

THE CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY FROM MYTH IN ALLAN SEALY'S *THE EVEREST HOTEL* AND *THE BRAINFEVER BIRD*

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ABSTRACT

Sealy's novels TEH and TBB blend myth in a subtle manner and deal with contemporary reality at various levels, providing a new dimension to storytelling. TEH revolves around cyclic mythical design and also the use of myth is relevant to the total conceit of the narrative and therefore, it is structural. According to Meenakshi Mukerjee in her work *Twice Born Fiction*, there are two distinct ways in which myths have been used in Indo-Anglican novels as part of a digressional technique and as structural parallels, where a mythical situation underlies the whole or part of a novel. Sealy in the interview by Padmanabhan explains that the structure of TEH that the novel starts in summer, goes through the seasons and ends in summer to preserve the unity. The action mirrors the season in which it is taking place. The narrative hinges on nature and action at a fairly significant interface. The myth of seasons abounds in literature as it is closely linked to human life. Sealy as an Indian author exhibits his fidelity to the indigenous traditions and beliefs.

Key words: myths - seasons – journey – reality - storytelling – narrative - structural parallel

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Myths are generated out of conflicts born of compulsive impulses to explicate the unknown phenomenon. When reality defies everything from simple phenomena to imaginative thinking, we find refuge in the supernatural to mend the gaps. Mystification of facts serves a meaningful purpose; mingling myth and fact is a natural process of observation and reflection and a device of characterization. Frye states the reason for a writer's obsession with myths in his *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology*, "Myths, along with folk tales and legends,... provide abstract story patterns: Writers are interested in (them) for the same reason that painters are interested in still-life arrangements because they illustrate essential principles of storytelling" (qtd. in Mukherjee, *Twice Born Fiction* 30).

Sealy's novels TEH and TBB blend myth in a subtle manner and deal with contemporary reality at various levels, providing a new dimension to storytelling. TEH revolves around cyclic mythical design and also the use of myth is relevant to the total conceit of the narrative and therefore, it is structural. According to Meenakshi Mukerjee in her work *Twice Born Fiction*, there are two distinct ways in which myths have been used in Indo-Anglican novels as part of a digressional technique and as structural parallels, where a mythical situation underlies the whole or part of a novel. Sealy in the interview by Padmanabhan explains that the structure of TEH that the novel starts in summer, goes through the seasons and ends in summer to preserve the unity. The action mirrors the season in which it is taking place. The narrative hinges on nature and action at a fairly significant interface. Sealy's point is validated by Chandra Rajan's introduction to Kalidasa's *Ritusamhara*:

Man and nature together celebrate a joyous festival of love and grieve together in sorrow. In Indian thought, a sharp line is not drawn between the worlds of man and nature. The universe is one ordered 'whole' of which man is a part. Imbued with the spirit that is transcendent and immanent, the same life-giving essence that is in man circulates in every part of it. The propelling force, therefore

in Kalidasa's poetry, is to see nature not as a setting for man and a backdrop to the human drama, but to perceive it as possessing a life of its own and as related to the world in many complex ways. (Rajan 40)

Sealy has acknowledged that *Ritusamhara* in which the poetry of the seasons is the essence, set the calendrical tempo to *The Everest Hotel*, and it is judiciously subtitled as "A calendar". The *Baramasa* is divided into sections, which have been assigned the ancient names of the months. The chapters in the novel are not numbered but each of the divisions is named after a month. A brief, at times a long description of the characteristics of the seasons is described and also a quick glance of the events that are to follow. The author takes care to give the English equivalent of the Sanskrit month.

Sealy has based his novel on *Ritusamhara*, the lesser-known work of Kalidasa. The influence of Kalidasa can be identified in every detail. Chandra Rajan in her translation of the works of Mahakavi (great poet) *Kalidasa: The Loom of Time* details that the pattern of the poem is interesting and intricate. A canto is dedicated to each season and the sentiment it evokes in the natural and human worlds is carved in its finest detail. Each canto is singled out as a self-contained unit, opening with the traditional announcement of the theme and closing with a blessing. The title, *Ritusamharam, or Gathering of the Seasons*, weaves the poem into one whole. The title holds a significance that is unraveled in the course of the work. The New Year begins with spring around the vernal equinox. The poem starts with summer and ends with spring, an auspicious time, for spring is renewal. The opening stanzas of summer set the framework of the poem. A pair of lovers is visualized, and then the picture moves out of the narrow world of the lovers into the larger worlds of other lovers. The poem ends where it began, to the lovers as well as the readers. In the closing stanza the narrator recapitulates the beauty and assets of the season and invokes blessings on the audience and the beloved:

The form of each canto and the poem as a whole is also circular; circles wheeling within a circle imaging the circling year into which the seasons are gathered. As Time is cyclic in Indian thought, it is rewarding to see the poem and read it as a celebration of Time itself in its endless circling procession of nights and days, of seasons, of

worlds born, dissolved and born again, until the end of time. The rhythms of the human and natural worlds image the cosmic rhythms... (Rajan 43)

Mukherjee in *Realism and Reality* observes that according to Mircea Eliade, mythic time of a pre-modern culture is cyclic, in which the same primordial drama is continually re-enacted; whereas historical time of modern man is linear, tracing in an irrevocable progression the events from the past passing on to the present future. (Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality* 39)

The seasons are portrayed not merely for delight but they gain more importance as archetypal myths that are in turn associated with four seasons. Northrop Frye in his 'Anatomy of Criticism' suggests the respective genres for the four seasons: 1. Comedy-Spring 2. Romance-Summer 3. Tragedy-Fall and 4. Irony-Winter. *The Everest Hotel* can be read at various levels as a romance, tragedy, and even as ironic since it yields itself to be one such form and yet it is not unrelated. It is whole and complete without any loose ends; TEH is all the three at the same time. In the author's words we come to understand that this novel differed from his earlier writings. The interviewer Mukund Padmanabhan observes that TEH is melancholic and despairing in the beginning but as it moves along, it is leavened by some light touches. Sealy too admits, "Yes, a hopeful note rather than a happy one" (Padmanabhan).

Bulbul Sharma, an artist and children's writer marvels at the beauty: "Never before has an Indian author of our time, painted such a vivid, joyous, powerful and heartrending picture of our ever changing seasons" (qtd. in Behal, 'What caught the eye ...'). According to Theodore Baskaran along with English language we have also borrowed the four-fold classification of seasons of that part of the world, which has little relevance to the seasons here. He lists out the six-fold classifications from the hundred years old Tamil tradition, which can be compared to the Sanskrit calendar. "This nomenclature renders our climate with a lot more meaning and acceptability" (Baskaran).

SEASONS	TAMIL-MONTH	ENGLISH- MONTH
Ilavenil	Chithirai-Vaikasi	April-May
Mudhuvenil	Ani-Aadi	June-July
Kaar	Avani-Puratasi	August-September
Koodhir	Aippasi-Karthigai	October-November
Munpani	Markazhi-Thai	December-January
Pinpani	Masi-Panguni	February-March

The seasons in TEH is categorically compared to the Gregorian calendar:

SEASONS	SANSKRIT-MONTH	ENGLISH-MONTH
SUMMER	Jeth	May-June
	Asadh	June-July
	Sawan	July-August
	Bhadon	August-September
AUTUMN	Kuar	September-October
	Karthik	October-November
FROST TIME	Aghan	December
WINTER	Push	January
SPRING	Phagun	February
	Chait	March
	Baisakh	April
	Jeth	May

The article by Baskaran ends with a wise comment that holds well in explaining the significance of seasons in TEH. He says: “I think we have to accept summer not because we cannot do otherwise but because of the delights it holds. And that goes for the seasons of our lives too” (Baskaran). Sealy believes in discovering within one’s own tradition and reinventing it and it is obvious that he chose to set the novel within the frame of Kalidasa’s lesser-known work. The moods and the events that recur are viewed as recurring in the life of human beings and the same idea has been captured in TEH. The pattern is identical in both Ritusamhara and TEH. It is considered as the seminal work of Baramasa form by Naveed Shazadh who synthesizes the work thus:

Summer, when the earth smoulders, is welcomed with ‘the days drawing to a close in quiet beauty, the tide of desire running to a close in quiet beauty, the tide of desire running low: scorching summer is here, my love’ (1.1). The monsoon season with its torrential rains, wreaking as much havoc as the drought in the previous months, is referred to as a time of ‘rivers swollen by a mass of turbid waters ... felling trees all round on their banks like unchaste women driven by passion-tilted fancies’ (2.2). Autumn is ‘enchanted, star-sprinkled, lit by a clear-rayed moon’ (8.22). While winter is ‘lit with ethereal beauty by many stars’, but ‘give no comfort or joy to people’ (5.4). The songs and seasons are sought in the curves of feminine anatomy and an exotic, erotic romanticism permeates the entire work. (Riaz xiv)

In the Song of Songs in the Bible, God is personified as the beloved and the human soul as hankering for the loved one. It is in the form of a passionate song and it spells longing and appears to be ancient ‘baramasa’ and a lamenting voice: My beloved speaks and says to me: “Arise, my love, my fair one, / and come away; /for lo, the winter is past, / the rain is over and gone” (Song of Songs 2:10-11). Ghulam Farriduddin Riaz too celebrates rural life in his Baramasa, the self same theme to which Riaz constantly refers to is, order and chaos; of peaceful days and vicious nights; of passion and yearnings of young women. He sets down in his introduction to the book that the reason for his choice was to give the writing a strong sense of

rural life, which greatly depends on the seasons, as it is primarily agricultural and moreover the ceremonies, the songs, the rhythms of daily life have a link with the weather forecasts made in terms of the future months and expectations of a plentiful harvest, prosperity and good times to come, “Promises about the future are made in terms of the months to follow and expectations of harvest, dreams of plenty, marriages, even the powerful surges and the quiescence of their physical and mental processes blossom and wither with the changing climate” (Riaz xi). The poet has attempted to capture these rhythms in the apparently insignificant events of everyday life. He describes the book as consisting of: “anecdotes about rural life, impressions, thoughts and characters. I will have succeeded if I have conveyed something of the hopes and dreams of the people of our beautiful land, and something of its sounds and smells” (Riaz xi).

There are several myths that we have come to regard as the truth about the rural areas but the reality is quite different. Riaz has made an attempt to decode the myth about the myth of rural life in his work. He is full of awe and admiration for the magnificent courage in the face of absolute deprivation:

For instance one widely held belief is that although there is considerable poverty it is not the kind of poverty that people generally associate with third world countries, especially those in Africa... The reality is that the countryside has been exploited in the most brutal manner by the more powerful elements in rural areas, as it has by the urban centers. (Riaz xi)

The myth of the seasons has evinced keen interest in the poets because of its causal link to the life of human beings in all ages. The genre of ‘barahmasa’ or twelve months is largely found in North Indian literature. Orsini defines barahmasa as, originally a folk form, written in most north Indian dialects. It was dear to the Hindi and Urdu poets both as a single form and as a part of longer poems. He comments:

People have always tended to think of the seasons differently for geography, context, temperament, and mood are constantly at play. There is no agreement even upon the number of seasons’ - spring, summer, autumn and winter. Here at home, the term most familiar

is shad-ritu, the 'six seasons' these being Vasanta, Grishma, Varsha, Sharad, Hemanta and Shishira.... (Goswami)

The seasonal myth has created interest not only in creative writing but also the translators seem to profess a new interest as Martha Ann Selby's work *The circle of seasons: A Selection from old Tamil, Prakrit and Sanskrit Poetry*. Thachom Poyil Rajeevan in his article 'Season-etched lines' is full of high praises for Selby:

The scheme the translator has chosen for organizing them is that of the Ritusamhara in which seasons are put in an order beginning with summer and ending with spring and obviously it is in spring that the Indian seasonal sketches begin. "And, this rearrangement of the conventional sequence is intended for adding to "the emotional continuity of the poems, their narrative tensions and suspense." Varnana, as exemplified in seasonal exposes in ancient Sanskrit and Prakrit or of space as conceptualized in tinai articulations in Tamil, in Indian poetics... a literary device to suggest the symbiosis between man, time and nature by associating each with the other at a deeper level of meaning and experience. "A generic way of thinking about time, and, impliedly, of space too, "articulated in transgeneric fashion", says the translator. (Rajeevan)

Selby has captured the seasonal sketches in their right perspective without losing its original flavour and the intention of the writer in her translation than any other native translator says Rajeevan:

It is, to all intents and purposes, the human desire, angst, desolation, the agony of separation and the joy of reunion; that is, life's all and varied experiential and emotional phases that displace onto the burning forests, rumbling clouds, dewy mountains, harsh deserts and flowering trees. Whether it is eroticism as in "In autumn/ thirsty travelers drink/ at the lake's clear waters/ spiced with the essence of

blue lotuses/ as if sipping from the faces/ of their darling” (“Autumn”, Gathasaptasati)’ or didacticism as in “Fabulous riches to a miser/ are useless/ as his own shadow to a traveler, / grilled to a turn by summer’s heat” (“Summer”, Gathasaptasati) or just a catchy stroke like “Flowing downhill,/ the pale, new water meanders,/ full of grass, dust, and insects,/ and as it crawls along its crooked path,/ startled frogs take it for a snake” (“Rains”, Ritusamhara), the seasons and landscapes function as stimulative or reflective determinants for responsive aesthetic flavour and meaning production...

They signify a corresponding space without obviously referring to it, but by passing onto it silently, which is elemental to all poetic expressions, for, “poeticisation of time is what makes time tangible and human”. (Rajeevan)

According to Goswamy Kalidasa’s *Ritusamhara* is rich in sound and image, and has the tinge of the colours of the tropical land, renewal of the rains, the golden plenitude of autumn and the glitter of the cold winter. The poets are obsessed with seasons because nature reflects the state of the mind, almost becoming a mirror picturing the inner workings of the mind. Vijay Nambisan also shares the same opinion in his article, ‘The Snows of YesterYears’. For him the seasons are an ‘aide-memoire’, just like the calendars. The philosophy drawn from the seasonal changes promise immortality. As the people shift to places in particular seasons, especially summer, there is also hope for transience. With a tongue in cheek humour, he points out that the poets are absent-minded and that is why they describe the seasons so as not to forget them. The birds are more susceptible to seasonal changes for they migrate to places during inclement weather and return when the situations change.

Sealy on his part also exemplifies the seasonal myth. The novel TEH is rendered from the point of view of Ritu, the central character. She is a Christian nun and her name is not so much a Christian name, but probably a variant of Rita, the proverbial Christian name. The

name itself is an echo of Kalidasa's work and also the main character is christened with an Indian name. Ritu in Sanskrit means fixed time, the fit or proper season, time appointed for any action. Another eccentric character around which the narrative revolves is named Jed or the aberrant or anglicisation of Jeth. It is the first month in which the novel begins, Jeth "brings the first gusting of hot winds" (TEH 15) and also the novel ends in the same month with a sense of nostalgia "when the frost was intact and there were groves and orchards besides..." (TEH 301). Only the name of the Superior Sr.Cecilia is very much a Christian name and she also stands apart due to her strict adherence to rules and regulations.

Summer marks the arrival of Ritu to Everest and she engages herself in attending to Jed who is the owner of the place. The rains bring about a change in the life of Brij and Ritu who fall in love with each other. The kite snaps and drifts along signifying Ritu's heart that goes out and it is no more under her control. She decides that she should leave her sisterhood. The situation gets complicated and uncertain, "Here is the real monsoon. Then why is it so flat, unstoried? Her spirit goes trekking across terraces of washed air, longs to be shared by beauty, by some grace it hasn't yet known, but keeps returning to that moment when the kite string breaks" (TEH 130).

Ritu stays away from attending Jed for fear of having to encounter Brij after realizing his love for him. The autumn brings "new ripenesses" (TEH 135) and the inmates of Everest are delighted enquiring each other, "smell the rice?" (TEH 135) Everyday Brij comes to visit Jed, but Ritu doesn't appear. There's a newcomer whose arrival gives a new twist to the story. Inge, the German girl comes in search of her uncle's cemetery to Drummondganj. Brij helps her to renovate it with red stone and she begins "to admire his casual approach to everything, even the politics that sometimes exercise him". (TEH 168) Brij is trapped by Inge and Ritu, who estranged herself, feels sorry that she kept aloof from him, "She can hardly bear it. Let them go. Let them all go. Leave her alone. Custody of the self". (TEH 184)

The winter sets in and mystery builds around the death of Inge and suspicion lights on everyone in and around Everest. The dead season has earned one more and "Everest the cemetery is one body richer" (TEH 251). Ritu finds a little girl abandoned during spring blossoms and there is promise of new life with the arrival of the girl, "It's the opposite of death. She's come out of nowhere fully formed. A magic mushroom, a button, sealed and

perfect” (TEH 270). Summer is back again; the wheel has come full circle. Ritu decides that the child needs a mother, not mothering” (TEH 304). Ritu decides to leave the convent with Masha, the little girl. The past events flicker before her, especially her brief encounter with Brij, and now he is no more, as his plans of bombing the dam failed and he became the victim.

Ritu decides to become the guardian of the child even if she cannot adopt, which is figuratively described by the author: “A creeper has sprung up at her workroom window, its tendrils looking for a neck to throttle” (TEH 321). Ritu forgives Brij in spite of his previous affair with Inge and she is ready to leave her sisterhood. If only he says he needs her, she would remain but unable to voice out her thoughts, she abruptly leaves the place and he in turn wishes her to speak out. They part ways as their love cannot materialize in the given social context and their personal ego hinders them from revealing their love that is embedded in their hearts.

The Everest Hotel is described as an elaborate song of the seasons reminding us that the poetry of the earth is never dead, be it spring or summer, autumn or winter, the minute observation of the myriad form of life, the falling of the first drop of rain on parched earth, or the crunch of dry autumnal leaves underfoot, or the slightest shine of a blade of grass as soft as an infant’s breath. Bulbul Sharma has aptly praised the narrative calling it a painting. “Nature follows the storyline, playing hide and seek, all the time dressed in all its finery. This is what I found most amazing and wonderful”. (qtd. in Behal, ‘What caught the eye ...’) The reader can almost live the seasons and experience nature mingling with life’s onward journey.

In both the novels Sealy has intertwined myths very neatly and it can be unearthed with surgical precision. Some of the myths which are interwoven are the seasons, journey, wise old man, angry young man, archetypal woman and so on. He dwells briefly on the journey motif in TEH, which starts with the journey of sister Ritu. In the same way she ends the journey but this time accompanied by the little girl Masha. Mukherjee’s comment about the scope of the journey in the novel *Indira* by Bankim Chandra can be applied also in this context, “A journey is a specially significant experience for a woman who normally inhabits an enclosed space. The mobility and the freedom of the road liberate her for a short period from the inhibitive social structure” (Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality* 76).

The journey motif is symbolic of the life of Ritu. Sealy draws a symmetrical pattern of the onward and return journey. The twists and turns life can take is symbolized through the twists and turns that the train winds through in the beginning and in the end. The landscape is also metaphoric of the uncertainty of Ritu's destiny in life, for the town is neither of the plains nor of the hills and Ritu seated by the window seat watches the branch line which glides under the track making three and vanishes dispatched to the other side can be figuratively compared to her life branching out and taking a turn from sisterhood to a single life. She misses her suitcase on her arrival in the confusion of the strike for a separate state – Varunachal, an anagram of Arunachal and she is caught in the same situation when she departs from Drummondganj which indicates that she has to keep pace with the rhythm of life and regrets, “this is not the crisis on which her life must hinge, surely” (TEH 24).

The journey motif seems to be the favourite leitmotif of litterateurs. Shazad in his introduction to Riaz comments: “The Painstaking journey from the cacophony of city sounds to the relative silence of the ‘insider’; viewing with distrust the alienation imposed upon him by physical and intellectual distances” (Riaz xviii). Contemporary writers in their reviews have captured this interest. Jayanta Mahapatra recalls the Sri Lankan poet, Siri Gunasinghe who speaks of “a long journey, / a grief-filled journey.” And that journey progresses “from darkness to darkness.” Rachel Brooks analyses the journey motif in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*. “The main characters undertake a physical journey which is representative of the psychological journey. Each stage of the journey is correlated to an emotional insight, and the implications are great enough to incur a change in the protagonists' lives” (Brooks). The discovery of alien lands stirs them to journey inwardly and finds solutions for their problems. In spite of the ordeals and direction from different guiding forces they come to experience immense self-awareness at the end of their journey:

... Marlow ... is inspired to examine the European notion of colonialism and the African people that it is affecting. For Jasmine, her westward journey becomes the catalyst for many new transformations. ... the ambiguity of Heart of Darkness and Jasmine accurately reflects the fluid and unpredictable nature of our own

existence, and the adversity we must surmount in our journey through life". (Brooks)

Mukherjee observes that robberies serve as a fictional device and sets the action in motion and also the situation forms a part of the plot. The journey is fraught with dangerous hazards as highway robberies are a common recurrence. She also remarks that to this day it is part of the legends and nursery rhymes and a realistic reflection of life. The woman who undergoes such agony is left to fend for herself, stripped of the "protective social crust and seeing her as an individual, unsupported by the props of the family, class and caste" (Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality* 77).

According to Don Helder Camara: "... Setting out means to get moving and to help many others to get moving to make the world more just and more human" (qtd. in Discover New Horizons 28). Ritu leaves the convent taking Masha the little girl to be her guardian, for she cannot adopt the child:

In the distance, the mountains, a blue wall, retreating. She is leaving them behind. Checks in her bag for the tickets, spies the scallop shell he gave her. Takes it out, looks up again at the mountains. The dam is up there somewhere. Where? She is clutching the shell so hard the frilled edges bites into her palm, parting skin. For a moment the whole range splits open, lights pouting through a crack in the wall... Her eyes say, my love, and then, my dear love. (TEH 330)

Only at the end of the novel Ritu acknowledges her love for Brij, which she had been so far resisting. It is true that as she embarks on a journey outward she comes to the center of her own existence. She sees a row of women filing past balancing head loads of firewood as if each one is balancing her whole life. Ritu has to sacrifice her ideas of life dedicated to a single purpose of mothering the child, which will ennoble it. She is one with the women who shoulder the burden and are content to be insignificant as they are. The woman doing the balancing act is symbolic of her destiny. "Where we had thought to travel outward, we will

come to the center of our own existence. And where we had thought to be alone, we will be with all the world” (Hart 1).

Joseph Campbell, the noted authority on mythology outlines that the hero’s journey consists of three parts - the departure, the initiation, and the return. Further he enlists another characteristic, that of the mentor or guide who instills confidence and also guidance. “The mentor may be one who has been down the hero-path in the past and now offers wisdom from that experience” (Hart 3). Jed in TEH is the singular mentor who ennobles Ritu to come to terms with her own self in her onward journey. From the moment he puts her to test by forbidding her not to look at the book with a green spine which in fact has the picture of a man and woman coupling, and inquiring whether she did take a peep or not. Immanuel Jed, the landlord of the Everest Hotel can be identified as ‘the wise old man’. “The young, the ignorant and the corrupt require the guidance of some “wise old man” who also would have the power of preventing them from losing their moral blessings" (Aronson 272). Sr.Cecilia consults him about all the important matters and nothing escapes his notice. Even though he is confined to his room yet he rules the Everest as the Lord of Drummondganj:

“How are things down there?”

‘Not bad.’

‘My subjects behaving? No sedition in the ranks?’

“No.” (TEH 291)

All the characters are linked to Jed in one way or another. Jed is the mentor, a mute witness to the love affair of Brij and Ritu. Jed is portrayed as a stubborn, self-willed, determined old man with his varied interests in books and gardening. He possesses immense knowledge on diverse subjects and everyone looks up to him as the divine authority. In spite of being an invalid he rules the entire Everest. Brij simply admits that he was attracted to Jed because he is famous and can get on well with everyone. He discusses with him about the upcoming dam, which thwarts the life of the people. Brij takes down the dictations of the books. Jed considers him as a son and feels hurt when he doesn’t visit him. Jed authors several books and one of them is *The Drummondganj Book of the Dead*. For Ritu he appears as a

demented prophet, she becomes conscious of a presence materializing from above. Sr.Cecilia would take his advice on Everest matters and she finds him perfectly sane when he wants; other days he talks nonsense from beginning to end. She is so obsessed with him that when he is supposed to be dead she tries to make a wax model of him. Even at the age of ninety he is so sexually energetic that he tries to seduce Inge. Jed is described as the youthful Mangalorean, great climber, trickster, and a giant with treble voice and also the honorary secretary of the Drummondganj cemetery.

Brij is the angry young man who cannot tolerate the plains people making laws for the hill people and so he feels that their demand for a hill state is just to take control of their lives. There is a real reason for Brij to be angry, causes for which he can heroically fight, especially the destructive dam. His youthful energy is not channelized into constructive streams. Osborne created the memorable 'angry young man' in his famous play *Look Back in Anger*. His mythical character Jimmy Porter's anger merely degenerates into emotions dangerously perverted but Brij fights for a cause. Yet due to miscalculations about bombing the dam, he loses his life. Brij can be identified as the sacrificial hero who must die to atone for the people's sins and restore the land to fruitfulness and on whom depend the welfare of the nation.

Following the newspaper report about the dam blast and Brij's tragic death, Jed reminisces about his love for him as a son and Ritu's love for him and how he willed that it should happen and that he had been a mute witness to their romance. Jed endearingly used to call Brij as Nachiketa. As per the myth, Nachiketa was a prince who went to meet the God of death and was granted the three boons. The third boon was a secret of death and in turn Yamaraja advises him to ask for immortality, jewels or heavenly women. Jed always refers to Brij as Nachiketa to Ritu and she feels that it was "to draw her into the cast. As if there was a role for her there. Heavenly women" (TEH 130) and he also seems to know that the two had experienced an emotional intimacy as they were flying the kite and inquired innocently, "Did you go with the kite?"(TEH 131). Ritu aware of that intense moment could only nod, a slow preoccupied nod soon after which actually Brij happens to come there and he throws his arms around Ritu and kisses her and though she's aware of the wrongness of the act allows herself to be held and kissed and also reciprocates the act.

Ritu feels ashamed and realizes the complication, uncertainty, after this physical encounter but on second thought shakes herself off from the bitter knowledge of it and decides to avoid him. Proverbially in the journey the guide goes the way only so far, the hero has to face the world on his own. After several trials comes the “Supreme ordeal” according to Campbell and which paves the way for transformation. The initiation into a new realm takes place, “The agony of breaking through personal limitations is the agony of spiritual growth ... finally, the mind breaks the bounding sphere of the cosmos to a realization transcending all experiences of form-all symbolization, all divinities: a realization of the ineluctable void. (qtd. in Hart 4)

Ritu exchanges her job with Tsering and no more she will have to go to Jed’s room to take care of him and also she can easily avoid meeting Brij over there. “Ritu’s load is lightened by the passing” (TEH 157). Ritu and Neha visit the village and the leprosy patient’s colony and come across women who carry head loads of coppiced firewood, and come to know that Trees are cut illegally and sold by the MLA, PyareLal. Ritu encourages them to join the Chipko movement and boldly photographs the trucks and the women. On her visit to the colony the man whom she photographed, attacks her but a distant cry stops the assailant. The women of the colony give her first aid and save her from a disastrous end. TEH starts with the journey of sister Ritu and ends with the journey but this time accompanied by the little girl Masha. The journey motif is symbolic of the life of Ritu.

The journey motif is couched in a metaphorical language in the very first lines of the Prologue to the novel: “Youth is a country. I used to live there. The inhabitants are determined to emigrate, exiles long to return” (TBB 1). For Lev in TBB the journey takes the form of the quest, for he is more a wanderer, separated from one’s culture, in search of the substantial than the hypocritical, in exchange for the materialistic society he has rejected. Lev departs from Russia with a suitcase of biological weapons and arrives in Delhi with a master plan to unleash terror in the city but his plans turn berserk after his suitcase is stolen and he meets Maya, the illusionist as her name signifies and who is waiting to meet the right man. They fall in love and unmindful of the Damocles’ sword that hangs above his head he pursues his affair. Lev seems to be unmindful of his past life, his wife and son in Petersburg. Setting aside his original plans to cause havoc, his journey can be assumed as a quest for a meaning in life even if it

means it is short lived. He is ready to stake everything for that one pleasurable moment when he is the lord of his life. He does not bother much about the loss of the secrets but peacefully goes about making new relationships. He is thoroughly callous about his dangerous mission and simply enjoys his life as a tourist exploring an unknown land. He enjoys life in the company of Maya, Morgan and Laiq. The people are affected by plague and he, the foreigner, is suspected as the 'plague master'. Lev is actually innocent of the plague that breaks out and takes its toll, since the suitcase containing the bioweapon was stolen.

Someone who has lost his dear one takes his revenge on Lev, suspecting him to be the cause of the tragedy, throws acid on his face. In the midst of his treatment he mysteriously disappears from the hospital. None expects his arrival and departure though Maya misses him initially but learns to live on taking Morgan as her partner. On his return he finds that his wife has left him and learns to accept her infidelity on account of his own unfaithfulness.

In the women portraits of R.K Narayan the myths of the past can be identified but the author very cleverly diverts from the mythical representation as they are only ideal representations and not real. He is supposed to be aware of the ideals of Indian womanhood and that it is irrelevant in the present context for "... women in India face the dilemma of the choice between the old and the new traditionalism and western modernism... Narayan depicts this clash and tension between the myth of the past and reality of today" (Trivedi 39). Maya is unmindful of the marital bond and continues to have affairs with Lev and Morgan without any qualms. She rejects all custom and tradition as unnecessary and worthless whereas traditional women consider it as a taboo and the worst blunder any woman can make, given the social restraints.

An ordinary woman generally does not misbehave so she must be someone "extraordinary" as Mr.Jain, father of Maya describes her. But Sealy has ventured to present the single mother concept which seems to suggest that women have to strive courageously to go against the current in this regard. Ritu and Maya remain as single mothers in spite of the opposition and they are ready to face the challenges, criticism and hardship in defending life. Sr.Cecilia even poses the problem that "A child needs a father'..." (TEH 307). Ritu is well aware that even her father won't approve of it but she decides to get a job and settle down with

the child. Maya on her part is worried about the future of the child. “What will happen to Masha? She was my gift to Morgan... One day at a time. What else?” (TBB 358).

Sealy has interlinked the two cities Delhi and Moscow by ascribing the symbolic colours. “The master puppeteers of the north stipulate that the two sides of a stage shall not be of the same colour. By antique tradition if one side is black, the other is white, if one is blue the other is yellow. In the present story the colours are red and white (TBB 3). Sealy names Lev as the white puppet who comes from a land which defies the ordinary man. On the contrary he presents Maya as the red puppet belonging to the country which has never defied the ordinary woman. The sandwich arrangement of TBB narrative shifts between white city, red city and white city.

In the mythical tradition red is the colour of fire, blood, sacrifice, violent passion and disorder. White signifies light, purity, innocence, timelessness, moderation and in its negative aspects, death, and terror. Whether Sealy means the negative or the positive aspects of the colours is left to the decision of the reader. Russia shackled by communism is generally identified with the violent red and India the secular nation bears the white, the colour of peace in the centre of its tricolor flag. The movement from myth to reality in both the novels can be delineated as:

Mythical expressions of archetypal experience are transformed into “Conscious formulas”; even in such forms, however they provide clues to unconscious experience, and they open an avenue through which man may return to what Jung believes is not only an older but a deeper level of reality”. (Feder 50)

Our burdens have to be light for a smooth journey for which we need to unburden ourselves of the unnecessary. The spiritual journey is not free of the hazards and also of the disappointment. The results of the arduous journey can be very satisfying if there is greater commitment and perseverance. The impossible and the possible alternate and commingle to pave the way for a deeper exploration of the mystifying myth and the pertinent reality within the focus of the two novels. Mukherjee rightly comments that:

The conscious use of myth for enhancing the effect of a contemporary situation is a device that the Indian novelist has emulated from the west but has naturalised it to the Indian soil. A world view is required to make literature meaningful in terms of shared human experience, and the Indian epics offer the basis of such a common background which permeates the collective unconscious of the whole nation. As such the Indian writer gains greatly by basing his symbiology on this rich mythic material.
(Mukherjee, *Twice Born Fiction* 31)

The passage from Myth to Reality is brilliantly conceived by the conscious effort of the novelist to make relevant the imaginative and the fictitious through details that adhere to life through the realistic and factual reference. Mukherjee's comment is worth mentioning in this regard: "Reality peeps through the chinks of the marvelous, reminding us of tensions that created these novels. These novels are in turn reminders that a great deal of truth can be revealed by means of fiction and fantasy" (Mukherjee, *Twice Born Fiction* 67). Myth evokes interest in the reader as it readily provides solutions in the supernatural way or means, which are beyond the control of human beings whereas any problem of human interest in reality captures the attention.

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