

moody and highly sexed?"

"Aren't they a bit frail? I mean ... their skin ... with so many freckles?"

"Did any one take you for a Maharajah?"

"No? You should have pretended."

Salim entertains his young female audience most gallantly, inflating his accounts with chivalrous anecdotes. Occasionally he gives Dalila a conspiratorial wink. He is miles from suspecting how difficult this day is for her. How hurt he would be if her enigmatic smile were suddenly to unravel the truth! Did he sense her coldness in the room when he tried to draw her close to him and she slightly pushed him back?

Sreena K.



DREAM

It was a terrible dream,
 wood entered into my body.
 That horrible words and deeds of the evil substances-
 they struck me with their invisible wands.
 Something hovering around,
 is it wind or light?
 Presence of something absent.
 Eyes are affixed with terror
 cemented into a theatre
 inside which the horror pictures moved rapidly.
 I hugged my mother tightly,
 my face on her bosom
 I could feel her breath.
 The soft touch cooled me.
 Those creatures were standing behind my mothers back
 I couldn't see them clearly,
 but I was able to feel the presence of that unearthly things.
 Suddenly she got up leaving me alone,
 in the midst of these creatures.
 I called her
 shouted
 don't leave me, don't....
 she left me without looking back.
 neglecting the small, fragile thing on the bed
 I was alone in the room.
 'Open your eyes,' I said to myself
 I saw the room in its dim light.
 opened all the windows.
 Fresh wind entered the room,
 washing away the evil thoughts.
 I laid back.
 Am alone
 Come thee creatures come.
 Take me to the dome of fear.
 I just want to perish in fear.



Ghost Story

First Chapter Of A Weird Novel In Progress

- P. Raja

The first ever ghost story I had the thrill of listening to was narrated by my mother. Like many mothers, my mother too was a storyteller... a very good one at that. It is not that that she could not lull me into sleep with her melodious voice that still continues to haunt me even after I have crossed five decades of my sojourn on Earth; but she could keep her listener spell-bound with her gimmicks and also by her special sound effects.

She mimicked the voice of the ferocious wind and the rubbing together of the wings of the cicada. She knew when to be silent. And her silence was as dark as the night itself.

"Years ago when I was a little girl, I saw a ghost. That was the first ghost I ever saw in my life. But it was not the last ghost," began my mother.

"What is a ghost?" I asked as ignorant as ever.

"Listen! Stop asking questions. At the end of the story you will know what a ghost is. Now listen," she said with a smile.

"In those days of no electricity, hurricane lamps and earthen oil lamps served the purpose of driving away darkness. People who stirred out of their houses in the dark for one reason or the other, invariably carried a hurricane lamp in their hands. They also carried a stick which had a few tiny jingling bells tied to the sides of the stick, so that when they walked they tapped the ground and the jingling noise of the bells drove creepy crawlies away. If the stick saved them from poisonous insects, the hurricane lamps saved them from falling into ditches which were plenty on the path. And both the weapons joined hands to dispel ghosts.

"Once I had a stomach disorder, may be because I overate on that day for my mother was an excellent cook. I woke up with a start and felt the urge to ease myself. I didn't dare to wake up anyone in the house for they were all fast asleep.

"I had to cross the backyard of my house, open the bamboo fence gate and then move into the nearby wood, the only place for all the people in the village to deposit night soil. Without making the least noise I tip-toed my way out with a hurricane lamp.

"The place was so dark that one could not see one's own palm. I had to lift my lamp to dangle it close to my face so as to know my way. The wind was chill and as I entered the wood I could hear the music of bamboo plants. The fully grown plants were perhaps hugging and kissing each other and in their wild ecstasy making eerie sounds. Such a weird sound the wind carried on its wings was enough to put any newcomer take to his heels even in broad daylight. But we were accustomed to all such sounds even, in the dead of night. Our way of living demanded it.

"My mother being a highly-respected country physician, very good at treating bites, especially dog and snake, took her children along into the wood in search of herbs. This she did only after midnight for she strongly believed that the herbs rejuvenated only after that hour and were able to regain their power lost during sunshine. And we were only lamp bearers to her and she always encouraged her children to turn a deaf ear to all such intimidating sounds for they would only cripple our audacity. Creech... Creech... reech... those were the cicadas. Jal... Jal... Jal... Anybody could easily mistake the sound for tinkling anklets of a woman dancing or running. But we knew that they were sounds made by beetles keen on attracting attention. While such horrendous sounds would easily make many of my playmates dirty their underwear, we were really amazed at the courage we had. Thanks to my mother who instilled courage and hope into us.

And on that night when I went out to ease myself, the cicadas joined hands with the beetles. Since I knew the musicians of the weird orchestra, no iota of fear gripped my heart.

I sat on my haunches and then, woo... woo... it was the wailing sound of the siren from the nearby cotton mill. I began to wonder what time was it. Was it 3.30 a.m or 5.00 a.m? I could think of only those two timings at that odd hour. And I saw someone sitting on his haunches at a stone's throw.

My lamp helplessly watched me screw up my eyes as I tried to decipher who was there. To my great surprise, the man I was trying to have a better look, stood up. He was quite tall with only a dhoti on. But for the dhoti, as white as a streak of lightning, he was naked. He had a piece of cloth tied to his head to resemble a turban. God knows whether it was his own loincloth, as men used to wear it like that at the early hours when they moved out of their houses to ease themselves.

The man who stood up began to move towards me. For every forward step he took he grew a foot or so in height.

I couldn't believe my eyes. It was happening as if in a dream with a pinch of magic. Fear gripped me and the next moment I stood up, ready to run for my life. Who can be more dangerous than men to women at such odd hours especially at the loneliness of the wood?

When the tall figure that has grown taller than the tallest palmyra tree in the wood, developed swift feet and was just a disastrous distance away, my feet developed wings.

I ran faster than my fastest feet could carry me, though I was not sure whether I could make my escape from the long-footed and long handed apparition. Yet I didn't lose hope.

My vigilant ears could make out the thud - thud noise of footsteps at my back close at my heels. For the first time I understood that I was capable of running without my feet touching the ground.

As I ran I screamed, yelled, wailed and cried. I had almost crossed the wood when I stumped against a root that stood protruding from above the ground and I fell. Before I could raise myself up I turned back my head to see if I had made my escape. The tallest of the tall ghosts was closing in on me.

My heart thumping louder I stood up and took to my heels again without even examining whether I was wounded or bleeding from the bruises.

I saw something stretching from behind over my right shoulder. From the corner of my right eye I saw a long hand trying to overtake me, perhaps to grab me.

I breathed heavily like a terribly tired dog. I did run, of course. In a few seconds, I reached the fence, pushed the wicket gate open and ran into the backyard of my house.

As I entered the backyard, the Sun too rose dispelling darkness. Huffing and puffing, I slumped onto a cane chair inside my house.

My mother who had just finished drawing her usual mammoth kolam in the front yard of the house, made her appearance with a broom in one hand and an empty pitcher in the other.

Seeing my plight she dropped the pitcher and the broom to the floor and cried: "Eh... eh...eh! What happened?"

With a wave of my hand I motioned her to wait for a few seconds. She gave me an inquisitive look. I was still gasping for breath. It took quite a long time for me to breath normal and I saw my mother helplessly watch my plight.

I rehearsed to her from a to z, with bulging eyes and with a frightened face.

On hearing my story with rapt attention my mother laughed like a shower of granites falling on a hot tin roof.

"Oh! That's only a shit eating ghost. Nothing to fear. It chased you to pull the shit out of you. And you, out of sheer fear, indirectly refused to give the needy ghost

what it wanted” she again broke into a guffaw, while I fell to the floor with a thud. I was told later that I swooned. And no amount of water splashed on my face and later poured on my head ever brought me back to my senses till the temple poojari came home, with a bunch of neem leaves and a pouch full of ash.

The poojari took a fistful of ash, recited mantras and then blew it on to my face. I must have looked like a white apparition. The bunch of neem leaves in his hand in the first round served as a fan on my face but in the second round metamorphosed itself into a whip. Every blow fell in my face like pinpricks with a sharp slashing sound. It gave me excruciating pain. The leaves that tore away from the bunch fell pell-mell, reminding me of a battlefield full of mutilated bodies of soldiers.

I stood up and made preparations to run away from the scene. But the poojari was all alert and he caught me by my long hair and forced me sit. I began to scream in pain.

“Huh!... Is it that much painful? Then leave this girl and go away this very moment. You don't know how cruel I could be towards spirits like you? Now tell me where are you from? And who are you?” howled the poojari.

“Believe me... I am no spirit. I am a live girl... I am Saguntala... And I am from this house. Don't torture me, please”, I pleaded with the poojari.

The merciless poojari raised his voice a few decibels and said: “You are a first rate liar. You better keep away from this little girl or else I know how to pull you out of her body and throw you back into your den. Go away before I do it for you.” He then roared at the pitch of his voice “Quick! Quick... be quick... else you can't even get into your world again. I will nail you to a tree. You will be doomed for ever.”

I was in a fix. I was not sure what the poojari would do to me.

A few months before this incident took place. I saw him brand a girl of my age with a red hot iron, all with the purpose of exorcising the evil spirit that was reportedly haunting her. She fell down with a thud and swooned. The poojari took a camphor, ignited it and placed it in the palm of his right hand. He then drew three circles in the air all the time reciting mantras and finally tossed the burning camphor into his wide opened mouth – He leaned back and smiled. Slowly his smile turned into laughter till it became an uproarious one at that. “Ha... Ha... Ha... Ha...”

When everyone was looking askance at the poojari he howled in a thunderous voice: “I have won you... I have won you. You 'll be in my den forever as my slave.”

Having witnessed such a scene before, a ruse flashed across my mind. I cried in a loud tone: “Oh, no! oh, no! Don't brand me again with that red hot iron. I can't bear it anymore. You are the cruelest of exorcists I have ever seen in my life. Leave me to myself. I am going... I am gone.”

I fell down and swooned. The poojari didn't know that I was pretending; neither did any one in the crowd enjoying the scene.

“I know... I know who you are. You must be the same spirit that I drove out a few weeks ago.” He then finished his preliminaries of lighting camphor, reciting mantras and then gobbling it up. After his customary uproarious laughter, he said in his guttural voice: “I have won you... I have won you again. But this time I'll show no mercy to you. No mercy for the adamant spirit.” So saying, he held me by my hair and pulled out as many as he could 'in one go'.

I stomachached the pain, woke up with a start and innocently and ignorantly looked for my mother. She came rushing towards me and took me into her ever loving affectionate hands, and showered kisses on my forehead and cheeks.

“She is quite normal now. You can take her home,” said the poojari and blew a handful of ash onto my head and face.

“That was how I made my great escape from the cruel hands of the poojari. In

fact, poojaris are crueller than the haunting spirits,” said my mother and heaved a sigh.

I was not ready to leave her at that. I became more curious than ever and asked: “What would the poojari do with the strand of hair he had pulled out of my head?” “Oh, that! That he would take to the nearby palmyra tree with no companions. He would have the strand of hair nailed into the tree. By doing such a thing he made us believe that he had saved us from an impending disaster. For all such acts of exorcism, he charged a cockerel and a big fat hen. Above all we had to pay him 4 annas.

Years later when I rehearsed my mother's experience with a ghost and a poojari to my uncle Samarapuri, he came out with his weird experience with a ghost.

Samarapuri was dark complexioned, short statured but well built. He was not visible in the dark unless the moon, particularly chose him to shower her cool rays. He himself would easily pass for an apparition in the midst of people who see him for the first time. Most often he was seen with his clean white dhoti kilted up and he hated to put on any shirt. He had a white towel which went round his hip when he was at work in the paddy field. The very same towel covered his torso when he moved around the village on business errands. And the same towel became his headgear when he sat on branches of trees eating their fruits, already tasted and abandoned by squirrels.

He spent the nights on the big broad pial of my grandma's palatial house. Adjacent to the house ran a lane that led to the wood, the very same wood my mother had bitter experiences with the shit-eating ghost.

Samarapuri was asleep when he heard someone call him by his name. The voice sounded as though it came from the other world and he cared a hair for it. The voice sounded again and this time it was louder than before. When he realized that the call was from his father, he woke up with a start.

He sat up. He saw his father standing on the muddy road. He squeezed his eyelids and looked at his father again.

“Hei! Come on...Light up that lantern by your side and bring it along,” said his father.

“Where are we going, pa?” It was the innocent Samrapuri.

“I feel uneasy in the stomach. I need to go to the woods to ease myself. Give me company. Bring with you the burning lantern,” said his father.

Samarapuri looked around. The parading Moon was quite bright, trying its best to show everything in its proper shape and colour as the sun would during his duty hours. “The moon is so bright... Why do you need me at this hour?” asked the impertinent Samarapuri.

His father didn't answer.

“Who can be a better companion then the Moon? Pa! On many occasions like this when I asked for your company, you gave me the lantern and advised me not to be afraid of the dark and face the world as a man should... And now you need my company eh! Ha! Ha! Ha! What a funny world? Ha! Ha! Ha!” Samarapuri laughed. His father too as if he wanted to digest his son's dig laughed uproariously.

“Hei! Come on...This is no time for joke...Bring the lantern along,” he said and moved away quite fast.

Samarapuri simply obeyed. He took the lantern and raised the wick a little up so that there could be more light and began walking behind his father nurturing no grudge.

Poor Samarapuri couldn't cope with his father's speed as his steps were quite long and fast. In fact, he was fleeing. Samarapuri was almost running after his father with the lantern dangling from his left hand.

“Why is he moving so fast?” Samarapuri asked himself. “He must be really sick,” he answered his own question. Seconds later, he thought why that old man was not stopping to ease himself. His father was not of that type to shy away from



human presence or hide behind trees to answer nature calls. He never even bothered about the presence of women, when his bladder declared emergency. Why should such a man go farther and farther into the wood and that too at dead of night? Was he afraid of the moon playing hide and seek amidst the fluffy cotton bale like clouds?

The cicadas all of a sudden began to chirp and a stray owl on wings let out two blood-curdling hoots. The frogs began to croak and sent jitters down my spine. "I was scared of croaking frogs because those ignoramuses do not in the least know that they were inviting trouble. Their croaking is simply a dining bell for snakes. And when snakes rush for their food, they do not spare the human trespassers," sermonized Samarapuri.

Oh! Is that the reason why Samarapuri's father was moving with such long and fast steps?

Samarapuri had the shock of his life, when he saw his father cross a well without any effort.

A well in the wood! Surprising indeed! No one knew when the well was dug and for what reason! During rainy days, rain water found its way into the well and filled the huge well. Since, it had a ground level mouth, many stepped into it unaware of its existence. They never came back alive to tell any story about it. But people concocted several stories about the well with the spirits and the goblins that were haunting it.

Samarapuri was shocked to his coccyx bone because no human being would ever be able to cross that huge mouthed well without falling into it. Stunned he stood, this time gazing at his father's amazing activity. But his father was going ahead, without even turning his head once to see if his son was following him or not.

How did his father cross that wide mouthed huge well with little or no effort when no one else escaped from its mouth?

The very thought was enough to make him freeze. And he froze.

As Samarapuri finished narrating his story, I was still in a fix for I was not sure what he saw and what was it that made him freeze.

I gave him an inquiring look. Samarapuri read my curiosity filled eyes. He wound up the tale by saying: I froze because I realized that my father died long ago when I was still in my teens.

It was time for me to freeze.

The Queen of Kittur

Basavaraj Naikar



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The Queen of Kittur

- Basavaraj Naikar

Authors Press, New Delhi

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The Queen of Kittur highlights the theme of honour and glory; patriotism and freedom; betrayal and defeat of the royal family of Kittur kingdom. The Spirit of freedom represented by Rani Chennamma holds mirror to the female heroism of India and serves as a model to the entire womankind.

- Basavaraj Naikar

Positive Outlook to Life

- V. Sunitha

The scorching sun has relieved from its hot blaze but the inner fury of Abirami became torrential and uncontrollable. She could not come to terms with what has been determined for her. Her sadist husband is the reason for her emotional havoc. She was once the beautiful and adorable daughter of an affluent merchant Venkatesam, but it is her fate which has trapped her in the pit assigning her a designation called Mrs Ajay Kumar and has splashed mud on her later life. It has been twelve years and she has not tasted the bliss of conjugal bond till now.

Her past was enwrapped with gay and gaiety. She was presumptuous of her beauty and wealthy state. Her friend Priya asked her, "Why do you go around temples? Why do you fast on all the days of the week?"

She hopefully replied, "To get a good husband"

She questioned, "What do you mean by good?"

With a lush on her face Abirami replied, "It means my groom should be a man with no bad habits, not even cigarette, he should be diligent, hard working man with good name and fame, he should love me a lot, give respect to my parents, should be humorous, though he is mediocre in beauty he should be manly and so on and so forth"

What happened to Abirami's hopes and expectations? Did *angapradakshanams*, fasting for continuous three days, all the severe prayers audible to god and was she bestowed a life of bliss and contentment?If the happenings in her later life would have been smooth and congenial she wouldn't have emerged as a successful woman with a doctorate degree in her hand.

As a newly wed bride she stepped into her in-laws house with colourful thoughts and enchanting mind. She was shocked to see her husband who cared a damn and least bothered about her presence. He was engrossed in newspaper, chatted with his sisters and mother, ignoring the new bride throbbing with life and flesh awaiting very much for his care and presence. Here starts the life journey of Abirami on the razors's edge where her twelve years of life can be adumbrated in a single phrase, "craving for husband's love and affection".

It's not only men bully women in the name of dowry and despotism; they also make their life go astray by their cold attitude, this is applicable in Abi's life too.

That was the nuptial night and the very first word she heard from her spouse pierced her ears and struck her like a hurricane.

He said, "You can commit suicide as I don't like to live a life with you"

Those thorns like words are unexpected from a bridegroom in the nuptial bed. They hardly knew each other as it is an arranged marriage and why does he carry so much disgust towards her? The answer to this query is still a mystery to her.

The day passed, the very morning she tried to ignore the bitter experience of the last night and went to him with a cup of coffee on her hand, expecting him to soothe her mind and body with his masculinity.

But alas he reiterated the same question, "When will you leave me? When does our relationship come to an end?"

She responded, "Why do you ask such questions, hardly we started living life together...what makes you to ask such unbearable questions...do I not look beautiful? ..in what way do you expect me to adorn myself, how should I behave?"

...I am really perplexed.... You know, the whole night I was weeping helplessly but you turned aside and dozed off..... Please don't talk so... I like you a lot and I want to live a life with you to the brim".

Ajay barely listened to what she spoke. Everything related to her is loathing and

hesitating to him. Poor bride as she could not explode her inner angst in the house full of people ready to pounce upon her as well as her parents blaming for the construed imperfections of her own marriage rituals.

Days passed on, but his attitude towards her remained the same.

She cried to god, "Is detachment and separation the rule and order of my life? When do I enjoy the experience of conjugal life? Isolation is hellish to me"

There were many weeks and even months that the couple hardly spoke to each other. Every night she lay down on the bed of thorns and not on the marital bed meant for sharing each others love.

Ajay's exorbitant attachment for his mother, his complaints about his wife to his mother made her berserk.

He said, "She doesn't have minimum sense ma, she always falls upon me."

She responded, "How can she disturb my son during night times, let me call her parents arrange for a *panchayat* and speak about this issue."

Abirami cried to her mother-in-law, "I beg you, please tell him some good words, his indifference and lack of concern is unbearable to me."

She rashly said, "With no love and lust how come there grows an offspring in your womb?...the moment you stepped across the threshold of our house, we were deprived of wealth and riches."

She cried, "Why do you impute blame on me for the sins you committed? Your son is a drunkard, has a keep to satiate his carnal pleasure...despite of all these drawbacks on your side it is disloyal on your part to point out me in such a derogatory way."

It was an unforgettable day in Abirami's life. That was the day she was eagerly expecting to convey him the glad news of her pregnancy being confirmed.

She took his hands and said, "Your baby is growing".

He said, "I want to pledge your jewels in order to pay interest for a loan." ...

"Don't you feel happy that your heir is growing inside my womb?"

Uncared of her words he ferociously said, "If you are not giving your jewels, I will send you along with the banker and thereby clear my loan, I cannot provide you food and shelter until your death."

She handed over the jewels with the only intention that she may be rewarded with love and affection.

She consoled herself, "My Ajay will definitely change as soon as he sees the innocent face of his baby, all his disgust will vanish in the air, the moment his baby laughs at him."

But her expectations remained only as expectations with no hopes for fulfillment. Nine months passed and it was the time for delivery. Ajay did not even bother to see the face of his little daughter. He was dry and passive even to his cute little daughter. His attitude was nothing but silent killing, slow poison, he was not harsh and dominating but never bothered to take care even when his wife suffered from labour pains nor relished at the sight of chubby infant.

She clutched his hands and said, "See our daughter, does she resemble you?", he didn't even bother to say 'yes' or 'no' and simply ignored by turning his head towards the ceiling of the hospital.

The flood of despondency that deluges Abirami makes her to pen to her thick friend Prabha, her collegemate. The letter which she got in response from Prabha, a physically challenged woman but an epitome of hard work and determination unveiled the bright side of life. Being suffocated in the pit of doldrums and wretched life she was able to have a fresh lease of air and was able to breathe new life through her advice. Infact she was the one to retrieve her to normalcy from the abyss that she was dwelling in.

Yet she resolved to step into MSc, applied for the course, with strong

determination and pursuit she managed to get through her master's degree, but with a second class. Unable to cope with stone-hearted and feelingless man she wrestled internally, yearned for him but molded her to fit into the patterns of life that is determined for her.

It is his passive response and null efforts to satiate her cravings for love metamorphosed her as an active woman with a positive outlook towards life. Thereby Abirami managed to complete her M Phil and Doctorate and became a professor in a reputed institution.

She often remembered the quotation by her friend Prabha,

"Unakaga vaalgiren endru pirar solvadhai vida, unnal vaalgiren endru pirarai cholla vai." which means, the phrase 'I live for you' is trivial and not worth mentioning when juxtaposed with the phrase, 'I live because of you' which is consummate and superlative.

She discerns the sagacity in her friend's words, keeps it as a repository and marches ahead to enlighten the lives of the innumerable by her noble teaching profession. Though she had reached her intended pursuit inspite of the bruises of her silent husband her unspoken suffering and agony are unheard to the external world.

- *Angapradakshanam*- It is a popular step of a Puja, which is practiced by the Hindu people of India. Devotees before taking *angapradakshanam*, take a dip into the sacred river, lie prostrate, and then roll around the temple, chanting the Lord's name.
- *Panchayat*- A village council meant for carrying out administration work and solving family problems.



Journals Received

- *D.C. Chambial*, POETCRIT, Vol.XXIII/No.2/July 2010 - Maranda (HP)
- *Jaydeep Sarangi*, SEVA BHARTI JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES, Vol.VI/Jan.2010 - Medinipur (WB)
- *KV Dominic*, IJPCL - Indian Journal of Postcolonial Literature, Vol.X/No.1/June 2010 - Thodupuzha (Kerala)
- *Laxmi Shankar*, PUNYABHOOMI, Vol.1/No.1/Jan. 2010 - Bhopal (MP)
- *Rajkamal Shiromani*, IJELL - International Journal of English Language & Literature, Vol.1/No.1/Summer 2010 - Patna (Bihar)
- *Sudheer C Hajela*, DIALOGUE, Vol.VI/No.1/June 2010 - Lucknow (UP)

Book Review

Bran Nicol: *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction*, Cambridge University Press, 2009, ISBN 978-0-521-67957-2

Book Review by: Lata Mishra, Govt. KRG PG (Autonomous) College, Gwalior (M.P.)

As does a biologist, systematically and methodically dissect a specimen for his study so does Bran Nicol in his *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction* deal with the concept of Postmodernism. The book is written with great care and concern. The scholarly approach and sustained argument about the postmodernism, postmodernity, theories in postmodern fiction is a major concern in this study. Nicol considers Postmodern fiction more as an aesthetic, it is a sensibility that brings under its umbrella all specific currents in writing of later half of 20th century.

In this comprehensive study of the term, Nicol emphasizes that Literature is no more about being delighted, but now it is a labyrinth and meanings have to be deciphered from the text. Postmodern readers cannot afford to sit with their backs resting and hearts delighting in the fancy created in the novel. One needs to work out meanings in the text. Reality is a manufactured product. The novel no more informs us about reality but it constitutes reality. The book is intended both for the scholars and students of postmodernism. In a very deft and precise manner, the writer divides the book into chapters dealing with the term Postmodern Fiction and its various kinds, citing key novels of its twenty-four representative novelists to enable the readers 'digest' each concept with full clarity.

Any attempt to define postmodernism, becomes difficult due to postmodernists' central claim that express, defiance and rejection of truths. The meaning of the term's prefix is also disputable as it signifies the end of an old and beginning of new era. However, critics regard the relationship between modernism and postmodernism as a complex one. Nicol argues that though postmodernism has been defined keeping in view modernist values and aesthetic techniques but postmodern fiction ought to be compared to realism for better understanding. He explains the reason for preferring so, through Patricia Waugh's argument that modernism is preoccupied by consciousness whereas postmodernism is interested in fictionality. Realism ignores fictionality.

Apart from Introduction, the book comprises eight chapters. Chapter One entitled *Postmodern fiction: Theory and Practice* assesses how social and cultural changes affect fiction and positions its readers to respond to it. After a brief discussion on realism and modernism the writer analyses the features of modernist fiction as pointed out by Nathalie Sarraute and Robbi-Grillet. Grillet talks of fiction as 'constructing' rather than 'transcribing' reality. This chapter also gives perspective of postmodern theorist Brian McHale and compares it with Hutcheon's poetics of postmodernism. McHale's theory states that 'dominant' component of modernism is 'epistemological' whereas that of postmodernism is 'ontological'. Two kinds of reading practices 'paranoid

reading' and 'conjecture' are critically examined.

Chapter Two, *Early postmodern fiction: Beckett, Borges and Burroughs* discusses the mentioned novelists. They are anti-realists and may be considered key-transitional figures between modern and postmodern fiction.

Chapter Three, *US metafiction: Coover, Barth, Nabokov, Vonnegut, Pynchon*, explores the terms such as metafiction, metanarrative, paratext, intertextuality and so on. It then takes into account the representative novels of these writers and discusses myth, fairytale and fantasy in their works. The writer explains how the reader also plays the role of co-creator of a text. He conjectures rather than interprets the rhizomatic narrative structure of postmodern fiction.

Chapter Four, *The postmodern historical novel: Fowles, Barnes, Swift* differentiates radical metafiction from historiographic metafiction.

Chapter Five *Postmodern-postcolonial fiction* explores postmodern strategies employed by postcolonial writers. The conventions of the Indian narrative traditions are often blended with western genre of the Bildungsroman in postcolonialist texts. The notion of single authoritative viewpoint is challenged in both postmodern and postcolonial writings. In this chapter Bran Nicol discusses Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's children*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*.

Chapter Six, *Postmodern fiction by women: Carter, Atwood, Acker* begins with discussion on several prominent feminist and cultural theorists like Sandra Harding, Sabina Loviband, Meagham Morris, Spivak, Irigaray and so on. The three fictionists clubbed in this chapter draw matter from literary and cultural myths that shape their contemporary culture and use postmodern aesthetic strategies in their writings.

Chapter Seven, *Two postmodern genres: Cyberpunk and 'metaphysical' detective fiction* assesses how postmodern fiction encompasses science fiction and detective fiction within itself. Science Fiction offers an alternative to realism. Writers like, Burroughs, Vonnegut, Atwood and Acker explore what is directly unrepresentable in fiction through creation of virtual space like, space colonies, space-stations, subterranean cities. The term cyber-punk and its origins along with example of novel, *Neuromancer* by William Gibson is also assessed. In detective genre, Nicol discusses Borge's *Death and the Compass* and Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, Paul Austen's *City of Glass*.

Chapter Eight, *Fiction of the postmodern condition: Ballard, De lillo, Ellis* is the final chapter of the book. In this chapter the works of three post-war writers are investigated. The chapter deals with the way the ever advancing and expanding technology has intruded our culture and changed the world from real. Bran concludes, 'postmodern fiction reminds readers of the nature of fictionality and causes them to reflect upon the process of deriving the meaning from narrative.'(185)



The Queen of Kittur, By Basavaraj Naikar, Authors Press, New Delhi, 2009. Pp.310. Rs. 300. | Dr. R.S.Chulki, Visiting Professor of English, S.B. Post Graduate College, Bijapur 586 103 (Karnataka)

This is a great historical novel dealing with the biography of Rani Chennamma from her birth to death. After the death of her husband, Raja Mallasarja, she became the powerful ruler of the Kingdom of Kittur and rebelled against the East India Company that wanted to conquer entire India. The first part of the novel describes her bravery and patriotism when she fought against J.M.Thackeray, the Collector of Dharwad and killed him. In the second part, though it is not divided into two parts, she fought against Mr. Chaplin, who left Bombay for Belgaum on 17th Nov 1824, with a firm decision to annex Kittur Kingdom after defeating Rani Chennamma.

Rani Chennamma had five great and admirable qualities of head and heart. Her nobility is shown when she gave ten thousand rupees to Saidansab to reconstruct a mosque. Her magnanimity is shown when she treated the Christian prisoners of war, saying, "These innocent women and children are like our own sisters and children" (P.146). She showed her political sagacity when she said, "We are free to manage our own kingdom the way we like. Our treaty with Munro says that" (P.91). Her humanity can be seen when she released two British captives, Mr. Elliot and Mr. Stevenson, whom she never ill-treated as enemies. She showed her equanimity of mind when she was kept as a prisoner in her own palace and also in the Bailhongal jail afterwards.

The greatest quality of Chennamma was that she was a great patriot and heroic in her struggle, which is shown in her speeches. She said to the warriors of Kittur, "The Kittur kingdom is your and you are the kingdom. Is there anything more honourable than a heroic death on the battlefield?" (P.232), "Our choice is only between freedom and heroic death on the battlefield" (P.246), "Please remember that I am not a coward, though born a woman... whatever happens to you will happen to me" (P.263). Then she is depicted as the greatest heroine whose name will shine like a star among the great queens of India. Mr. Eden, the Acting Political Agent, after the demise of Thackeray, admired Chennamma's bravery, in spite of her being the enemy of the Company Government (P.203). Even Thackeray himself had admitted saying, "This Rani seems to be a thorough gentle lady" (P.147). On 5th December 1824, Mr. Chaplin, who was ecstatic about his victory over the Rani of Kittur, frankly confessed, "Rani Saheb, though we have fought against you, we have great respect for you. You have done your duty as a true patriot" (P.273).

Though she had a big army of 3000 horsemen, 2000 camels and about a hundred elephants, 36 cannons and 56 guns, she was defeated in the war. There were three obvious reasons for her defeat and downfall. First of all, she could not get any help and support from the Raja of Kolhapur. Secondly she was betrayed by her own selfish and treacherous man, Sivabasappa, who had adulterated the gunpowder with cow dung and grains of millet, which made the guns defunct at the most crucial time. Thirdly the Company army, which surrounded Kittur Fort from three directions, was several times bigger and better equipped with modern weapons of war.

The revengeful and ambitious Chaplin ordered the captains and his soldiers

to give capital punishment to the prominent rebels and warriors of Kittur like Sardar Gurusiddhappa and others. He ordered for the demolishing of the main portion of the palace and the fort of Kittur so that the name of Kittur kingdom should be obliterated from the minds of people. The glory and grandeur of the kingdom was crushed down. It seemed that the sun was setting eternally on the Kittur kingdom (P.261). But it is an undisputed fact that Rani Chennamma sowed the seeds of 'Patriotism and Freedom', which sprouted afterwards.

It is a highly absorbing historical novel, in which the author has neither distorted the facts, nor exaggerated them. Neither has he suppressed the truth, nor has he sacrificed it for the sake of convenience. In every historical novel there must be a proportionate fusion of facts and fiction. The author is not allowed to take liberties with the recorded events. At the most he can reconstruct the past and interpret it by filling the gaps logically and artistically. As there is no scope for the free play of imagination, he can create minor or functional characters to bring out the truth of history. It is a work of art, not rewriting the history. The author's artistic part will be in the blending of the realistic with the fantastic. The exact dates, months and years of hectic political activities, wars and deaths, manners and morals of the kings, queens and common people must make us think, feel and see the past before our mind's eye. The letters written by the British Political Agents and others confirm the authenticity of the novel. Generally what the historians sum up in three pages Dr. Basavaraj Naikar has described vividly in three hundred pages. Nothing is tedious or monotonous in the novel. As it is not divided into chapters, the novel has swift continuity and flow till it reaches the final disaster. Several Virasaiva technical terms, Kannada and Sanskrit words like *vibhuti*, *istalinga*, *dasoha*, *tirtha*, *prasada*, *puja*, etc., create the local colour and atmosphere successfully. The language is racy and effective. Somehow, some misprints have crept in, but they could be avoided in the future reprints of the novel. Indians depend heavily and rely on British historians, who were partial in the writing of history, but here Dr. Basavaraj Naikar has viewed and re-written from the Indian point of view showing the greatness of Rani Chennamma, who is praised even by the British Captains and Commanders of the East India Company. Much of what he has recorded may not be original, but the presentation of facts is new. In spite of our best efforts to know the truth much of history remains a mystery. As a creative writer Naikar has injected life into the moth-eaten records and has infused blood and life into all the characters, both major and minor. He can easily transport the readers to the concerned time of history. The portrait of Rani Chennamma on the galloping horseback, with a sword in one hand and a shield in the other, on the cover page, can inspire the people and arouse patriotism even in the dull souls, even today.

By writing this novel the author has immortalized Rani Chennamma, the Queen of Kittur, and in turn, he is immortalized by the novel. It is not merely a great achievement, but a solid contribution to Indian English Literature. No other Indian novelist can ever dare write such another.

The novel deserves to be prescribed as a text-book at the graduate level, in all the Universities of Karnataka State.



Sudha Murty: *Gently Falls the Bakula* (Penguin Book, 2008, Rs. 150)

Review By : Anju Bala Agrawal, Reader, Dept. Of English, R.C.A. Girls' P.G. College, Mathura

Sudha Murthy is a well-known name in literary circles. Apart from being the wife of N R Narayan Murthy, the legendary software entrepreneur who founded Infosys, Mrs. Murthy has created an identity of her own as a writer. The novel, *Gently falls the Bakula* was written more than three decades ago. In fact it was Sudha Murthy's first Kannada novel. It was translated and published in English in 2008 by Penguin.

The story is about a bright young man and a girl, who know each other from their school-days. In fact, they are class mates and both have broken record in the Bangalore SSLC Board as Shrimati stands first and Shrikant stands second. In the beginning, Shrikant is not happy as Shrimati has proved herself better than him. Soon after the rejoicings of success, they meet in the train going to their relatives. During this journey, they get a chance to know each other and promise to become friends. They decide to meet under the Bakula tree. Though, they are neighbours, their families are always in feud. After High school, Shrikant takes admission in Science College. He graduates from IIT-Bombay and joins a software firm. Shrimati who is extremely brilliant, chooses history which is uncommon for a bright student, but achieves her best in it. Their friendship continues and they fall in love. At the end of her masters, Shrimati drops her career interests and chooses to be a wife of Srikant. Srikant's mother, who is a greedy woman, is in search of a rich bride but Shrikant is interested in Shrimati, so they get married in spite of a family feud. They come to Bombay.

In the beginning, Shrimati manages her house and lives at home. After a year, she feels bore and wants to pursue her studies, but a letter from her mother-in-law spoils all her plans. Like a villain of a Bollywood movie, she writes to Shrikant to return which she had taken as a loan for his studies. In fact it is a trick to tease Shrimati. Shrimati as a faithful wife decides to work to pay the loan and thus shatters her plans of studies. In spite of all this everything appears rosy to her in the beginning. Later she feels like a bird in a golden cage when Srikant for his career interests ignores her and more so mocks at her skill in history as a useless knowledge. But she not only endures but also encourages him in his career for a long time. After almost half a decade of marriage, she realizes that her husband has become too focused on his career and has no place for family matters or to think about her. Eventually, she takes a decision that leaves their family life shattered. One fine day decides to end her endurance and moves out to take care of her life and interests.

Shrikant is so workaholic. He is not much interested in giving the blessing of motherhood to Shrimati. He does not want to adopt a child nor is he interested in taking any medical treatment. His mother Gangakka leaves no chance to insult and torture her daughter in-law. Shrimati is not feminist but she has not been able to make herself a machine like Shrikant. Besides she is not overambitious. She merges her identity with that of Shrikant. She easily manages his house and other affairs so he is touching the heights. Even his friends know that he is successful only because of Shrimati. He does not understand the "sacrifice" of Shrimati who inspite of being sharper than him, leaves her career pursuits. For him, there is no limit. He does not understand the emptiness which is in the life of Shrimati. This is a picture of today's