



Different stages of Textual (●) and Subtextual (☁) Development

The text starting in A-stage naturally brings into its periphery the subtext in B-stage, and gradually the text in C-stage begins to be subsided whereas the subtext becomes dominant. In D and E-stage the text gradually sinks into almost oblivion and the subtext gradually replaces it and gets prominence and becomes text (co-text) in F-stage having a new periphery of subtext. In the same manner, I-stage gives rise to another new text. It is quite obvious that the construction of subtext in the domain of text can never be an intentional endeavour of an artist, nor is it in case of Amitav Ghosh. But Ghosh's constant shift from a convergent to divergent study of the text and vice versa accordingly shifts the reader from textual to subtextual to co-textual study and vice versa, and his enticing narration so engrosses and absorbs the reader that he cannot escape the tapestry made by the author woven into a text-like net, rather he tries to be 'transmuted' to it. The subtextual study that runs within the text to make the reader 'write' in between lines in order to make up the ambiguity, the silences, the unspokens or ellipses has been shrunk by Ghosh in *The Hungry Tide* snatched up either by detailing the cetological research or by philosophizing the hunger of crabs or nature, or by the New Historical presentation through Nirmal's diary, and so it calls for a reading not in isolation of events but in its entirety, integrity and wholeness focusing on the unity of impressiveness.

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Short Story

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Laltheri and Chalthanga

- Margaret L. Pachuau

Abstract: The following tale has been translated from the original Mizo to English. The tale reflects the harshness of Mizo society in precolonial Mizoram, then known as the Lushai hills, and it depicts the class consciousness that existed amongst the village chiefs and the villagers. Laltheri and Chalthanga's plight was seminal because it resulted in the creation of a more liberal Mizo society.

A long time ago there lived a comely maiden by the name of Laltheri. She was the daughter of a chief called Lalsavunga, and she was in love with a commoner called Chalthanga. Chalthanga had a friend who was a composer by the name of Chhawnthanga. Laltheri was deeply in love with Chalthanga but he did not dare to reciprocate her love for him because she was the daughter of the village chief. However, so madly in love was Laltheri with Chalthanga that she would follow him wherever he went, and she would even block his path even as he set off for the jhum. Yet even though she tried her level best in her pursuit of him Chalthanga was afraid to reciprocate her love for him. However Laltheri was adamant in her pursuit of Chalthanga and so he too found it difficult to resist her charms and eventually they both fell in love with each other. After a while the entire village came to know about their love for each other and when Laltheri's brothers heard about their relationship they were enraged because they did not want their sister to fall in love with a mere commoner. In a frenzy they drove out Chalthanga from their village and they even wanted to kill him. So they sent a man to track him down and the man then invited Chalthanga to share rice beer with him, "Since you are leaving the village, why don't we share some rice beer together?"

Chalthanga was not a fool and he was well aware of what the man was up to, so in great alarm he followed the man. And as he did so, he engaged Chalthanga in conversation, "Since you are leaving the village why don't you partake of the brew first?" Chalthanga then did as he was told and in the process, the man pierced him with a dao and he died instantly. Now at that time, it so happened that Laltheri was pregnant with Chalthanga's child and when she heard about Chalthanga being driven away from the village she was wild with remorse. In grief she roamed about wildly and so she did not care about her attire anymore and her hair was always shabby and unkempt. She was unaware that Chalthanga had died. Eventually she came to know of his death when a servant in the household enquired, "Do you know what has become of Chalthanga?"

To which she replied, "Why, what has happened to him?" The servant said, "He has been killed and his body has been thrown on the outskirts of the town." As soon as she heard the news, Laltheri threw away the

clothes that she was wearing and she ran about like a woman possessed. She ran about the village, in a state of nakedness and the villagers would gaze at her in amazement and would wonder in trepidation as to whether she had lost her sanity. After this she refused to wear any clothes and very soon she refused to eat any food. Her mother would cajole her by saying, "My dear please wear your clothes, it does not become you to behave in this manner." However she refused to listen and her mother's pleas went in vain. Finally she no longer wanted to live with the villagers and she ran away to the forest, which was far away from the village. As she no longer partook of any food she grew faint with hunger after while and soon she fainted in the *jhum* that she took shelter in. She could no longer speak and finally the villagers found her in a state of unconsciousness and they carried her back to Chhawnthanga's home.

Laltheri refused to wear clothes and she continued to live in a state of nakedness. She was still lonely with grief and she refused to eat. Instead she drank rice beer all the time and in this manner she passed her time. Her temperament was greatly affected and she would get annoyed at the slightest provocation and she no longer had any friends. Only the memory of Chalthanga occupied her mind. Eventually with the passage of time, she gave birth to a baby boy. At first the birth of her son did not bring her any happiness. Whenever she gazed at her son she was filled with grief and she would hold him and weep all the while. However, after some time there was a change in her and she began to participate once again in the throes of life. She began by wearing clothes, which she had discarded a long while ago, and later she would even fetch wood for fire in the forest. One fine day her brother Lalphunga who had ordered for the death of Chalthanga fell very ill and as his condition worsened he called for a messenger and said, "My sister Laltheri must come and pay me a visit as I am on my deathbed." But when the messenger went to her home she refused by saying, "Why did he kill Chalthanga? Woe should befall him. I shall not go." This message was conveyed to him and when Lalphunga heard about it, he knew that he had indeed committed a grave wrong and only then did he realize the error of his ways. However there was little that he could do and so he did the best that he could and he called his family members and declared, "What we did to Chalthanga was wrong. I am about to die. But after my death should anyone in the family fall in love with commoners, it must be ensured that they live happily and that no harassment should befall them."

Saying thus, he died and so it came to pass that chiefs and commoners began to pay court to each other in earnest and at liberty with one another. Laltheri's son soon grew up and she too was eager to see him grow. This was because she wanted him to take revenge upon his father's killers. After a time she asked him, "My son, come here, do you think you can now seize the head of your father's killer?" And saying this she would make him lift a pumpkin. Now it so happened that the man who had killed Chalthanga was of the Pawi tribe. When he heard of this incident and of Laltheri's determination to hunt him down and kill him, it is said that he and his family left the village they dwelt in, never to return again.



An Indian Bull in the American China Shop

- N D Dani

Abstract: Mr Dev, a man of fifty-something, with an incorrigibly romantic heart and strange notions about the land of Uncle Sam – which he has picked up from his stray reading of books from or about America – gets a chance to visit USA. Being a bumbling type and having little understanding of the rules of life in the West, he blunders, fumbles, stumbles and finds himself frequently caught in funny situations, one after the other. Frequently mistaking the American way of life for what it is not, he makes a complete fool of himself. This is the fictionalized real-life account of an Indian who stares, gawk-like with his mouth agape at a world which to his Indian sensibility is confusing and perplexing but replete with doubtful promises of a romantic/ erotic kind. Not having much understanding of how to behave in a new country, he sometimes comes in for mild but cold disapproval at the hands of his American hosts. His bewilderment ends only with his taking his flight back home on Air India flight.

Mr Dev was pleasantly surprised when on his first morning walk on the pavement of Rocky Hill the beautiful American blonde bowed to him in respect. Surprised because he didn't understand this gesture from a total stranger; pleasantly, because the person who bowed to him in his walks was a pretty blonde. Came the next morning and he saw her coming from the opposite direction. She bowed to him. Mr Dev was still at a loss because back in India women, young or not so young, pretty or not so pretty, didn't bow to stranger males. Fantasy took over. "May be the blonde was carried away by my handsome looks!" thought Mr Dev. When young he loved to spend time before the mirror as if asking it, "Mirror, mirror on the wall who is the most handsome male of all?" The mirror, as mirrors always do, returned the answer that Mr Dev wanted to hear. He no longer spent time before the mirror now. The double chin, the pockets under the eyes, the creases under the mouth and above all the grey head made him fear the mirror and he always ran the mandatory comb through his hair, quickly. Self-knowledge is a horrible thing. One may have it – even if in glimpses – but one wishes to forget it. That pretty American twenty-something on the Rocky Hill pavement on the mornings had made him forget self-knowledge. However, his better sense made him suspect that there was more to it than his looks. He decided to share this experience with his son. The young man who had been living in America for some time told him that it was a perfectly natural thing for Americans to greet perfect strangers in their country. Plus, Americans were deferential to age. Mr Dev was crestfallen, "So it was my grey hair that made the blonde bow!" He regretted why he had not dyed his hair before coming to Connecticut. He had never used dye himself. He got his hair dyed back in India at his favourite parlour in Godavarinagar. The next day when he got ready for his morning walk, his head full of thoughts of meeting the blonde, his son said, "Papa, you had better put on shirt and trousers. Nobody wears kurta pyjama here." Mr Dev took young man's advice without any protest. He also put on his