the formation of an ethnic education based on language education. Korean language schools were launched in almost all the areas where

[1] NISHINARITA, Yutaka, *Zainichi Chosenjin no 'Sekai' to 'Teikoku' Kokka*, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan, 1997, p.334.
[2] MOON, Gyong-su, *Zainichi Chosenjin Mondai no Kigen*, Kurein, 2007, p.88.

Koreans resided after the "liberation." These language schools were founded by *Choren*, which soon led to elementary schools, junior high schools, and normal schools being opened the following year. It was confirmed in *Choren'*s third national meeting of 1946 that more than 500,000 Koreans would remain in Japan, which caused the reorganization of the ethnic education into a more permanent educational system.[3]

This paper discusses one of the civil rights struggles of the resident Koreans that took place in such a situation. I will elaborate at a later juncture, but as the tension between the U.S. and the Soviet Union increased, the political pressure against the resident Koreans in Japan tightened as well. This was so especially since the Koreans' life-threatening campaign for ethnic education from 1948 can be considered as their response towards such suppression.

The novels around this time by Kim Tal-su, who is known as one of the pioneers of resident Korean literature, depict this struggle. I will focus on two motifs, viz., "Aunties" and "home-brewing" that appear frequently in those novels. This paper will discuss how the struggle can be linked to these motifs and thereupon, consider the problem of how minorities can secure their place to live in the colonial setting that remains after the collapse of the empire and amongst the wild waves of renewed international politics.

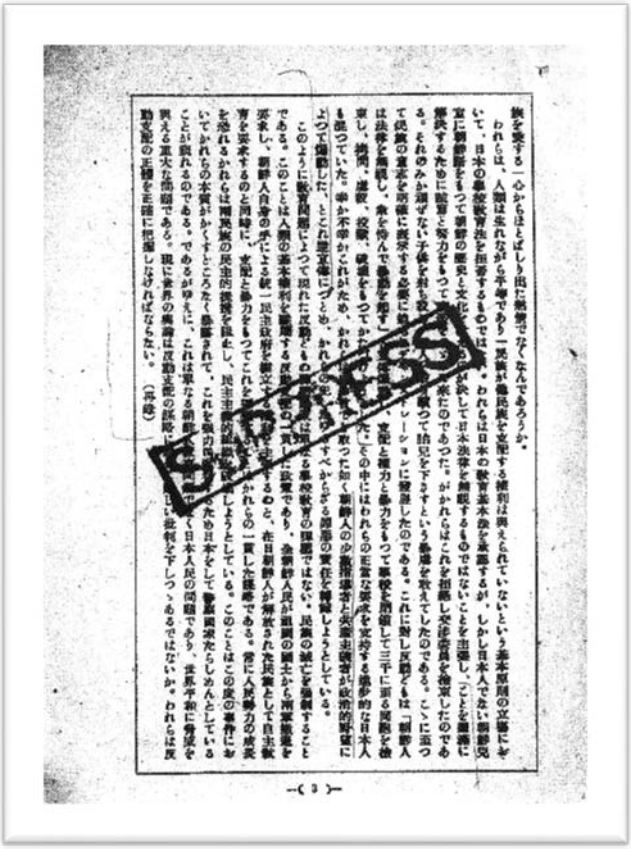
Hanshin Educational Struggle

In October of 1947, the American occupation army suddenly released a notice that prohibited the Korean schools in Japan from teaching ethnic education, which included Korean language as a regular subject. This was peculiar considering the Japanese Ministry of Education had no problem approving *Choren's* Korean school as a legitimate educational institution in April the same year. Due to the GHQ's notice, the Japanese government changed its attitude towards Korean ethnic education, and began to regard it as an "indoctrination," which was restricted by the newly-introduced Fundamentals of Education Act; one of the "democratic" reforms led by the GHQ.

[3] YANG, Yong-hu, 'Kaihougo, Minzoku Kyoiku no Keisei,' *Sanzenri*, Sep. 1986.

Choren, of course, made a strong protest against this notification and developed several rallies for its repeal. However, the local government, police, and the military government tightened the pressure and released another notice to shut down the Korean schools.

The protests from the Korean side became more active due to the Japanese government and GHQ's actions. They even held a protest meeting in which tens of thousands of people gathered in Osaka and Kobe. The GHQ declared a "state of emergency" for the first time since the beginning of the occupation, and the armed police shut the protest down. During the suppression, a police officer killed a 16 year-old boy with a gunshot through the head. After this 1948 conflict – which damaged the Korean community in a serious manner – a conclusion was arrived at, the Japanese government compromised by approving ethnic education in Korean schools and by promising to provide the compulsory education in Korean schools that was prescribed by Japan's educational law. However, the suppression continued; in the following year's September, the *Choren* was ordered to dissolve, and in October, Korean schools were shut down by compulsion.



The situation was aggravated by the media coverage on the Hanshin Educational Struggle that was strictly censored by the GHQ, which made it difficult to report the details from the resident Koreans' side. For example, a magazine *Minshu Chosen,* in which Kim Tal-su was an editor, had a special edition about the struggle, and Kim himself was present at the scene as a correspondent. However, all the articles were suppressed by the civil censorship and the magazine itself was suspended.

On the other hand, the reports by the police and major newspapers described the educational struggle as a "riot," and the protest's objective to protect Koreans' ethnic education was never recognized as a fact in media discourses. Let's take an example from an article of *Ashahi Shinbun* on April 27th, 1948 that reported the following: "GHQ's announcement to the school problem in Kobe… Illegal Koreans arrested…Never accept mob violence." Words like "illegal Koreans" and "mob violence" openly made an unfavorable impression, portraying the mentioned as a Korean group agitating for communism to intentionally cause a political disturbance.

The picture provided above is one of the article scripts from the June 1948 issue of *Minshu Chosen* that was suppressed. This article, titled "For the Protection of Ethnic Culture," claims that their demonstration for protecting Korean ethnic education was reported by the Japanese media as a result of communist agitation for political purposes. By such reports, the article insists, the movements of Koreans were only utilized to fuel the intensifying tension between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The Japanese media's article was appealing to the readers to consider the Korean struggle for educational rights as an ideological dispute.

However, while looking at the censored *Minshu Chosen* script, we can clearly spot the evidence of the censor intentionally trying to misread the article as a piece of offensive criticism against the Japanese government and the US occupation force. By highlighting the insignificant parts such as the phrase "repressive policies by the reactionaries," the article's original accusation is ignored.[4]

Kim Tal-su's novels, especially two works "Big Barrel Granny" and "A Chapter from the Other Night,"[5] depict the Korean ethnic education's suppression as a method of implication in the Cold War wave between the US and Soviet Union. Through his novels, Kim's intention was to appeal to the public on behalf of the resident Korean perspective.

"Big Barrel Granny" and "A Chapter from the Other Night"

"Big Barrel Granny" portrays the event that resulted from the notification of *Choren* and the mandatory closure of Korean schools. The protagonist "I" is a Japanese language teacher at the Korean high school in Itabashi, Tokyo. The plot is set on a day in which the police may come and close the school. When the protagonist enters the school's staff lounge, he notices that all the teachers are silent with nervous faces and realizes no scope for a lecture exists. Later, the police notify them that the closure will be enforced after examinations. The protagonist, relieved that there are still a few days of grace, leaves the school to visit a Japanese friend and stay in his house.

The next day, he returns to his neighborhood of Yokosuka only to find that the local Korean elementary school had already been cleared out by the armed police. "I" was also told by a young student that his mother joined the resistance against the forced removal, and was injured by a Japanese policeman, who kicked her. He returns home immediately to find his mother lying on a futon. Fortunately, she only sustains a slight injury; a bruise on her

[4] KOBAYASHI, Tomoko's 'GHQ niyoru Zainichi Chosenjin Kankou Zasshi no Kenetsu' (*Zainichi Chosenjinshi Kenkyu*, Zainichi Chosenjinshi Kenkyukai, Sep. 1992) also mentions this case as "this year's representative case of the censorship toward the resident Korean."

[5] The translations of the two novels are referred to in Robert J. Del Greco, *KIM TAL-SU AND EARLY "ZAINICHI" LITERATURE* (A Master's Thesis, the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures and the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Kansas, 2009) although there are some minor changes due to mistranslations.

forehead. The protagonist asks her to confirm in detail whether the bruise was an injury from being kicked. It turns out that the mother was injured from a fall, not by the policeman kicking her head. The protagonist is "relieved" and feeling calmer, sets out for the elementary school. The story ends here with "End of chapter one," despite no chapter following it.

This is the ending of "Big Barrel Granny," and in fact, "Big Barrel Granny" never appears in this story although it is the novel's very title. The "Big Barrel Granny" appears in "A Chapter from the Other Night." This tells us that "A Chapter from the Other Night" is a novel that is a reorganization of the draft "Big Barrel Granny."

"A Chapter from the Other Night" also illustrates a struggle after the shutdown of the Korean elementary school in Yokosuka. However, the two novels' writing style that describes this struggle is quite different from the style in Kim Tal-su's other novels. For example, an independent struggle during the Japanese colonization depicted in novellas such as "The City of Descendants" (1946) and other short stories about Koreans' lives during the American occupation period describes the same as a period of a nationalist movement with male intellectual elite leaders. On the other hand, these two novels place the community's middle-aged females or "aunties" as the main agents in the ethnic movement. Of course, male characters appear too, such as the protagonist, *Choren*'s local branch leaders, and communist party members. They negotiate with the Yokosuka city government and police station, but their negotiations are never marked by any progress. Rather, the leaders do not share information and instructions from the directive board of *Choren* with other communal people, but only with the men who are "executives," or in other words, male elites. Later in the novel, there is a scene in which these leaders' arrogant attitudes are criticized by community members. Despite the male leaders' exhaustion due to the fruitless negotiation, the aunties – who have continued to gather in the school every day – pressurize the negotiators to continue their fight against the local government.

"The Aunties" and Access to Education

One month after the closure, the protagonist finds out that a large group of aunties (seventy or eighty in total) and a hundred students flocked to the city hall for an appeal. As a result of

the demonstration, they withdrew a Yokosuka city mayor, Horiguchi, who had not appeared until then. The demonstrators succeeded in making him promise to work harder in favor of the Koreans.

The last push was made by a large-built woman called "Big Barrel Granny." Here, finally, "Big Barrel Granny" appears in the story and the educational struggle that "Big Barrel Granny" and "A Chapter from the Other Night" focuses on, comes to its climax when the group of aunties demonstrate at city hall.

"Big Barrel Granny" does not depict the aunties' demonstration itself, but instead focuses on the protagonist's mother's injury from the protest. "I" recalls that his mother has always understood his involvement in the Korean independent movement, but has never involved herself in the activity. Therefore, "I" was moved when he heard that his mother rose against the forced and violent removal by the Japanese police.

The demonstration at city hall in "A Chapter from the Other Night" was not participated by any of the "executive men," but was conducted independently by the "aunties." As a result, they attained a promise from the mayor; a far better outcome than the men who had not yet gotten so far.

This role reversal existed not only in fiction, but also in the actual Korean educational struggle in which Korean women played a significant part. Song Hae Won discusses how many mothers, female teachers, and school girls who belonged to the Democratic League of Korean Women (*Jomei*) played active parts in the educational struggle.

The male activists of *Choren* were constantly attacked by the US army, the Japanese police and even by another conflicting Korean association called the Association of Young People for the Foundation of Korean Nation, so that they couldn't be active in public. Instead, women in Jomei kept in contact with local people and prepared for meetings and relief movements for people who are captured as well as nation-wide fund raising and signature campaign.[6]

[6] SONG, Hae Won, *'Zainichi Chosenjin Bungaushi' no Tameni; Koe naki Koe no Porifoni*, Iwanami Shoten, 2014, p.35.

One big reason that women joined this educational struggle was a change in the educational environment after the "liberation." Before the liberation, the Empire of Japan developed an education system based on "the personal principle" that regulates who can access elementary education with factors such as ethnicity, class, and gender; eventually excluding Korean women from the system. The school absence of Korean girls was normalized throughout the colonial period[7].

After mid-1945, as discussed above, the Korean ethnic education spread throughout Japan, and Korean women who had never attended school received the opportunity of education. However, after only four years, such an opportunity was about to be taken away from them by the GHQ and Japanese Government's suppression of Korean ethnic education.

The "aunties" rising up for the school that were depicted in "A Chapter from the Other Night" were such women who were afraid of losing their claim to education. In the scene where Kimura, a deputy mayor of Yokosuka, yells angrily to the protesters, "Don't you all have any manners! Manners! Try to have a little common decency, why don't you!" Then, one of the aunties retaliates with tears in her eyes, "Who was it who made us people without manners?! You're the ones who have been trying to make us into illiterate fools! Well, aren't you?!" For the "aunties," access to education is one actual gain from the liberation.

The following scene also depicts the "Big Barrel Granny" being pushed by Kimura, falling on the floor and screaming;

"Are you going to kill me? Do it then! Kill me!"

Now granny had fallen to the ground and was pounding on her own chest with both fists.

This heartrending cry became the final push to remove the mayor from office. The Granny is characterized in the novel as a vice president of the "School Mother's Meeting" that supports the ethnic education. To her, closing down the Korean schools meant being robbed

[7] KIM, Puja, *Shokuminchiki Chosen no Kyoiku to Jenda; Shugaku to Fushugaku wo meguru Kenryokukankei*, Seori Shobo, 2005, p. 274-278.

of women's gains from the liberation, their right and space for a women's independence struggle, and women's involvement in ethnic education. That, for her, is equivalent to "being killed."

Another old lady also cries out to the police;

"It's the school we bought and we built. We would rather burn it and ourselves to death than giving up to you. I won't let you take it from us!"

Here, we can see the earnest claim being made by these "aunties" that try to protect their school at the peril of their own lives. When considered that these aunties are the ones who were excluded from the education system of the Empire of Japan, the Korean school symbolizes a place to redo their lives once again as independent individuals. That's why the "mother" of "I" in "Big Barrel Granny" took action, even getting injured from the protest, which she had never done before.

Next, I will focus on the novel "A Chapter from the Other Night" as having reportage-like features that record the moment as a struggle that was actually pushed forward by the active involvement of local "aunties," which is in contrast with the male elites' incapability of negotiation. As I discussed earlier, in the media coverage of the Hanshin Educational Struggle, it was reported that the Koreans' protest was "an illegal Korean's riot agitated by the communists." The GHQ censorship also ignored the resident Koreans' specific problems and claims that were not manipulated by Communist politics, but were honest in motives to improve community members' lives. That is why this novel attributes to the male elites, who have a political background, passiveness because they are actually guided by the local people's pressure, especially from "the aunties" gathering in the school. This shows how the protest was not led by the political motivation.

Tak-ju Brewing

Let's look at other novels by Kim Tal-su around this time to see his intentions in the portrayal of "the aunties" more clearly. In his novels during the occupation period, there often

appears home-brewing *Tak-ju* as work that "the aunties" are engaged in. *Tak-ju*, or also known as *Makgeoli*, is an unrefined sake since it is home-brewed. The best example for such a depiction is in the novel "A *Tak-ju* Toast" (*Shiso*, Sep. 1948). This novel is set before the "liberation," but the protagonist is the same as in *An Tongsun* (安東淳) from "A Chapter from the Other Night." In the story, there is one military policeman called Koyama (黄山) who comes to a Korean slum for observation, but actually this Koyama is Korean and his real name is Hwang (黄). That means Koyama is a Korean collaborator with the Japanese colonizer. Because Koyama understands Korean, he discovers that the aunties in the slum are engaged in illegal home-brewing, and he makes them promise not to do it again. Several days later, Koyama returns to the slum to look for a Korean political criminal. There, one of the local man serves Koyama a plate of roasted giblets together with *Tak-ju*. First, Koyama hesitates to drink *Tak-ju,* but eating the roasted giblets makes *Tak-ju* irresistible for Koyama. Then, finally Koyama gives up the search for the political criminal by saying, "Now the guy is lost for good."

Although the protagonist, An Tongsu, first thought of killing Koyama before he enters the slum, such violence never occurs. Instead, the *Tak-ju* made by the aunties solves the problem. An Tongsun considers the aunties' *Tak-ju* making as "Koreans' wits for surviving" and thinks that this is their way of fighting against the oppressor. A Korean military policeman drinking illegal *Tak-ju* means that the people in the slum coax him successfully to their side without relying on violence; a true protest against the violent colonization. The livelihood of Koreans includes such a fight, the protagonist utters.

Another novel, "A Village without Address" (*Sekai Hyoron*, Mar. 1949) also has *Tak-ju* brewing as a significant theme. Within the novel, the main character *Eun Chomji*, an ignorant old man, feels an immense joy for life for the first time after liberation. This is caused by the discussions and singing he hears from the next door local branch of *Choren*, giving him feelings of "liberation" and "independence," although he does not understand their meanings. Due to these strong feelings, he realizes that he can now live his own life, but also what gives meaning to his life is his work in helping the local aunties with their home-brewing.

"The aunties" who are engaged in *Tak-ju* brewing is a motif that repeatedly appears in Kim's novels of this period. I would like to elaborate on its historical background in order to analyze why it appears so frequently.

The situation awaiting the liberated Koreans after Japan's defeat was not the prosperous independence of their homeland, but severe poverty. Many people who worked in munitions factories were discharged without means for earning their daily food, and kicked out to a foreign land. One of the very few employment options was coal mining, an occupation that was suffering from a chronic shortage of manpower to secure sufficient coal for the occupation army. Thus, many Korean men had to work continuously as coal miners during the period of forced labor during the wartime, and even after the liberation. In this condition, there was no way for the resident Koreans to support their livelihood fully, which resulted in 90% of the resident Korean population being unemployed or barely making a living in 1947.[8] It was much more difficult for Korean women to find a decent job; thus, they were engaged in illegal *Tak-ju* brewing business at home to support their everyday life.

On the other hand, *Yami-ichi* started to appear in every Japanese city immediately after the defeat, and poisonous alcohol, so called *Kasutori Shochu,* which was made from methyl alcohol, was distributed. There were stories of people who became blind or died because of the *Kasutori*. At first, *Kasutori* was not recognized in connection to the resident Koreans. However, after two compulsory investigations for home-brewing in Korean residential areas in March and June of 1947, whenever alcohol-related criminal incidents occurred, resident Koreans' connections were often suspected, and the regulation against home-brewing by Koreans became even more intensified.[9]

This regulation on Korean home-brewing was connected to a media and political discourse called the myth of the "Third Country National," that all the illegal activities such as black marketing and crimes were done by foreigners, Koreans, Taiwanese and Chinese, even though the majority of the black marketers were controlled and managed by the Japanese.[10]

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[8] PARK, Kyong-Sik, *Kaihougo Zainichi Chosenjin Undoshi*, Sanichi Shobo, 1989, p.113-114.
[9] LEE, Hen-ri, "Kaihou" Chokugo niokeru Zainichi Chosenjin nitaisuru Dakushu Torishimari Gyosei nitsuite,' *Chosenshi Kenkyukai Ronbunshu*, Ryokuin Shobo, Oct. 2013.
[10] MIZUNO, Naoki, 'The origin of "Third Country Nationals" discourse and its Impact,' *Zainichi Chosenjinshi*

Furthermore, as the tension between the US and the Soviet Union intensified, this discourse corresponded with the Japanese government and GHQ's change of attitude towards resident Koreans, regarding them as communist elements. By considering Koreans as illegal and violent, the "Third Country National" discourse was functioning to conceal the political intention of the oppressive side. This dragged Koreans, as supposedly agitating for communism, into the Cold War structure, thus drowning out their claim for life improvement. Therefore, after the liberation, especially after 1947, *Tak-ju* meant for the Korean community both something that was indispensable to their life and something attached to the "Third Country National" image, which gave them reason to be expelled from the Japanese society.

There was actually a movement among the Korean community protesting *Tak-ju* brewing as harmful for "the dignity of the Korean race," and asking people to stop. However, the leaders of the community soon realized that they could not live without the aunties' home-brewing. Although the leaders worked hard to stabilize their fellows' livelihood, they didn't sufficiently understand what and who were supporting the resident Koreans' life. The leaders of the resident Koreans themselves were too conscious about "the dignity of the Korean race" to be dragged in the rhetoric of the "Third Country National" discourse that enclosed the resident Koreans economically, ethically, and politically. Eventually, the *Choren* leaders realized their mistake and started developing a protest against the regulation over *Tak-ju* brewing.

Here, we can find the meaning of the *Tak-ju* brewing "aunties" appearing in Kim Tal-su's novels. As in "A *Tak*-ju Toast," "the aunties' *Tak-ju*" plays a role in winning the Korean military police over to the community side while denying usage of violence. Moreover, in "A Village without Address," it is an old lady engaged with local brewing who actually secures the protagonist's own life through his feelings of liberation from *Choren*'s singing. This means that "the aunties" and *Tak-ju* in these novels function to correct and modify the people's bigoted and repressive movement led by the male elites to instead pursue its own principles and dogmas. These "aunties" indicate alternative ways to develop the fight for the better living. Such dynamism within the movement was symbolized in the motives of "the

Kenkyu, Ryokuin Shobo, Zainichi Chosenjinshi Kenkyukai, Oct. 2013.

aunties" and *Tak-ju*. These women are not mothers and wives who passively support the men's fight, but are instead active and have their own subjective agenda and practice that they are fighting for. *Tak-ju* of "the aunties" has its very own energy for the movement. That's why the "Big Barrel Granny" has the "barrel" inside her.

Son who never understands his mother

Finally, I would like to look at the conversation between the protagonist referred to as "I" and the "mother" in "Big Barrel Granny" more closely.

In the story, the protagonist "I" is responding to the question of whether or not his mother was kicked in the head by the muddy shoes of a Japanese police officer. The idea of "Mother" being kicked by the Japanese police "has even driven him to anger." He asks her importunately if it really happened. For "I," it is "an insult" received by him "in order to face our racial battle," and he says to himself, "I had to be sure of my own personal rage." However, here we can spot the differences in the consciousness between the son and mother towards the educational struggle.

"I" felt that his mother's head being kicked was "an insult" against their race, and his "rage" is an impulse to drive him to the fight. On the other hand, for "mother," it is not a big deal that she was injured. She laughs at her actions and those of the other old ladies by saying, "It was almost like an action scene starring wrinkled old women," with her hand wiping her watery eyes. Then, she says to him proudly with slight embarrassment, "I've never done anything like that in my life."

What she experienced for the first time is probably not what "I" thought of as "an insult against our race." If he sublimates the mother's experience into a HISTORICAL notion like "an insult against our race," then her present agency is somehow obscured in the background. What she experienced is her own "action scene." It is her fight to protect her own life and what she considers "our school" established after the liberation. The true nature of this educational struggle can be found with regard to the Korean women, whose opportunity to receive education was robbed by Japan's colonial policies and resident Korean society's patriarchy, leading them to protest for themselves by pushing men away with their elbows.

Here, we can find the resistance against the closure of the resident Koreans cast by the postwar society of Japan through the image of the "Third Country National," which was associated with words such as "illegal," "violent" and "politically agitated." The "mother," "Big Barrel Granny," and other "aunties" in the community are portrayed as the main agents of the struggle. Their energy renews the indurated organization and revives the movement. Kim Tal-su's novels illustrate such "wrinkled old women" fighting against the continuing colonialism.

A New Harvest of Anger:
Reading Pakistan's Society as Alternative Narrative in Contemporary Urdu Literature

Asif FARRUKHI
(Habib University, Pakistan)

1.

I will refer to a short fiction first and then describe the ground I hope to cover in this paper. Let me begin by a story with a task-conscious protagonist with heaps of dead bodies all around. Pilfering with the bodies of the dead piled up in a special chamber, a scavenger describes his main task as liquidating memories of the dead, obliterating all personal information. He prides himself on large scale tempering with records, that is history on a large scale, reducing to unsalvageable information junk while proclaiming himself to be a chronicler. The substance of what is ignored by the *Waqa'i Nigar*, or the Chronicler as he calls himself, finds a repository for itself in contemporary Urdu literature from Pakistan.

Taking the cue from the short fiction of Asad Muhammad Khan, the paper signposts that a clearly demarcated chronicle of trends in Pakistan's society emerges from its literary expression, providing an alternative narrative from a country with diverse reality, inherent contradictions and unique literary expression. It argues that a significant body of work gives voice to experiences missed out in the dominant narrative.

This paper will go on to outline the major themes and patterns emerging from contemporary Urdu literature as it bears witness to shaping events in Pakistan's tumultuous history, and rapid socio-political developments. Ranging from the continuing influence of classical traditions to modernistic influences from the West to post-modernism and recent theoretical advances, various authors have grappled in their own way with accelerated social changes, political instability, religious extremism, sense of despair and aimlessness in youth, suppression of women's rights and sense of isolation in minorities. I will not go into the

details of these well-documented phenomena and do not want to identify parallel literary instances, but instead argue about the overall value of this body of work through representative samples. Significant in itself, this body of work is often conspicuous in its absence from national academic syllabi and generally ignored in socio-political analysis about Pakistan, thus leading to a limited understanding of Pakistan's society. I will focus to a large extent on two contemporary writers of short fiction, move on to the novel and then go on to poetry. I will highlight representative examples from these writers who are less known to international audience and deserve to be better known through the medium of translations in order to deepen and enrich understanding of the dynamics in Pakistan's society.

The context of my argument and the gist of the paper originate from a train of thought and associations set in motion in my mind from reading and contemplating diverse short fictions of Asad Muhammad Khan. A major contemporary writer in the Urdu language from Pakistan, he is an influential figure, generally acknowledged as among those who shape the prevalent literary discourse. The title of my paper A New Harvest of Anger is a tribute to his writing. This title seems apt and applicable in the current context as I present a broad overview of the contemporary Urdu scene.

In order to do so, I will begin with a story. The Urdu original bears the title *Ghussay Ki Nai Fasl* and the author named one of his books after the story[1]. This also served, with the omission of the word "new" as the title of a volume of selected short fiction translated into English[2].

The story captioned with this phrase apparently has little or no relevance to the current theme, as it is set in another time and place. It is set in the era of Sher Shah Suri, the late fifteenth century ruler of Delhi, but as its historical reference is a deception or fiction of convenience, it could have been set anywhere. A visitor to the abode of the king comes across weird and terrifying noises coming from night-time quarters and discovers a group of men howling at the top of their lungs but sitting across each other without lifting a finger:

[1] Asad Muhammad Khan, Ghussay Ki Nai Fasl (Lahore: Ilqa Publications, 2013)
[2] Asad Muhammad Khan, The Harvest of Anger, trans. Aquila Ismail (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002)

"The roof had been illuminated with many lamps, torches, *diyas* and *shamas*. It seemed almost as if it was daytime. Forty or fifty men and women were sitting in a circle emitting strange sounds of rage and anger. At times, it seemed as though they might get up and tear each other apart. But in spite of the rage and the fury no one moved from his place or attacked anyone. They were only intimidating the person in front of them with angry noises, glaring at them with wide-open eyes and gnashing their teeth.[3]"

A fascinating image, but it makes one wonder as to what else it could imply. Could this be a tongue-in-cheek precursor of the modern phenomenon of the literary conference in this modern day and age? Could it be a symbolic description of the coming together of writers and poets, who can do nothing else in view of each other except grimace and gnash their teeth? The story of course offers no neat explanation. It is this capacity to raise terrifying and unanswered questions which set my imagination working. Is it pointing to repressed emotions? Is it calling for a cathartic relief from demonstrations of anger? Does it point out to a possibility devoid from our present society? There is no clear or straight answer. You are free to draw your own conclusions.

Dazed by these questions, here I will speak of another short fiction at some length, called *Waqa'i Nigar* in the volume bearing the name of the story I have already referred to[4]. A realistic account of a young man whose enthusiasm for films from across the border makes him take a risk. After a long and meandering course, almost episodic to the point of being picaresque, the story comes to a critical situation as the actual work being carried out by the protagonist is described.

The mortuary seems particularly interesting to the author apparently, as he has set another remarkable story in this unlikely setting. This is *Murda Ghar Main Mukashifa*[5]*,* translated into English as *Apocalypse in the Morgue* [6]and is woven around the protagonist who is at

[3] Khan, Ghussay Ki Nai Fasl, pp 4-17
[4] Asad Muhammad Khan, "Waqai Nigar" in Ghussay Ki Nai Fasl, pp 59
[5] Asad Muhammad Khan, "Murda Ghar Main Mukashfa" in Burj e Khamoshan (Karachi, 1990)
[6] Asad Muhammad Khan, "A Revelation in the House of the Dead", trans. Yudullah Ijtehadi in Fires in an

home inside the morgue to the extent of being able to play around with dead bodies. Once the reader has adjusted to this unsettling location, there comes the unspeakable gesture on behalf of the protagonist.

The gesture is horrifying by itself. However here defilement is part of a larger and more complex meaning. To come back to this story, as it moves on:

> "He told me that after spraying the bodies with chemicals each one is placed in a plastic vat. Then another vat, which is actually the lid of the first, is placed over that and made airtight, etc., Then the process of obliteration begins. Every trace of the corpse – its name, address, and period, its opinions and ideas, its ideology, the poems written for it, the processions taken out for it ---- everything begins to liquidate. Even outside the morgue no one utters its name out loud. "All the records of the corpse are thoroughly mixed with a huge quantity of irrelevant information in such a way that no one can salvage them. Then everything is forgotten and ignored and nothing is denied because denial is a form of acceptance.[7]"

Denuding what were once people of any individual attribution, it becomes easy to what the story terms as liquidation. The fiction becomes allocation of defiance as it preserves a moment of dissent. Irrelevant information sweeps in to erode any remnants and bury everybody, but it is the fiction which provides the alternative space in which the dehumanizing act can be recorded and protested. This possibility of an alternative space seems to me to be an essential gesture here, showing what fiction can do and is doing in a society such as Pakistan by preserving the human face of people who can be lost in numbers. Sometimes brutally reduced to a faceless pulp on the international media, it is fiction which maintains a record of these individuals.

Acclaimed and well-known in literary circles, Asad Muhammad Khan cannot be described as a popular success at home and similarly he is not as well known outside the home ground.

Autumn Garden, ed. Asif Farrukhi (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp 232- 240

[7] Hasan Manzar, "Zameen Ka Nauha". Rehai. Hyderabad, 1981

His powerful vision and off-beat expression deserve to be better known, for their own inherent qualities as well as powerful renderings of Pakistan's society as lived experience.

As different as two writers can be who live in the same period and cover a more or less similar terrain of experience, Hasan Manzar is, like Asad Muhammad Khan, best known for his short fiction even though unlike the latter, he has penned six novels during a literary career spanning many decades. This number is itself unusual in a literary setting where writers face many difficulties in taking up the longer narrative.

Perhaps the most original, certainly the most dramatic short fiction by Manzar is *Zameen Ka Nauha,* translated as *Requiem for the Earth*.[8] As befitting the author's approach of avoiding direct comment and focusing on small details instead, the short story opens with a changed trend in the matrimonial advertisements published in newspapers as indicative of a bigger issue of women gradually decreasing in numbers from the face of earth to the point of becoming endangered. This is shocking by itself but the story goes on to describe the developing scale of the problem as how matrimonial advertisements cross national preferences and the need becomes global. The impending doom takes the form of an advertisement in which the mounting desperation is subdued:

> "White citizen, belonging to South Africa, age about 45, connected by birth to the Dutch Reformed Church, well-off, wants to marry. The girl need not belong to any particular race or religion."[9]

The crisis looming in the background of such advertisements is commented upon in a deliberately nonchalant manner by the author: "It looks as if the world was facing a serious shortage of women." It is later that the full impact of such a situation becomes apparent. As the improbable but highly plausible story given its context moves on, the world is searching

[8] Hasan Manzar, "Requiem for the Earth", trans. M. Salim ur Rahman in Farrukhi, Fires in an Autumn Garden, 353- 367
[9] Ibid., pp 354

desperately for its lost women. The staff of an international organization called Save Mankind surprised by a letter alerting them to the sighting of a woman:

> "In a nearby village I have seen on a number of occasions a woman walking towards a hill, accompanying by her husband. He is a former schoolmaster and now herds sheep but spends most of his time looking after his wife. Both their young sons died suddenly of a blood disease. I know where the woman lives."[10]

The closing sentence of the letter has a dramatic effect but the expedition it leads to not unexpected resistance from the old man, her husband. He refuses to acknowledge their concern for the survival of mankind by telling them off. As the last surviving woman's condition worsens, the world watches with bated breath and the staff in the communication satellite hold the wondrous new medicine in their hands. Ultimately, they will find a purpose for this medicine as the capsules are placed inside a rocket going off into outer space. Oblivious to the noise around him, the old man prepares to put his dead wife's body inside the earth, saying to himself:

> "Dear earth, how good you still are and so beautiful. You are so beautiful that I am ready today to yield to you my most precious possession, one which I denied to your enemies."[11]

The stark situation of the story strikes one as something of a shock but the immediate context is not made apparent immediately, in spite of the old man's outburst against the so-called rescuers. Outside the frame of the text, however, the author has commented upon this story and it may be useful here to refer to it in order to get a better understanding of this complex and nuanced story. In an essay written a few years later[12], the story comes up for

[10] Ibid., pp 363
[11] Ibid., pp 367
[12] Hasan Manzar quoted in Farrukhi, Fires in an Autumn Garden, pp 352

discussion between two voices, one of which is the author and the other a physician friend who turns out to be his other self. The author has to say to his imaginary counterpart:

> "The story has been shown to me in many colours, just as in the days of black and white films the projector-man in some movie houses would change slides to please the public and show different colours on the screen and without the creator's knowledge, the whole scene would suddenly be pink or turn blue or green, as in the silky *shalwars* and shirts of women wearing a lot of make-up. Yet in my mind, the requiem for the earth was a requiem without colours, in which only the tiny flowers growing besides some lake were colourful and these too were blooming only to be crushed under military boots.
>
> "For some people this story was doomsday literature --- a chronicle of the end of the earth, some took it for science fiction ----"[13]

An English translation of this was story was included in an anthology of short fiction offering insights into the "state of the nation," which I edited. Referring to this dialogue in the introductory note I wrote for the author, I made the observation:

> "Open to several possibilities of interpretation, the story has its origins in the author's perceptions about environmental degradation and the status of women in Pakistan ---- "one step forwards, two steps backwards" is the title of a study of the setbacks to this status. In the form of a history of the future, the story presents a recurrent and persistent pattern in Pakistan's history, taking it to its logical conclusion."[14]

My argument in the current context would be that the story offers a dramatic reading of the situation of women in Pakistan and the ecological challenges faced by the country. By no means limited to such representation, it is also a work of imaginative art in the best possible

[13] Hasan Manzar quoted in Farrukhi, Fires in an Autumn Garden, pp 353
[14] Farrukhi, Fires in an Autumn Garden, pp 352

sense of the terms. The unique insight it offers can complement social analysis in an illuminating manner.

The bulk of Manzar's work consists of short stories, remarkable for their veracity. His themes and perspective are ever expanding while the locale keeps changing. Faruq Hassan, himself a notable translator and writer, defines an essential feature of Manzar's writing when he describes it as signifying an expansion of one's views, a journey from the familiar to realms unknown:

> "To read him is to undertake a voyage beyond one's customary and geographical limits. It is to participate in an experience of "deep human sympathy" which transcends political and national boundaries."[15]

This is also borne out by new writings which display the writer's power and range, and one such story is *Na Shukray*, recently translated into English[16]. The location is not specified and offers no direct explanation of why the ingrates are described as such. As a narrative act, the story tends to gain from such direct commentary which have made it more journalistic. However, it leaves no holds barred for depicting the plight of the individual in the context of a brutalized society.

2.

For its point of departure, this paper began with the short story as this is the dominant form in Urdu literature from Pakistan. Paradoxically, the novel comes next, as good works of a literary quality make an appearance after some intervals. This is in contrast to the global situation where the novel is recognized to be the dominant literary form and through which any country's literature is known abroad. As a genre the inherent value the novel holds is too well-known for any reiteration here, but I will refer to a very perceptive comment made by Orhan Pamuk, and although he mentions India and China by name, it is allocable to Pakistan

[15] Faruq Hassan quoted in Farrukhi, Fires in an Autumn Garden, pp 351
[16] Hasan Manzar, "The Ingrate", trans. Imtiaz Paracha, Critical Muslim 24, October-December 2017

as well. "In recent years," according to Pamuk, "we have witnessed the astounding economic rise of India and China, and in both these countries the rapid expansion of the middle class, though I do not think we shall truly understand the people who have been part of this transformation until we have seen their private lives reflected in novels."[17] My underlying assumption here is reinforced through Pamuk that it is through novels that one can develop a sensitive and nuanced understanding of social transformation, which affects people's lives.

Such an understanding would be deficient without an appreciation of novels emerging from this society. However, there is another way in which such analyses can be incomplete, and that is by ignoring the fact that the major vehicle for Pakistan's literary expression is Urdu. On the international front, the situation is compounded by the fact that a handful of English-language novels have attracted attention far and wide. My argument is that these novels are recognized to be "the novels from Pakistan" which readers outside the country are likely to know, instead of the novels written in Urdu and indigenous languages and as such unable to access large global audiences. This goes beyond monopoly of market to large issues of representation, and for this purpose I will refer to the study *Where Worlds Collide* by the respectable French academician and scholar David Waterman[18]. The book bears the subtitle Pakistani fiction in the New Millennium. The book begins with an Introduction introducing Pakistan as a very young and a very old nation in its cultural heritage. The Introduction comes to its conclusion with remarkable flourish with the following words:

> "Ultimately, this is perhaps the biggest contribution made by Pakistani writers taking history with a capital "H" into account, linking it to the everyday, and daring to imagine a Pakistan whose story is not yet finished."

[17] Orhan Pamuk, Other Colours: Essays and A Story (New York: Knopf, 2007)
[18] David Waterman, Where Worlds Collide: Pakistani Fiction in the New Millennium (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2015)

There is no quarrel with the contribution or its recognition of the achievements of Pakistani writers, but then as one gets into the main body of the book one realizes that it is completely confined to the small group of English language writers. Not only is there no discussion of any of the local writers, there is no mention of the fact that such a body of works exists, that it does serve some purpose and may have even exerted some influence on the English language writers, who are themselves not repelled but strengthened by local associations. It is beyond the scope of this paper to draw any sort of comparison between these two vastly different bodies of work, and also this would be un-necessary. I would like to present the literary and representational qualities of some novels written in Urdu and focus on what they have to offer. I would have liked to take a panoramic view of the range of publications and contextualize them, specially in terms of the insights they offer, but also the problems and hardships these writers face in reaching out to wider audiences. However, this is the subject of another paper for the future and here I will only touch upon two or three names.

A fiction writer who has not attracted the kind of wider readership he deserved is Ikramullah. The author of a number of collections of short stories, his best work is the early novel of his career, *Gurg-e-Shab*. However, the novel was banned upon its first publication. An intensive study of the breakdown of relationships, it earned the ire of the censor authorities for depicting an incestuous relationship between two of the main characters. He is at his best in longer tales such as *Aankh Ojhal*, set in the Punjab still reeling from the violent riots around the Partition but a new rift begins to set in as the Ahmadi community finds itself subjected to discrimination and mob-attacks. In the finely crafted novel, the author has touched upon a sensitive theme, hardly been taken up by other writer from Pakistan. While Pakistan's track record in dealing with religious or ethnic minorities is subject to censure in international for a, what is known is the brave and dissenting voice of the writer who dares to speak about all such injustices.

In this part of the paper, I would like to describe briefly the novels of Mirza Athar Baig, one of the most unique figure among Urdu fiction-writers today. Baig has published a collection of short stories and authored several plays for the television, he has excelled primarily in the novel. His first novel *Ghulam Bagh* was widely commented upon while

Cypher Say Aik Tak an unusual medley of narrative styles and techniques. In this novel one can read an entire map of the various possibilities of contemporary narrative in Urdu. His third novel, *Hasan Ki Soorat e Haal* continues his relentless experimentation and innovation to express contemporary reality, and I will dwell upon some of its features briefly.

In the novel's very first sentence, Hasan Raza Zaheer is described as encountering something after a lifetime of *uchat-ti hui manzar-beeni*, a lifetime of skimming over the surface of things, which could well be the author's diagnosis of what ails contemporary Urdu fiction[19]. Avoiding this superficiality, the novel makes an attempt to go deeper and deeper into the heart of the matter. Its pensive and reflective mood comes out in its unconventional way of narrating even the most seemingly ordinary incidents. All disruptions in the flow glossing over the surface of all scenes and filling up the blank spaces with alternative scenes are enigmatically defined as the "apparently real, personal life" of a character named Hasan Raza Zaheer. The book's textured narrative is enigmatic, and invites the reader to take this journey with and through the book.

As the chapter reaches its conclusion, we learn that Zaheer's story has ended, yet some stories continue in spite of having come to an end. Surprises never cease and we encounter the term *hairania* which could be an amalgamation of narration and wonderment. Is this the best way to describe this novel, one may ask, but the story moves on. This *soorat-e-haal*, or the situation, is "the only possible scenario" and after we encounter a trash-collector, we are informed about the manuscript lost in a heap of garbage, a manuscript which could have changed the fate of the world as its name goes. Surprises do not end and we are invited to distribute sweets in celebration of attaining liberty from the Great Liberator. The choice of the name and its political implications are obvious. The question which confronts us is whether he the dictator who will obtain freedom from the last dictator, who had seized power promising to be the Great Liberator?

As the novel moves on, significant details seize every moment and we seem to be watching a surrealist film. Or is it the making of a film that we are looking at? People come forth and are dissolved as if being shot through a movie camera and narrative styles change from a

[19] Mirza Athar Baig, Hasan Ki Soorat e Haal (Lahore: Saanjh, 2014)

reflective, realist mode to that of a screenplay. Some portions do not offer an easy read and make one wish for editorial cuts. While it may be heavy going in some places, the style and narrative techniques are suitable for the innovative approach the novel has adopted. The novel is a Jack in the Box, ready to spring surprises. The swirling, freewheeling storyline takes many twists and turns and often stops in its tracks to reflect upon itself, the narrative force coming out effectively through the language which is unconventional but well-tuned to the novel's spirit.

Commenting upon his first novel, a critic had commented that such writers deserve a wider reading public. Plagued by a limited market at home and little or no access to translations in other languages, these novelists carry their own unique versions of truth, voices which need to be heard. Inventive and bold in taking risks, Mirza Athar Baig is all set to expand the horizons of contemporary Urdu fiction.

3.

From fiction, I move on to poetry, but poetry situated at an angle to the mainstream. Fraught with difficulties in translation, Urdu poetry, from the classical works of Mir and Ghalib to the modern Faiz and Rashid nevertheless has been relatively well served by its translators. For the purpose of the present paper, I will take up the work of poets whose concern as well as expression is more contemporary with a sharp difference from the classical. I will speak specifically of two poets, Azra Abbas and Afzal Ahmed Syed, who share some common characteristics but are very different from each other is their choice of subjects, themes and poetic concerns.

Defying classification, Azra Abbas has maintained a singular identity reflected in her poetic voice. It is distinct and highly personal at the same time. In *An Evening of Caged Beasts*, an anthology I edited in collaboration with Frances Pritchett, I noted the seemingly "prosaic awkwardness" of Abbas' work, commenting that: "Azra Abbas is unconventional, deliberately un-poetical in her choice of themes as well as style of expression. She writes the poetry of life's prose. Her realm is that of the commonplace, the ordinary. She writes about

the hackneyed routines, the dull emptiness and boredom of life. Her deadpan style seems all the more glaring when she writes about her tribulations as a woman."[20]

In her later work, she touches upon themes such as violence, civic breakdown and the suffering of the down-trodden but it is remarkable that violence does not become a "subject" in her work but remains unmeshed within the overall thematic framework. In these poems, she sometimes brings in more than one voice, indicating a kind of dialogue but without clear demarcation as to where one speakers transitions into the other. The poems include the following I have translated as A Fear:[21]

A fear
        Runs along the railway track
Is entwined
        Around a machine's wheel

The ship's crew
Can see it on the surface of the sea
It coils
            like the branches of a tree
Around a man walking

It is visible in any eye
                at any given time

When it rains for long

[20] Asif Farrukhi and Frances Pritchett, An Evening of Caged Beasts: Seven Post-Modernist Urdu Poets (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999)
[21] Asif Farrukhi, "People All Around You: Locating Karachi in the Poetry of Azra Abbas" in Cityscapes of Violence in Karachi: Publics and Counterpublics, ed. Nichola Khan (London: Hurst and Company, 2017), pp 35-36

When the sun begins to melt iron
When roofs no longer
make you think of shadows
A fear gets up from some place
And fills the heart
with strange premonitions

It is fear
Which snatches away
bread from the hungry
water from the sun
raindrops from the cloud

A fear which enters
From my nostrils
to the pit of my stomach
And causes
my death.

From an abstract notion, fear takes on physical attributes. Another poem belonging to the same period is entitled The Final Victory:

A fear
Creeps out of some corner
And begins to dance
In front of my eyes
Like an expert
Showing off his movements

Or telling
a great secret of life and death.

The curtain falls
Nobody knows when
The fear climbs up
and sits on my chest
I scream
In sleep and in waking hours
I keep fighting

Who will win
This war?

With its unanswered questions, the poem leaves us at a poignant point. Contemporary realities determine the poetic expression. The poetry of Afzal Ahmed Syed marks a significant departure from the dominant trends of the day. It can be seen as a beginning, the invention of poetry all over again, as borne out by the remarkable poem, *Shaeri Main Nay Ejad Ki*, translated into English as I Invented Poetry[22]:

Paper the Moroccons invented
Letters the Phoenicians
Poetry – I invented

The grave-digger invented the oven,
The oven-controllers made orders for bread
The bread-takes invented the queue
And learned to sing in chorus

[22] Afzal Ahmed Syed in Farrukhi and Pritchett, An Evening of Caged Beasts, pp1-3

When ants came too and stood in the queue for bread
Hunger was invented.

The mulberry-seller invented the silkworm,
Poetry made dresses for girls out of silk,
For girls dressed in silk, madams invented harems,
Wherever they went, they told of the silkworm.

Distance invented four feet for horses,
Fast movement made the chariot.

But by that time poetry had already invented love.

Love invented the heart,
The heart made tents and boats
And traversed long distances

The palace eunuch invented the fishhook
Stuck it into the sleeping heart
And ran away
To hold the cord with the hook stuck in the heart
The auction was invented
And
Force invented the final bid.

I sold all the poetry and bought fire
And burned up the hand of force.

This is as good an introduction to the poetic world of Afzal Ahmed Syed. However, his technique is at its best in a longer poem from which the title of his first collection of poems was extracted, *Cheeni Hui Tareekh*, called An Arrogated Past in English translation[23]:

We survived the massacre
And are now trying
To outwit the targeted killings

We are not worthy yet
To have a frozen death set after our heart
Locked into a sensitive weapon's sight

In the finest hotel of a bustling metropolis
A panel of experts
Is holding a seminar
To find out how we survive ----

The poem reaches its conclusion on the following lines:

The cover of four sandbags
And an arrogated past
Were insufficient
To keep us alive.

Going back to the well-known Faiz poem *Lahoo Kay Suragh,* dated January 1965, there is a history of bearing witness and giving voice to the murder and mayhem afflicted upon

[23] Afzal Ahmed Syed, Rococo and Other Worlds, trans. Musharraf Ali Farooqi (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2015), pp 4.

downtrodden and unsung people[24]. Syed has used a stark diction and is closer to the common man as a victim, betrayed and horror-stricken beyond words. Even more so then when these poems were written, Pakistan has been a target of terrorist attacks and this poem seems to me to capture the quintessential essence of what it means to live in such a situation, unspeakable, denied of a past, tormented and torn by present day problems but nevertheless poetic. I wonder if the world is listening, a question which the entire body of work I have sketched out seems to be asking.

I would like to refer to another poem before I conclude. This tragic note is clear in a number of Afzal Syed's later poems and a poem states:

> "History is already turning counterclockwise.".The poem I would like to mention here is called in this translated version, We Need a Whole Lot of Flowers.[25]" From its enumeration of painful sites of possible remembrance, the poem ends on a particularly poignant note:
>
> We need a whole lot of flowers
> On a whole lot of dancing creepers
> That we could train to cover the city.
>
> We do need many books, more and more stories and a whole lot of flowers to cover the country of many stories.

ENDNOTES

Asad Muhammad Khan is a fiction writer and poet. He was born on September 26, 1932 in the Indian city of Bhopal. He received his early education in Bhopal and had to leave home at an early age. He came to Karachi in 1950 and started his working life with various jobs

[24] Faiz Ahmed Faiz,"Lahoo Kay Suragh" in Nuskha-haiye Wafa: Kuliyat-e-Faiz (Lahore: Maktaba-e-Karavaan)
[25] Afzal Ahmed Syed, Rococo and Other Worlds, pp15-16

and at the same time continuing his education. He obtained his bachelor's degree from the Karachi University but had to abandon plans for further studies. He joined the Karachi Port Trust and served there until his retirement. He started writing poetry in the 1960s, becoming known for his lyrical style. He is at home in both prose and poetry, writing in a variety of styles. His first collection includes both short fiction as well poems, and it was self-published by the writer in 1982. His second collection appeared in 1990, followed by *Ghussay Ki Eik Nai Fasl* came out in 1997. He has published a volume of poetry, three further collections of short fiction as well as a volume of collected stories. His selected stories in English translation came out in 2002 entitled *The Harvest of Anger and Other Stories*.

Hasan Manzar is a fiction writer whose real name is Syed Manzar Hasan. He was born on March 4, 1934 in Hapur, North India. In his boyhood he accompanied his family to Lahore after independence and the partition led to the emergence of Pakistan as a new nation-state. He obtained his degree in medicine from Lahore, going on to post-graduate in psychiatry from the University of Edinburgh. He worked as a physician and psychiatrist in a number of places in Asia and Africa. An early stint of short stories and a novel left incomplete marked his early writing career in Lahore but gradually he stopped publishing, even though he did not completely stop writing. Later on, he decided to settle down in Hyderabad and established a medical practice there. It was in that period that he re-established his links with the literary world with the publication of his first collection *Rehai* in 1981 and the second in 1982, both collections self-published by the author. His latest collection *Khaak Ka Rutba* won an important literary award by the Pakistan Academy of Letters. His first novel *Al-Asifa* was set in the Gulf area and focused on the social upheaval with the discovery of oil. He has since then published five more novels. His unpublished works include a novel, a full-length play, a collection of short stories, two books for children, some verse and essays. He now lives in Karachi.

Ikramullah is a novelist and short story writer. His full name is Ikramullah Chaudhry. He was born in a village in the Jullundhar district of the Punjab in India and received his schooling in the city of Amritsar. With his family, he moved to Pakistan after the partition. He completed his education from Multan and Lahore. He worked for an insurance company

throughout his career, retiring in 1990. He achieved fame and notoriety for the novel *Gurg e Shab* which was banned after its publication in 1978. He has published a number of books since then. A translation of two novellas entitled *Regret*, translated by Faruq Hasan and Muhammad Umar Memon came out as a Penguin Modern Classic from New Delhi in2015. Never prolific, his literary output is relatively small. He is recently working on his memoir of childhood days in the pre-Partition era. He now lives in Lahore.

Novelist **Mirza Athar Baig** has come to the forefront relatively recently. He was born in Sharakpaur, a small town near Lahore. He received his education from Lahore and became a respectable professor of philosophy at the prestigious Government College, now The Government College University. His literary career started with short fiction and he published several, though he has kept back only a few in his to date single collection. His first novel *Ghulam Bagh* achieved considerable critical acclaim and went on to five editions, an unusual achievement for a serious novel which was also heavy-going in terms of language and themes. His collection of short stories appeared in 2008. His second novel *Sifar Say Aik Tak* appeared in 2010 while the latest is *Hasan Ki Soorat e Haal* was published in 2014. He lives in Lahore.

Azra Abbas is a poet as well as a writer of fiction and memoirs. She was born in Karachi and grew up in a middle-class locality which she has depicted in her memoirs of childhood days. She was educated in Karachi and completed her Masters in Urdu Literature from the Karachi University. She subsequently started teaching at a government college in Karachi. In 1976 she was married to fellow writer and poet Anwer Sen Roy. She attracted the notice of literary circles with her book length prose poem *Neend Ki Musafitain* in 1981, later translated into English as Voyages of Sleep. She went to publish a collection of poems in 1988 and again in 1996. She has published four collections to date and is currently working on another one. Her memoir of childhood days has been translated into English as *Kicking Up Dust*. In addition to her poetry, she has published a collection of short stories and a novel. A selection of her poems was included in *An Evening of Caged Beasts*, translated and edited by Asif Farrukhi and Frances Pritchett. Her later poems are discussed in some detail by Asif

Farrukhi in a study included in Nichola Khan's book, *Cityscapes of Violence in Karachi*. Azra Abbas now divides her time between London and Karachi.

Poet and translator **Afzal Ahmed Syed** was born in September 1946 in Ghazipur, North India. He grew up and received his early education in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh now but then the major city in East Pakistan. He witnessed the traumatic period marking the death throes of East Pakistan and the blood-stained birth of Bangladesh. He completed his education in Karachi and Beirut, to be trained as an entomologist and in that capacity he worked for the Government of Pakistan. His first collection of poems *Cheeni Hui Tareekh*, regarded as a landmark collection of modern poetry, appeared in 1984. A collection of poetry in the more traditional form of the ghazal came out in 1986 while his third and fourth books of poetry appeared in 1990 and 2000. He has translated extensively from modern European poets and from classical Persian into Urdu. A selection of his poems was included in *An Evening of Caged Beasts*, translated and edited by Asif Farrukhi and Frances Pritchett. All of his poems have been translated into English by Musharraf Ali Farooqi with the title *Rococo and Other Worlds*, published from New Delhi in 2015.

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