CHARACTER IN THE INDIAN NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

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The Indian novel is a realistic genre adopted from the West. Though Indian literature dates back to ancient times, there was no novel in India until it was introduced by the British in the nineteenth century. Prior to the influx of Western ideas, there were obstacles that hindered the growth of the novel in India, foremost among which was the non-humanistic, a-historical orientation of Indian society fostered by Hinduism.

This non-humanistic, a-historical outlook produced didactic literary forms meant to be symbolic illustrations of ultimate reality. Among the established norms of the early Indian literary pieces based on this world-view is the presentation of divine, mythical, or noble characters to represent moral and ethical truths believed to be of timeless value. On the other hand, the humanistic, historical view of life that developed in the West more than a century before it reached the Indian sub-continent produced literary forms that are essentially mimetic

representations of the life of the common people in contemporary society.

Among these literary forms is the realistic novel, which was born in the West in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the non-humanistic, a-historical view of life had weakened and had gradually been replaced by the humanistic and historical; at that time medieval Christianity had given way to the humanistic movement which stressed the importance of the individual and his activities in the temporal world. Being the literary genre of a humanistic society, the realistic novel did not develop in India until the impact of the West changed its basic orientation.

The British conquest and colonization of India, lamentable though it is on the whole, brought about some favorable results, among which was the introduction of new literary forms from the West. Among them was the realistic novel, a mature, flourishing genre that Indian writers found suited to their need to simulate everyday reality, to portray common people from contemporary society, and to dramatize political and social themes. Its relative formlessness and lack of a rigid set of conventions made it flexible enough for them to write on the new subjects. Its adoption from the West to depict indigenous materials and experiences helped Indian writers express their commitments, especially through the use of characters as vehicles of meaning.

In interpreting and evaluating the use of characters in the Indian novel, I use international norms characteristic of the realistic novel, with due consideration given to the historical and socio-cultural background of India and its literary tradition. Therefore, I make use of the sociological and psychological approaches, together with the formalistic.

In Indian literary tradition, characters are usually types, with symbolic roles; and by their nature, functional characters tend to be flat rather than round, and static rather than dynamic. In the realistic novel adopted by India from the West, the functional role of character has remained. I therefore avoid E. M. Forster's distinction between flat and round characters and the common distinction between static and dynamic or developing characters, the use of which makes the criticism of fiction prescriptive rather than descriptive.

In my analyses, I will use the terms thematic and mimetic, which, being relatively new in the criticism of fiction, have not yet acquired connotations implying the superiority of one over the other. Thematic characters are those used to represent or embody certain abstract ideas, concepts, motifs, sentiments, values, and attitudes advocated or condemned by fiction writers. Such characters are not explored in depth, nor presented primarily for their own sake. Mimetic characters are "end-products"

presented mainly for their own sake, with individualized portraits. Thematic and mimetic characters are not always distinct and separate. Some characters, especially in thesis novels and novels of social criticism, are simultaneously thematic and mimetic. The problem of integrating their dual functions, however, is a difficult and crucial one for fiction writers, since these two roles tend to pull them in opposite directions. They are not, however, necessarily inconsistent with each other and can, in fact, be reconciled by skillful writers.

Some novelists try to avoid the problem of integrating the dual functions of characters by presenting protagonists that are dominantly thematic. Others depict characters that are simultaneously social types and particular individuals, with mimetic portraits that infuse life into their thematic roles. A few Indian novelists portray characters that are dominantly mimetic. Because of the greater prestige and wider appeal of thesis novels and novels of social criticism, with functional characters, however, some of these novelists try to fit their protagonists into plot and thematic patterns that clash with their mimetic pictures. There are, however, a few Indian writers who take their protagonists for what they really are.

CHARACTER IN THE INDIAN NOVEL

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INTRODUCTION

A. Historical Background

The Indian novel is a realistic genre adopted from the West. The Indian literature dates back to ancient times, there was no novel in India until it was introduced by the British in the nineteenth century.[1] Prior to the influx of Western ideas, there were obstacles that hindered the growth of the novel in India. Foremost among

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[1]There is no consensus among writers on what the first Indian novel was. They agree, however, that the Indian novel was of recent origin. Dorothy Spencer in Indian Fiction in English: An Annotated Bibliography (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), p. 9; J. C. Gosh in his "Introduction" to his English translation of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Krishnakanat's Will (Norfolk, Connecticut: James Laughlin, 1962), p. viii; Khuswant Singh in "Tradition and Change in Asian Literature," The Indian P.E.N., XXIX (January, 1963), p. 38; Mulk Raj Anand in "A Note on Modern Indian Fiction," Indian Literature, VIII, No. 1 (1965), p. 45; and M. E. Derrett in The Modern Indian Novel in English: A Comparative Approach (Belgium: Universite Libre de Bruxelles, 1966), p. 13, write that the Indian novel is a product of Western influence, imported from England, in the nineteenth century. Louis Renou in Indian Literature (New York: Walker and Co., 1951), pp. 31-32, writes of the Sanskrit novels of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries A.D.; but he notes that there were very few of them and that they "hardly deserve the name" since they are "really expanded tales, written in the same sophisticated and often precious style as the scholarly lyrics." Babu R. P. Bhaskhar in The Indian Novel in English (M.A. thesis, University of the Philippines, 1959) claims that the novel in India is an indigenous literary form. By "indigenous," he apparently means developed in India itself, not native to it.

these was the a-historical, non-humanistic orientation of Indian society, fostered by Hinduism, the dominant philosophy, religion, and social system of the Indian sub-continent.

In the traditional Hindu world view, man's life is not seen as part of a historical process but as a repetition of an eternal essence existing in the changeless Absolute.[2] This view encouraged a strongly metaphysical orientation in life that sees man essentially in relation to the cosmos rather than as an individual and a social being living in a physical world. Paradoxically, this highly metaphysical orientation of India was interpreted in almost purely social terms, society being seen as a microcosm of the macrocosm and man-made social norms, conventions, and values handed down from past generations as visible manifestations of the permanent cosmic order.

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[2]The traditional Hindu world view, though not exactly the same as the Platonic world view, bears a close resemblance tothe latter in the sense that both are monistic. In the traditional Hindu world view, reality is in the Absolute or Ultimate, and the phenomenal world is Maya, an appearance based on the existence of Brahman, the cosmic spirit. In the Platonic world view, reality exists in the noumenon, the world of being or of Permanent Forms or Ideas; and the phenomenal world of becoming, or flux of change, is just a copy of pre-existing forms. In "Ideas and Literature," Comparative Literature: Method and Perspective, 1961, p. 131, Stallknecht explains that among ancient thinkers, "Change is subordinate to form and to law and is essentially a matter of repetition within a permanent framework. . . . Time, including human life, tends constantly to exemplify and reexemplify the same eternal principles."

In such a society, the past was considered a reservoir of myths and legends which explained the relation of man to ultimate reality and the ways by which he could strive for spiritual perfection. His life was considered to be beyond his control and hence beyond his responsibility. Society controlled his life instead and his role was mainly to play, with detachment, the role assigned to him by the caste into which he was born.

This non-humanistic, a-historical view of life that prevailed in India up to the middle of the nineteenth century produced literary forms that are essentially illustrative of moral and ethical truths believed to be of timeless value. Among the established norms of the early Indian literary pieces, such as the epics and plays, is the presentation of characters with divine or mythical origin or noble characters belonging to the upper castes of Indian society. Such characters are meant to represent moral and ethical values assumed to be existing permanently in the Ultimate.

On the other hand, the humanistic, historical view of life that developed in the West more than a century before it reached the Indian sub-continent produced literary forms that are essentially mimetic representations of the experiences of the common people in contemporary society. The values represented by these characters are social and psychological rather than moral and

ethical.[3] Among these literary forms is the realistic novel, a modern literary form that evolved from earlier narrative prose forms.

The realistic novel was born in the West in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the non-humanistic, a-historical view of life had weakened and had gradually been replaced by the humanistic and historical; that was, when medieval Christianity had given way to the humanistic movement which stressed the importance of the individual and his activities in the temporal world.[4]

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[3]Actually, social and moral values are similar. What used to be called moral values in earlier times are now known as social values, as reflected in the use of the term conscience before to mean moral conscience and in the present to mean social conscience. The difference is the stress given in earlier times to the good of the upper classes and in more recent times to that of the lower classes, especially the masses.

[4]There were other related causes that gave rise to the realistic novel in the West. Ian Watt in The Rise of the Novel (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964), pp. 48-49, and Arnold Kettle in An Introduction to the English Novel, I (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 30, both trace the rise of the novel in England to the growth of the middle class and the increase in literacy, especially among women. In addition, Ian Watt includes the tendency to introspection encouraged by Puritanism and the more secular outlook that started in the seventeenth century and spread in England in the eighteenth century (p. 74). Arnold Kettle notes, too, that the rise of the novel in England was "a realistic reaction to the medieval romance and its courtly descendants of the 16th and 17th centuries" (p. 30). Summing up, he observes, "The impulse towards realism in prose literature was part and parcel of the breakdown of feudalism and of the revolution that transformed the feudal world" which he describes as "based on static property relationships, exalting an unchanging God-ordained hierarchy in Church and State" (p. 35).

Previous to the seventeenth century in the West, medieval Christianity, though dualistic in its basic philosophical assumptions, resembled the prestigious monistic and non-dualistic schools of Hinduism. Probably because the medieval world was dominantly an agrarian society, people were close witnesses to the recurring cycles of nature that made it appear as periodic, continuous manifestations of eternal essences. Its focus being man's life in the hereafter, the medieval Christian world was not conducive to the growth of a man-centered society. Instead, it encouraged, especially among the lower classes, an other-worldly view of life that considered the material aspects of the life of man as incompatible with his moral and spiritual goal. It stressed self-denial, mortification of the flesh, obedience and conformity to the laws of society sanctioned by church authorities for man's spiritual salvation in the world to come. As such, it gave rise to didactic verse forms and autobiographical confessions aimed to show the authors' sorrow for their sins and their attempts at atonement.

With the growth of the historical sense and the spirit of humanism in the West in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, society gradually became man-centered rather than God-centered, and interest shifted from man's life in the herafter to his life in the present. The spirit of secularism and liberalism, twin aspects of a

humanistic culture, stressed the reality of the phenomenal world and the freedom of man from tradition and the authority of the past. Without denying the importance of the spiritual in man's life, the secular spirit gave significance to the other aspects of man's life in this world. It affirmed earthly values and viewed the material as something that is not necessarily incompatible with the moral and spiritual. It stressed the individual man's uniqueness and potentialities for self-fulfillment in the phenomenal world considered as real in itself. The liberal spirit, likewise, blurred the marked distinctions among men. Together, secularism and liberalism created a humanistic society, with a historical view of life and reality, that gave man a greater sense of freedom in influencing events in time, with consideration given to the limitations imposed by his society and his own humanity.

In such a society, the earlier literary forms with well established norms were found inadequate. There was the need for a new literary genre that could depict the individual man's secular activities in the phenomenal world of flux and change. The literary genre that developed to meet this need was the realistic novel which, as Professor W. J. Harvey says, is "a temporal art, dealing with identities and largely concerned with the process of motive, cause and effect," "the distinct art form of

liberalism."[5] Its main subject is the life of the common man, with no pre-established identity in myths and a timeless tradition, and it affirms his secular activities as valid ends in themselves.

Considering the circumstances surrounding its birth, the realistic novel has become the literary genre of a humanistic society, marked by the spirit of secularism and liberalism and a sense of history. Freed from the need to conform to past literary conventions, it has developed its own literary norms consistent with the need that gave rise to it. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the West, the realistic novel developed further.

Being the literary genre of a humanistic society, with a historical outlook, the realistic novel did not develop in India until the impact of the West changed its basic orientation. With a few necessary generalizations, a brief account of the philosophical, religious, social, and literary conditions that delayed the growth of the novel in India and the conditions that favored it later will be given below.

As might be expected, there are many differences in the beliefs held by the Hindu intellectuals and the

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[5] Character and the Novel (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1965), pp. 22, 24.

common people.[6] In spite of these differences, however, there are concepts that are more or less common to them. These are the concepts of the oneness of all reality, Maya, moksha, karma, samsara, dharma, the caste system, and the ascetic ideal of renunciation, all of which, as will be explained later, discouraged the growth of the historical outlook and the spirit of secularism and liberalism, the chief characteristics of a humanistic culture that gave rise to the realistic novel in the West.

Many Hindus accept the Upanishadic doctrine of Brahman, which assumes the oneness of all reality. In this non-dualistic view of reality, man has no separate existence and identity from the noumenal and the phenomenal world. Paradoxically, the doctrine of Brahman simultaneously exalts and reduces the importance of the individual. On one hand, Atman, the individual self, is Brahman, the universal or cosmic Self. Man and the Supreme are one. On the other hand, man is indistinguishable from the rest of creation, animate and inanimate. In a society

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[6]Most Hindu intellectuals believe in a purely transcendental concept of Nirguna Brahman, an impersonal, abstract being, a God without human attributes, free of the limitations of time, space, and causality. On the other hand, many among the common people believe in the theistic concept of Saguna Brahman, a Supreme Being with personal qualities, capable of having avatars or divine incarnations in human form. Some Hindu intellectuals, however, believe in both aspects of Brahman, without seeing any contradiction between them. A prominent example was Sankara who systematized the basic concepts of Vedanta.

that views man as one with the Ultimate and the rest of creation, both animate and inanimate, the personal identity of the individual man is considered of lesser importance than in a secular society that views man as an individual and a social being living in a temporal world.

There is also the belief in Maya or that "force of illusion which leads us to believe in our phenomenal world."[7] Percival Spear explains: ". . . India thinks of God as more real than the world. There is no ultimate purpose in life but eventual reunion with the One, and all doctrines, disciplines, devotions, and ecstacies are but means to an end. The world is part of God, but not the whole of him; it is his thought or dream, 'the baseless fabric of his vision,' and ultimately has no substance at all. Man, to obtain Union, must escape from the round of births and deaths, from the chains of passion and desire. He escapes by realizing that actuality is illusion, by purging the passions because they lead to action and so create the strong delusion from which he wishes to be free."[8]

Among Hindu intellectuals, the doctrines of Brahman and Maya have given rise to the concept of moksha,

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[7]Louis Renou, ed., Hinduism (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., c. 1961), p. 23.

[8]India, Pakistan, and the West (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 43-44.

liberation, release, freedom from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, or fusion with the Absolute. Among the common people for whom the desire for liberation or release is weak or sometimes even absent,[9] the chief concern is to accumulate merits in this life in expectation of a better one in the next or succeeding incarnations. In any case, to both the Hindu intellectuals and the common people, life in this world is just a means to a distant end. Their goals, which lie at opposite poles, are similar on one point, their lesser interest in man's life in this world. They give less value to man's life in this world than a non-Hindu culture does because their interest lies in goals other than the immediate present, which they do not consider important in itself. Why write about man's numerous activities in the present when his aim is a better life in the next incarnation, freedom from rebirth, or fusion with the Ultimate? In the non-secular society that the concept of moksha helped encourage, literature and art are aimed at the moral edification of the people for the sake of goals in a distant future.

The Hindu belief in samsara, or the passing of individual souls from one life to another, makes man's

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[9]L. S. S. S. S. O'Malley, Popular Hinduism (Cambridge: University Press, 1935), p. 10.

life in this world appear of lesser importance than in a society that believes that the individual lives a single lifetime. To Hindus who believe in samsara, this world is just one of many worlds and this life is just one of many lives, a mere passing phase or infinitesimal fragment of existence in the light of infinite time and space.

Each stage in the series of transmigrations depends on one's karma, "the stock of merits and demerits arising from past deeds which causes rebirths."[10] On previous karma depends one's present life, "divine, animal, hellish."[11] In turn, one's future life depends on his conduct in the present. This life, therefore, has no value in itself but only in its relation to the past and the future.

The beliefs in Maya, moksha, karma and samsara have given rise to the ascetic ideal of renunciation as a way to achieve liberation or to acquire merits for a better life in the next or succeeding incarnations. Though renunciation is supposed to be the goal of the fourth state of life, the state of the hermit,[12] and though many who reach this state do not actually follow this goal, the ascetic ideal of renunciation has remained a living force

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[10] Kenneth W. Morgan, The Religion of the Hindus (New York: The Ronald Press, 1953), p. 409.

[11] A. L. Basham, The Wonder That Was India (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1954), p. 323.

[12] K. M. Sen, Hinduism (Maryland: Penguin Books Ltd., 1961), p. 22.

in the life of the Hindu people,[13] focusing their interest mainly on the future rather than the present.

In a society that believes in the oneness of all reality, Maya, moksha, karma, and samsara, the secular spirit is weak, if not entirely absent. These beliefs are still prevalent in India up to the present but were most dominant before the middle of the nineteenth century. As a philosophy and religion, Hinduism encouraged a non-secular outlook in life that gave rise to the didactic literary forms.

Furthermore, Indian society at that time was based on caste that outruled the spirit of liberalism which, in theory, if not in actual practice, espouses the equality of all men. To Hindus who believe in caste, which is supposed to be divinely ordained, inequality in this life is a divine manifestation of unequal spiritual states. To them, the beliefs in karma and samsara form the philosophical and religious justification of caste. The doctrine of karma explains the social status of the individual, his position in the social scale being the result of good and

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[13]Louis Renou, Hinduism, 1961, p. 5. "If we are to look for a global characterization of Hinduism, we could (as was recently suggested) consider it the very type of religion of renunciation. Certainly Hinduism could exist without those who renounce, but it would remain singularly impoverished and would be as if deprived of its crest. Many of the elements of the religion seem to have been created for the man who has withdrawn from life, or they were later modified for his needs. . . ."

bad deeds he has committed in a previous existence. One born to a position of wealth and prestige is supposed to be reaping the rewards for a good life in his last incarnation. On the other hand, one born to a low social and economic state is supposed to be undergoing punishment for committing bad deeds in a previous life and, at the same time, being given the opportunity to improve his chances of being born to a better life in his next incarnation. His dharma or duty in this life is to do what is expected of him as a member of his caste.[14] If he fulfills his dharma in this life, he will be born to a higher caste in the next incarnation or attain union with the Absolute.

Traditionally, there are four castes: the Brahmin, priestly or intellectual caste; the Kshatriya, warrior and ruling caste; the Vaishyas, the commerical and agricultural caste; and the Sudra, the artisan and laboring caste.[15]

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[14]Percival Speare explains, "Dharma does not coincide with the Western idea of duty, since it is not related to any fixed principle, but it resembles the Western code in that it carries with it a sense of moral obligation, so that failure is a moral fault. The duty of a caste may be immoral from the Western point of view, and also from that of another caste, but it would nevertheless be immoral for a member of that caste to neglect it. . . . My dharma is the occupation and behaviour fitting my caste and it is my moral duty to follow the rules of that caste and no others through life. . . . The idea of dharma is not of course rigidly applied, and it would be easy to find exceptions. But it runs through the whole of Hindu thought and practice, and is an essential part of Hindu mental processes. Op. cit., pp. 42-43.

[15]T. Walker Wallbank, A Short History of India and Pakistan (New York: The American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1955), p. 25: "This four-fold division. . . has been blurred and complicated by the development of more than three thousand separate caste groups."

At the bottom are the outcastes who do not belong to any one of the four castes.[16] Members of the twice-born castes, the upper castes, are considered more highly evolved beings than the Sudras and the outcastes. Theoretically, the former enjoy rights and privileges as rewards for spiritual merits acquired in a previous existence. On the other hand, the latter, who are considered low in the stage of spiritual development, hardly have rights, much less, privileges. It is believed that to attempt to improve their life in the present is to interfere with their dharma. Actually, as K. M. Sen observes, caste divisions are very much against the basic Hindu doctrine of the all-pervading Brahman being identical with the Atman.[17] But the concept of Brahman has been distorted

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[16] R. N. Dandekar, "The Role of Man in Hinduism," Morgan, The Religion of the Hindus, p. 145: "The exterior castes, known also as outcastes, originated back in the times when certain groups were barred on purely magic-ritualistic grounds from participating in the communal ritual. Theirs is indeed an anomalous position for they are not altogether disowned by Hindu society, but they are kept outside the caste system. They are condemned to suffer all legal, social, and religious disabilities to which a low caste Hindu is normally subjected, and at the same time they are denied the few advantages which would have accrued to them if they belonged to the caste system. . ." As a result, their lot is worse than that of the Sudras, the lowest Hindu caste.

[17] Op. cit., p. 27.

through the ages. Instead of all men being considered equal, some are supposed to be socially superior to others for spiritual reasons.

Society, which strictly regulates the conduct of the people according to norms handed down from the past,[18] is given more importance than the individual. His uniqueness as an individual separate entity is not recognized, he being only a part of the group to which he is born, his caste which has absolute authority over his conduct. Of great importance is the welfare of society which is assumed to be identical with the welfare of the individual. The greatest errors that he can commit are to violate the accepted social conventions and to rebel against the authority of the past. In addition to the social ostracism he would suffer in the present, there is the appalling prospect of a worse life in the succeeding incarnation. In his

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[18]The authoritarianism of traditional Hindu society has been made acceptable to the people in the guise of immutable existential laws. Whatever is decreed by society in the name of religion is believed to be for the good of its members. Fulfilling their dharma as prescribed by their caste is supposed to be their sole aim in this life so that they would have better chances of being born to a better life in the next incarnation. Most of the members of the lower caste and the outcastes, being uneducated and confined to the village of their birth, accept what the members of the upper caste dictate. Thus, the status quo remained unchanged until the impact of the West gave rise to the Indian independence movement. On the side of the privileged castes, it must have been a partly deliberate and a partly unconscious attempt to blur the distinctions between man-made and universal laws in order to prevent changes that would prove unfavorable to them.

present life, the best he can do is to conform, for his role is fixed and unchangeable. As a social system based on caste and the belief in dharma, Hinduism discouraged the growth of the liberal spirit before the Western influence reached it through the British.

The writing of literature was the monopoly of the upper castes, particularly the Brahmin caste. For the learned, there were the Vedas[19] and the Brahmanas and the Upanishads.[20] The Puranas and the epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, particularly the section known as the Bhagavad Gita, served as the scriptures of popular Hinduism.[21] In addition, there were the Tantras, the scriptures of the Vaishnava, Saiva and Sakta sects.[22] There were also

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[19] V. Raghavan, "Introduction to the Hindu Scriptures," Morgan, The Religion of the Hindus, p. 265; "The primary scriptures of Hinduism are the Vedas, containing knowledge which has been handed down from the most ancient times, knowledge which does not owe its origin from man."

[20] D. S. Sarna, "The Nature and History of Hinduism," Morgan, The Religion of the Hindus, p. 7: "The Brahmanas are prose commentaries interpreting Vedic myths. The Upanishads are 'mystical utterances revealing profound and spiritual truths.'"

[21] V. Raghavan, op. cit., pp. 271-272: The Puranas "deal at great length with the different pilgrimage places, with vows and authorities, gifts, temples and images, caste, the duties of the devotee, and the responsibilities of rulers." The Ramayana and the Mahabharata include "as much as possible of the Puranic accounts of creation, cosmography, dharma, and stories of heroes, sages, and gods."

[22] Ibid., p. 274.

religious hymns to inspire devotion to the deities in homes, temples, and places of pilgrimages. Plays, poems, and tales classified as belles lettres were written for the purpose of moral instruction.[23]

In all these writings, the tone is didactic. The major characters are mythical heroes or members of the Brahmin and Kshatriya castes whose idealized qualities served as examples to the people in their quest for release or freedom from rebirth or a better life in the next or succeeding incarnations. In the epics, the leading characters are avatars, human incarnations of gods serving as intermediaries between the Supreme and man. Such characters are meant to illustrate moral and ethical virtues of timeless value. Basically, they function as vehicles of meaning.

The style is characterized by rhetorical assertions and the use of epithets found sufficient in presenting supernatural, divine, and illustrious characters with pre-established identities in myths and legends. Reflecting the a-historical view of the nature of reality, the plots of such literary pieces are cyclic in structure, going through the phases of order or felicity, chaos or destruction, and re-creation or a return to order. They have a timeless quality based on the assumption that the past

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[23]Louis Renou, Indian Literature, pp. 23-30, 32-33, 37.

is eternal and that the present is just a repetition of recurring patterns existing in permanent forms.

The ancient literary genres, ostensibly aimed at the moral edification of the people, perpetuated a non-secular, non-liberal society based on tradition and the authority of the past entrusted to the priestly caste. In this scheme, the common man had no importance. The novel could not have developed in India until the spirit of secularism and liberalism spread. The adoption of the novel introduced by the British in the nineteenth century indicated a shift in world view brought about by the impact of Western values and ideas.

Actually, the secular and liberal outlook was not entirely absent in India before the nineteenth century. But it lacked the strength, influence, and prestige of the prevailing Hindu values till the influx of ideas from the West started.[24]

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[24] In "Realism in Indian Thought," (Triveni, XXXIII No. 1 (1964), pp. 28-30, C. Kunhan Raja writes, "There is no system of thought in India in which the world is not real. The Absolute from which the phenomenal world evolved is real and the phenomenal world too is real." It becomes evident early in the essay, however, that by Indian thought, he means ancient Indian thought. He blames the evolution and propagation of "the cloister philosophy of latter-day India" which "contains such an element of unreality in the nature of the world" on "people in saffron robes," the Buddhists. His analysis might be right, but the fact remains that realism in Indian thought had been the weaker strain for centuries until the impact of the West in the nineteenth century strengthened it.

The British conquest and colonization of India, lamentable though it is on the whole, brought about some favorable results. On the whole, the coming of the British into India encouraged the growth of humanistic values and ideas and gave the Indian people significant, if painful, experiences that necessitated the adoption of new forms of expression. The four-fold movement that followed--political, social, religious, and cultural--bore close similarities to a pattern familiar in most of the Western-colonized countries of Asia.

Among other things, British rule brought about the following: the introduction of a secular system of higher education through the medium of English; reforms in the Indian courts, which favored the idea of equality; the use of the printing press which encouraged the growth of a greater number of readers among the members of the middle class and took away the monopoly of writing from the priestly caste; and the research by European scholars into India's past, which awakened the Indians' interest in their own culture and finally brought about a literary renaissance and the introduction of new literary forms from the West.

Starting with the victory of the English in Bengal in the Battle of Plassey in 1757, British power spread rapidly in India. By 1818, the English East India Company had become the leading territorial and political power in

India, having defeated or subdued almost every important Indian ruler. And by the middle of the nineteenth century, India was ruled directly by the British government or indirectly through the princely states.[25]

In 1835, Thomas Babington Macaulay issued his Education Minute, an order supporting Western secular education.[26] A lakh of rupees (100,000) was made available to the Governor-General "for the revival and promotion of literacy and the encouragement of the learned natives of India to form a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, opinions, in morals and in intellect."[27]

"Whatever the motives behind it," writes Babu R. P. Bhaskar, "Macaulay's Minute was welcome as it opened the way for imparting a modern liberal education to Indian youth. By 1853, English colleges were started in Hoogly, Dacca, Krishnagiri, Berhampur, Madras, and Bombay in pursuance of the new policy. Even as the army was putting down the 1857 uprising the administration was organizing three modern universities in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, on the lines of the University of London." The

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[25]Bashan, op. cit., p. 481.

[26]Robert Crane, "India," Asia in the Modern World, ed. by Helen G. Matthew, op. cit., p. 174.

[27]Quoted in footnote by M. E. Derrett, op. cit., p. 16.

establishment of these universities made possible the imparting of higher education in the country through the medium of English.[28] R. P. Bhaskar further notes, "The introduction of the English language in Bengal brought the Indian mind into direct contact with the culture and civilization of the West. The encounter with European liberal thought had an electrifying effect on the Indian intelligentsia. They examined their social and religious customs and practices in the light of the ideas of equality and liberty and found many of them outdated and even inhuman. . . ."[29]

By 1885, the British system of education was well established in India. And the Indian youth educated in this system started to examine traditional Hindu values in the light of the modern secular outlook. T. Walter Wallbank writes, "It was this system of education that was the vehicle of Western culture and brought about a veritable revolution in the thought climate of India."[30]

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[28]Bhaskar, op. cit., p. 15: "The concentration of facilities for learning English in Bengal, which came under British rule earlier than the other parts of the country, accounts for the fact that the earliest men of letters in English all came from that region. It also explains why the renaissance in the Indian literatures, which was the result of the refreshing Western literary influence, was born in the Bengali Language."

[29]Bhaskar, op. cit., p. 115.

[30]Wallbank, op. cit., p. 91.

Likewise, reforms in the Indian courts helped spread the spirit of liberalism. T. Walter Wallbank observes, "While the British system of justice as it has worked in India has had its weaknesses, it nevertheless brought into the country the great legal principle of equality under the law of all individuals, regardless of their caste status."[31] These reforms served as one of the factors that made Indians aware of the blatant inequalities in Indian society itself and also between the British as a ruling class and themselves as subjects.

The presence of the British in India was anomalous for two reasons. First, their rule was incongruous with the idea of justice and equality that they themselves introduced and fostered in the British courts. Second, their position in the country as a privileged class did not fit into the traditional Hindu belief that social inequalities are manifestations of unequal spiritual states. The British were outside the four Hindu castes. In their everyday life, they violated orthodox Hindu beliefs and practices. Yet they enjoyed more rights and privileges than the Indians themselves, as if the law of karma did not apply to them. As a result, there were protests against Hindu rule and further reexamination of traditional Hindu beliefs and ways led by the Western-educated middle class.

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[31] Ibid., p. 75.

The middle class[32] was a small class between the still smaller class of the rich, strong, and powerful and the much bigger class of the poor and weak. Literacy had barely reached down to the level of the masses. But the Western-educated elite provided the necessary leadership.

In India, as in the other colonized countries of Asia, nationalism began as a movement among the intellectuals, mostly professionals disgruntled by the limited opportunities for employment given to them by the colonizers. These educated Indians were not satisfied to serve as mere clerks in the Indian Civil Service. Their striving for better opportunities later developed into a more altruistic wish for widespread social changes.

The nationalist leaders saw that the Indian people, especially the masses, were oppressed not only by the British but more so by members of the Indian upper castes, particularly the landlords and the money-lenders. The movement for liberation was, therefore, directed not only against the British but also against the upper castes that

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[32] In "Appendix 9," Asian Drama: An Inquiry Into the Poverty of Nations (3 vols.; New York: Twentieth Century Fund, c. 1968), III, p. 2118, G. Myrdal explains that in South Asia, the intellectuals and the educated are all members of "what we should correctly call the upper class." He explains further that the term middle-class has been adapted in scientific literature, is equated with the middle-class in Western Europe, and is in itself "an indication of the misleading strong Western impact on the thinking in the region."

sought the protection of the foreign masters to maintain the status quo for their benefit. The leaders protested against Indian institutions and values that had become distorted through the ages and demanded political reforms and finally independence from the British. They felt that if a reorganization of Indian society was to take place, they should first get rid of the British and take the actual leadership of the country into their hands. On the whole, the nationalist movement was a bid for liberalism and secularization of the Indian social system which, in the name of Hinduism, had perpetuated a non-humanistic society for ages. Members of this class, as Buddhadeva Bhose explains, "taught others to think in terms which were humanistic instead of sectarian, national instead of caste-bound, cosmopolitan instead of parochial."[33]

Foremost among them was Raja Ram Mohan Roy who, in 1828, founded the Brahmo Samaj, a society which was Hindu in its basic orientation but contained Christian and humanistic elements. It prohibited child-marriage, purdah or the seclusion of women, and sati or the practice of the widow's burning herself in the funeral pyre of her husband.[34] In 1875, Swami Dayanand Sarawasti founded the Arya Samaj whose slogan was "Back to the Vedas." "It did

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[33]"Modern Bengali Literature," Comparative Literature Studies, I (1964), p. 49.

[34]T. Walter Wallbank, op. cit., p. 92.

very good social work, attempting to spread education and to raise the standards of the backward classes." There were other schools and movements led by other leaders. "To sum up, it might be said that the impact of the West has produced new schools of thought which have emphasized old doctrines.[35] The development of liberal reformism was only one consequence of the revivalist movement. It also gave impetus to the forces of reaction. On the whole, however, the revival of old doctrines helped the progress of liberalism by purging Hinduism of the distortions that had been engrafted into it through the ages.

In the meantime, the nationalist movement and the interest of European scholars in India's past awakened the interest of educated Indians in their own culture. "This revaluation of the past," writes B. Bhose, "conjoined with the acceptance of the new and the foreign made it possible for our nineteenth-century writers to adopt forms hitherto unknown."[36] A literary movement started. The cultural revival focused itself not only on the ancient classics and religious texts but also on the popular epics and folk stories of the Indian masses, written in the different regional languages instead of only in classical Sanskrit.

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[35]K. M. Sen, op. cit., pp. 109-111.

[36]Bhose, op. cit., p. 4.

The use of the printing press in large towns all over the country helped spread literacy. And slow though it was, it encouraged the publication of reading materials in English and the Indian vernaculars and gradually took away the monopoly of writing from the priestly caste.[37] The new leaders turned to writing for mundane purposes instead of the moral edification of the people. Among them were Rabindranath Tagore, "the prophet of enlightened humanism." Gokhale, Tilak, and other political leaders "gave a lead to the Home Rule movement and to the literature advocating social and political reforms," writes M. E. Derret.[38] In their attempts to awaken the people to the need for political and social reforms, there was an implicit recognition of the reality of the phenomenal world and the value of the common man and his right to find fulfillment in this life. He came to be seen as an individual with a unique identity, separate from ultimate

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[37]Margarita Barns, The Indian Press, 1940, p. 183, quoted by M. E. Derrett, op. cit., pp. 16-17: "The emergence of a new class of writers, publishers and printers owed its origin to the establishment of the Indian press. . . . It was originally . . . particularly Christian missionaries who took the initiative, established their presses, and produced literature in the country's languages, though in the beginning for the exclusive purpose of spreading the Gospel among Indians. This started an Indian cultural renaissance. . . . the educated class of Indians contributed to the growth of a body of vernacular literature, especially in Bengal, where it became an effective agency for the infiltration of European knowledge to the lower levels of society."

reality and the rest of the phenomenal world. His importance came to be viewed as something apart from the caste into which he was born. And his present life came to be seen as something worth improving in itself, not just a means to a distant goal. The focus shifted from the desire to acquire merits for future incarnations, release physical existence, or the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth to liberation from political bondage to the British and the shackles of Indian social conventions and institutions. The over-all result of the Western impact was to strengthen the dualistic world view and to weaken the non-dualistic world view that fostered the growth of a non-humanistic culture, with an a-historical outlook, in India before the coming of the British in the nineteenth century. With the shift in world view, the need for a new literary genre arose, just as it did in the West during the eighteenth century with the waning of medieval Christianity and the growth of the humanistic movement.

Hitherto, the existing literary forms were considered adequate means for the portrayal of noble and romantic sentiments and moral and spiritual truths in the life of mythical heroes and illustrious characters. But when the common man and his problems came to be accepted as proper subjects for writing, the traditional Hindu view of art as a symbolic illustration of timeless metaphysical

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[38] Ibid., p. 21.

reality and absolute values had to be supplemented with a mimetic art which depicts the life of the common man in contemporary society. Since the religious scriptures, the epics, the highly conventional dramatic and poetic genres, and the short prose forms with well established norms could not accommodate the new subjects and themes, the need for a more flexible, representational, and sophisticated prose genre arose.[39]

Among the Western literary forms introduced by the British, Indian writers found the realistic novel, a mature, flourishing genre, best suited to their needs to simulate everyday reality as closely as possible so that they could portray the necessity for political and social reforms and later for independence from the British and liberation from

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[39]There were ancient Indian plays of original invention dealing with domestic life. Common people played the major roles. But these plays were considered lesser plays in both subject and technique, plays inferior to the Nataka. If the realistic novel had not been introduced by the British together with the influx of new ideas from the West in the nineteenth century, it is possible that such plays could have served the purpose of the Indian political and social reformers. But the introduction of the realistic novel from the West precluded this possibility. The reformist Indian writers chose to adopt this new literary form which had had no association with the hierarchical structure of Indian society instead of the ancient play of original invention associated with the lower caste and depraved members of society. In choosing the realistic novel genre, they gained a new form with no unfavorable associations but with norms acceptable to a more liberal, secular outlook in life.

the outmoded social institutions of the country itself.[40] Its relative formlessness and lack of a rigid set of conventions made it flexible enough for them to write on the new subjects and themes.

In the novel, the Indian writers could depict common people[41] in the contemporary milieu to represent or embody political ideas and sociological and psychological values instead of the idealized characters with pre-established identities in the past to illustrate moral and ethical values. The former move in a plot pattern governed by the law of causality or probability, with the present related both to the past and the future. Sometimes, like characters in the earlier literary pieces,

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[40] At the start, the romantic novels of Sir Walter Scott were popular among the educated Bengali middle class. But it was the realistic novel that Indian writers found suited to their nationalistic purposes.

[41] B. R. P. Bhaskhar, op. cit., pp. 53-54: "The revolutionary significance of the elevation of the common man to the hero's position cannot be appreciated without understanding the traditional concept of the hero in Indian literature. In the early years of the Christian era, or perhaps even earlier, it had been laid down by Indian literary theoreticians that the hero should fall under one or the other of the four categories: dheeran (courageous), dheerasantan (courageous and calm), dheerodattan (courageous and haughty), and dheeralalitan (courageous and simple) and specifically limited the qualification to be a hero to the higher denominations of the caste hierarchy. . . . These injunctions were scrupulously obeyed by writers of India for centuries with almost the same rigidity with which the caste system was observed by society. It was the renaissance writers who began to cast ordinary human beings into the role of the hero, which for ages was reserved exclusively for kings and noblemen . . . ."

they, too, tend to be dominated by plot and theme; but, on the whole, they seem to have greater freedom of action in a world subject to historical processes.

With the adoption of the realistic novel from the West, the use of different languages, such as Sanskrit for the royal and noble male characters and Prakrit and the other vernaculars for women and characters belonging to the lower castes, gave way to a single language, either English or Bengali or one of the other Indian languages, written in a more or less uniform prose style that reflects the humanistic ideal of the equality of men.[42] The ornate, rhetorical prose and verse found in the early Indian literary forms were replaced with ordinary prose, making use of specific, concrete, and particularized details. The result is a much closer correspondence between the fictional world and the real world simulated that creates a strong emotional impact on the readers. Besides, the writers' presentation of historical events and everyday happenings in the life of the people and of particular individuals, including well-known national leaders, enables them to create a sense of contemporaneity in interpreting Indian problems to awaken the people to the need for political and social changes. There is also the possibility

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[42]The case is similar to the levelling of styles noted by Erich Auerbach in Europe of the early nineteenth century. Mimesis: The Representationof Reality in Western Literature, trans. by Willard Trask (New York: Anchor Book Edition, 1957), p. 490.

of the writers' using different points of view, including the omniscient, to make explicit or implicit comments on political and social problems with no appeal to tradition and metaphysical reality but to human justice.

Some of the earliest novelists questioned the rule of the British, who practically composed a super-caste at the top. Others tried to show India in a favorable light, apparently to convince the British and the Indian people themselves that they were ready for reforms and ultimately for independence and self-government. Prior to and after Indian independence, the emphasis shifted from political to social conflicts, for social problems in India, such as poverty and other crippling forces in society, were wide-spread, causing misery and suffering to the masses. Others dealt with conflicts between the past and the present, traditional Indian and Western values, traditional beliefs made to justify existing social ills and social inequalities in Indian society itself.

In their writings, the focus is on Indian society seen from the point of view of man's secular interests instead of his fate in future incarnations and the goal of release from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Indian society as a whole was still non-secular and non-liberal. The Western-educated writers, however, used the realistic novel to express their protests against the status quo. Tradition and the authority of the past were

challenged in favor of a better life in the present. Among them, social inequalities came to be seen as man-made rather than divinely ordained. Beliefs in maya, karma, samsara, moksha, were not contradicted but disregarded. The Upanishadic doctrine of Brahman was not openly opposed but overlooked in favor of earthly values.

Sometimes, references are made by Indian writers to the traditional Hindu concepts for characterization and artistic effect. The characters they present may refer to their dharma to justify their way of life or to their evil karma to account for their sufferings in this life and justify their hopes for a better life in future incarnations. But the novelists themselves do not make use of these concepts inthe resolutions of the characters' conflicts. Such characters are shown to suffer a result of the policies and actions of the British and members of Indian society itself, not because of deeds committed in a previous existence.

At present, the Indian novel still follows the central tradition of realistic fiction decades after the Western novel has made significant departures from it. Mimetic representation of social reality is emphasized to dramatize the propagandistic themes. Most novelists write for the purpose of proving a thesis; hence the prevalence of novels of social criticism and protest, which range

from cheap propaganda to artistically successful ones that integrate form and content.

Although it is true that the realistic novel thrives best in a humanistic milieu, it has grown and developed in India, where the humanistic view of life is only a little over a century old. It may be because there is a sizeable number of writers and readers with the liberal and secular outlook on life. As Professor Harvey explains, the novel is the product of a liberal mind. By "liberal" he means "not a political view nor even a mode of social and economic organization but rather a state of mind." "This state of mind," he writes, "has as its controlling centre an acknowledgment of the plenitude, diversity and individuality of human beings in society, together with the belief that such characteristics are good as ends in themselves. It delights in multiplicity of existence and allows for a plurality of beliefs and values."[43]

From the nineteenth century to the present, the liberal state of mind has prevailed among some Indian thinkers and the educated elite who are receptive to the influence of the West. But because liberal ideas have not yet spread over a wide segment of Indian society, the novel in India has not flourished to the same extent that

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[43]Harvey, op. cit., p. 24.

it has in the West. It has not become a genre for the masses but for the educated elite and those literate in the Indian languages. On the other hand, the very presence of conditions that inhibit the growth of the liberal and secular spirit has given Indian writers strong motives to use the realistic novel as a means to express their views on Indian society. As a result, the novel in India has not only survived but has developed as a recognized literary genre. Its adoption from the West to dramatize indigeneous materials and experiences has in a way helped Indian novelists express their commitments.

B. Character in the Indian Novel

This study will be focused on the nature and function of ptotagonists in the Indian novel.[44] In interpreting and evaluating them, I will use international norms characteristic of the realistic novel, with due consideration given to the historical and socio-cultural background of the Indian setting. I will, therefore, avoid E. M. Forster's distinction between flat and round characters[45]

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[44] In the discussions of the protagonists, references will be made to the implied author defined by Wayne Booth in The Rhetoric of Fiction (Phoenix Books, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 71, as "The official scribe." Booth, likewise, refers to the implied author as the author's "second self," a term used by Dowden in writing on George Eliot's novels in 1887 and revived by Kathleen Tillotson in her inaugural lecture at the University of London in 1959.

[45] Aspects of the Novel (Harvest Books, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1954), pp. 67-68 passim.

and the common distinction between static and dynamic or developing characters. Among Western and Western-oriented critics, there is a marked preference for round and dynamic characters in spite of their recognition that these characters are to be found in certain kinds of fiction, not in others. With the use of these terms, the criticism of fiction becomes prescriptive rather than descriptive.

The prejudice against flat and static characters is seldom found among Indian readers and critics. In Indian literary tradition, characters are usually types with symbolic roles; and by their nature, functional characters tend to be flat rather than round and static rather than dynamic. Protagonists are supernatural or mythical characters of divine or semi-divine origin or characters of noble birth illustrating moral and spiritual values believed to be reflections of absolute principles of timeless value. Antagonists illustrate violations of the accepted norms. Both protagonists and antagonists are presented not for their own sake but for didactic purposes.

In the realistic novel adopted by India from the West, the functional role of character has remained.[46] Characters are the chief means by which writers convey

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[46]The cyclic plot structure in the ancient Indian literary piece stresses change in outward circumstances rather than within the characters themselves. The persistence of the cyclic plot structure in the Indian novel is another reason limiting the creation of dynamic characters as they are known in the West.

meaning. They are depicted not for their own sake but as means to an end, as instruments by which novelists dramatize their propagandistic themes.[47] As vehicles of meaning, they are used to create a strong emotional impact on the readers. Although not so highly didactic as the ancient literary pieces, the realistic novel in India deals with ethical values represented or embodied by characters by which the writers project their vision and interpretation of life in concrete form. The difference is that while the ancient literary pieces portray characters purporting to illustrate metaphysical values seen from the cosmic point of view, the Indian novel presents characters representing temporal values seen from the point of view of society and the individual.

Protagonists in the Indian novel are more complex than in the ancient literary pieces. Being mostly functional characters, however, they are not so sharply individualized as in the Western novel. Such characters have their roots and are, in fact, but reflections of people in Indian society itself. Social institutions, customs, and traditions in India leave little opportunity for personal development though not necessarily for inner change. The norm-giver in traditional Hindu society is an authority

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[47]Propaganda is used in this study not in the derogatory sense but in the sense of influential political and social criticism.

transcending individuals--in this case, the voice of the past handed down through the community and guarded by its elders. Dharma, as postulated by society, has an authority not to be questioned by people who, as a result, become wholly or largely dependent on it, for fear of punishment in their succeeding lives.

Indian society has not reached the point where the individual is of much significance in himself. The main problem is still the recognition of the lower castes, outcastes, and the poor masses as human beings in the same scale of significance as the upper castes. Ironically, the highly idealistic concept of the identity of atman with Brahman has been distorted through the ages into the belief that some people by virtue of their karma in previous lives and birth into this life are lower in the scale of creation than members of the upper castes. Worse still, the ranking has ceased to be spiritual, except in the theoretical sense, and has become, in fact, almost purely social and material. Novelists who advocate the amelioration of the lot of the lower castes, outcastes, and the poor masses tend to present characters representative of their caste or class; hence, they tend to be types, with individual traits to make them appear as convincing human beings. The individual being still very much a part of society, his role as a member of his caste or class comes in inevitably. Even his name reveals his position

in the social scale and the community to which he belongs, such as the Hindu, the Muslim, the Sikh, and the Parsee community.

Socially, most characters in the Indian novel belong to the common people in contemporary society. Psychologically, however, the protagonists often differ from the common run of tradition-bound people who follow age-old practices fostered by the highly stratified social system. Usually, they are sensitive, introspective individuals capable of self-illumination and transformation. Sometimes, they are individuals alienated from a tradition-bound society who struggle for self-actualization in a society that tends to thwart them at almost every step they take to assert themselves. Those who make personal discoveries and achieve self-awareness in spite of the great pressure of social conventions undergo changes within themselves. This process, however, is not necessarily followed by a dynamic personality development outwardly manifested, for often their realization of their relationship with other people in society is accompanied by the equally important discovery that they cannot drastically change their roles in life. To them it seems ridiculous, no matter how glorious, to rebel against a deeply rooted system that cannot be changed overnight. Usually, the result on such enlightened but outwardly unchanged

individuals is reflective of social values stagnating, back-sliding, or undergoing gradual transformation.

Considering the Indian socio-cultural milieu, I will make use of the sociological and psychological approaches in conjunction with the formalistic. The presentation of functional and the exceptional non-functional characters in the Indian novel is essentially similar to that in Western fiction. Because of cultural differences, however, Indian characters may appear different from their counterparts in the West.

Furthermore, I will not make use of terms commonly used in the study of fictional characters in the West. Instead, I will use the terms thematic and mimetic,[48] which being relatively new in the criticism of fiction, have not yet acquired connotations implying the superiority of one over the other.

Thematic characters are those who represent certain ideas, concepts, motifs, sentiments, values, and attitudes advocated and condemned by fiction writers. Such characters are not explored in depth and presented primarily for their own sake but depicted for functions bigger than

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[48]These terms are taken from Prof. B. J. Paris' lectures in C.L. 453, Spring Term, 1966. I will also make use of the psychological approach to fiction as explained by him in the same class (later published in Victorian Studies), without, however, confining myself to Horneyan psychology. Instead, I will use the popularly known psychological concepts that apply to Indian characters.

themselves. They are used to dramatize abstract ideas and make them vivid, concrete, and easy to comprehend because of the emotional impact they tend to create.

Thematic characters are to be distinguished from illustrative characters found in early narrative forms antedating the modern realistic novel. The latter are defined by Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg as "concepts in anthropoid shapes and fragments of the human psyche masquerading as whole human beings." They are used "to present selected aspects of the actual, essences referable for their meaning not to historical, or social truth but to ethical and metaphysical truth."[49]

Mimetic characters are characters presented mainly for their own sake. These characters are "highly individualized figures who resist abstraction and generalization and whose motivation is not susceptible to rigid ethical interpretation."[50] Such characters, not Scholes and Kellogg, are developed in the representational manner, either sociological or psychological, with the latter being more mimetic than the former.

To avoid confusion, I will not strictly follow Scholes' and Kellogg's classifications. I will refer to characters in the novel of psychological realism as

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[49]The Nature of Narrative (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 88.

[50]Ibid., p. 101.

mimetic and characters in the novel of sociological realism as thematic characters whose mimetic traits admit of varying degrees of vividness.

Mimetic and thematic characters are not entirely distinct and separate. Some characters, especially those in the novel of social realism, combine dual functions. The problem of reconciling these roles, however, is a difficult and crucial one for fiction writers. Characters with well developed mimetic portraits tend to take on a life of their own apart and beyond their thematic functions. On the other hand, their thematic roles tend to pull them to the plot patterns that may have been preconceived and designed by the writers. Unless the dual roles of characters are allowed to develop subtly together as the plot patterns progress, the result will be partial or total inconsistencies.

Speaking of realistic novels in the West, Prof. B. J. Paris explains that in some of them, there is a disparity between representation and interpretation and that in others, the interpretations are not only inappropriate or inadequate to the experience dramatized but altogether inconsistent.[51] The same observations can be made of the Indian novel.

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[51]"The Psychological Approach to Fiction," p. 2.

Since most Indian novelists write for the practical purpose of interpreting Indian problems and directly or indirectly inspiring reforms, the majority of the novels they write are thesis novels or novels of social criticism advocating or condemning certain values and practices. More concerned with interpretation than artistic portraitures, they present characters that are representations or embodiments of social values, attitudes, concepts accepted or rejected by them. At the same time, they feel the need of depicting characters that bear a close semblance to people in actual life to make the abstract ideas they represent appear vivid and concrete. Hence, they make use of the common people in contemporary society who can be easily identified by the readers. Usually, they are social types with dual functions, the thematic and the mimetic, or individuals who bear a close semblance to universal psychological types.

As might be expected, not all attempts to depict characters with dual roles succeed, for representation and interpretation tend to go into opposite directions. Though these dual roles tend to conflict, however, they are not necessarily inconsistent.

To dramatize their theses, Indian writers try to reconcile the dual functions of characters in various ways. There are those who try to avoid the problem of integrating the characters' dual roles by presenting protagonists that

are dominantly thematic. Some writers start with ideas they hope to illustrate concretely by means of characters who stand for them. But by casting them in the mold of idealized characters in the ancient literary pieces, they fail to infuse them with lifelike qualities that would make them appear convincing. With their lifeless mimetic pictures unsustained by a rich mythodological context, such characters tend to be purely allegorical or stereotyped, synthetic puppets drawn by none-too-invisible strings according to the plot patterns pre-conceived by the novelists. In novels with serious tones, the ideas they are meant to represent remain unassimilated into the mimetic pictures of the protagonists who, as a result, appear to be merely the authors' mouthpieces. In novels of manners, however, dominantly thematic characters presented in a satiric-comic tone help achieve the novelists' intentions.

Other novelists succeed partly or wholly in their intentions by portraying characters who are simultaneously social types and particular individuals. The fact that they are familiar types makes them easy to recognize as people belonging to the matrix of contemporary Indian life. And to the extent that they reveal traits of other people, they can easily be made to represent certain beliefs held by cross-sections of Indian society. As such, they create an impact on the reader who experiences

vicariously what they think and feel and how they act and react. To the extent that their psychological make-up reveals some degree of complexity manifested by individuals in actual life, they appear like specific, particular individuals, and their authenticity lends credence to the themes they symbolize.

To a large extent, successful writers of novels of social realism present their views through thematic characters with personal traits that individualize them and infuse life into their mimetic portraits. Usually, these characters have a life apart from and beyond their thematic roles and yet are not so complex that some of their characteristics contradict the very ideas that they are meant to represent. Nor are their experiences so private and unique that they no longer fit the thematic patterns of the novels in which they are depicted. As such, their portrayal remains consistent with the plot structures of the novels and makes the correspondence between the abstract world of ideas and the concrete world of reality easy to comprehend. Likewise, the constant tension between their dual aspects and apparently irrelevant mimetic traits add depth and richness to their portraits and significance to their thematic roles in the narratives. Sometimes, these protagonists are not individual characters but towns or villages with complex composite mimetic portraits of various elements.

Unfortunately, however, some novelists fail in their difficult task of integrating the dual functions of their protagonists. The reasons are varied, but the common manifestation of their failure is the contradiction between their protagonists' mimetic pictures and the thematic interpretations explicitly or implicitly given in the novels.

Some Indian writers present protagonists who should be taken as individuals memorable in themselves, usually psychologically ill individuals confused by the clash of values between the East and the West. Created from the phenomenological perspective, such characters properly belong to novels of psychological realism. Because of the greater prestige and wider appeal of novels of social realism in India, however, some of these novelists try to fit their protagonists into plot and thematic patterns that are too precise to contain them, resulting in inconsistencies between their thematic roles and mimetic pictures. There are, however, a few Indian writers of novels of psychological realism who succeed because they take their protagonists for what they are and interpret them consistently with the way they are actually depicted, or omit explicit interpretations altogether and integrate them with the representation of the character.

C. Aims, Scope, Methods

The aims of this study are two-fold. First, it will show that in the analysis and evaluation of the use of character in the Indian novel, a hybrid product of both East and West, the peculiar circumstances of its development will be considered. Secondly, it will show that though the Indian socio-cultural milieu and literary tradition are given significant attention, established norms of character presentation of the novel as a realistic genre are not to be disregarded. The extremes of absolutism and relativism will be avoided, for artistic values are relative only within limits. The norms of a genre as it has developed in one culture can be modified to a certain degree but not radically changed in another culture that adopts it.

The body of the thesis explains in some detail the use of character in some representative novels written in English and in the regional languages translated into English. The critical methods used are interpretative and evaluative. The conclusions sums up the achievements of Indian novelists in the presentation of character.

CHAPTER I

PRESENTATION OF DOMINANTLY THEMATIC CHARACTER

A. Unsuccessful Presentation of Idealized Characters

Most Indian novelists who wish to dramatize propagandistic themes portray characters belonging to the common people in contemporary society whom the Indian reader can easily identify as people in actual life. They present characters with vivid mimetic portraits so that the abstract ideas and values they represent will have a strong emotional impact on the reader. Both protagonists and antagonists are made to appear like recognizable human beings in contrast to the mythical heroes and demons belonging to a long-forgotten past. In this way, the Indian writers try to convince the reader of the validity of their propagandistic aims.

For some reasons, however, some Indian novelists present thematically idealized characters who appear anachronistic in the modern realistic novel which, by convention, demands that characters be made to appear like real people instead of idealized abstractions. Possibly, these novelists persist in presenting characters with

idealized thematic roles because they cannot get away from the pattern of character presentation in the ancient literary pieces, thus creating built-in inconsistencies in their characters' dual roles. Or probably, they do so because of their belief in reincarnation. Following this belief, it is assumed that some characters are born perfect, or infinitely better than others, since they have developed themselves to an advanced spiritual state in previous incarnations. As such, they are supposed to be infallible leaders to be followed willingly by those whose spiritual development belongs to a lower state. They are cast in the mold of idealized characters in the ancient literary pieces.

Writers who present thematically ideal protagonists overlook the fact that their aim is not to present characters as symbols of moral virtues to be emulated by the reader or audience but to create plausible characters in order to convince or persuade the reader or audience to accept or reject certain ideas and values. They often interpret their psychologically ill protagonists as ideal characters whose infallibility is to be taken for granted.

Indian writers who present idealized characters use the method of characterization found in the ancient literary pieces. Though their characters are contemporary individuals, they depict them as if they were characters with rich mythological backgrounds and whose

identities are pre-established in the past. Like ancient writers, they make abundant use of epithets rhetorically asserting their characters' supposedly ideal traits instead of depicting them by means of specific, particular details. Lacking a rich mythological past and having no mimetic portraits that can support their thematic roles as ideal characters, however, such protagonists appear non-descript and, as progaganda figures, ineffective. Or if it happens that the protagonists have mimetic pictures that are solid, their thematic functions as ideal types are contradicted by their mimetic traits based on values of the past that have become stereotyped and distorted.

Very often, Indian writers who present idealized characters uphold traditional Hindu values that have become perverted through the ages. Brahmin traits, such as intelligence and lack of interest in material wealth and social prestige, are supposed to be meritorious in themselves. But the protagonists who possess such traits are usually psychologically ill characters who wish to assert their moral and spiritual superiority over others by invoking old traditional values in their desperate bid for acceptance and recognition as leaders. And the novelists who present these characters are often unaware of the inconsistency between their thematic roles and their mimetic pictures as neurotics. Unconsciously, it seems, they

recognize their characters for what they really are. But pseudo-nationalistic reasons compel them to give these characters thematic interpretations that are alien to their mimetic pictures. As a result, they fail to use characters as vehicles of meaning.

Among these Indian novelists is Venkataramani, who persists in presenting his protagonists according to the pattern of the traditionally known ideal types symbolizing moral virtues of "timeless" value. Confusing ends and means, he depicts idealized characters similar to those found in the old didactic genres of ancient times.

In Murugan, the Tiller, Venkataramani commits two errors in the use of character to convey meaning. Firstly, he confuses ends and means. Contrary to the fact that he is writing in a modern realistic genre, he casts his protagonist into the mold of idealized characters in the ancient Indian literary pieces, as if his aim were didactic rather than propagandistic. Though Ramachandra or Ramu, the major character, is supposed to be a real character in contemporary Indian society, he is idealized as if he were meant to represent moral virtues of "timeless" value. His idealized picture, however, is not sustained by a pre-established identity to be inferred from a rich mythological background. Still the author relies heavily on assertions made by minor characters rather than on actual rendition. Secondly, Ramu's thematic role as an ideal

character is directly contradicted by his mimetic picture as a psychologically insecure man. And the manifestations of his insecurity are interpreted by the author as part of his ideal character.

As a mimetic character, Ramu has little psychological reality, for his inner life is barely explored by the author, who is obsessed with the propagandistic theme of the novel. Ramu is dominated by the plot based on a narrow concept of poetic justice. Based on the premise that the good should be rewarded and evil, punished, two complementary moral laws are made to operate inexorably, like fate. On one hand, passivity, submissiveness, and lack of interest in material possessions and social position, which are assumed to be ideal traits, lead inevitably to worldly success and prestige to be used not for one's own sake but for the service of others. On the other hand, ambition, dishonesty, and short-lived material success, which are supposed to be interrelated, lead invariably to a reversal in fortune, repentance, and reformation in character. These over-simplified formulas of life form the plot of the novel.

The main theme is the propaganda on how to solve India's twin problems of poverty and land-holding. Ramu and the minor characters are dominated by the plot and theme which, as will be shown later, are manipulated by the author without regard for sociological and psychological reality.

There is also the intrusive narrator used by the author to express his views explicitly. The narrator recalls that Ramu's lack of worldly wisdom makes him fail twice in the B. A. examinations. It is not that he lacks intelligence. In fact, it is his intellectual superiority that makes him unable to pass the mediocre examinations given to B. A. candidates. And though it is not mentioned that he is a Brahmin, it is implied that he possesses the ideal Brahmin traits--moral wisdom and lack of interest in material wealth and social prestige. The mimetic picture of Ramu that the author obviously wants to present is that of a young man who is outwardly a failure but is, in reality, a morally superior man.

It is shown that because Ramu does not have a good-paying job, his wife Janki and his mother-in-law Meenakshi constantly berate him for his failure to provide them with things abundantly enjoyed by rich, capricious women with unscrupulous husbands. Ramu suffers in silence until an opportunity occurs which gives him the upperhand. Overnight, he is transformed into a highly successful man. His success is indirectly attributed to his meekness and unworldliness, since the moral laws are supposed to work inevitably like fate. But lest the rewards for his approved traits appear too obviously materialistic, they are ostensibly traced to his decision to sell his remaining ancestral property on the advice of

his mother-in-law, who hopes to profit from it. The narrator explains that one cannot hope to be appreciated and understood in a place where people have known him since birth, but that he can lead in a place where he is practically unknown.

It is claimed that in the new place, Ramu becomes a very practical, articulate, and outstanding leader of the community. To a receptive audience of villagers, he explains how the zamindari system can be replaced by a system in which each individual will have three acres of land that cannot be sold or mortgaged, but passed in perpetuity from father to son, from mother to daughter. Ramu's plan, if implemented, is supposed to solve the problems of poverty and land-holding in India permanently. This is the propagandistic theme of the novel.

The naivete of the proposed solution to India's age-old problems is glossed over by the claim that Ramu is an ideal character favored by fate. Whatever he advocates is, therefore, bound to succeed. It is suggested that in spite of his outward change, he is still an ideal character. He is no longer passive and submissive, but his new articulateness and ability to manage practical things are meant for the good of others.

The author tries to vouch further for the validity and plausibility of the plans proposed by Ramu by having them approved and practiced by the minor characters. At

the opening of the novel, these characters act like real people in actual life. But they are arbitrarily made to undergo sudden transformations and are ultimately subordinated to the plot and theme of the novel.

Supposedly under the impact of Ramu's new personality, the women in his family change suddenly. His nagging, materialistic mother-in-law submits to his influence and dies soon afterwards. Janki becomes a virtuous wife earnestly supporting Ramu's plans. In addition, there are three men who change to do credit to Ramu's plans. His college friend Kedari, who has been ungrateful to him and ambitious in politics, and the unscrupulous politician Markandaya both meet reversals in fortune and, as ordained by fate, turn over a new leaf. They become staunch supporters of Ramu's plans. Murugan, the poor but honest peasant who has gone through the same cycle of being ambitious, dishonest, and rich, loses all his wealth overnight. He goes back repentant to his master Ramu and helps the latter's irrigation projects succeed. The transformation of these three male characters and of the women in Ramu's family, which defies the law of probability, is supposed to be decreed by fate for the sake of Ramu's success in helping his country.

The two moral laws are intended to be complementary. While Ramu rises in life, others fail so that they can submit to him and follow his wishes. Passivity,

submissiveness, and lack of interest in material wealth and social position are rewarded by the possession of these things and the submission of those who fail because of their ambitiousness, dishonesty, and interest in material wealth and social prestige. To justify the workings of these moral laws, Ramu is held up as an ideal character who needs power and success not for his own benefit but for the service of others.

The author makes use of an idealized protagonist to give weight to his propagandistic intent. He uses the method of character presentation in the ancient Indian literary pieces that are didactic. The confusion between ends and means, however, results in the ineffectiveness of Ramu's thematic function as an infallible advocate of solutions to the problems of India. He remains a shadowy speaker of ideas. Likewise, his mimetic portrait fails to give credit to the propagandistic intention of the author which, in the first place, is fantastic in the sense that it is over-optimistic without being realistic. On the whole, the author fails in his attempt to use character to support a doctrinaire solution to India's complex problems.

In Kandan, the Patriot, as in Murugan, the Tiller, Venkataramani confuses ends and means. Writing in a modern genre, he depicts Kandan, a common man belonging to contemporary times, as if he were an ideal man.

Kandan's identity, however, cannot be inferred from a well-known mythical background, nor does he possess a solid mimetic portrait that lends credence to his authenticity as a contemporary individual; thus he remains nondescript. His vague image cannot concretely render the thematic role he is made to play in the novel. As a result, the author fails in his attempt to dramatize his ideas on how to win independence for India.

Thematically, Kandan is a hero and martyr, a wholly selfless and altruistic nationalist leader with a charismatic personality and a big following. Like the ideal Brahmin, he is an intellectual who does not care for material possession and social prestige. He is a member of an aristocratic family and an Oxford graduate, but he has renounced his wealth, social status, and his much coveted position in the Indian civil service. The reason behind his renunciation is his frustrated love for Rajeswari, another Oxford graduate and member of an aristocratic family who has renounced both wealth and social position for the sake of service to the country. Frustrated in love, Kandan becomes a nationalist leader not to gain the goodwill of Rajeswari but apparently to forget her.

Following traditional Indian thinking, the author suggests that Kandan can succeed as an independence leader only if he ceases to be a lover, for love of woman and love of country are supposed to be incompatible with each other.

As a patriot completely dedicated to the service of the country, Kandan is an exemplary character whose virtues are approved, admired, emulated, and ardently asserted by others. Foremost among Kandan's admirers is Rajeswari, who has refused his offer of marriage to accept that of a less patriotic man. But her lavish praises of Kandan as a nationalist leader seem to be more of an attempt to salve a guilty conscience than a real proof of Kandan's merits.

Other characters are introduced to show a cross-section of Indian society that is supposed to be strongly influenced and transformed by Kandan's ideal traits. At the start, these characters act like real people in actual life. But in the latter part of the novel, they are given thematic functions that contradict their mimetic pictures and are subordinated to a plot pattern that is obviously manipulated to suit the author's avowed intent. There is Sarawasti, humorously and vividly presented at the beginning as a discontented wife constantly nagging her husband for having accepted the lowly position of a railway official in a remote village. Towards the end, she is transformed into a woman of great beauty and profound intuition so that she can vouch for Kandan's worthiness. There is also Mr. Mudaliar, an avaricious landowner and promiscuous man, who suddenly abandons his wicked ways when he learns that Kandan, his opponent, is highly

regarded by the villagers. The sudden transformation of these two characters and a number of others is supposed to be the result of the impact of Kandan's idealism and strong personality on them. On the other hand, Kandan's merits are assumed to be true on the testimony of these characters. The logic behind the author's presentation of Kandan as an ideal character is circular. The effect is supposed to prove the cause; and the cause, the effect.

Besides, the author's abundant use of assertions instead of actual rendition is ineffective, since what is asserted is not supported by a rich mythological past nor by scenes vividly presented. Kandan makes only brief appearances to explain his ideas on how to free India from the British. Even at the moment of his death from a bullet wound, he speaks on how those who would survive him should carry on after his death. Essentially he is a thematic character with no solid mimetic portrait. As a result, the ideas he advocates seem to come from nowhere.

The author's main aim in the novel is propagandistic, but he erroneously casts his major character into the mold of ideal characters in the ancient Indian literary pieces that are didactic in intent. Kandan's idealized character is meant to make the ideas he advocates readily acceptable to the reader. But his lack of authenticity removes him from the contemporary Indian scene. Belonging neither to the past nor the present, Kandan fails in his function as a symbolic vehicle of meaning.

In both Kandan, the Patriot and Murugan, the Tiller, Venkataramani presents idealized characters in the ancient manner to present modern propagandistic themes which, unfortunately enough, are impractical schemes. The incongruity between ends and means obviously prevents him from successfully rendering his themes convincingly. By using idealized protagonists with thematic roles unsustained by a rich mythological background or by authentic mimetic pictures of contemporary individuals, he fails to put across the theses that he hopes to render in these two novels.

B. Successful Presentation of Comic Types

The emphasis on the characters' thematic roles and the vividness of their mimetic pictures vary according to the kind of novel in which they appear. In novels of manners in which plot and theme dominate and the satiric-comic tone prevails, a high degree of realism is not aimed at by the writers. The characters presented are mostly types whose thematic functions are stressed more than the mimetic. There is little or no attempt to explore their inner life in depth to give them well-rounded portraits. Mimetic only in so far as their dominant qualities that are relevant to the comic plot are revealed, their mimetic traits are limited to the thematic aspects of their characteristics emphasized in order that the plot can run its course smoothly and the theme can be easily rendered.

The characters are made to appeal to the intellect of the reader rather than to his deeper feelings so that he can laugh at them as objects of satire instead of identifying and sympathizing with them fully. Social follies and other weaknesses of people in society are presented through characters whose salient traits are exaggerated sometimes to the point of absurdity. But since the degree of realism in character presentation aimed at is limited and the plot and theme are frankly stressed, writers of novels of manners often succeed by following the accepted norms of the sub-genre.

In Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's novels of manners in which the comic tone prevails, the mimetic role of the characters is subordinated to the thematic. Characters are comic types representing various follies and weaknesses of the Indian middle class, such as hypocrisy, snobbishness, materialism, lack of taste, and the like. Since these characters are personifications of social follies, there is no attempt to give them fully developed mimetic portraits. What is depicted is mostly what is directly relevant to their thematic functions. Their weaknesses are stressed, even exaggerated to the point of ridiculousness, while other traits they may possess are not shown in the least. On the whole, they act like puppets, and their mimetic pictures are caricatures of people in actual life. In presenting them almost wholly

on the outside, Jhabvala avoids the danger of distracting from their thematic functions. Their lack of psychological depth is consistent with her intention to satirize their foibles.

Jhabvala's characters live on the surface. They are incapable of feeling and thinking, except of richly spiced and very sweet food, gaudy clothes, jewelry, money, family prestige, making "good" marriages, and staging showy weddings. The women, usually with fat buttocks and big bosoms, sometimes show some talents for repartee and subtle hints, but most of them are insensitive to everything, except their obsessive concerns. The men, both young and old, are often corpulent and either snobbish or complacent in their ignorance. In the world they inhabit, nobody seems to have a will of his own. Everybody is subject to social norms that they follow without comprehension.

In Amrita or To Whom She Wills, the major characters, Amrita and her fiancé Hari, are primarily thematic characters representing a confused Indian couple torn between upholding old Indian values and following Western practices. The minor characters are types representing old Indian values that have become distorted through the ages. All of them are comic types dominated by the satiric theme and plot. Their chief function is to serve as vehicles of meaning.

In their "love" affair, Amrita and Hari, both university graduates working in a radio station, show the Indian misinterpretation of the Western concept of romantic love and the glorification of dubious Indian values. The juxtaposition and simultaneous presentation of these incongruous tendencies in the same characters accentuate the absurdity of mixing Indian values and Western values half-understood and hence misinterpreted by its proponents.

Amrita ridiculously tries to import into their conventional life the alien idea of romantic love. She believes and succeeds in making Hari believe that they are in love with each other. Actually, she is just in love with the idea of love, and Hari just happens to be the available man around. At the same time, she glorifies him for traits he does not possess. Because she is rebelling against the Western ideals of promptness and independence, she idealizes Hari into a charming and lovable Indian male simply because he cannot meet appointments and has no will of his own. Her pseudo-nationalism makes her see his weaknesses as commendable traits.

On his part, Hari is convinced that he is in love with Amrita when the truth is that he is merely sentimental about her and the idea of romantic love. The author mercilessly caricatures him. It is shown that his real love and chief interest in life is oven-baked fish. Like other Indian men in Jhabvala's novels, he has a hearty

appetite but completely lacks the capacity to feel and think for himself. Most of the time, he simply drifts from one commitment to another, depending on the pressure put on him by others. But his lack of will and capacity to think and feel are taken by Amrita, as well as by the members of his family, as part of his goodness. His greeting of friends and members of his family with superficial warmth and empty exuberance is interpreted by them as something genuine, showing that all of them are shallow-minded. Whatever they feel and if ever they think, they err. The author allows nothing to distract from their thematic functions in the novel. This over-simplification in character presentation results in exaggeration, which is consistent with the author's satiric intention.

The relationship between Amrita and Hari shows how little they understand each other and the values they profess to live by. While Hari believes that he is in love with Amrita, he is physically attracted to Sushila whose marriage to him is being arranged by their parents. And while Amrita believes that she has deeply hurt him because of his unwonted silence, he is just preoccupied with thoughts and visions of food and the fun he would have in his wedding to Sushila. He believes, however, that he is torn between his love for Amrita and his duty to his family to marry the girl they have chosen as his bride.

In the meantime, Amrita is arranging their elopement to England, without realizing that she has fallen in love with Krishna, her mother's "paying guest." Like Hari, she has totally deceived herself. Thus when Hari married Sushila, without telling Amrita, as an easy way out of his "predicament," Amrita feels relieved and readily shifts her interest to Krishna. Both Amrita and Hari are primarily thematic characters dominated by the plot pattern that is made to prevail, according to the author's satiric intention in the novel.

All the other characters also play dominantly thematic roles, exposing their adherence to the old values. Whether they stick to the old values or confound them with Western ways, the author suggests that they all end up ridiculous because of their lack of capacity to think and feel for themselves, so steeped are they in age-old norms and practices.

Amrita's mother Radha demands submission as a sign of respect and filial obedience. Disapproving of Hari because he belongs to a lower social and economic class than her family's, she goes imperiously, or so she believes, to Hari's place to demand that he stop seeing her daughter Amrita. But she is easily appeased when she is served sherbet that is cloyingly sweet and assured that Hari is engaged to be married to a girl of his own community. Thoughts of food and her daughter's future

occupy her equally. Her next move is to arrange Amrita's marriage with Lady Prasad's son who is still in the United States. But when she finds out that the latter has an American wife, she pretends that she has never considered him good enough for a son-in-law. Suddenly, she takes an interest in Krishna, her "paying guest." In Radha, the author humorously exposes greed, materialism, pretentiousness, superficiality, and snobbishness, all classic traits of the social climber. This is her thematic role, and no other facets of her character are revealed.

Amrita's aunts and the scheming women in Hari's family are also comic types illustrating the inanities and affectations of women in the Indian middle class. Like Radha, Amrita's Aunt Mira is fat and obsessed with thoughts of rich food and nice clothes. Aunt Tarla is thin, childless, and absorbed in committee work that gives her numerous opportunities to meet rich, fashionable women involved in charity work for the sake of family prestige.

On the side of Hari's family, there is his eldest sister Prema, the counterpart of Radha. Having become newly rich through marriage, she is a social climber, flaunting her husband's wealth to impress others. Like Radha, she demands submission as a sign of filial love and respect. She compels Hari to marry Sushila, a girl

from their own community, instead of Amrita, who has gone to college and imbibed "modern" ideas. In her obtuseness, Prema does not realize that Hari is only too willing to follow her wishes because he has no mind and will of his own. The fact is that Prema is merely imitating characters in sentimental stories, over which she constantly weeps, thinking that she is sensitive and hence artistic. All her traits are negative, revealing only that side of her character that is relevant to the author's satiric intent. Her similarities to Radha are intentional rather than accidental, the author's purpose being to use the device of repetition with little variation to stress the follies that she wishes to satirize.

Hari's mother and other sister, Mohini, try to impress Radha on their first meeting with the importance of their family. Later, when they see each other again at the railroad station, Hari's mother and sister Mohini try to hide from Radha the fact that some of their friends and relatives have taken the second and third class berths in the train, while Radha herself tries to conceal the fact that her "paying guest" Krishna, in whom she is interested as a future son-in-law, has taken the second class berth. Their aim is to maintain family prestige which, to them, depends largely on one's ability to spend money ostentatiously. All of them reveal the absurdity of snobbery and their inordinate wish to keep up appearances in order to impress others.

Like Hari, all the other men in the novel are types of ineffectual characters. Ram Bahadur, Amrita's grandfather, represents the type of father who pretends to have control and domination over his grown-up children long after he has actually lost them. Dayal, Amrita's uncle-in-law, is a habitual drinker, a pretentious connoiseur of arts, and a constant maker of promises that he does not fulfill. Prema's rich husband is a lecher with women, but all he can do is to ogle at them. All these men play subordinate roles to the women who seem to be more active and strong-willed than they. It is noteworthy that Krishna, Radha's "paying guest," is the only male character with brains. But like all the other male characters, he plays a subordinate role to the women.

All the characters in the novel have dominantly thematic roles, showing the follies and weaknesses of the Indian middle class. Intentionally, they are not given mimetic portraits with psychological depth. Their weaknesses are exaggerated to help the author achieve her satiric intent. Following the conventions of the novel of manners in which the comic tone prevails, the author stresses only the salient traits of the characters and thus succeeds in using them as "vehicles of meaning." Her success is due largely to her superficial treatment of her characters, which proves an asset rather than a defect. By avoiding the portrayal of complex characters,

she succeeds in her aim to use them as objects of satire. Had she delved deeply into their psyche, she would have created sympathy for them and made them memorable in themselves.

In The Nature of Passion, Jhabvala portrays comic types exposing the follies of the Indian nouveau riche class. These comic types, playing mainly thematic roles, are dominated by theme and plot. Their mimetic pictures are flat, showing only aspects of their characters that the author wishes to emphasize. Each of these characters is an entity in himself. Though they often meet and speak, they seldom communicate, for each is absorbed in his own special obsessions and aspirations. But after all they are not much different from each other, for they possess some traits in common, such as materialism, hypocrisy, snobbery, self-righteousness, social climbing, obsession with family honor and prestige, and various shades of coarseness, lack of taste, dishonesty, and insincerity and other characteristics of the nouveau riche class that the author wishes to satirize. Other traits they may possess are not depicted to avoid distraction from their thematic functions.

The Indian nouveau riche class is represented in the novel by the members of Lalaji's family. Lalaji is a successful businessman who has become immensely rich through hard work, the use of family connections, and

bribery which he stoutly defends as a time-honored way of running business courteously and smoothly. His main preoccupation is acquiring wealth and prestige. Being abundantly supplied with money, the members of his family indulge themselves in various ways that reveal their pretensions and special obsessions.

Chandra Prakash, Lalaji's eldest son, represents the "England-returned" civil service employee. His wife Kanta, a blind admirer of the British, represents the ostentatiously "cultured" woman. Together, they look down upon the conventional values of his unsophisticated family and pretend that they have nothing to do with his father's unscrupulous business ways. Nevertheless, they accept money from Lalaji so that they can enjoy the privileges of their "cultured" friends. Chandra even allows himself to be "persuaded" by his father, who is being investigated for bribery, to destroy an incriminating letter in his files to save the latter's business and reputation from ruin. Then to silence his "conscience," he allows himself to be "convinced" by Kanta that he is entirely blameless and that his father has coerced him into agreement. The fact is that he wants to be able to think well of himself and be thought well of by others. His English education has not gone very deep, having made him merely more snobbish, hypocritical, and insincere with himself and others. Both he and his wife are hypocrites who would

like to enjoy the blessings of a good conscience while being benefited by their collusion with Lalaji's dishonesty. Through them, the author exposes the superficiality of the Indian educated in England but steeped in the old perverted Indian values and practices.

Om Prakash, the second son, represents the son of a rich family who has not gone to England and is, as a result, more candid in his follies. Every time he appears, he is shown either asking his father for an air-conditioned office, or getting ready to go out with his friends to visit disreputable places. He is a married man, with three children, but apparently, he does not care much for his wife whom he has wedded in a pre-arranged marriage for wealth and convenience. Like other men of his class, he looks forward to initiating a younger brother into the vices of his company. And like his father and other members of the nouveau riche class, he is corpulent, opulent, and coarse in his ways. As a comic type representing the follies of the Indian unashamed of his vices, he presents a marked contrast to his hypocritical "England-returned" brother Chandra and his college-educated brother Viddi.

Viddi, the youngest son of Lalaji, represents the nouveau riche Indian young man aspiring to go to England and be known as a cultured man. He is a younger version of Chandra. Viddi's obsession is to enjoy the prestige of

being "England-returned." But he is unable to convince his father to send him to England, for the latter is afraid that Viddi might be another Chandra, low-paid but obsessed with keeping up appearances, employed in the Indian civil service, and married to a "cultured," snobbish wife.

In the meantime, Viddi poses as an intellectual misunderstood by his family. Among his "artist" friends who patronize him with the hope of getting money from his father, he loudly protests against the materialism and lack of taste of his family. He likes to believe that he is above their bourgeois ways. But he is easily pacified when his father gives him a monthly allowance of 500 rupees, to be increased to 800 rupees, with the promise of being taken into the family business. While enjoying the power, prestige, and privileges that go with his family's wealth, he pretends that he is going to save money to be able to go to England and study art and sociology. In his case as in Chandra's, education merely accentuates insincerity, snobbishness, and hypocrisy. Viddi has a fuller mimetic portrait than Chandra, but his mimetic traits are depicted in detail only to stress his thematic function as a comic type belonging to the nouveau riche class.

Like Viddi, Nimmi, the youngest daughter of the family, has a fuller mimetic portrait than the rest of the members of Lalaji's family. Like his, her mimetic

traits are given only to accentuate the thematic. Following the examples of the two "educated" sons of the family, she is a snob and a hypocrite and a social climber. She is also very materialistic and obsessed with keeping up appearances for the sake of prestige. Like them, she aspires to be accepted into "high" society by pretending to look down on her own family.

At the start, Nimmi tries to dissociate herself from the women of her family, who are all stout and fond of gaudy saris and jewelry, not because she has better taste and values but because she wants to be known as fashionable instead of being merely rich among her few selected friends. In the university, she goes with girls from rich, "cultured," fashionable families and snubs her sister-in-law's poor cousin who wants to be accepted into high society. Nimmi does not want to be used by anybody though she herself uses her friends to attain her wishes.

Among the members of Lalaji's family, it is Nimmi who outwardly and most openly tries to break away from the old ways, but she ends up just like the others. Priding herself on her modern fashionable ways, she cuts her hair short. She dates Phero, a boy from a rich Parsee family, and goes out dancing with him, without a chaperon, in an exclusive nightclub. She shocks the women in her family who have taken for granted that they can arrange

her marriage with a man from their own community. Incapable of love but professing belief in romantic love, Nimmi ridicules the idea of a pre-arranged marriage. Eventually, however, she agrees to a pre-arranged match when she finds out that the chosen bridegroom is a rich, fashionable young man who can give her the chance to travel to England like her friends. Like Chandra and Viddi, she believes that she stands above the values of her family. But her decisions and actions betray that, in actuality, she, too, is steeped in these values. She seems to wear a different mask from the others, but her disguise is transparent.

The older women in Lalaji's family, being uneducated, follow the old ways self-righteously. They are comic types of nagging, gossiping, bickering, backbiting old women intent on enhancing the family prestige to impress others. Within their household, Lalaji's older sister and his wife are always at odds; but to outsiders, they present a united front. When a new baby is born to Om Prakash's wife, they try their best to impress her folks with their wealth and generosity. They compete in giving money to the newly born baby and try to get all the members of the clan to camp in their private room in the hospital to prove that they are more concerned with the daughter-in-law and the new baby than the members of her own family.

All the characters in the novel play mainly thematic roles illustrating the negative traits of the

Indian nouveau riche class.[1] The uneducated ones openly admit and practice what they wish, while the "educated" ones try to deceive themselves and others by pretending that they are different. No one suffers. Everything ends happily in spite of threats to the contrary. Lalaji, with the cooperation of Chandra, escapes ruin. Chandra goes on receiving money from his father to keep up his prestige. Om Prakash keeps on going out with his friends to disreputable places and is looking forward to initiating Viddi into his way of life. Viddi enjoys his allowance and looks forward to being able to to save enough to go to England. All of them have their wishes fulfilled.

The older women succeed in impressing others with the family wealth and prestige and in making a good match for Nimmi. For her part, Nimmi, who has been very much against a pre-arranged marriage, agrees to it when she finds out that she can fulfill her dreams and ambitions through it. Everybody fits neatly into the plot, which reveals the theme that the values and ways of the Indian nouveau riche class are absurd. The emphasis on the surface traits of the characters, following the conventions of the novel of manners, helps the author

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[1]Only two members of the family are unaffected by the family's drive for power and prestige. But they are the most colorless characters, the naive, almost stupid daughter and the meek daughter-in-law. Their dullness is their saving grace.

succeed in dramatizing her satiric intent. Barred from participating in their inner thoughts and feelings and seeing only what goes on the surface of their minds rather than deeply in their hearts, the reader is more easily persuaded to laugh at their follies and absurdities. The author's lack of sympathy for the characters is thus easily passed on to the reader.

CHAPTER II

PRESENTATION OF CHARACTERS WITH DUAL ROLES

A. Successful Integration of Thematic and Mimetic Functions

In the novel of social realism in which the serious tone prevails, characters are given fuller mimetic portraits than in the novel of manners. But since the writer's chief aim is to present a social theme or thesis, the thematic roles of characters are likewise stressed. The emphasis is on their sociological rather than their psychological reality. They are not created primarily for their own sake but for functions bigger than themselves. Their inner lives are explored mainly to throw light on their thematic roles that make them a part of a large scheme and give them their own significance. As such, they tend to be dominated by plot and theme though not to the same extent that characters in the novel of manners are dominated.

To make these characters convincing and hence effective in conveying meaning, however, the novelists try to make their mimetic portraits as vivid as possible. Their psychological reality is brought out in scenes showing them acting and reacting to different situations

as real people do in contemporary Indian society. But since characters with well developed mimetic pictures tend to take on a life of their own, the novelists come across the difficult problem of reconciling the characters' dual functions which tend to go into opposite directions. The reconciliation of these two roles, which are not necessarily incompatible, proves a challenging one to Indian writers.

If the novelists succeed in harmonizing the dual roles of their protagonists, it is very likely that they will also succeed in dramatizing their theses. To the extent that the protagonists are social types, they reveal traits characteristic of people in contemporary Indian life. And to the extent that their psychological make-up shows some of the complexity of individuals in actual life, they appear realistic; and their authenticity lends credence to the beliefs they uphold or contradict and the personal discoveries they make.

Indian writers succeed if they portray thematic characters vibrant with life and endowed with personal traits that individualize them and distinguish them from others. These characters have a life apart from their thematic functions and yet are not so complex that some of their traits appear to contradict the very ideas they are supposed to represent. Nor are their experiences so private and unique that they no longer fit the

plots and themes of the novels in which they are presented. Their mimetic pictures remain consistent with their thematic roles. And whatever facets of their mimetic functions may appear irrelevant to their thematic roles merely enrich their portraitures.

Among the Indian novelists who succeed in integrating the dual roles of their characters and consequently in dramatizing their theses are the following: Rabindranath Tagore in most of his novels, including Binodini, Gora, and The Home and The World, Mulk Raj Anand in Untouchable, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala in Esmond in India, and Manohar Malgonkar in The Princes. Using places as protagonists, Raja Rao in Kanthapura and S. Nagarajan in Chronicles of Kedaram, likewise, succeed in rendering their themes by integrating their thematic functions with vivid composite mimetic portraits.

B. Mixed Achievement

Khuswant Singh in Train to Pakistan succeeds only in part. He succeeds in depicting a village as protagonist, with a well-developed, composite mimetic portrait. In his portrayal of the hero of the novel, however, he fails to sustain the latter's mimetic picture with convincing details. As a result, the individual protagonist's thematic role appears vague and merely superimposed on the novel.

The young widow protagonist in Tagore's novel Binodini is a character whose thematic function is beautifully interwoven with the mimetic. As a thematic character, she is both a victim of social injustice and a rebel against it. Her being born into conservative Hindu society makes her automatically its victim. Her perceptiveness and innate talents, however, enable her to rise above it and the people who wish to perpetuate its most oppressive, time-hallowed practices. From an unwilling victim, Binodini is transformed into an active rebel. Towards the end, she seems to turn conformist. Her dynamic transformations are part of her complex mimetic picture as a confused though highly talented young woman; and this picture graphically dramatizes instead of contradicting her triple-phased thematic function as victim, rebel, and conformist.

Binodini's father was a non-conformist who brought up his only daughter in an unorthodox manner that has developed her innate talents. From the start, Binodini's inborn traits and upbringing conspire to make her an outstanding individual in a society that upholds conformity as one of its highest ideals. Contrary to the widespread practice of preparing a young girl for marriage and saving for her dowry, her father instead spends for her education, saving little for her future. Unfortunately, he does not live long enough to make Binodini's

unconventional upbringing meaningful in her life. At his death, her mother, a defenseless widow, buckles under strong social pressure and conforms to age-old practices which put the talented and individualistic girl in a difficult predicament. Fearful of being condemned as immoral if she keeps Binodini unmarried, she looks for a husband for the young girl. But with little money left for Binodini's dowry, her chances for a good marriage are limited. Her mother agrees to have her married to Mahendra, the rich but spoiled son of the widowed Rajlaksmi. And when Mahendra capriciously changes his mind about the marriage, her mother hastily arranges her marriage with a sickly distant cousin of hers in her native village, for her value in the marriage market has further decreased. In the mind of her mother, the stigma attached to her being rejected by Mahendra and later by his friend Bihari proves stronger than her fear of the risk of early widowhood which, in itself, is a curse to be avoided. When the sickly bridegroom dies shortly after the marriage, the taboo against widow remarriage dooms Binodini to a life deprived to happiness. Thus, she becomes a victim of oppressive social practices. As A. V. Rao observes, "The cultural cussedness of the Hindu society is primarily responsible for her becoming a widow even before she becomes mature enough to live a married life." [1]

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[1]"The Novels of Rabindranath Tagore," Triveni, XXXIII (July, 1964), p. 66.

Binodini's thematic function changes as the narrative progresses, and the transformations she undergoes are consistent with her complex psychological development. Her thematic and mimetic roles are brought out through her interaction with other characters who, like her, have dual functions. Aside from Mahendra, there are his widowed mother Rajlakshmi, his widowed aunt Annapurna, his wife Ashalata, and his childhood friend Bihari. Their thematic roles as characters who bring about Binodini's transformations are made alive by the vivid semblance of life infused into their mimetic pictures.[2] Their thoughts and motives are dramatized from within and without. Their present behavior is traced unobtrusively to past experiences; and their motives and actions are correlated with Binodini's motives, actions, and reactions.

Rajlakshmi, "the archetypal doting mother," spoils her only son Mahendra to keep him always by her side as a psychological crutch. Her own sense of loss and insecurity on her husband's death drive her to manipulate people, without regard for their feelings, just to be able to please her spoiled son. By catering to his wishes, reasonable or not, she hopes to win his love

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[2]In her book review of Binodini, Mary M. Lago writes, "They are personality types of almost Theophrastian clarity, yet each is individualized." Mabfil, III, No. 1 (1966), p. 78.

and loyalty for life. Her fear of losing him to others is a manifestation of her own insecurity and lack of trust in herself. Moreover, the ban on widow remarriage makes it impossible for her, a conformist, to find fulfillment in a second marriage. Hence, she clings to her son while she allows him to play the tyrant over herself and others. Ultimately, Rajlakshmi's self-centeredness begets the most wilful kind of egoism in her son Mahendra.

Having lost his father in infancy and having been indulged by his widowed mother excessively, Mahendra, now a grown-up man, still acts very much like a spoiled child. At twenty-two, he is still his mother's "beloved helpless son, her own baby incapable of looking after himself."[3] Though he has finished his M.A. degree and is studying medicine in the university, he is still wayward and petulant and has to be constantly humored and fussed over by his mother. He is, as M. Lago describes him, "a self-centered, self-indulgent pseudo-intellectual who cannot see the relationship between prestige and responsibility, between a medical degree and discipline, between love and loyalty."[4]

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[3]The novel, known in the original Bengali as Chokher Bali (literally "Eyesore") was first published in 1902. This quotation is taken from the English translation by Khrisna Kripalani (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1964), p. 125.

[4]M. M. Lago, op. cit., p. 79.

Together mother and son, who trample on the rights and feelings of Binodini, do not appear to be merely abstract thematic characters who bring about a set of reactions. Their motives and actions, vividly and concretely rendered, make Binodini's reaction to them appear natural and convincing.

The doting mother and the spoiled son expose Binodini to awkward social situations and harsh condemnations. Instead of appealing to his sense of honor and responsibility, Rajlakshmi tries to convince Mahendra's childhood friend Bihari to marry Binodini. When Bihari refuses, Binodini's disgrace and humiliation increase. Thus mother and son unwittingly conspire to expose Binodini to strong social pressure and condemnation that her own widowed mother is too weak to resist.

As the actions of the doting mother and the spoiled son conspire to make Binodini a victim of social injustice, so they also help bring about her transformation. Their machinations make Binodini's latent rebelliousness come out into the open. Now a widow stranded in her village like "a pathetic glory in a joyless wilderness," Binodini feels cheated out of life. But for sometime, she finds no chance to improve her lot. Ironically, she finds the opportunity to leave her boring life in the village three years later when Mahendra marries Asha (whom he has chosen as a wife for his friend Bihari but

marries himself). Jealous of the new daughter-in-law, Rajlakshmi invites Binodini into her household in Calcutta to spite Asha and make Mahendra realize that his new bride is not worthy of his love. Obsessed by her own loneliness, Rajlakshmi does not care how Binodini would feel in the household of the man who has once rejected her hand in marriage. In fact, it is Rajlakshmi who has cleverly, if half-consciously, set the stage for Binodini's seduction of Mahendra.

In Rajlakshmi's household in Calcutta, Binodini resentfully gives way to the rebelliousness welling within her. She endears herself to the old woman by attending to her needs and the management of the household intelligently and efficiently, as if to show the thoughtless Mahendra that he has made a big mistake in refusing to marry her. She feels bitter that Mahendra's pretty wife Asha, who is much less talented than she is, is now enjoying the position, rights, and privileges that should have been hers. Nevertheless, she befriends the naive Asha and tries to find vicarious satisfaction in listening to the young bride's experiences of first love with "the avidity of a drunkard thirsting for the fiery wine."

From the beginning of her stay in Rajlakshmi's household, Binodini seems to be attracted to Bihari. But his self-righteousness appears forbidding to her, especially because he obviously looks down on her as a seductress who

can only make trouble for Mahendra and Asha. Her jealousy of Asha is intensified by the high regard and ill-concealed love for her by Bihari. In Binodini's mind, it is unfair that the dull-witted Asha should have everything that has been denied her. Perversely, she tries to seduce Mahendra, with Rajlakshmi's unspoken consent. Mahendra's widowed aunt Annapurna indirectly abets the seduction by leaving the scene and taking refuge in a convent when she knows quite well what is going to happen to the young people in her absence. Thus, all together, Mahendra, Asha, Bihari, Rajlakshmi, and Annapurna bring about Binodini's transformation from a passive victim to an active rebel against oppressive social practices. Through them, she becomes aware of what should have been hers by right of marriage, what she has been missing in her widowed state, and what she can possibly enjoy if she could but flaunt the taboo against widow remarriage.

In seducing Mahendra, Binodini's motives are complex. Possibly, she wants to attract Bihari by making him jealous of Mahendra. It may be that she wants to spite the self-righteous Bihari who looks down on her, while he looks up to Asha whom he has no right to love. Or probably, she wants to attract and punish Mahendra for rejecting her hand in marriage and also Asha who is now enjoying the position that should have been hers. Binodini's complex motives add to the vividness of her

mimetic portrait which, in turn, sustains her thematic function as a victim of and a rebel against social injustices perpetrated through the practices of early and pre-arranged marriage and the ban against widow remarriage.

Binodini's perceptiveness makes her soon see Mahendra for what he really is, a self-centered humbug in love with nobody but his made-up image of himself. She readily sees that he is neither in love with his wife Asha nor with herself. She believes that he is running after her only because she eludes him but that he would run away from her if she submits to him and tries to hold him. She believes that it is Bihari whom she loves and respects. Perceptive though she is, however, she is blind to her own weakness, her inability to decide what she really wants from life. She goes after Bihari because the latter eludes her, for there is also a streak of Mahendra's perversity in her.

When Mahendra openly declares his "love" for her, Binodini flees from his household. She has pursued him but retreats when he responds to her advances. She asks Bihari to give her refuge and offers her love for him. But the self-righteous Bihari, himself in love with Asha, sends Binodini away in anger. He leaves his house in Calcutta and tries his best to forget "the evil charmer," but he cannot help being drawn to her.

Back in the village, despised by her neighbors as a fallen woman, Binodini is once more plagued by conflicting emotions. Sometimes, she accepts what seems to be her fate. Sometimes, she wants to hit back at the village people who have unjustly condemned her, without knowing that Mahendra has followed her to the village against her wishes. Her main grievance against them is that they think of her only as a despised widow, a young woman with no rights at all as a human being. Recalling Bihari's advice to her to give up Mahendra obviously for the sake of Asha, she regrets her decision to submit to Bihari's wishes. Finally, the rebel within her once more gains the upper hand and refuses to succumb to her submissive, conformist other self. As a result, when Mahendra pays her another visit and offers to take her anywhere, she goes with him to the West but only to be able to search for Bihari.

At this time, Bihari realizes that his rejection of the love that Binodini has offered him is due to his excessive self-righteousness and that, in fact, he has rejected her because he is still in love with Asha, not because he wants to protect her in her innocence, as he believes. He opens his eyes to the idea that Binodini is worthy of his love and respect. Now that he believes she has ceased to pursue him, he wants to have her. When they finally meet in a remote village, he offers to

marry her in spite of the ban against widow remarriage and society's condemnation of her as a fallen woman. Binodini, however, refuses.[5] It is in her psychological makeup that, like Mahendra and Bihari, she pursues one who eludes her but flees when the one she has pursued is within her reach. Besides, she knows that Bihari is the type who finds security in conforming to society and that his avowed intention to defy social norms is just a daring gesture. She is not sure that he will not regret losing his caste if he marries her, a widow and a woman in disgrace. She entreats him, "Do not deceive yourself. You will never be happy if you marry me. You will lose your pride and I shall lose mine. Live as you have always lived, detached and serene and let me remain at a distance, engrossed in your work. May happiness and peace be ever yours." (p. 244)

Now that Binodini has succeeded in defying society and is in a position to get what she has longed for, she changes her mind. She has tried to win Bihari over, as she has done with Mahendra and then retreats when she

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[5]Niharranjan Ray in "Three Novels of Tagore: 'Choker Bali'--'Gora'--'Yogayoga'," Indian Literature, Tagore Number (A Centenary Volume, 1861-1961) objects to Binodini's changing her mind about marrying Binoy. He refers to this turn of events as Tagore's deception. His objection would be valid if Binodini were merely a thematic character. But she is also a mimetic character whom Tagore refuses to subordinate to the plot and theme of the novel.

has achieved her end. As she has made Mahendra regret what he has missed in rejecting her, she has also made Bihari realize that she is not the shameless woman that he has thought her to be. Having made both men recognize her worth as an individual and power as a woman, she is satisfied. She wants none of what they are offering her, neither of which is accepted by society--the illicit affair that is the only possible relationship with Mahendra and marriage with Bihari which, being disapproved by society, is not likely to end in happiness and fullfillment. The rebel in her recedes the moment she has the recognition that she craves. At the end, she decides to conform not because she lacks the courage to rebel further but because she knows full well that only in conformity can one find peace in conservative Hindu society. Though she knows that she herself can defy social conventions, she is also aware of the debilitating pressure that society can put on people; and she is not sure that Bihari is strong enough to stand on his impulsive decision to marry her. To her, it is better to be able to hold on to the idea that she has triumphed over him than to be able to marry him and end up in remorse. She herself has not been spared by society's pressure, for why else should she desire victory over men who are not even as strong as she?

Binodini's symbolism is dynamic. Her dominant thematic role is that of a rebel against the oppressive social system. This role, however, does not preclude the fact that simultaneously, she is also a victim and a conformist, at least on the surface. Her conformity being born of prudence rather than lack of courage, does not contradict her dominant thematic role as a rebel. In fact, the three facets of her thematic function are inextricably linked. All together, they reveal the extent of the pressure exerted by society on the individual, making it necessary for him to conform outwardly while he remains a rebel inwardly. In other words, if it does not completely stultify the individual, society encourages a dichotomy between his inner and outer self; the individual can be his real self only within himself. For the sake of prudence, he has to follow norms that he does not fully believe.

Binodini's dynamic symbolism, which constitutes her thematic role in the novel, is well integrated with her complex mimetic picture as a basically confused individual torn by conflicting desires to dominate and to submit, to pursue and to retreat. Her portrait shows her awareness that within the conservative Hindu social system, one will lose his personality if he submits wholly. On the other hand, to dominate through rebelliousness is to put oneself outside the pale of Hindu

society, which is impractical unless one has the opportunity to be accepted in a different community.

Binodini realizes that the best thing to do, at the moment, is to submit outwardly while remaining herself inwardly. As an individual woman, she simultaneously satisfies her ambivalent wishes to submit and dominate by thinking of Mahendra's regrets and Bihari's respect without having a close personal relationship with either man. Her divided psyche is a reflection of the damage that society can wreak on an exceptionally talented woman like her. If she had been less intelligent and perceptive, she could have emerged whole within herself, but possibly as a submissive victim, for then she would have accepted all the values that society imposes on her. It is her misfortune, however, that while she is perceptive enough to realize that one can be free to be himself only outside the pale of Hindu society, she does not have enough courage to live, except within it, for the norms she has defied have also become an integral part of herself.

Binodini triumphs in the sense that she, a woman and a despised widow, is the one who achieves enlightenment. But she is defeated in the sense that she cannot put into practice what she has achieved. Her mimetic portrait as an inwardly divided woman gives solidity to her thematic role as a dynamic symbol, a rebel and victim of the Hindu social system.

In The Home and the World, Tagore succeeds in dramatizing conflicting ideas through the interaction of the characters. There is the device of a young woman torn between two men representing contrary ideals. At the opening of the novel, Bimala, who represents Mother India, is attracted to the pseudo-nationalist Sandip who advocates violence for the cause of the country's independence from the British. She has become alienated from her husband Nikhil, an idealist who advocates non-violence, humanism, and universal brotherhood. To Sandip, the militant nationalist, the end justifies the means; whereas to Nikhil, this Machiavellian tenet can lead to no good end.[6]

All three characters, however, are more than just symbols. There is no clear-cut distinction between the two men.[7] There is a little of Nikhil in Sandip and a

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[6]A. V. Krishna Rao in "The Novels of Tagore," Triveni, XXXIII (July, 1964), p. 67, comments, "Sandip and Nikhil are ideologically poles apart: the former is an aggressive and unscrupulous nationalist while the latter is a non-violent humanist."

[7]In "Tagore the Novelist," The Diliman Review, VII, No. 3 (1959), p. 337, B. Bhaskhar gives an over-simplified, ultra-nationalistic interpretation of the characters' thematic roles: "Nikhil symbolizes all that is good and vital in the Indian tradition, and Sandip personifies aggressive, Western-type nationalism, which Tagore feared was beginning to take shape in India. Sandip openly advocates the 'Western military style' as a substitute to the traditional system. Nevertheless, he is compelled to acknowledge the strength of the Indian tradition . . . Nikhil is the true inheritor of this tradition. He cannot think of gaining success at the cost of the soul, for, to him, the soul is greater than everything else, including success."

little of Sandip in Nikhil that make it possible for Bimala to be attracted to both men. All three are complex characters with mimetic portraits that reveal their reality as individuals. As thematic characters, they espouse ideals that are consistent with their basic traits and past experiences presented in their mimetic portraits. With the use of the composite point of view and extended interior monologues, the author reveals the inmost thoughts, feelings, and reactions of the characters to each other and thus renders their thematic functions vivid and concrete.[8] Their intense inner lives establish their identity as real individuals who simultaneously represent the main currents of India's response to the independent movement against the British.

Likewise, through these devices, the author reveals the basic differences of the three characters in temperament. Nikhil's lyrical-philosophical turn of mind shown in extended interior monologues brings out his main contrast with the two other characters who are more

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[8]Bhabhani Bhattacharya, in "Tagore as a Novelist," Tagore, 1861-1961: A Centenary Volume (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademy, 1961), p. 99, observes, " . . . it is the human interest in The Home and the World that mainly counts. The characters are no pawns in the hand of history, even if they are good symbols. The story is a total departure from the traditional form. It is built through the awareness of each of the three main characters by the introspective use of the first person singular."

matter-of-fact in their ways of thinking and acting. And by means of this contrast, Tagore indirectly shows, from the start, the basic distinction among the three characters. Together with his master Chandranath Babu, Nikhil serves as the author's spokesman in the novel.

Nikhil is both a type and an individual. As an idealist, he is a type that speaks as a slightly disguised mouthpiece of the author whose ideals were too advanced for most of his contemporaries to understand. But Nikhil is shown to be more than a type: he is an individual whose ideals are atypical, considering his background. He is a Maharajah but is different from the rest of the men of his family who are given to drink and dissipation. He is the best educated of them all, having taken his M.A. degree. An intellectual rather than a pleasure-seeking Maharajah is a rarity during his time. His difference from other Maharajahs marks him as an individual.

Nikhil is a non-conformist to the traditional and fashionable Hindu practices. In spite of the opposition of orthodox Hindus, he has engaged an English woman as a tutor and companion of his wife Bimala so that the latter can go out of purdah[9] and be cured of her

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[9]Purdah is the system of secluding women from men and strangers.

"infatuation with tyranny." He objects to the seizure and burning of foreign cloth owned by a poor man on the ground that his family will suffer unnecessarily for it. He opposes the fashionable spirit of Bande Mataram,[10] which almost everybody is eager to support to free the country from the British. Openly, he declares, "I am willing to serve my country. To worship my country as a god is to bring a curse upon it.[11] To his "patriotic" countrymen, this is sacrilege. His stand is too idealistic to be understood by others, his wife Bimala included. To the down-to-earth Sandip, Nikhil is but "an incorrigible schoolboy" who speaks as if he were quoting his guru, Chandranath Babu. Treated sympathetically by the author, however, Nikhil serves as his spokesman of his unpopular stand during the early days of independence.

Idealistic though Nikhil is, his mimetic portrait shows that he is far from being an idealized character. His self-examinations, given in extended interior monologues, reveal that he commits errors in judgement. He

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[10] Bande Mataram, the battle cry of the Indian revolutionary movement for independence against the British, encouraged the use of violence.

[11] The novel in Bengali was first published in 1919. This quotation is taken from Surendranath Tagore's English translation which was revised by the author (London: Macmillan Co., Ltd., 1961), p. 26.

observes that there is "a tyrannical streak" in him that alienates his wife, and he regrets his mistake in having influenced Bimala to accept his views, without considering her own wishes. To him, who believes that all imposition of force is a sign of weakness, his mistake is something to be remedied only by giving his wife her freedom. His over-scrupulousness is his most salient weakness.

Nikhil's mimetic portrait is further rounded up by observations made by his wife Bimala and his rival Sandip. Bimala's thoughts, likewise given in extended interior monologues, show that it is precisely Nikhil's "tyrannical streak" that she needs and finds in Sandip. Nikhil can understand high ideals but not his own wife's mind. He does not realize that it is his idealism and inability to assert himself when others impose on him that alienate her and attract her to the imperious Sandip. Being an idealist, he cannot understand that she is a woman who wants to submit rather than to dominate. He makes her believe that he is weak when he hesitates to talk with her about her falling for Sandip's wiles, for fear that jealousy might make him exaggerage Sandip's defects.

At the end Nikhil goes unarmed to a neighboring zamindar's place where the treasury is being looted and the women are being subjected to violence. His recklessness, born of excessive idealism, is likely to result in

his untimely death in the communal riots. In Nikhil's mimetic portrait, which marks him as an individual, Tagore shows the positive and negative aspects of idealism, with emphasis on the former. His dual roles are thus integrated.

With his audacity and unscrupulousness, Sandip presents a striking contrast to Nikhil. Like the latter, Sandip has a complex mimetic portrait that gives substance to his thematic role as the advocate of violence in all its aspects for the sake of the country's independence.

On the surface, it seems that he has completely overcome whatever scruples he has in deceiving Bimala and his other followers. He convinces himself and others that being a superior man he has the right to be cruel for the sake of the Motherland. He succeeds in making himself and others believe that to be just is only for ordinary men and that it is reserved for the great to be unjust.[12] But his jealousy of Amulya, a youth whose innocence touches Bimala, reveals Sandip's lack of belief in his much-vaunted superiority over others.

Outwardly, Sandip impresses people with his forcefullness and his ability to trample on the rights

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[12]Sandip belongs to the type that counts Raskolnikov and Julien Sorrel among its members.

of others presumably for the sake of the Mother Country. Inwardly, however, he has to fight against an idealistic streak that he despises in Nikhil. Although he praises himself on being an incarnation of Ravanna, the demon king in the Ramayana, he has some sympathetic characteristics that he tries his best to suppress. He tries to get rid of what he considers his weakness but is actually what survives of his humaneness.

Sandip's thoughts, revealed in extended interior monologues, point to his inwardly divided self. Once he reflects:

> It seems to me, in this story of my life, that, like a living planet, I am displaying the picture of an ideal world. But I am not merely what I want, what I think,--I am also what I do not love, what I do not wish to be. My creation had begun before I was born. I had no choice in regard to my surroundings and so must make the best material as comes to my hand.
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> . . . this malady of ideas which afflicts me is shaping my life within; nevertheless a great part of my life remains outside its influence; and so there is set up a discrepancy between my outward life and its inner design which I try my best to keep concealed even from myself; otherwise it may wreck not only my plans but my very life.
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> It is not that I do not understand at all Nikhil's point of view; that is rather where my danger lies. I was born in India and the poison of its spirituality runs in my blood. However loudly I may proclaim the madness of walking in the path of self-abnegation, I cannot avoid it altogether (pp. 98, 100-101).

Incidents recalled by Sandip show that there is a constant tension between his unscrupulous self and his more humane other self. Because he is sensitive, he is

aware of how much others suffer because of his misdeeds, but he tries his best to be callous to their feelings. For instance, he can see how much Bimala suffers from her "broken pride" when she fails in her request to Nikhil to order foreign goods out of the market. Yet Sandip goes on making further demands on her which, he knows, would be directly or indirectly opposed by her husband.

It is shown, too, that in some instances where Sandip suffers from scrupulousness, he is moved by mixed motives. He has scruples about asking Bimala for money and later her jewels not because of the deceit involved but because of the possible taint it would make on his manhood. He pities Bimala for her disappointment in herself for her inability to get the money immediately and regrets that he has asked for it because it "savors of beggary, for money is man's not woman's." To himself, he rationalizes:

> That is why I had to make it a big figure. A thousand or two would have the air of petty theft. Fifty thousand has all the expanse of romantic brigandage (pp. 153-154).

It is shown that Sandip, not Nikhil, understands the workings of Bimala's mind and that his insight into her mind is linked with his attempt to counteract his uneasiness, which comes to the surface in spite of his attempts to deceive himself. To silence his troubled conscience, he convinces himself that the only way to make Bimala happy is to demand of her a great sacrifice,

and he justifies his deceitfulness by thinking that his deprived childhood entitles him to take advantage of the opportunities that might never come back. His probings into his and Bimala's minds, juxtaposed with his ambivalent attitudes towards his scruples and lack of them, add depth and solidity to his mimetic portrait as a man who would stop at nothing, in spite of his misgivings, to get what he wants on the pretext of working for the country's independence.[13] In being himself and acting out his spontaneous impulses, Sandip symbolizes the forces that advocate violence during the Indian movement for independence.

At the center of the conflict between Nikhil and Sandip is Bimala, the only character in the novel who goes through a dynamic transformation, as it appears to others, if not exactly within herself. As a thematic character, she stands for Mother India attracted by conflicting ideas on how she can free herself from the stranglehold of the British. As a woman, she manifests

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[13]In the latter part of the novel where Sandip ceases to tell his own story, he seems to be too evil to be a real human being. This latter picture of Sandip, however, is not a contradiction of the earlier one. It simply shows that Sandip viewed wholly from the outside is a mere abstraction, whereas Sandip viewed both from within and without is a human being of flesh and blood. His mimetic portrait having been made to appear authentic in the early part of the novel, it does not matter much if he is shown in the latter part of the novel only through the eyes of the other characters.

the same characteristics as Mother India and other traits that mark her as a particular individual. Her childlessness after nine years of marriage symbolizes the sterility from which India suffers in spite of her alliance with an idealistic spouse, India's spiritual idealism, not only because of British domination but also because of her "infatuation with tyranny."

On the whole, Bimala's traits as a particular woman can be taken symbolically without reducing them to a one-to-one correspondence. She is conscious of her lack of good looks but proud of her present position as Chota Rani (Junior Rani). Her having been born and brought up among the common people, however, makes her very susceptible to the new fashion in the nationalistic movement for independence led by Sandip. Following Sandip's orders, she proposes to get rid of Miss Gilby, her English tutor and companion, and to burn all her foreign clothes. When Nikhil protests, she takes his objections as signs of weakness and treachery to the country itself. She finds his decisions and actions embarrassing to the people who are quick at jumping to conclusions. She just cannot understand his idealism and brand of nationalism. His practice of swadeshi[14] within the privacy of their household and the help he

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[14] Swadeshi refers to the home-rule movement.

extends to the poor have no appeal to her, whereas Sandip's flamboyant and spectacular, if unjust, gestures, impress her deeply. She fails to see through Sandip's attempts to make the National Cause serve his self-interest and finds his flatteries difficult to resist, especially because he calls her the symbol of Shakti, primordial energy, of Mother India herself. Moreover, she comes to believe his contention that she with her Shakti is beyond sin and is persuaded to steal money from her husband's treasury by Sandip's claim that only a commoner can be a thief and that she with her Shakti can take money as her rightful spoil for the cause of the country. Though her thoughts, feelings, and actions are those of a particular woman, they can also be seen as characteristics of the unenlightened segments of Indian society during the early days of the independence movement, the masses inflamed by the passion for violence untempered by reason and spiritual idealism.

Her giving money to Sandip, a man, however, makes her feel superior to him, even if he receives it presumably for the sake of the country. Above all, she wants to keep her dignity but is disillusioned to find out that Sandip is what she has suspected, an opportunist, and, at bottom, really a weak man. She reflects:

> Oh, the weak! The weak! At last Sandip has realized that he is weak before me! That is why there is this sudden outburst of anger.

> He has understood that he cannot meet the power that I wield, with mere strength. With a glance I can crumble his strongest fortifications. So he must need resort to bluster. I simply smiled in contemptuous silence. At last have I come to a level above him. I must never lose this vantage ground; never descend lower again. Amidst all my degradation this bit of dignity must remain to me!
>
> The moment I had stolen my husband's money and paid it to Sandip, the music that was in our relations stopped. Not only did I destroy all my own value by making myself cheap, but Sandip's powers, too, lost scope for their full play. You cannot employ your marksmanship against a thing that is right in your grasp. So Sandip has lost his aspect of the hero; a tone of low quarrelsomeness has come into his words (pp. 210-211).

Bimala does not enjoy her newly discovered sense of superiority over Sandip, for she wants to submit rather than to dominate. On the other hand, she wants to be treated with reverence as the price of her submission. She would rather be able to look up to him as her savior than see him as a man dependent on her. To her sorrow, she realizes that she can submit only to one who is spiritually superior to her. The succeeding scenes, dramatized largely from her point of view and Sandip's, reveal her traits as an individual woman which, simultaneously, dramatized those of Mother India, who flirted with violence for a precarious moment in her historic life-and-death struggle with the British.

The conflict in Bimala's mind between the ideals of Nikhil and Sandip is resolved obliquely and realistically in a way that is consistent with her basic traits.

She does not decide outright that Nikhil's idealism is right and that Sandip's lack of scruples is wrong. Instead, she wavers for some time in her loyalty to the two men and the ideals they represent. The conflict within her is not resolved until the entrance of Amulya, a young man who represents the Indian youth awakening to the country's need for independence.

Bimala believes that it is the woman within her that makes her turn away from Sandip when she sees the youthful Amulya, with ideals still in the formative stage, following Sandip's footsteps. She thinks that she wants to save Amulya from Sandip's evil influence. But there is a big difference between what she thinks and what she actually does, showing her wish to deceive herself and save her pride in the process. Nevertheless, what she professes is a partly true reflection of herself. She calls Amulya "my child, my little brother." Yet twice, she makes him risk his life to save her reputation. Though, in a way, she really desires to save Amulya from Sandip, she also uses him to save her name from ruin. First, she gives him her jewels to sell so that she can replace the 6000 rupees she has stolen from her husband's treasury, but soon she regrets having sent the boy on such a risky mission:

> When I sent him off to sell the jewels I must have been thinking only of myself. It never crossed my mind that so young a boy, trying to sell valuable jewelry, would at once be suspected. So helpless are we women, we needs

> must place on others the burden of our danger. When we go to our death we drag down those who are about us. I had said with pride that I would save Amulya--as if she who was drowning could save others. But instead of saving him, I have sent him to his doom. My little brother, such a sister have I been to you that Death must have smiled on that Brother's Day when I gave you my blessing,--I, who wandered distracted with the burden of my own evil-doing (pp. 226-227).

Bimala realizes that she has been selfish and thoughtless, and yet she makes Amulya risk his life a second time for her sake. When he comes back without having sold the jewels but with 6000 rupees in currency that he has stolen from Nikhil's sub-treasury, she tells him to return the money where he has taken it, notwithstanding the risks.

Bimala's turning away from Sandip through Amulya is marked by self-deception motivated by self-interest. It is not exactly Amulya's innocence that appeals to her but his willingness to risk his life to save her name. Her greatest concern is her reputation as a Rani, and her greatest fear is the fear of the discovery of her theft of 6000 rupees from her husband's treasury. Sometimes, in her thoughts, she is honest with herself:

> It struck nine, I could not get rid of the idea that Amulya was in trouble, that he had fallen into the clutches of the police. There must be great excitement in the Police Office--whose are the jewels?--where did he get them? And in the end I shall have to furnish the answer, in public before all the world (p. 227).
>
> In a very few hours now my unseen fate would become visible. Was there no one who could keep on postponing the flight of these

> hours, from day to day, and so make them long enough for me to set things right, so far as lay in my power? . . .
>
> I shall try to think of it no more, but sit quiet,--passive and callous,--let the crash come when it may. But the day after tomorrow all will be over,--publicity, laughter, bewailing, questions, explanations,--everything (p. 249).

Lastly, Bimala turns to Amulya because of the reverence he offers her, the kind of reverence that Sandip has never given her in earnest. Apparently, Amulya's youthful innocence appeals to her pride, which is not satisfied by Sandip's flatteries. When Amulya expresses his admiration for her for repulsing Sandip when the latter makes a move as if to embrace her, Bimala is unduly elated. Almost hysterically, she exclaims, "O my little brother, my child! This reverence of yours is the last touch of heaven left in my empty world" (p. 198). Coming from the innocent Amulya, this reverence, she believes, is sincere, unlike the flattery that Sandip has lavished on her in order to exploit her. She knows that Amulya looks up to her as to a goddess, a higher being. And his faith in her gives her the idea that she can save herself and, incidentally, Amulya, too, from Sandip's influence. Still she wavers. At one moment, she believes that she has freed herself from Sandip. At the very next moment, she succumbs again to his influence.

It is Amulya's rejection of Sandip and adoration of her that finally give Bimala the courage to repudiate Sandip and ask forgiveness from her husband whom she has

betrayed. In repudiating Sandip, she rejects the unscrupulous way he puts his ideas into practice. In going back to her husband, however, she does not necessarily affirm his ideals. On the whole, she simply realizes that Nikhil's ideals and ways are better than Sandip's. It is not the case of the protagonist's complete triumph over the antagonist. It is the case of the antagonist's losing because he commits more serious blunders than the protagonist. In the Indian movement for independence, the idealism and non-violence espoused by Nikhil are not perfect in themselves but are more effective than the unscrupulousness and violence advocated by Sandip.

Bimala is reconciled to Nikhil on her own terms. She offers him the kind of worship that she has always wanted to give him and that he has been too scrupulous to accept as it is. She clasps his feet to her bosom, touching them repeatedly with her head in obeisance. Now he accepts her on her own terms, telling himself that actually he is not the god of her worship so that he would have no qualms about accepting her offering to him. Unfortunately for both of them, Nikhil is going to die in the communal riots that he will try to stop, unarmed. Idealism and non-violence will suffer a death-blow in the riots but only momentarily, for there are other Nikhils who will take over with similar ideals tempered by the practical wisdom gained from bitter experience.

Thematically, Nikhil's impending death represented the end of the kind of idealism that he espouses. From its viewpoint, India does not have to cut itself off completely from the British from whom it has important things to learn, like getting out of its narrow seclusion and learning a sense of justice, just as Nikhil believes that he should not discharge Miss Gilby, whom he has hired to get Bimala out of purdah and help her get over her "infatuation with tyranny." It is not this kind of idealism that is going to save India from the British and its own institutional weaknesses. India gets its freedom after its own bitter experience with violence which it ultimately rejects, as Bimala does with Sandip. Violence, as espoused by Sandip, is not evil in itself but the tormented product of centuries of poverty and confusion that the country has undergone under British domination and the oppressive rule of its own princes. Ultimately, it will prove ineffective in saving India from the British and its own perverted practices.

India, like Bimala, realizes that in spite of its built-in weaknesses, spiritual idealism embodied in the philosophy of non-violence is preferable to the militant kind of nationalism that advocates violence even at the sacrifice of others. Nevertheless, India's flirtation with violence, like Bimala's, helps it gain its spiritual freedom after opening its eyes to its excesses. It is

the fervor of the country's youth ready to sacrifice itself that enlightens India to the need of saving its reputation in the world of nations, just as it is Amulya's fervor and willingness to sacrifice himself that make Bimala realize the need of saving herself and Amulya from Sandip's influence.

Although, in some ways, there is an almost one-to-one correspondence between the characters' thoughts, feelings, and actions and what they represent, their thematic roles do not reduce them to mere abstractions, since they are also mimetic characters whose thoughts, feelings, and actions are so characteristically human that they create a strong emotional impact on the reader's mind. Furthermore, the oblique and indirect resolution of the conflict shows that the three major characters are more than just symbols. Shown from the inside and the outside from three angles of vision, each character is portrayed as different from the others. Each transcends his thematic role in the novel without ceasing to be a symbolic character. In the fusion of the thematic and mimetic aspects of each character, Tagore succeeds in making conflicting abstract ideas appear concrete and easy to comprehend.

In these two novels, Binodini and The Home and the World, Tagore's main interest is to dramatize ideas by projecting them into the living images of his characters.

The major characters move towards the confirmation of ideas favored by the author and overcome opposition within themselves and the forces represented by other characters whose views are contrary to theirs. His success as a writer of thesis novels lies in his ability to create characters whose ideas are closely interwoven with their inner lives.

B. Bhaskhar writes:

> Tagore's chief asset as a novelist is his skill in character delineation. Nikhil, soft and strong, and Gora, vigorous, ebullient and youthful, stand before the reader's eye as men of flesh and blood in spite of the rare fineness and abstraction of the ideas they represent. The ill-tempered fanatical Haran and the good-humored, amusing pseudo-intellectual Amrit Rai are lively characters rather than grotesque caricatures. The scheming, vicious Sandip, in whom there is much of the stuff with which an Iago is made, is perhaps the most charming villain in Indian fiction. The older characters in all novels are generally persons with the practical wisdom of a lifetime of experience.
>
> The women in Tagore's novels are just as genuine as the men. Sucharita and Lolita, Kamala and Bimala represent the many faces of Indian womanhood. . . . The older women are generally orthodox types, and yet are not mere reproductions of a common prototype, for they differ widely among themselves.
>
> The actions and interactions of characters reveal the deep psychological insight of the novelist. The subtle handling of the Nikhil-Bimala-Sandip affair is perhaps the best evidence of the novelist's understanding of the organic relationship between individuals, between individuals and society, and between the individuals and their past, of which there are ample manifestations in all novels . . .
>
> Tagore is often explicit in the advocacy of the ideas with which his novels are impregnated. However, the aesthetic qualities are

> not sacrificed in the anxiety to deliver the message. Indeed he devoted great attention to the literary qualities since he realizes that a damaged container may spoil the content. His novels are the literary expression of his thoughts. The employment of the novels as vehicles of idea does not reduce their literary merit; on the contrary they enhance their worth, for the ideas are dovetailed into the theme with dexterity.[15]

In conclusion, it can be said that Tagore's achievement as a novelist lies in his artistic presentation of characters whose thematic functions blend harmoniously with their mimetic pictures. Their sociological reality and philosophical symbolism are focalized, particularized, and infused with life by their psychological authenticity.

The theme of Raja Rao's Kanthapurna is the power of the Gandhian spirit that transforms an Indian village that is symbolic of the country itself. To dramatize the greatness of this power, the author first shows the power, influence, and extent of the reactionary forces that the Gandhian spirit has to conquer in order to succeed in its mission. These reactionary forces foster Hindu values that have become institutionalized through the ages, rendered India weak, and made it possible for the British to enslave it. Gandhi's intention to free India politically from the British is interlinked with

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[15]Bhaskhar, op. cit., pp. 341-342.

his intention to free the country spiritually from perverted beliefs and practices by reviving old Vedic beliefs. Since these beliefs have been forgotten through the ages, however, Gandhi and his followers appear to some of the villagers not in the light of revivalists but as innovators and iconoclasts to be resisted so that they can retain "the ancient purity of their race."

The conflict between the reactionaries and the revivalists is a bitter one fought by two powerful forces whose emotional impact on their followers is much greater than their rational motives. Of the two, the revivalists seem to have less chances of success, since they demand of their followers the need of overcoming their common human weaknesses. The reactionaries are more likely to succeed, since they require nothing beyond the merely human, in fact, they appeal to the people's greater tendency to succumb to human weaknesses. It is true, however, that the gospel of heroism and self-sacrifice advocated by the revivalists also has a good chance to succeed in a country like India whose revered heroes are not soldiers and fighters but saints.

While Gandhi wishes to revive some of the Vedic ideals before they became corrupted through the ages, the swami, leading the reactionaries, wants to perpetuate perverted practices for the sake of self-interest. Neither the swami nor Gandhi appears in person. Both, however,

are represented by a number of leaders and followers who serve as their mouthpieces.

The characters in the novel, though divided into protagonists and antagonists, are not drawn in black and white as in the earlier literary pieces. Their thematic roles are sustained by vivid mimetic portraits which reveal that, to a certain extent, protagonists and antagonists are not distinct and separate. Sometimes, the protagonists are also their own antagonists; that is, their opponents are not people other than themselves but hidden facets of themselves that have become bound by perverted values and practices. As such, they have to conquer their own weaknesses before they can triumph over the reactionaries who play the role of antagonists. Since thematically, the protagonists are not entirely different and separate from the antagonists, the author presents them with mimetic pictures that are somewhat complex.

The story of the village's transformation is told in retrospect by an old woman raconteur, an eyewitness to the events that have taken place in the village. Through the old woman's narrative, it is shown how the revivalists triumph spiritually over their own weaknesses and, in the process, defeat the reactionaries. Through this old woman raconteur, the author introduces the characters as caste-members to stress their lack of unity at the beginning of the novel. They live in separate streets

for, in their belief, caste divisions are pre-ordained. At the end, caste distinctions are still mentioned. In her simplicity, the old woman has not yet got over the old nomenclatures, but they remain on the surface in her manner of speech. It is shown that in actuality, the people of Kanthapura, resettled in Kashipura after the burning of their village, have transcended caste divisions and other practices that encourage injustice and have become one in their belief in the Gandhian ideals and their fight against the British and their own weaknesses.

Moorthy, the first Gandhian leader in the village, has a well-drawn mimetic portrait that shows how difficult it is even for a leader to overcome his inherited prejudices. It takes him time and much soul-searching to be a real Gandhi leader. In the presentation of Moorthy, however, the author dramatizes not only the great power of established beliefs and practices that encourage injustice but also the even greater power of the Gandhian spirit that enables him to overcome not only his own prejudices but also those of the villagers.

At the beginning, Moorthy is known as "the learned one," "Moorthy, the good, Moorthy, the religious, and Moorthy, the noble," who has gone through life "like a noble cow, quiet, generous, and serene, deferent and Brahmanic, a very prince." He is "so brilliant in school

in his ways." He being such an ideal youth, according to norms expected of Brahmins, it is a wonder to many of the villagers that he abandons the Brahmanic ideals and leads the people in toppling over the status quo.

There are plausible reasons given, however, to show that in spite of his Brahmanic birth and upbringing, Moorthy undergoes some experiences that enable him to change within himself. Being one of the few young men of the village who have gone to a university in the city, he is influenced by Gandhian ideals. Moreover, he has a dream-vision of the Mahatma which helps him initially overcome the values which he has lived by so far. His conversion is a painful process, for it is many times more difficult for a Brahmin than members of the other castes to give up inherited rights and privileges. On the other hand, knowing that the leader who is to convert people steeped in prejudices should have the stature of a Brahmin, he undertakes the difficult task himself.

A scene shows that even if he has vowed to propagate Gandhian ideals, he still hesitates to enter Pariah Rachanna's hut. The old woman raconteur recalls:

> . . . Moorthy thinks this is something new, and with one foot to the back and one foot to the fore, he stands trembling and undecided, and then suddenly hurries up the steps and crosses the threshold and squats on the earthen floor. But Rachanna's wife quickly sweeps a corner, and spreads for him a wattle mat, but Moorthy, confused, blurts out, "No, no, no, no," and he looks this side and that and thinks surely there is a

> carcass in the backyard, and it's surely being skinned, and he smells the stench of hide and the stench of pickled pigs, and the room seems to shake, and all the gods and manes of heaven seem to cry out against him, and his hands steal mechanically to the holy thread, and holding it, he feels he would like to say, "Hari-Om, Hari-Om." But Rachanna's wife has come back with a little milk in a shining brass tumbler, and placing it on the floor with stretched hands, she says, "Accept this from this poor hussy!" and slips back behind the corn-bins; and Moorthy says, "I've just taken coffee, Lingamma . . ." but she interrupts him and says, "Touch it, Moorthappa, touch it only as though it were offered to the gods, and we shall be sanctified;" and Moorthy, with many a trembling prayer, touches the tumbler and brings it to his lips, and taking one sip, lays it aside.[16]

With difficulty, Moorthy goes through the trial of accepting milk from an outcaste. He has not expected that having mentally repudiated the concept of caste, he would still have to go through an inner struggle before he can really do so in actual practice. Later in Rangamma's hut, his hair stands on ends when he remembers the Pariah hut and the tumbler of milk he has touched with his lips, for liquid food is considered more easily polluted and polluting than solid.

In another scene, it is shown that when it is the turn of the outcastes to take the vow to the Goddess Penchamma and they ask if they can go inside the temple with the Brahmins or out only in the courtyard where they

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[16]This novel was first published by George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London, 1938. This quotation is taken from the New Directions edition (New York: James Laughlin, 1963), pp. 71-72.

are traditionally allowed, Moorthy becomes so confused that he does not know what to do. At this stage, the Gandhian ideals he advocates have not really become an integral part of himself.

Another scene shows Moorthy sorrowfully wondering alone by the river all day long when all his followers leave him to attend the marriage feast of Venkamma's daughter. He deeply feels the pain of being an outcaste, cut off from the religious and social life of the upper-caste Hindus as punishment for his fraternizing with the Pariahs. These little details reveal how difficult it is for Moorthy to get over old beliefs and practices that go counter to the Gandhian ideals that he professes, showing that it is much more difficult for others who have not had his college education and his dream-vision. His somewhat complex mimetic picture brings out vividly his thematic function as a youth who wavers in his dedication but is really strong enough to bear the enormous burden of his mission. Moorthy is a realistic character. And the authenticity of his mimetic picture, integrated with his thematic function as the first Gandhian leader in Kanthapura, helps make the village's spiritual transformation appear plausible.

Like Gandhi, Moorthy makes use of accepted Hindu practices, such as fasting and hymn-singing (<u>badjao</u>) to convert the villagers into the ideals of non-violence and

truth-speaking and to encourage them to spin and weave khadi cloth so that the country can stop importing foreign cloth from England. In spite of the objections of his heartbroken mother, Moorthy teaches the untouchables how to read and write and tries to save the collies of the Sheffington Coffee Estate from the abuses of the British sahibs. He leads the villagers in picketing toddy booths which lure the collies to squander their meager wages on drinks that eventually go to the coffers of the foreign government. When the villagers are beaten by the police with lathis, he exhorts them not to retaliate in the name of ahimsa or non-violence. For three days, he fasts and meditates in the village temple to atone for the violence committed by the villagers in defending him. He prays so that he and the others would be purified of sin before he preaches the "Don't touch-the-government" campaign. These actions of Moorthy are all relevant to his thematic role as the village Gandhi, their Mahatma. Intentionally, he follows the past actions of Gandhi to project the latter's image, instead of his own personality.

Sankar, who takes over the position of leadership when Moorthy is arrested and imprisoned, is another thematic character representing the Gandhian spirit. Both his thematic and mimetic functions bring out another form of the Gandhian spirit, suggesting the variety it can possibly take. In contrast to the young Moorthy, a university student, Sankar is an older man past the stage of the householder.

In the four stages of Indian life (student, householder, ascetic, forest dweller), Sankar is two steps ahead of Moorthy. Sankar is an ascetic who refuses to marry again after the death of his wife. As a lawyer, he has no chance to get rich, for he is honest and he never defends "a false case," accepts the lowest fees, and even spends for his poor clients. Since asceticism has a strong emotional appeal to the Indian people, Sankar, as a Gandhian leader, has a big following. Aside from his asceticism, there is also the fact that he is continuing the work that Moorthy has already started.

Like Moorthy, Sankar functions primarily as a thematic character but is made lifelike and convincing by means of little details that round up his mimetic picture. The old woman ranconteur recounts that Sankar is a fanatic at speaking Hindi and at wearing khadi. He is also a fanatic at making his family fast to commemorate the day of the Jallianwalabagh massacre, the day of Tilak's death, the day that Mahatma was imprisoned, and some day "for every cough and sneeze of the Mahatma." The ludicrous touch, furnished by his fanaticism, brings out his human side which, instead of distracting from his thematic role, makes it vivid and concrete. It is very important that Sankar should be made to appear human. As an ascetic, he has more tendencies to be an idealized abstraction than Moorthy. As Sankar is depicted,

however, he appears to be a dedicated Gandhi leader, with fanaticism as his main weakness. But it is his fanaticism, taken as an evidence of sainthood by his equally fanatical admirers, that makes his leadership effective. The implication is that to survive and triumph, Gandhianism has to be espoused by different kinds of leaders, including the fanatic. And since Gandhianism is to take root in an actual human situation, instead of in an ideal vacuum, it takes different kinds of leaders to make it a success.

There are also woman leaders, showing that for the Gandhian movement to succeed, there is need for such leaders to awaken and convert the women among the villagers. One of them is the rebellious young widow Ratna who, in her own life, has started to protest against oppressive established practices even before Moorthy introduces Gandhian ideals into the village. Being a widow, Ratna is expected to wear white mourning clothes and withdraw from the social life of the community as an outward sign of sorrow for the "sin" of outliving her husband. But she defies these accepted practices. Aside from not wearing widow's white garb, she adorns herself with glass bangles, nose-rings, and earrings. And instead of secluding herself in the silence of her house, she goes about the streets alone like a boy and washes clothes in the river. The old woman ranconteur recalls:

> . . . when she was asked why she behaved as though she hadn't lost her husband, she said that was nobody's business, and that if these sniffing old country hens thought that seeing a man for a day, and this when she was ten years of age, could be called a marriage, they had better eat mud and drown themselves in the river (p. 30).

Ratna's own mother Kamalamma is afraid that Ratna would bring dishonor "to the House" and regrets having sent the girl to school. The villagers are outraged by her words and behavior which would not have been condemned harshly by the Gandhian reformists who themselves are against oppressive practices.

To the conservative village people, Ratna is nothing but a rebel until an opportunity occurs which enables her to assert her leadership to a certain extent. On the death of Ramakrishnaya, the illiterate villagers allow her to read the Sankara texts, provided they are interpreted by her aunt Rangamma whose goodness would "purify" the words of the "pollution" that Ratna's "impurity" might impart to them in the process of reading.

Later in Moorthy's and Sankar's absence, Ratna further asserts her leadership, making the women overcome much of their antagonism against her. They follow her when she leads them in defiance of the police, blowing a conch to make it appear that she is leading a religious procession instead of a boycott against the toddy booths. In leading the boycott against the toddy concessionaires

and giving shelter to the strikers chased by the police with guns and lathis, she proves her courage. Her rebelliousness, which the villagers used to condemn before, is now accepted by them as a positive force. It takes a resourceful and courageous young girl like her to lead the convention-bound timorous village women, without whose cooperation, the Gandhian movement cannot succeed. When she is arrested and brought to prison, her forbearance further convinces the village women to accept her as a true Gandhian leader. Her thematic role is well-integrated with her mimetic picture as a rebel against established norms, which is vividly drawn even before she assumes her role as one of the Gandhian leaders among the villagers.

Ratna's widowed aunt Rangamma is the other woman leader propagating the Gandhian movement for political and spiritual independence. The fact that she is a decorous middle-aged woman shows that there is need for such a leader to convert the older women who might not be fully convinced by the young widow Ratna. That Rangamma is a rich woman belonging to the Brahmin caste also makes her leadership more easily acceptable to the older women. Her wealth and high social status help them overcome their prejudices against the Gandhian movement. Aside from Moorthy, Sankar and Ratna, Rangamma is the only one in the village who gets newspapers from

the city. Generously, she shares her knowledge of the outside world with the other villagers and helps them understand values and ways beyond the narrow confines of their birthplace.

Rangamma also serves as a force for unity and continuity to the cause of the Gandhian movement. She gives support to her non-conformist niece Ratna when most of the villagers condemn the latter for her unorthodox ways and leave her out of the social activities of the community. Rangamma is also the first to give moral support and shelter to Moorthy when he is turned out of the house by his heartbroken mother, crazed by the swami's excommunication of the family and generations to come as a punishment for his association with the outcastes. Later, Rangamma serves as Sankar's secretary, looking after his Congress correspondence, in spite of the envious Venkamma's gossip that "this widow has now begun to live openly with her man."

Remaining at the background while giving moral support and material help to the three other Gandhian leaders in the village, Rangamma serves as a unifying force rallying the protagonists to the Gandhian movement. Left in the village while, one after the other, the three leaders are taken to prison by the British authorities, Rangamma serves as a force for continuity in the Gandhian movement. Her thematic role as a force for unity and

continuity is substantiated by her mimetic picture as an unconventional widow whose outward decorum, wealth and prestige make her more easily acceptable to the conservative women of the village as well as to the others.

The presentation of leaders among the protagonists is realistic. The fact that all of them are Brahmins reveals the actual workings of the caste system, one of the greatest obstacles to be overcome by the Gandhian movement if it is to succeed. In a remote village like Kanthapura, where social roles are well-defined and seldom questioned because they are assumed to be pre-ordained, the Brahmins have the privilege to be the thinkers and hence the leaders. Moreover, it is necessary that the leaders enjoy high social standing and prestige in the community so that the other Brahmins and members of the lower castes would overcome their inherited prejudices. With top Brahmins as leaders, the members of the upper castes would more readily be persuaded to give up their positions of privilege and give way to the Gandhian ideal of justice for all, regardless of birth. The members of the lower castes would more readily accept that their inherited low status in life is not really pre-ordained.

The caste hierarchy is mentioned in the order of their importance in the social scale, suggesting that though one of the aims of the Gandhian movement is to get rid of caste as an instrument of injustice, concepts and practices

related to caste have to be used initially by the Gandhian leaders. The presentation of the members of the lower castes, though less detailed, follows more or less the same pattern as the presentation of the Brahmins.

The Potter's caste is led by Patel Range Gowda, a rich honest man who has helped many peasants through their difficulties with the money-lender. In his fight against the British agents collecting rent, he is "a terror to the authorities." The prestige that goes with his possession of wealth and his fighting spirit and courage qualify him for leadership among the potters. But it takes him time to become a full-fledged leader propagating Gandhian ideals. It is shown that his conversion to the cause of the Gandhian movement goes counter to his natural character. And even after his conversion to the Gandhian cause through Moorthy's efforts, Patel Range Gowda still shows signs of being his old vindictive self. But intellectually convinced of the superiority of the Gandhian ideals over the old beliefs prevailing in the village, he himself explains to his caste followers the importance of ahimsa (non-violence), weaving khadi and the goals of "the great, great Congress." Because of his high standing in the community, he succeeds in convincing his fellow-potters of the truth of the Gandhian ideals advocated by Moorthy. In the face of the people's reluctance to take vows before the goddess Kenchamma to spin khadi, which is

against their way of life and inherited belief about dharma, he uses compulsion. His mimetic portrait as a domineering, if well-meaning man, does not invalidate his thematic role as one of the leaders in the village's transformation. In fact, it is another evidence that there is need for a leader like him to make the people overcome their age-old prejudices. Patel Range Gowda is not an idealized character but a strong-willed man whose arbitrariness, a weakness from the Gandhian point of view, proves an asset to the movement.

The outcastes are "led" by Ranchamma, who is sent away with his wife and children from the Sheffington Coffee Estate and deprived of his accumulated wages as a punishment for defending Moorthy from the beating of the police. Being an untouchable, he receives the worst punishment among those who have impulsively defended Moorthy. At the moment of his expulsion from home and departure from the village, he spits on his fellow-outcastes who do not lift a finger to help him and his family because of their fear of the police. Ranchamma does not choose to be the leader of the outcastes but is chosen as such by the upper-caste leaders simply because he has suffered much. They elect him to the Congress panchayat in the village as a kind of compensation for his difficulties resulting from his impulsive defense of Moorthy. His is no deliberate act of will nor a great act of self-sacrifice,

unlike Moorthy's and that of the other leaders of the Gandhian movement in the village. As an untouchable, his lot is to suffer. But the fact that he suffers more than the other outcastes confers on him a badge of sainthood which has a strong emotional impact on the villagers. Thus, he is selected the leader of the outcastes, to represent them in the Congress panchayat. Like the other Gandhian leaders, he is far from being idealized. His mimetic picture as an impulsive, vindictive man gives substance to his thematic function as the outcaste thrust into a position of leadership simply because he has suffered much.

The antagonists, represented by the money-lender Bhatta, Waterfall Venkamma, and the Muslim policeman Bade Khan, are less fully drawn than the protagonists. But they do not appear like abstractions either. Though their thematic function as antagonists is emphasized, they have mimetic pictures that convincingly show the strength of the resistance they put up against the Gandhian movement.

The resistance of Bhatta, the money-lender, is shown to be adequately motivated. He wants the status-quo retained so that he can go on enriching himself by exacting usurious rates of interest from the poor people of Kanthapura and the neighboring villages. When he realizes that the swami's excommunication of Moorthy and his family does not stop the movement, he decides to raise the interest

of every Congress member up to 18 to 20%. Ostensibly, he does so to punish those who work for the "pollution of castes." Actually, he takes advantage of the situation in order to enrich himself while appearing to be pious in his own eyes and those of others.

To get the sharp-tongued Venkamma to his side, Bhatta finds a rich husband for her daughter who, having been refused by Moorthy, has now less chance in the marriage market. Finally, Bhatta goes on a pilgrimage to Kashi with toddy contract money. His materialism and hypocrisy are strong motives which make his opposition to change appear real and concrete.

One little scene adds more life to Bhatta's mimetic portrait. Happy over the success of his match-making scheme with Venkamma, he wakes up his wife to make love. This little incident makes him appear like a real character in actual life, and his authenticity reenforces the impression that he is not an abstraction representing the forces of reaction.

On Bhatta's side among the antagonists is Waterfall Venkamma, a widow with a shaven head. She is among those who show their loyalty to the British authorities, against Gandhi's followers, by paying land revenue dues. Like Bhatta, she wants the <u>status quo</u> retained to be able to hold on to her wealth and social standing in the village. In addition, she has another motive in opposing the

Gandhian movement. She bears a personal grudge against Moorthy who has once refused her daughter's hand in marriage. To avenge herself and her daughter for the humiliation they have suffered, she spreads the news of Moorthy's excommunication by the swami. To save her hurt pride, she agrees to marry her daughter to a wealthy advocate, a middle-aged widower, in spite of the fact that he is much older than her daughter and has two missing front teeth. To spite Moorthy further, she invites everybody, except him, to the betrothal and nuptial feasts of her daughter. Given a mimetic portrait that reveals the psychological motives behind her opposition to the Gandhian movement, Venkamma appears to be a very real character in her role as one of the antagonists.

Another character on the side of the antagonists is Bade Khan, a Muslim from another town, hired as a policeman by the British authorities against his own countrymen. There is also an unidentified toothless old man who speaks in favor of the British and "the ancient ways of our race" against the Gandhian movement which, to him, means the corruption of castes and of "the great tradition our ancestors bequeathed to us." The other antagonists just appear in their capacity as thematic characters condemning the Gandhian movement as a Pariah movement. All of them, together with the more vividly portrayed Bhatta and Waterfall Venkamma, convey the picture of the hard core of

tradition and reaction against which the Gandhian movement has to pit itself in propagating its ideals.

Moorthy's mother Nirmanna does not belong to the characters representing the antagonists. Thematically, she represents the fear-ridden woman who contributes to the difficulty of uprooting age-old beliefs and supplanting them with the Gandhian ideals. Though she does not oppose the Gandhian movement for any ulterior motive, she is against her son's leading role in it because she fears the consequences in this life and the next incarnation(s). Being the closest to Moorthy, she suffers extreme anguish when he associates with the untouchables and she practically loses her mind when the swami excommunicates Moorthy, his family, and generations to come. As a result, she falls unconscious on the sand and dies of exposure to the cold. In her fear and sorrow, she does not live long enough to witness and undergo the spiritual transformation of the village. Her grief and subsequent death show the extent to which traditional beliefs have entrenched themselves. Indirectly, her grief and death also reveal the power of the Gandhian movement that eventually triumphs over deeply entrenched beliefs and practices.

The conflict between the protagonists and the antagonists is depicted as a long-drawn struggle between two powerful forces. It is shown that against the stronghold of the antagonists, the protagonists are not always

constant in their dedication to the Gandhian movement. At times, it seems that they would abandon the fight for their ideals and become engulfed once more by the traditional values and practices.

A scene early in the novel depicts the protagonists hesitating to take an oath to the Goddess Kenchamma to spin at least a hundred yarns a day because they feel that spinning would degrade them to the level of weavers. They resist Moorthy's exhortation to spin khadi to save the country from foreign taxes because to them, traditional occupations are fixed and pre-ordained. It is only when Patel Range Gowda uses his authority to compel them that they obey.

Furthermore, the protagonists waver in their loyalty to Moorthy, for they are deeply steeped in values and customs inherited from the past. Although Waterfall Venkamma is on the side of the swami against Moorthy, they join the betrothal and nuptial feasts of her daughter. During the betrothal, they leave Moorthy wandering alone by the river bank, feeling wretched at being cut off from the religious and social life of the community. Later, they attend the nuptial feast of Venkamma's daughter instead of the welcome feast for Moorthy, who is coming out of prison. Between a Brahmin feast and what Venkamma calls "a feast for a polluted pig," they choose the former. They are not very eager to meet Moorthy by the river

because, as one of the women says, "Why, you cannot refuse a nuptial feast. If there's no married woman to offer kumkum water to the wife and husband, tomorrow you may have your own daughter's marriage, and she may go unblessed" (p. 114). Because of their belief in age-old practices, their enthusiasm for the cause espoused by Moorthy wanes. Apparently, at this stage, the Gandhian ideals have not yet taken deep roots in their minds and hearts, since they are quite recent and, to all appearances, new-fangled.

Another scene shows how difficult it is for the protagonists to get over normal human feelings that go counter to the ideal of ahimsa or non-violence. Though Moorthy has prepared them not to hit back when beaten by the police, they forget themselves and they beat Bade Khan when he lays hands on Moorthy. And when they find out that Bhatta has sent for the police to arrest Advocate Rangamma for opening the temple that he has built to the outcastes, they feel "the keenness of our hearts burn." To them as to other people, it is very difficult to be more than human even if they have vowed to follow Gandhian ideals.

Other scenes depict the protagonists wavering between strength and weakness. On Moorthy's instructions, they refuse to pay taxes, and they boycott toddy booths in spite of the beatings of the police. Being "soldier-saints," they vow to seek "victory of the heart" within

themselves. And yet when they meet reverses, they condemn Moorthy for their sufferings. The Gandhian ideals that he advocates and tries to inculcate appear impractical to them when they learn of Rachanna's little grandson being beaten by the police, Putamma being raped, and their loved ones being chased with guns. Satamma, fearful that the village would be sacked again, claims that she has done nothing, that she is not a Gandhi follower, and that it is "this Moorthy, this Moorthy" who has brought all the misery upon them. She also denounces Ratna as that bangled widow who would lead all of them to prostitution. In her fear and anger, Satamma voices out what must be in the minds of the other protagonists.

With the coming of the volunteers from the city to give them moral support and material help, the women rally once more to the Gandhian cause espoused by Moorthy. They organized themselves into volunteer corps to boycott more toddy groves that ruin the coolies while giving revenue to the foreign government. In this incident, it is revealed that the Gandhian ideals and the dedication of Moorthy and of the other leaders are not sufficient to make them go on with the struggle. The villagers need more tangible help and proofs from the city that they can succeed in their fight against the antagonists.

At the end, all the protagonists leave the burning village of Kanthapura to seek refuge in Kashipura.

Together with the coolies of the Sheffington Coffee Estate, they finally settle down in Kashiputa. In spite of their weaknesses and regrets, they overcome their fear of the British and their agents, the swami, the money-lender, the police and their own inner weaknesses imbibed since childhood from their culture. They have become united in their stand against the forces of reaction that have made India a slave to the British and its own institutionalized vices. The spiritual transformation of the village is depicted vividly and convincingly through the presentation of characters whose mimetic portraits give credence to their thematic roles as protagonists and antagonists in the life-and-death struggle between two conflicting ideologies. The combined mimetic portraits of the protagonists and antagonists in conflict create a total picture that makes the ideological struggle appear concrete. The triumph of the Gandhian spirit over the reactionary forces, represented by the antagonists and the protagonists' own weaknesses, appears great because the latter are vividly depicted as a very strong force which takes the combined efforts of different kinds of leaders among the protagonists to defeat. All together, the protagonists and the antagonists, led by various leaders from the village, as well as from the city, create a vivid mimetic portrait of Kanthapura that sustains its thematic role as a village, a symbol of India itself, in the process of undergoing a great change.

In Chronicles of Kedaram, K. Nagarajan does not intend to tell the story of particular individuals but of a district headquarters town that is typical of others of its kind. Through the members of the local Bar Association engaged in court suits, politics, and gossip, the author shows the town of Kedaram going through a transitional phase from conservatism to modernism. The uneasy transition is marked by the conflict between the past and the present, particularly the clash of attitudes towards the preservation of caste distinctions and communal differences dramatized by the long-drawn quarrel between two groups of Aiyengars or Vishnuvite Brahmins over the rites held in the temple of Kadereswar.

Kedaram, however, is more than just a symbol of other Indian towns undergoing change. It is a particular town with a composite mimetic portrait that is remarkable for its vividness. This composite portrait consists of the pictures of various characters and their activities chronicled by Gokarna Sastri or Koni who, aside from being an observer-narrator, is also the focal character of the novel. He is a reliable narrator and reflecting mirror in spite of minor errors in judgment that reveal his simple-mindedness. On the whole, his assessments of the different characters are valid.

Koni's outstanding traits, both thematic and mimetic, are revealed by his observations on other characters so that while he describes them, his descriptions

also create a vivid image of himself. What they say about him also throws light on both his lovable traits and weaknesses. Likewise, he characterizes himself in his innocent remarks on a number of things. The result is an apparently spontaneous revelation of the town's composite mimetic portrait, with Koni at the center of it. His story of the town's growth and development is simultaneously his story itself.

In his reluctant acceptance of the inevitability of change, Koni represents the town of Kedaram that resists change but finally accepts it. In this sense, Koni is a thematic character symbolizing the town's gradual transformation. Though not created for his own sake, however, Koni is a strikingly mimetic character made interesting by his very commonplaceness. A member of an old prestigious Brahmin family, he is very proper, even priggish but still very lovable because of his sincerity and warmheartedness.

At the start, Koni is a living embodiment of conservatism which is partly the result of his upbringing in an old Brahmin family and partly the result of his own naivete. By his description, he is of mediocre intelligence, or as his friends say, he is not quick on the uptake. As a law student, he has studied night and day yet barely managed to pass his B.A. and bar examinations. As a lawyer, he is commonplace. He does best as a junior

assistant, drafting pleadings and doing the necessary preliminary researches.

Koni's conservatism is such that his modern education "has not even scraped the surface of his medieval mind." To Koni, as to the other simple-minded people of Kedaram, religion is a kind of magic. When he passes his B.A. and bar examinations, in spite of lack of talents of which he is very much aware, he attributes his luck to "the virtue and piety" of his old-fashioned parents and his passionate prayers to the kindly god Kadereswar. Moreover, religion to him consists of propitiatory rites and practices to be observed on pain of punishment. In spite of his growing alarm, he and his wife have nine children, including twins, born at yearly intervals, for he believes that it is not in their hands to refuse what God gives. One can just imagine that there are many other people like Koni in Kedaram.

It is shown, however, that Koni's conservatism is of the innocuous kind, born out of naivete rather than a selfish wish to perpetuate the status quo for the sake of inherited advantages and privileges. It manifests itself in his concern for others rather than for himself. First, he worries over his friend Vasu's refusal to consider marriage offers before he finishes college. To Koni, the refusal of Vasu's grandfather to arrange things himself is "carrying the theory of freedom too far;" and

he thinks that the agreement between the old man and Vasu not to press the matter is "certainly un-Hindu." When Vasu finally takes an interest in the offer of the Dikshits, Koni disapproves of them as too modern for his taste, whereas his friend Hemadri believes that they are too conservative. Koni says that he does not believe in "this love business" when Vasu takes a romantic interest in the girl Charulata when they meet. Koni, however, is amiable to Charulata when the marriage takes place in spite of his well-meant objections. His innocuous conservatism manifests itself again when he worries over the gossip that Charulata stays more with her parents than with Vasu and that the latter is consorting with another woman, Nirmala. Koni feels that he has the right to interfere with the life of Vasu since he is older than the latter and is, therefore, entitled to act like an older brother. Nevertheless, he harbors no ill-feelings when his advice is not heeded.

As the novel progresses, it is also shown that Koni's conservatism is a part of his sincerity which, as will be shown later, contrasts sharply with the conservatism of other characters based on opportunism. And though he is conservative, he is not inflexible in his thinking nor rigid in his ways. For instance, though he does not condemn his friends Vasu and Nirmala who are both working for the improvement of the lot of the outcastes. And

though he does not believe that a man and a woman should be seen together in public, he does not believe the malicious gossip that Vasu and Nirmala are lovers. His conviction that they are innocent shows that he is open-minded in spite of his attempts to make them conform to established practices.

It is noteworthy that though Koni must have been brought up to see appearance as truth itself, he is not so blind as he might have been under the circumstances. Sometimes, he sees right into the core of things in spite of superficialities that he sometimes accepts as valid. For instance, though he disapproves of Vasu's non-observance of religious rituals, he realizes that the latter is religious minded, as manifested by his love for the beauty of the temple of Kadereswar. Such keen observation shows that Koni's inborn perceptiveness has survived in spite of his outward acceptance of the prevailing village contentions he has imbibed since birth. Moreover, his intellectual mediocrity as far as rational matters are concerned does not blur his intuitive insight into human relationship. Thus, it is suggested that it is possible for him to accept change and that his transformation is authentic. On the whole, Koni's mimetic portrait is complex but still in harmony with his thematic function as a symbol of the town of Kedaram reluctantly accepting change. It is also the most important part of the town's composite mimetic portrait.

The other characters whose mimetic pictures form the rest of Kedaram's composite portrait are not so complex as Koni. Yet they are vivid enough to appear more than just thematic characters. Their presentation as characters with dual functions, the symbolic and the mimetic, is in itself a suggestion that the transformation of the town from conservatism to modernism is a complex process. It is not a straightforward development but a vacillating one, pulled at opposite ends by forces that are not well defined in themselves. In spite of their relative complexity, however, these characters tend to fall into two groups, the conservative and the modernistic with various shades in between.

The positive side of conservatism is represented by Koni's parents and his wife Alamelu, unsophisticated people who sincerely believe in traditional values and practices. As Koni observes, his parents "belong to the childhood of the world." Taking the concept of unworldiness seriously, they do not demand an exorbitant dowry and expensive presents from the family of Alamelu, whom Koni marries. It is their simplicity that gives them strength. In spite of the debility brought on by old age, they go on a pilgrimage to Talaikashi, braving the rains and rough roads, since a pilgrimage, to them, is an act of sacrifice that adds to their spiritual merits. When Koni's mother develops fever and weakens, shortly after her return from

the pilgrimage, she faces death calmly and bravely, certain that she will have a good life in the next incarnation, for she has faithfully followed her beliefs. Shortly afterwards, Koni's father dies just as calmly and bravely. It is shown that though their strength and courage are born of a rather naive view of life and death, they are basically good people whose conservatism makes them serve as a stabilizing force to the young people in town, including the irreverent Hemadri. They also serve as models to the others who are in danger of being thrown off-balance and rendered rootless by the onset of modern values and practices.

Alamelu, Koni's wife, is conservative in her ways. As Koni observes with approval, she is among the few who still wear nose-rings that went out of fashion in the 1930's. Nevertheless, she is not a blind believer in traditional practices. In spite of malicious gossip spread by the self-proclaimed progressive characters about Vasu and Nirmala, she retains her belief in their innocence, a belief that is vindicated towards the end. Together with her in-laws, Alamelu represents the positive side of conservatism, showing that it is not wholly to be eradicated even if modern changes are to be accepted. Koni's love and admiration for them reflects not only his conservatism but also their basic goodness and his.

The positive side of modernism is represented by P. P. T. Chari, his daughter Nirmala, and her friend Vasudeva Suri. P. P. T. Chari, a gifted lawyer and politician, works for the unity in a town torn by age-old factions and other divisive forces. "Avoid splits in the camp; put country before self," he enjoins others. Speaking before a meeting of the Congress party, he declares, "The main thing is this. We should rise above communal considerations. It should not make the slightest difference to us, whom we put up. Brahmin or non-Brahmin, Muslim or Christian, it is all one to us.[17] He himself sets the example when he nominates his rival Vanchinatha Sastri to the Madras Legislative Council so that the Congress Party, which advocates the independence of India from the British, would win over the Justice Party, which favors the continued dependence of India on the British. In getting over her personal dislike for Vanchinatha Sastri, Chari reveals the positive aspect of modernism that espouses unity over divisiveness born of age-old prejudices.

Chari's heavy drinking, which his daughter Nirmala tries hard to regulate, endows him with a human weakness, which shows that a positive force is not necessarily distinct and separate from the negative. Indirectly, the

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[17](Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1961), p. 130.

author suggests through the mimetic picture of Chari the complexity of people and forces at work in a society undergoing change.

Chari's daughter Nirmala represents another positive aspect of modernism. It is largely through her actions, for she is a woman of few words, that she reveals her stand on the issue of change. Going against the powerful force of tradition, she leads the harijan movement in Kedaram. People condemn her because her work runs counter to the wishes of the old prestigious Brahmin families in town that are set on maintaining caste distinctions as part of their religion. Moreover, the nature of her work brings her into close contact with Vasudeva Suri, whom people believe to be her lover. Nirmala's indifference to gossip and her dedication to the harijan movement indicate a most positive aspect of modernism.

Nirmala, however, is far from being an idealized abstraction merely playing a thematic role. Through the recollections of Koni, the observer-narrator, the psychological motives behind her attitude and actions are given, thus creating a full mimetic picture of her that lends credence to her thematic function in the novel. Koni recalls that at fifteen, she has been given away in a prearranged marriage to an idiotic man. Separated from her husband even before she conceives a child by him, she tries to find fulfillment and a sense of accomplishment

in her leadership in the harijan movement, which in itself is a drastic way of changing the conservative town. Her disastrous marriage must have made her lose faith in traditional practices; but instead of being vindictive, she tries to help others more miserable than she is.

Nirmala's refusal to appear in court to testify against her husband when the latter, through the instigation and machinations of a political leader, files a case against her for refusal to live with him, shows her unspoken disapproval of people who opportunistically take advantage of the accepted belief that a Hindu wife's place is beside her husband, no matter what he is. And finally, her decision, on her parents' death, to live in Gandhi's ashram confirms her expressed wish "to have peace and life's fulfillment." The fact that she arranges to have the rent of her house and the interest on her fixed deposit given to the harijan colony indicates her thoughtfulness and sincerity to help the oppressed. She bears no ill will against a society that has made her suffer; instead she works hard to rid society of practices that encourage injustice. The reference to her motives gives her mimetic picture psychological depth, humanizes her, and gives weight to her thematic function in the novel as a positive force in the movement towards modernism.

Likewise, Nirmala's friend Vasudeva Suri or Vasu has a mimetic picture that substantiates his thematic

role as a positive agent for change. Koni recalls that with his quick mind, Vasu has finished law at the head of his class though he spends much time going to concerts, cinemas, and other forms of entertainment in contrast to Koni, who has slaved night and day studying and yet barely managed to pass. Vasu's brilliance and success as a lawyer further attest to his talents, which he uses for the good of others.

Being talented and having been brought up by his liberal-minded grandfather, Vasu is among the first to break away from the bondage of old beliefs that have become outmoded. Aside from helping Nirmala in her work with the harijan movement, he sets an example to the town people by hiring an outcaste to serve as attender in his own law office. His non-conformity to age-old prejudices and his helping the oppressed put him on the positive side of the movement toward modernism.

Vasu's modernism does not manifest itself in abandoning old practices for the sake of appearing progressive. Though he can set up practice in Madras, he settles down with his grandfather in Kedaram and lives in the old ancestral house not out of a sense of duty but out of love for the liberal-minded old man who has brought him up. On the whole, Vasu is progressive, without being unnecessarily iconoclastic. His broad-mindedness manifests itself in other ways. He is liberal-minded enough

to accept the limitations of others, as shown by his patience with Koni's constant worrying and fussing over his (Vasu's) reputation. Together with Nirmala, her father P. P. T. Chari, Vasu represents the positive aspects of modernism.

The negative sides of both conservatism and modernism are exemplified by two lawyers, Vanchinatha Sastri and Hemadri. They, too, have thematic and mimetic roles that reveal the complexity of forces at work in a society undergoing change, suggesting that the negative is not entirely separate from the positive.

As a lawyer and politician, Vanchinatha Sastri or Vanchi is a success largely because of his unscrupulousness, which repels even the good-natured Koni. Inwardly committed to the cause of the Brahmins who want to preserve the purity of their caste and maintain inherited advantages, Vanchi consorts with the outcastes to win their votes in his bid for the municipal elections. In this sense, he contrasts sharply with Koni who, at the beginning, objects to the harijan movement because he sincerely believes in maintaining the purity of caste as part of the Hindu religion instead of for ulterior motives; and Koni stands on his decision instead of doing what he does not believe for expediency's sake.

Furthermore, Vanchi makes use of Gandhi for political propaganda purposes. Though he does not believe in Gandhi's ideals, he invites him to Kedaram to be

able to bask in his reflected glory, gain the reputation of being an influential man, and win votes for himself. Later, he asks Gandhi's permission to name his daughter after Gandhi's wife Kasturba. When Gandhi sends his permission and blessings, Vanchi frames Gandhi's letter for everybody to see, obviously for campaign purposes. In short, Vanchi sacrifices his conservative views and makes use of devices used by unscrupulous modern politicians for propaganda purposes.

In his personal life, Vanchi reveals the vices of both the past and present generations. Married in his teens in a pre-arranged wedding, he regards his unloved wife merely as a housekeeper to run his household and look after his needs. And to make up for his lack of interest in her, he has mistresses whom he changes as often as he changes his cars. On the death of his wife, he marries a woman much younger than he is and becomes the willing victim of her extravagance and the greed of her relatives.

Negative though he is in a number of ways, it is also shown that Vanchi is, in effect, a positive instrument of change. As Koni observes, Vanchi is a go-getter, a man with ideas and "drive" which are of utmost importance in bringing about change in a tradition-bound town like Kedaram. With his success and prestige, his approval of the harijan movement, even if given for selfish motives,

helps the untouchables gain acceptance in the community. His vitality and boundless energy help the nationalistic Congress Party win over the Justice Party in the elections to the legislative councils in Madras. His opportunism brings Gandhi to Kedaram and puts an end to the age-old feud between the two warring factions of the Aiyengar. On the whole, Vanchi makes things happen and breaks the bonds of traditionalism that fosters divisiveness and injustice. In spite of his self-centered motives, he serves as a positive instrument for the changes that Kedaram needs.

Hemadri, a younger version of Vanchi, represents the Indian who is outwardly modernistic but inwardly conservative in the negative sense. Constantly, he makes fun of Koni's outdated beliefs and supposed backwardness, calling him a pundit, a pacifist, and an obscurantist. And yet, he maliciously spreads rumors about Vasu's and Nirmala's relationship, seeing sin where it does not exist.

Hemadri's modernism consists largely of his unscrupulous use of politics to improve his financial position and social standing in the community. Selfish personal motives play a big role in his decisions and actions. An opportunist, he chooses his party not out of personal conviction but on the basis of which can give him more opportunities for advancement. For a while, he flirts with the Justice Party but later shifts his allegiance

to the Congress Party when it proves stronger than the former. Moreover, he welcomes the Hindu-Muslim riots as a means to get clients for his law practice. Frankly, he tells Koni, " . . . it will be the making of me. Both sides will clamor for my services and I shall choose the winning side and have a rare time" (p. 145). His frankness about his opportunism, however, is preferable to Vanchi's hypocrisy.

Like Vanchi, Hemadri is, in effect, a positive instrument of change, notwithstanding the means he uses to achieve his ends. It is Hemadri who saves Nirmala's property from being confiscated by the government and awarded to her idiotic husband ostensibly for the benefit of the candidates in the opposite party. The fact that he helps Nirmala whom he has constantly maligned shows his human side, both in the positive and negative sense. It is possible that he helps Nirmala out of the goodness of his heart. But it is also possible that he helps her only because she is a native of Kedaram who, he feels, has to be defended from her outsider husband, whose relatives and friends belong to the opposite party. In defending Nirmala, or rather her property, he makes use of his bullies to prevent the confiscation notice from being served. But in any case, his unscrupulousness helps Nirmala retain her property which she uses for the benefit of the harijan colony. In a roundabout way,

Hemadri helps a progressive movement, even if it is not exactly what he has intended. In presenting Hemadri as a thematic character representing the negative aspects of conservatism and modernism who, nevertheless, ends up helping a progressive movement, the author once more dramatizes the complexity of forces at work in a tradition-bound society going through a transitional phase.

Besides, Hemadri's mimetic picture lends color to the story of the town's transformation. Without Hemadri's pranks and irreverent remarks, the novel would be less interesting. His mimetic picture as a man with a healthy appetite and "an engaging creature, rather impudent as most engaging creatures are" helps make the town's composite portrait appear really lifelike.

Bridging the gap between the past and the present is Vasu's grandfather, Gangadhar Suri, who favors old and new values according to their real merits. Like Tagore's old men, he does not believe in the authoritarianism sanctioned by tradition. He remains in the background, giving advice only when young people seek it. He is careful not to impose his wisdom on others, including his grandson Vasu who has been in his care since his parents died. While others pressure Vasu into getting married for the sake of security and as a social duty, Gangadhar Suri leaves the matter to Vasu himself. Being broad-minded, Gangadhar Suri shuns customs that have

become meaningless through the ages, like the custom of early and pre-arranged marriage.

Likewise, he shuns modern practices that have become prestigious simply because they come from the West. He opposes the wearing of British clothes and the British practice of holding garden parties not because of prejudice but because they are alien to the Indian people and would make them uncomfortable. An earlier example of his independent-mindedness is the incident in his youth when working as a clerk in the Indian civil service, he asserted himself against a British official who tried to make use of his services for personal purposes.

Thematically, G. Suri represents the exceptional Indian who has adapted the positive aspects of both conservatism and modernism and discarded the negative. Among the different characters, he is the one most worthy of emulation. He is the realized ideal towards which all the characters are consciously or unconsciously striving.

Gangadhar Suri, however, is not an idealized abstraction. He, too, has a solid mimetic picture, showing a man with many talents. Koni recalls in retrospect that Gangadhar Suri has finished mathematics, law, and philosophy in the Christian College which is responsible for the family's "notorious non-conformity." He also has a wide practical knowledge of botany. And at seventy, he loves to work in his vegetable garden to relax and help feed his numerous dependents.

His shrewd remarks to the other characters, especially Koni, make him appear like a real character of flesh and blood. There is also his apparently innocent but determined effort to resist Vanchi's flatteries and attempts to play the marriage-broker between Vasu and Charulata Dikshit for selfish motives. To ward off Vanchi, Gangadhar Suri persists in talking about his botanical interest, leaving Vanchi frustrated. Gangadhar Suri's portrait as a shrewd man, with many talents, interests, and a few tricks gives him a semblance of reality that lends weight to his thematic role. It is shown that his intelligence and mature view of life and its complexities enable him to shift the positive from the negative aspects of both conservatism and modernism, a rare achievement.

Charulata, Vasu's wife, performs no definite thematic role in the novel. She is just herself, a young bride still more attached to her own family than to her husband whom she meets only shortly before their marriage. She wishes to stay in her parent's home instead of Vasu's ancestral place teeming with poor relatives who are coarse in their appearance and manners. But gradually, through her jealousy of Nirmala, she realizes that her place is at her husband's home rather than with her own family. Concerned mainly with her personal life and the members of her family, her husband and their child,

Charulata takes no stand, either explicit or implicit, in the conflict between the past and the present. The presence of such a character with no definite thematic role to perform makes the novel appear less schematic than it otherwise would be. It also gives a greater semblance of actual life to the story of the town of Kedaram.

All together, the different characters--Charulata who has no definite thematic role to play, the ones representing the positive aspects of conservatism and modernism, those representing the negative aspects of conservatism and modernism who, nevertheless, act as positive instruments of change for the better--indicate the variety and complexity of forces at work in a town undergoing change. All of them find their focus in Koni, who reveals both his thematic and mimetic functions in the process of writing his chronicle of Kedaram through his vivid pictures of the different characters. With the conservative but open-minded Koni at the center of action and reflection, Kedaram's composite mimetic portrait renders the theme of a conservative town's gradual acceptance of the forces at work that bring about inevitable changes.

CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION OF DOMINANTLY MIMETIC CHARACTERS

A. Mixed Achievements

The portrayal of characters for their own sake is seldom the chief aim of Indian novelists. They are so engrossed in the country's pressing political and social problems that only a few depict characters memorable for their mimetic portraits. Besides, the ancient tradition of presenting symbolic characters has persisted, making them more prestigious than non-functional characters.

As a result, dominantly mimetic characters are rarities in the Indian novel. These characters are portrayed in great depth to reveal their inmost selves. Their personal experiences, traceable to past happenings and present motives, usually unconscious, are vividly depicted. Although they may reveal characteristics of social types or take stands on current political and social issues, the emphasis is on their experiences as individuals rather than as representatives of society. And though they are not entirely unique, they appear to be so, since the focus is on the inner reality of their psyche.

In the few instances in which dominantly mimetic characters appear in the Indian novel, they are rarely taken as "end-products." Because of the greater prestige and the wider appeal of functional characters in Indian literary tradition, some novelists cannot resist the temptation to assign them thematic roles that are alien to their mimetic pictures. Oftentimes, these characters are disturbed individuals who have become neurotic as a result of the confusing socio-cultural milieu, with its conflcting Indian and Western values. Only if such characters are made to represent institutional neurosis can they properly be called thematic characters.

Usually, for pseudo-nationalistic reasons, some novelists tend to assert the superiority of traditional Indian values. Sometimes, their intellectual grasp of their country's problems is much inferior to their intuitive understanding of their characters' disturbed psyche. They make no claim, explicit or implicit, that their protagonists are ideal characters. But they attribute highly commendable traits to their protagonists that the latter do not possess. Such writers often allow their protagonists to evolve by themselves but later try to fit them into preconceived patterns and sacrifice them to dubious plots and themes that clash with their life-like mimetic portraits.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, who wrote during the last quarter of the nineteenth century when the Indian

novel was still in its infancy, reveals his inconsistencies rather naively. Anita Desai, Raja Rao, and Bhabani Bhattacharya, more sophisticated stylists of the 1960's, show theirs less directly, but, likewise, obviously. All these writers fail to reconcile their functions as analysts and dramatists of their characters' psyche.

Ideally, novelists should accomplish what they propose to do with their protagonists. If they present dominantly mimetic characters, they should take them as such. Or if they wish to assign them thematic roles, they have to make them consistent with their mimetic pictures. If they fail, their works appear blemished. Nevertheless, they cannot be considered total failures, for the presentation of characters with psychological depth, even if erroneously interpreted, will somehow make up for any inconsistencies committed. Ironically, their achievement may be even greater than that of novelists who present characters whose dual roles are consistent but are lacking in psychological depth. In the final analysis, it is what they accomplish that really matters.

B. Successful Presentation of Dominantly Mimetic Characters

There are a few Indian novelists who take their dominantly mimetic protagonists for what they are, interpret them consistently with the way they are depicted, or

omit explicit explanations altogether. Among those few who present characters that properly belong to the novel of psychological realism are Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, R. K. Narayan, and Bibhuti B. Bamerjee. Their protagonists are exceptional in the Indian novel, which still carries overtones of the ancient literary tradition of presenting characters as vehicles of meaning.

In the novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, character is used thematically in the ancient manner--to inculcate moral values that have become part of the accepted norms of society. In his unconscious mind, Bankim Chandra recognizes that some of these norms violate normal human relationship. And yet he upholds these values consciously, using characters to illustrate them. The disparity between the characters' dual roles would have been less evident if they were mere abstractions. But his insight into their psyche and his gift of drawing them according to the dictates of their inner beings make obvious the unresolved conflict between what he intuitively perceives as right and what he consciously believes in conformity with the accepted norms of society.

Among the values that Bankim Chandra extols in his novels are those found in the ancient Indian epics, such as the subjection of woman to man and the double standard of morality. Following the example of the faithful Sita in the Ramayana, his woman protagonists are

meant to illustrate the theme that a wife finds fulfillment in sacrificing herself for her husband's sake rather than in developing her own potentialities. She should not assert herself but follow whatever he wishes. This theme, however, is not borne out by the mimetic pictures of his woman protagonists.

Sympathetically, Bankim Chandra depicts women who deviate from the accepted norms and suffer as a consequence. In their mimetic portraits, he reveals that they have reasons of their own for violating the norms. In fact, he reveals a deep understanding of the psyche of women, especially of the rejected ones who obviously fascinate him. Yet, aware of the expectations of his reading public, he naively subordinates their psychological reality to norms that he tries to repudiate but ultimately accepts.

Bankim Chandra's wish to please his reading public makes him contradict the vivid mimetic portraits of his characters in his thematic analyses. He casts the women into the thematic roles of sinners who have to suffer in order to atone for their sins even if their actions are shown to be justified by complex psychological forces. Incongruously, he labels them wicked and depicts them as suffering cruel punishments that far exceed their offenses. On the other hand, he exonerates and even glorifies the erring male characters who drive the women

to violate the accepted values and practices. For these male protagonists, some gestures at atonement are considered sufficient. The discrepancy between their mimetic pictures and their thematic roles as proper judges of the women is obvious to any reader who does not share the expectation of Bankim Chandra's reading public.

Bankim Chandra has written a number of novels, most of which reveal his confusion between what he intuitively believes and what he outwardly professes. This confusion is most evident in Krishnakanta's Will.

In Krishnakanta's Will, Bankim Chandra Chaterjee fails to give thematic interpretations of his major characters that are consistent with their lifelike mimetic pictures. The disparity between his protagonists' dual functions can be traced to his basic confusion between what should be, according to the expectations of society, and what is true in reality. He introduces an obtrusive, voluble, supposedly omniscient narrator to serve as the spokesman of society, strongly condemning Rohini, the woman who transgresses against the accepted social norms, and absolving the man, who is more guilty than she. This narrator, speaking for society, represents the author's conscious self which he contradicts unconsciously with the vivid mimetic portraits of the characters that he depicts.

Thematically, Rohini, the mistress, is the arch-villainess who makes Govindalal desert his virtuous and faithful wife Bhramar. Patterned after the faithful Sita of the Ramayana, Bhramar is cast into the thematic role of the ideal Hindu wife who remains faithful to her husband no matter what he does. Govindalal is the husband who is led to sin by the shameless Rohini, but he repents for his sin and is forgiven.

The mimetic portraits of the three characters, however, are diametrically opposed to the author's analyses of their thematic functions made through the narrator. Bhramar is actually a spirited woman capable of asserting her rights as an individual and is not beyond taking vengeance against her faithless, hypocritical husband Govindalal. In vividly rendered scenes, Rohini is portrayed as a sympathetic character, a young widow unjustly despised by society for the crime of outliving her husband; she becomes Govindalal's mistress in her desperate attempt to find solace in her loneliness. Govindalal is an opportunist who, not having the courage to face the consequences of his own guilt, self-righteously passes all the blame to Rohini but eventually suffers pangs of conscience. His burden of guilt is heavy because he is not strong enough to admit to himself that he has sinned and, therefore, cannot forgive himself.

A more detailed account of the incidents in the novel will show the glaring disparity between the thematic and the mimetic roles of the major characters and the author's futile attempts to make their dual functions consistent.

Rohini, the proclaimed villainess, is first portrayed in a scene with Krishnakanta's disinherited son Haralal, who tries to convince her to steal Krishnakanta's will and substitute a forged one for his benefit. He reminds her of the time he rescued her from some bad men and offers her a thousand rupees as her advance reward so that she would do what he bids. Rohini shudders, saying that she cannot betray her benefactors, Krishnakanta and his nephew Govindalal. It is only when Haralal offers to marry her that she reluctantly consents to exchange the wills. The temptation proves too strong for her to resist, for she has suffered much in her widowed state. She agrees to Haralal's proposal, for she wants to be elevated to the status of wife instead of being looked down upon as a despised widow for the rest of her life. She knows that Hindu society, or rather the more progressive part of it, is beginning to recognize widow-remarriage as valid, according to the ancient scriptures that have survived.

The scene shows that though Rohini is not beyond temptation, she is not a woman entirely devoid of

principles. She is not merely after material reward but fulfillment in human relationship. She consents to do wrong only to counteract a greater wrong, the ban against widow remarriage and the low status of widows in Hindu society.

Rohini is deeply mortified when after doing Haralal's bidding, he refuses to marry her because she is a thief. Her status in society sinks lower than ever. In her chagrin, she weeps bitterly by the Varuni tank, thinking:

> For what fault was I destined to become a widow while still a child? Am I a greater sinner than other people that I should be deprived of all joys of this world? For what fault am I, still young and beautiful, condemned to pass my life like a piece of dry wood? People who have all the happiness that life can give--for instance, Govindalal's wife--what virtues have they got that I have not got? What have they done to deserve so much happiness, while I have none? I do not grudge others their happiness, but why should all paths be closed to me? What shall I do with this miserable life of mine?[1]

After going deeply into Rohini's mind, the narrator, obviously a mouthpiece of the author, makes a concession to accepted norms by naively observing that Rohini is not a good woman, that she is jealous for nothing, and that she has many faults. The obvious difference between her representation and the narrator's interpretation is evident in this scene as in the rest of the novel.

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[1]This Bengali novel was first published in 1895. This passage is taken from J. C. Gosh's English translation published by New Directions (Norfolk, Connecticut: James Laughlin, 1962), p. 29.

The author gives the psychological motives behind Rohini's falling in love with Govindalal. It is while she is weeping bitterly by the Varuni tank that he discovers her and listens to her problems. It is understandable why Rohini, despised in her widowhood by society and cheated by Haralal, responds readily to Govindalal's concern and sympathy in spite of what people are likely to say about his paying attention to her. Her falling in love with him is psychologically motivated, not born of wickedness as the narrator asserts.

The next scene shows that Rohini is a woman whose love for a man and sense of gratitude to him make her take a risk in undoing a wrong she has committed. Once more, she enters the house of Krishnakanta at night, while he is smoking opium, to replace the counterfeit will with the genuine will so that Govindalal would have his rightful share of the inheritance. Unfortunately, she is caught by Krishnakanta in the act of exchanging the two wills. He refuses to believe her explanation of what she is doing, and he decides to turn her out of the village in disgrace, with her hair shaved and whey poured over it. Govindalal rescues her from his uncle's anger and offers to send her to Calcutta with her uncle whom Haralal has bribed to pen the counterfeit will. It is in this scene that Govindalal learns of Rohini's love for him. He himself has fallen in love with her. As Krishnakanta

shrewdly observes, Govindalal "seems to have lost his head at the sight of the woman's pretty face," for he misses answers to his own questions as to what has happened. It is shown that the attraction between them is mutual. Later, however, the narrator tries to create the impression that she is a consummate seductress and that Govindalal is her unfortunate victim.

Psychologically, it is understandable why Govindalal falls in love with Rohini in spite of his wish to conform to social norms. According to custom, he has been married in his youth to Bhramar, a child bride of eight. After nine years of marriage with only one dead son to show for it, it is very probable that he has grown tired of his wife. And just at the right psychological moment, he sees Rohini, a fair-complexioned woman, who by traditional Hindu standards, is more attractive than his dark-skinned wife. Besides, while Rohini has the grace and the attraction of a young woman in deep sorrow, Bhramar, at seventeen remains petulant and childish in many ways. He falls in love with Rohini in spite of his scrupulousness. Actually he is scrupulous only on the surface, his passionate wish being merely to be able to think well of himself and maintain his good reputation among others.

Contrary to the narrator's assertions, Rohini is not wholly wicked, even if she is judged by the standards

of her society. Aware of society's injunctions against love outside marriage, she tries to fight against what she considers to be her sin in falling in love with Govindalal. Fervently, she prays:

> O lord of the world, protector of the poor, sole refuge of the unhappy, I am fallen into great trouble and am very unhappy. Save me. Quench this unbearable fire of love in my heart. Do not burn me anymore. Whenever I see him whom I am now going to see, I feel unbearable pain and endless pleasure. I am a widow. I am about to lose my virtue, my happiness, my life. I shall have nothing left, O lord, nothing that I would like to keep. O God! O Durga! O Kali! O Jagannath! give me good counsel, compose my heart. I can't bear this pain any longer (pp. 57-58).

Rohini succumbs to her love for Govindalal but not after a struggle with her own feelings. If she sins in going against society's norms, it is because she is unable to resist her own feelings, not entirely because of wickedness. It is her misfortune that the only one who shows her concern and sympathy and touches a response in her heart is a married man.

Desperate at the thought of being separated from Govindalal, she follows the jealous Bhramar's order to kill herself by drowning. Govindalal, who is now always on the watch for Rohini, saves her when he discovers her almost lifeless at the bottom of the Varuni tank, showing that his psychological need for her proves stronger at this time than his awareness of what society expects of him. He does not allow her to die unaided, as he

would naturally do if he were merely concerned about society's certain verdict. Instead he spends two to three hours reviving her by mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, an act that would surely outrage the village people. The fact that he does not tell his gardener, who is present, to call for help shows that he wants to make sure that nobody interferes with his attempt to revive Rohini, who is now a persona non grata to the rest of the villagers. He wants her to live for his sake, not merely because it is a sin to commit suicide, as he explains to her when she regains consciousness. He pays no heed to her answer that it is "better to die outright than by degrees every day, every hour, every moment" (p. 68).

When Rohini goes home by herself, Govindalal prays: "O lord, save me from this danger. I shall not be able to save myself unless you give me strength. I shall die; Bhramar too will die. Abide in my heart, and give me strength to conquer myself." To save himself from the danger and to evade Bhramar's questions about what he has been doing in the garden for some time, he asks his uncle Krishnamata to allow him to visit the family estates in Bandikhali. In this scene Govindalal reveals his tendency to run away from the truth, as he does in the rest of the novel.

When the story of the rescue finally reaches Bhramar, it is mixed with malicious gossip, which hurts

her as much as it hurts Rohini. To get even with Bhramar, whom she blames for spreading the lies, Rohini pretends that Govindalal has given her a sari and three thousand rupees worth of jewelry. So far, this action of Rohini is the worst she has done. It is not born of sheer wickedness though, as the narrator implies, but is a very human reaction of a downtrodden woman who wants to hit back at people who have further ruined her already-blemished reputation, an all-important matter in traditional Hindu society. In her confusion, she unjustly blames Bhramar, her chief rival.

Bhramar's reaction to the gossip reveals that she is not an ideal Hindu wife, by current standards, as the narrator tries to make her out. She behaves like an outraged wife capable of forgetting the role prescribed by society. She is conscious of her rights as an individual in spite of the fact that she has been brought up with the idea that a woman's god is her husband and that she has to keep faith in him no matter what he does. To Govindalal's shock, she writes:

> You probably think that my devotion to you is unshakable, and my faith in you unbounded. I too thought so. But I now find it is not so. I was devoted to you as long as you were worthy of my devotion, I had faith in you as long as you deserved it. Now I have neither devotion nor faith in you, nor happiness in seeing you. If you kindly let me know before you come home, I will do everything in my power to go away to my father (pp. 82-83).

In her mind, their relationship should be reciprocal, if it is to be meaningful at all.

Bhramar's letter, which shows that she is capable of reacting like a normal woman, infuriates Govindalal, who cannot believe that his wife can deviate from the accepted standards. Another letter from Rohini's uncle, accusing Bhramar of circulating ugly tales about Rohini and asking Govindalal to put matters to right, makes Govindalal more disgusted with his wife. When he arrives home and finds out that she has left for her father's house without waiting for his explanations, he decides to abandon her.

The fact is that Govindalal wants to enjoy the love of Rohini and, at the same time, be able to vindicate himself by putting the whole blame on his wife. As if he had not enough reasons to forsake Bhramar and turn to Rohini, he looks for another and finds one soon enough when his uncle Krishnakanta dies shortly after changing his will, leaving half of the ancestral property to Bhramar instead of to Govindalal. The latter nurses his hurt pride and tells his wife that he would not live on her charity and that he would go from place to place to find some way of earning a living, obviously to make her feel guilty.

He does not heed the fact that his uncle has left his own share of the ancestral property to his wife to

keep him from going to Rohini. Nor does he listen to Bhramar's explanation that Krishnakanta's will is invalid and that he is really entitled to half of the ancestral property, nor to the fact that she has made a deed of gift of all her property to him. Apparently, he can see the logic behind Bhramar's explanation, but he has no intention of losing a good excuse to abandon his wife without appearing to be the offender.

Thinking of the "beautiful Rohini bright and scintillating like Venus the morning star," Govindalal adroitly plays the role of the aggrieved husband who has the right to punish his wife who has committed "a grave offense." Taking leave of Bhramar, he blames her for her lack of trust in him, for writing him "that hard letter," and for "not having cared to ask him if the reports she had heard about him were true" (p. 101). Having exonerated himself of all guilt, he deserts Bhramar in spite of her tearful pleas for forgiveness.

Ostensibly, Govindalal goes on a pilgrimage to Benares with his mother to make people believe that he is leaving his wife with a pious intent. Soon afterwards, he takes leave of his mother and joins Rohini in Prasadphur with a "clear" conscience. His complacence however, does not last long, for, at bottom, he must have known that he is not guiltless. But the narrator, who shares Govindalal's delusions, sadly calls him foolish while condemning Rohini

as a fiend. The narrator adds, "We can only shed tears for him, we cannot describe his fall" (p. 90). Applying the double standard of morality to the lovers, the narrator merely sympathizes with Govindalal while harshly condemning Rohini.

In Part I of the novel, the author portrays the characters acting and reacting according to the dictates of their inner motives. In Part II, however, he tries to distort their mimetic portraits to make them conform to his inaccurate thematic interpretations of their roles. But he succeeds only in distorting their images to a certain extent and fails to make them entirely consistent with his thematic analyses. In the case of Bhramar, she is partly reduced to what Gosh, the translator, calls "a sentimental pathetic abstraction," as when she muses, "God knows where Rohini is gone. I, a sinful creature, will not utter my suspicions" (p. 114). Her old spirited self, however, still persists.

Rohini is still portrayed as a real woman, but an inconsistency enters her portrayal. Now drawn almost wholly from the outside, she no longer appears to be a woman responsive to kindness. She is shown to be ungrateful to Govindalal and easily attracted by the good looks and rich clothes of Nisakar, a young man sent by Bhramar's father to look for the lovers. On the pretext of wishing to hear news of her uncle, Rohini arranges a

tryst with Nisakar, who bribes a servant to inform Govindalal. Incongruously, she is made to appear like a loose woman in order to justify Govindalal's attempt to exculpate himself. By this device, the author hopes to be able to absolve Govindalal of guilt and cast him into the thematic role of a betrayed lover who has the right to pass judgement and punish his unfaithful sweetheart. Though he is more guilty than she, he is cast into the thematic role of judge and executioner.

In the next scene, Rohini and Nisakar are seen in their trysting place by the jealous Govindalal. Nisakar escapes, and Govindalal drags Rohini home, upbraiding her:

> For you I sacrificed my princely fortune and my moral principles, and became an exile. I deserted Bhramar who is a paragon of kindness and love. What are you, Rohini, that I sacrificed all this for you? (p. 143).

In spite of her pleas to spare her life, he kicks her and shoots her to death. Rohini is cast into the thematic role of the archvillainess who has to die a violent death to satisfy society's wish for punishment of the guilty in an illicit relationship. Govindalal's anger is made to appear justified by Rohini's ingratitude and faithlessness to him who has supposedly sacrificed everything for her sake.

It is suggested in the succeeding incidents that Govindalal need not pay for Rohini's murder. He eludes the

law successfully for years. And when he is caught and brought to trial, he is acquitted because Bhramar's father has bribed the witnesses. Govindalal, however, does not return to his wife, probably because of his persisting sense of guilt and pride.

After a year of difficulties, however, he writes her to save him from starvation. This is the first time he swallows his pride and admits his guilt, probably expecting his wife to be as apologetic and eager at reconciliation as when he left her. But contrary to his expectations, she sends him a letter "devoid of tenderness," just like the "hard letter" she has written him before. Now she writes:

> After making all arrangements for your coming, I shall go to my father's and stay there until my own house is built. It does not seem likely that you and I shall meet again in this life. I am content that it should be so, and I do not doubt that you too are content (p. 159).

Bhramar has remained essentially the same woman capable of asserting herself; she is not the "ideal" Hindu wife that the narrator tries to make her out.

Bhramar's portrait is not contradicted either in her presentation towards the end. As she lies dying, she sends for Govindalal and begs for his forgiveness and blessings so that she would be happy in her next life. She has begged for Govindalal's forgiveness before to keep him by her side; and now that she is dying, it is understandable that she does the same for the sake of her

happiness in the next incarnation. She is willing to submit herself to him only if it will benefit her, for she cannot overlook what he has made her suffer for years.

The narrator comments:

> Govindalal had loved two women, Bhramar and Rohini, both of whom were dead. Unable to control his youthful desire for beauty, he had forsaken Bhramar and taken Rohini. But no sooner had he done this than he realized, in the difference between the two women, the difference between love and thirst for beauty, between happiness and enjoyment, between nectar and poison. As he drank the poison of Rohini's love, he was reminded of the nectar Bhramar had given him. Bhramar has always been in his thoughts, enthroned in his inmost heart, when he was living with Rohini in Prasadphur. Although he has lost Bhramar, she was always within him; and tied though he was to Rohini, she was always without. This is the reason why Rohini died so soon, as I hope has been clear to my readers. In vain have I written this story if it has not (pp. 164-165).

Govindalal, who gives the final judgement on the two women, is a badly confused man divided between what he really is and what he believes himself to be, between what he spontaneously feels and how he thinks, according to the norms of society. On the thematic level, it is suggested that his admission that he has killed Rohini in fact and Bhramar in effect and his wandering as an ascetic are sufficient atonement for his mistakes.

The author's intuitive grasp of Govindalal's psyche, however, is more accurate. It is shown in the scene that Govindalal's giving up his property on the death of Bhramar bespeaks a still-guilty conscience. He

is unable to free himself because of his compulsive need to pass on his guilt to others, his wife first, and then his mistress. His visit to his ancestral home twelve years later and his parting words to his nephew Sachinata's son reveal his old self, still steeped in pretenses: "Only by offering one's mind at the feet of God can peace be found. God alone is now my property, my Bhramar, and my more than Bhramar." He speaks these words just after he has admitted to his nephew that there is no peace in asceticism and that he just wears the monk's garment because it is suitable to a life of obscurity.

Speaking through the unreliable narrator who is intended to be reliable, the author tries to uphold traditional values in the novel. His attempt fails, however, because the thematic interpretations he gives the major characters are in conflict with their mimetic pictures. Ironically, what he succeeds in doing is the opposite of his avowed aim. He shows how harsh and cruel society can be when it succeeds in imposing its values on the individual. Govindalal allows himself to be imposed upon and he, in turn, imposes on Rohini. Bhramar does not allow herself to be imposed upon by society or by her husband; but the latter makes her suffer by deserting her. Directly or indirectly, all three characters suffer as a result of values imposed on them by society. The author fails in his conscious intent to uphold these

values but succeeds in depicting what he intuitively perceives as evil when the spontaneous course of human relationship is tampered with by accepted values rigidly imposed on the characters. He succeeds in using characters as vehicles of meaning not according to his conscious intent but rather according to his intuitive grasp of their psyches.

Anita Desai's Voices in the City is another one of the few Indian novels of psychological realism. Like The Serpent and the Rope, its protagonists have dominantly mimetic portraits. It is a vivid and deeply sympathetic study of two members of the Ray family, Nirode and Monisha, both very sensitive characters who have succumbed to mental illness. Less sympathetically treated, probably because less sick, are their younger sister Amla and their mother. The four parts of the novel are named after these four characters, the first, after Nirode, then Monisha and Amla, and finally, Mother. But the story of each character is continued in the succeeding parts so that Nirode has the most exposure and hence the most fully developed mimetic picture.

In Part I, a few selected scenes are dramatically rendered; others are reported in Nirode's long monologues with his friends. Some events, both past and present, are summarized, analyzed, and commented on by the omniscient author. Sometimes, the latter makes direct comments on

Nirode's character and actions. He is "proud to the point of being a fanatic" and "intense enough to be capable of whole-hearted dedication." And yet he drifts, "a shadowy cipher," his life consisting of "one rejection following another." He loathes not only the world that can offer him "no true crusade, no pilgrimage" but also himself "for not having the true, unwavering spirit of either within him." To him, there is "only this endless waiting, hollowed out by an intrinsic knowledge" that there is nothing to wait for.[2]

It is shown that Nirode has a failure complex, which he tries to elevate into an elaborate philosophy of life. Speaking of his literary magazine, Voice, to his friend David, Nirode explains:

> . . . I want it to fail--quickly. Then I want to see if I have the spirit to start moving again, towards my next failure. I want to move from failure to failure, step by step to rock bottom. I want to explore that depth. When you climb a ladder, all you find at the top is space, all you can do is leap off--fall to the bottom. I want to get there without that meaningless climbing. I want to descend quickly.
>
> . . . Happiness, suffering--I want to be done with them, disregard them, see beyond them to the very end (p. 42).

In this attempt to explain himself, Nirode reveals his compulsive need to pursue failure. Apparently, he expresses his wish to fail because he is afraid of

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[2](London: Peter Owen, 1965), p. 42.

what others would say if he fails. He anticipates failure to be able to say later that it is a matter of choice rather than the result of weakness. It is possible, too, that some unresolved guilt makes him shun success which he feels he does not deserve. It seems that he wants to fail to punish himself, for success would make him suffer more deeply than ever. Later, he admits to his sister Amla:

> . . . you know, I once told a friend--a friend who has become a Buddhist now, an acolyte--that life lived to be a success only follows one success after the other but eventually has to bend with the arc and arrive at the bottom. And since I never was any good at going along with the others, I thought I would take the other direction and follow failure after failure and reach the bottom of the arc much quicker, while I was still young enough to see and feel and understand with every one of my senses. But that was the mistake. . . . You can't descend to such complete darkness, such complete isolation, all exposed. That's where you most need to know how to hide, because not only is it unbearable to expose yourself to such agonies, it is also pointless, it wears you away and leaves you nothing. Do you read Camus, Amla? . . .
>
> He wrote that "in default of inexhaustible happiness, eternal suffering would at least give us a destiny. But we do not even have that consolation, and our worst agonies come to an end one day (p. 190).

Nirode's admission of his mistake at this point is a very rare instance indeed. It must be noted, however, that he tries to show that it is not peculiarly his mistake but of people in general. There is still the attempt to justify himself.

Nirode's relationship with his friends reveals another facet of his instability which he tries to cover up by an outward show of aggressiveness. The self-effacing David helps give Nirode an added sense of superiority. Nirode vents his frustrations on David, who defends himself merely by turning a deaf ear to Nirode's abuses. Nirode himself wonders if his weakness has gone so deep that he has to make a whipping boy of David, "a familiar Occidental eccentric who has gone native."

Likewise, Nirode's relationship with his other friends reveals his weaknesses, as well as theirs. Often, he makes vicious verbal attacks on them, which they seem to bear because of their own need for chastisement. He abuses Sonny Ghose on whom he sponges when he resigns from his work in a journalistic office and makes plans for his literary magazine, Voice. To Nirode, "Sonny's nothing, nobody, just a reflection of all that tawdry tinsel and glimmer-glamour of his father's wealth" (p. 183). Nirode has nothing but contempt for Sonny who, he suspects, wishes to see him "at the head of a vast arty magazine which he will patronize in the same fashion his old man patronized painted women" (p. 110). In his contempt for Sonny's pretensions to being a man of leisure and an amateur artist, Nirode somehow enhances his own sense of precarious security.

Another friend of Nirode is Jit Nair, an artist lured into employment in a big British Tea Company. In

berating Jit Nair for his materialism, Nirode feels that he himself is above the bourgeois values that are not supposed to be accepted by a truly dedicated artist. As Jit Nair counters, however, Nirode loathes people like him because of the temptation they offer.

Nirode manages to keep the good will of Jit Nair, Sonny Ghose, and others in spite of his viciousness because they find in him what they wish to be themselves--someone dedicated to the cause of art even at the sacrifice of the common joys of life. They fail to notice that although Nirode is intellectually brilliant and artistic, he is psychologically sick. The fact is that Nirode is being used by his friends to give them the vicarious satisfaction of leading "a crusade, a cause, a way of life and a set of values" without the risks and consequences. But Nirode hates to be used though he himself uses others for his own advantage. He gives up his magazine, which has attained some degree of success, because he thinks that he does not want to be responsible for something which his friends believe in and have encouraged. Very jealous of his privacy, he wishes to be free of his friends, to be alone, and to avoid all kinds of involvement. These wishes of his reflect a deep sense of alienation.

Nirode's relationship with his mother reveals his psychological difficulties to the utmost. He thinks and speaks of her with anger and contempt, but his judgment

of her is not confirmed by Monisha nor Amla nor by the text itself. His anger against her seems in excess of his conscious grievance against her. He used to despise his father and adore his mother. Then suddenly, as Monisha recalls, on his father's death, he pitied him and loathed "that same, unchanged mother." Now he himself feels that Mother is unchanged and that it is he who has changed. The only obvious grievance that he has against her is her friendship with Major Chadha, which developed after the death of her husband. Why Nirode is very bitter against this is not explained or suggested in the novel. What is stressed is his anger at the mere mention of Mother's name and, worse still, her suggestion that he accept her offer to help him by giving his share of the income from the family estate. Instead of accepting her offer, he chooses to depend on his friends and later to live in extreme poverty. After his debilitating illness, he raises some money by deceiving his aunt, selling her a supposedly ancient but actually three-weeks-old statue of Shiva and Parvati making love. He even shows grim amusement over the old woman's embarrassment and her buying the statue at an exorbitant price just to keep it from the eyes of the servants. These acts of Nirode reveal how distorted his values are and how unaware he is of his own perversity though he despises others for less serious offenses.

Part II of the novel focuses on Monisha and her relationship with her in-laws and her brother Nirode. Her character is drawn mainly through the revelation of her inmost thoughts and feelings by means of a first-person account that makes her inner life stand out. The impassioned style reveals her deep absorption in her problems.

It is shown how much she suffers on hearing her in-laws openly discuss her ovaries. They consider her a failure as a wife because of her inability to conceive a child after several years of marriage. They have no respect for her privacy and have only contempt for her books, her silence, and her artistic talents. Her whole marriage is a mistake, as Aunt Lila later explains to Amla.

In her reminiscences, Monisha seeks to justify herself and her brother Nirode, the only one who understands her and whom she alone understands. From her viewpoint, both of them are ill at ease in a bourgeois society that is too crude for their sensibilities. She recalls that they have been considered failures by relatives and friends who, in their materialism and obtuseness, cannot understand their artistic temperament and thus condemn them for their nonconformity to the usual concept of what constitutes success. They have been compared unfavorably with their brother Arun, who has excelled in his

studies and in sports and has been sent to London by their parents. As Monisha recalls, Nirode ran away from college and "floundered about in such torment," while she herself "failed again and again and crept back to Mother" (p. 133).

Monisha, however, has more depth and objectivity in her valuation of themselves. In spite of her wish to justify both of them, she can see their shortcomings. Seeing Nirode's self-effacing friend David, she noted in him "that vital element that is missing from Nirode and myself--that element of love," the absence of which "makes us both, brother and sister, such abject rebels, such craven tragedians." Furthermore, she notes that in place of love, they possess "a darker, fiercer element--fear," particularly of love that to them means attachment from which arises longing (p. 139).

Wistfully, she reflects, "If only love existed that is not binding, that is free of rules, obligations, complicity and all stirrings of mind and conscience, then--but there is no such love" (p. 139). She does not find it in her relationship with her husband Jiban, "which is filled only by loneliness and a desperate urge to succeed, and once plunged me into the most calamitous pleasures and pains, fears and regrets," nor in her relationship with Mother, "which is filled with an inbred and invalid sense of duty, of honour, of concern" (pp. 139-140).

By love, Monisha means "not these physical passions and congenital connections" at all but "only an awake condition of the conscience" that both Nirode and she fear because they are "frozen with distrust" (p. 140). Their withdrawal from life is embodied in her plea to "allow us just this--to stand back, apart, in the shadows, and watch the fire and the flames, the sacrifices that are flung into it, the celebration, the mourning, and permit us--not to take part" (p. 140). Thus, while she admires David, "a seeker after God," she does not envy him "who is walking into the ring of love, faith, and betrayal" (p. 140). Later, however, she bewails her wasted life, "this life enclosed in a locked container, merely as an observer, and so imperfect, so handicapped an observer at that" (p. 248). Bitterly, she regrets her withdrawal from life, a desperate attempt to avoid pain but which has resulted in even greater pain. Psychologically ill though she is, Monisha confronts her problems as honestly as she can, unlike Nirode, who tends to blame everybody, except himself.

Like Nirode, Monisha suffers from lack of a meaningful relationship with others. Her isolation from her husband's family is such that even the mere act of cutting the sick Nirode's hair gives her "such sensuous delight" and a feeling of accomplishment as "a member of a family, a human being" (p. 138). But she cannot always

have contact with Nirode, whose strange ways are repellent to her husband's family. Soon afterwards, she is accused of theft by her in-laws, "these pettiest of people." To her, however, she has not committed theft. She believes that she has simply taken her husband's money and paid it to the hospital, "which looks as if it really needs to have its bills paid." Nevertheless, confronted with the loss of Jiban's money, she feels guilty and is hurt most by his asking her, "Why didn't you tell me before you took it?" instead of "Why didn't you tell them at once?" (p. 141). Finally, she takes her own life in a moment of supposedly heightened consciousness.

Monisha's death by fire, recounted by the omniscient author, is a kind of ritual preceded by music played by a street band. She locks herself in her bathroom, soaks herself in kerosene, and strikes a match, as if to see if it would light. To her astonishment, or so she thinks, the very first match strikes fire. She screams, "No! No! No!" At the moment, she does not want to die yet, but the fire consumes her, and she loses consciousness. Her mimetic portrait is presented with intense vividness, but it is as short-lived as the fire that puts an end to her anguish. Except for Nirode, who is elated by her fiery death, no other character in the novel makes any comment on her suicide, thus making it appear justified. With only her own norms and Nirode's

as frame of reference, she is shown to be a character to be sympathized with, even admired for her courage to put an end to her torments.

In Part III, the focus appears to be on Amla. But actually, she serves mainly as an observer-narrator, throwing further light on Nirode and Monisha. Less tormented than her elder brother and sister, she also gives a more objective and accurate picture of Mother to the painter Dharma:

> . . . She is the most beautiful woman I know, and very accomplished. None of us is like her, so polished and balanced and contained--like a well-cut jewel. I will read you her letters one day, to show you how warm-hearted she is, in spite of her self-absorption, how full of impulses and instincts she can be. Yet at the core of it all there is this cold, frosty love of power--like a concealed fluorescent bulb. I can't describe it or explain to you why I sense it, but I'm certain it is there. Perhaps I understand it because, really, I am a bit like her, and so is Nirode, and we share this secret inner coldness and outward impulsiveness with her . . . (p. 215).

In Amla's valuation of Mother, there is no attempt to downgrade her and spare her children, including the self-righteous Nirode, whose much-vaunted idealism remains on the surface of his speeches to his friends.

Mother's final appearance in Part IV of the novel confirms Amla's valuation of her, but she has good reasons to show her coldness to her children. She does not speak with Nirode, apparently because he has obstinately refused to answer her letters for years and rejected her

repeated offers to give him his share of the family estate. She is equally cold to Amla, who herself regrets her failure to help Monisha when she has already sensed her unhappiness in the home of her husband's family. Through her silence, Mother reproaches her children.

Nirode, who has been eager to meet and talk with her, embraces her but feels her "draw away, push him away with a cool, dispassionate movement so that she might stand alone and free," and he realizes that she does not want him anymore. He himself feels free and contemplates "this unanticipated and desolate liberty that her small gesture had so silently and irrevocably maneouvered" (p. 259). His interpretation of her rejection of him, however, completely ignores the fact that he himself has repeatedly rejected her for years. Incongruously, he concludes that she no longer needs him nor her other children because she has been fulfilled by the great tragedy of Monisha's suicide. Then he assigns to her a symbolism that her mimetic picture does not bear.

Excitedly he exclaims:

> . . . Amla, I know her now. She is Kali, the goddess and the demon are one. When I was driving through the city with her, and I saw the sky darken, and people put on lights in her honour, and heard them wail and chant, and I knew at once then, that she is Kali. She has watched the sacrifice and she is satisfied. Don't you see, Amla, the satisfaction on her lips? See how still and controlled her lips and hands are, because she has at last seized and mastered death, she has become Kali--

> Mother, mother--Kali is the mother of Bengal, she is the mother of us all. Don't you see, Amla, how once she has given birth to us, she must also deal us our deaths? Oh, I see so clearly now, I feel my skin is stripped away and my interior has melted into the exterior, I know it so well. I see now that she is everything we have been fighting against, you and Monisha and I, and she is also everything we have fought for. She is our consciousness and our unconsciousness, she is all that is manifest, and all that is unmanifest . . .
>
> . . . it spreads and spreads far beyond, it compasses not just this one earth but all the planets, all the centuries, night and day, light and dark. She is not merely good, she is not merely evil--she is good and she is evil. She is our knowledge and our ignorance. She is everything to which we are attached, she is everything from which we will always be detached. She is reality and illusion, she is the world and she is maya. Don't you see, in her face, in her beauty, Amla, don't you see, the amalgamation of death and life? Isn't it perfect and inevitable that she should pour blood into our veins when we are born, and drain it from us when we die? Oh, I have such a vision, I don't know if I can bear it--and survive. Monisha's death--Monisha dead. I am sentenced to death, too, now. I am prepared and waiting for it. I have heard her approach--death, Kali. She watches me all the time now, Amla, and while she watches I grow more and more vividly alive by the minute, and also closer and closer to my death. I am so stretched, so open to this vision, I can feel it seep into me, like night, like night turning my blood black (pp. 263-264).

What Nirode and the implied author overlook is the fact that Nirode and Monisha have come back to Bengal with the seeds of destruction already within them. Mother herself has left it on the death of her husband to live in the hills of Kalimpong where the family estate is located. She has abandoned Calcutta the moment she feels free to do so. And though she has the weakness

of the rich upper class for the comforts of life, she has none of the destructiveness of Nirode and Monisha. It is, therefore, inappropriate to accept Nirode's valuation of her as Kali. The saner Amla can but feebly protest that Mother is Mother, not Kali. The implied author makes no comments but implicitly shows in the elevated, heightened, lyrical style of the last scene that Nirode's judgement is right.

There is no discernible aesthetic distance between the author and the approved characters, Nirode and Monisha. Anita Desai fully sympathizes with them, with no qualifications whatsoever. Amla is the least neurotic of the three younger characters, but her valuation of Mother is brushed aside and Nirode's distorted judgement is made to prevail. References made by the omniscient narrator earlier in the novel to Kali and the evil city of Calcutta are meant to be clinched by the symbolism assigned to her in the last scene by Nirode who, hating her beyond reason, cannot possibly make a fair valuation of her.

Nirode and Monisha and, to a certain extent, Mother and Amla are all unhappy characters whose inward sufferings are dramatically rendered or subtly suggested in the novel. They emerge as individuals with well developed portraits. But personal neurotic values are finally made to represent abstract ideas. The result is

a forced symbolism superimposed on the novel, and the imposition of thematic roles that are incongruous with the characters' mimetic pictures blemishes an otherwise wholly successful novel of psychological realism. Nevertheless, Anita Desai's achievement in the novel remains outstanding, the portrayal of the anguished lives of psychologically ill characters.

Among the few essentially mimetic characters portrayed by Indian writers are Achala, her lover Suresh, and her husband Mahim in The Fire[3] by Sarat Chandra Chatterjee. They are depicted mainly for their own sake and experiences. Their mimetic portraits are explored in depth and their inner motives are dramatically rendered in well-developed scenes. The novel is thus dominated by character rather than by plot and theme, unlike most Indian novels in which plot and theme are as important as, or sometimes even more important than, character.

In spite of references to prevailing social conventions and the Hindu-Brahmo conflict, Achala, Suresh, and Mahim are by no means thematic characters. Achala is not concerned that the two men are Hindus, nor is she bothered by how members of her own community, the Brahmo

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[3]The novel, entitled Grihadalin in Bengali, was first published in 1920. S. L. Ghosh's English translation, The Fire, was published in Calcutta 5 by Aruna Roychowdhury in 1964. Quotations will be taken from the latter.

Samaj, would view her relationship with both of them. Her main concern is what other people, mostly Hindus, would think of her relationship with them, particularly her lover. Suresh and Mahim do not take their Hinduism seriously either. Both fall in love and think of marrying her, without being troubled by their conscience nor the thought of what other Hindus would think and say. Nowhere is it mentioned in the novel that both men have been influenced by Western values; but it can be gathered that, as university students, they must have been exposed to such values which must have weakened their belief in their inherited Hindu values. Thus, both of them, especially Suresh, try to live up to personal codes of honor that are neither uniquely Christian nor Hindu but are supposed to have social sanction.

The conflict in the novel is thus not primarily an ideological one between the Hindus and the Brahmos. It is a psychological one between the characters' unreconciled selves, the more spontaneous selves of Achala and Suresh and their other selves influenced by the values upheld by the Hindu majority crystallized in the person of Mahim. The fact is that though they take Hindu values lightly on the surface, they intuitively recognize that these values are more deeply ingrained in Indian society than the values advocated by the Brahmo Samaj which are generally considered new-fangled.

The mimetic pictures of the three characters reveal that psychologically Achala should be attracted to Suresh. She becomes engaged to Mahim simply because she meets him first. Later, when she meets Suresh, she is drawn to him for reasons she cannot wholly comprehend. In their vivacity, candor, warm-heartedness, spontaneity, and impulsiveness, they are kindred spirits. In addition, Suresh is generous with his wealth, time and services in helping the poor in remote villages. In contrast to Suresh, who is outgoing and rich, Mahim is poor, cold, reserved, and slow in reacting to people and circumstances.

Within herself, Achala knows that Suresh is better suited to her temperament and taste. But by traditional Hindu standards, Mahim is the better man. Intuitively, however, she prefers the rich and lively Suresh, who can satisfy her psychological need for social recognition and the prestige that goes with the possession of material wealth and a high status in society. Contrary to the early literary tradition of idealizing protagonists, particularly women, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, one of the earliest Indian novelists, makes his heroine realistic by attributing to her very human motives.

It is suggested that the weaknesses of Achala and Suresh, such as false pride, impulsiveness, and the tendency to deceive themselves are not evidences of inherent viciousness but just their defensive reactions against

oppressive social expectations and impositions, deeply entrenched social mores, and rigidly defined codes of moral behavior. They are shown to be basically good people who have developed some unwholesome traits as a result of their inability to escape from the widespread institutional neuroses prevailing in the culture in which they live. While it is shown that their transgression of social norms is understandable because of the strong inner forces that drive them to follow their impulses, it is, likewise, revealed that their paradoxical inability to take the consequences of their actions can be traced to the more widespread cultural neuroses.

It is not the author's intention, however, to condemn Hindu society directly by presenting the protagonists as rebels and victims. Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's main intention, which is realized in the novel, is to depict the personal anguish suffered by Achala and Suresh in a situation they believe to be beyond change. The Hindu moral code on marriage is brought out in the novel not to expose the hypocrisy of society but simply to show how it affects the protagonists and aggravates their sufferings. The focus is on their mimetic portraits as lovers unable to resolve their inner conflicts. Though they are recognizably Indian types, they are not essentially thematic characters, for it is their psychological reality that is stressed.

In his "Introduction" to the English translation of the novel, S. L. Ghosh writes:

> Grihadlin points no moral (except probably the elemental truth that love is a disrupting, sometimes tragic, amoral thing); it is the human story of the tragedy of a young woman tempted by her heart and impelled by circumstances to sin and suffer. The main point is that Grihadalin possesses not a social but a psychological significance. . . . Sarat Chandra's preoccupation in Grihadalin was to portray the psychological vicissitudes of this young woman; not to judge or persecute her (i).

Of the three characters, Achala is the most fully and sympathetically presented, not in spite of, but precisely because she is what society calls a fallen woman. It is shown that there are valid psychological motives behind her confusion, her reluctant violation of the social norms, and her inability to cope with the disgrace she feels as a consequence. Her mimetic portrait is that of a young girl who wants to be herself and follow her impulses and yet cannot escape from the need to think well of herself by following the accepted norms of Indian society through the ages.

Born and brought up in a Brahmo family, Achala has developed her innate spontaneity and a certain degree of independence. Unfortunately, however, she has not developed a strong sense of her personal identity. When her views on the role of women in Indian society, as envisioned by the Brahmo Samaj, lead her to decisions and actions condemned by the Hindus, she completely loses

her bearings. Since the prevailing patterns of behavior still follow the strict norms of the Hindu majority, she finds herself still very much subject to strong social pressures and dependent for her self-respect on the opinions of the others. Thus, she tries to live up to the Hindu ideal of a virtuous woman, which clashes with her spontaneity, vivacity, impulsiveness, and capacity for life and happiness. Within her, there is a constant tension between her inborn traits and her dependence on the opinions of others, a tension which, to a large extent, precipitates events.

The mimetic portrait of Suresh reveals that of a warm-hearted man who feels compelled to deceive himself because of his love for a woman chained by social conventions. Like Achala, he is inwardly divided. His inner conflict, however, arises from a source different from hers. He himself is not so dependent on Hindu norms and the opinions of others, as she is. But his life being linked with hers, he, too, feels constrained. Her dependence on society for her self-respect makes him its unwilling captive. And because he is unable to free himself from her, he suffers.

Achala and Suresh, who, from the point of view of conventional morality, are sinners, are depicted in the novel as attractive, sympathetic protagonists. They are made to appear so by their presentation firstly

through their own eyes and from their own point of view and secondly by means of the close focus on them and the detailed rendition of their inmost thoughts, feelings, and motives in relation to their outward actions.

On the other hand, Mahim, the deceived husband who possesses the accepted Hindu traits of patience, passivity, reserve, and conformity, is presented as the least attractive of the three characters. He is presented largely through the eyes and point of view of Achala and Suresh, and only very rarely are his own thoughts and feelings directly revealed. He is a protagonist only in the sense that he is an essentially good man. Apparently, he just cannot do the right thing at the right moment, thus driving Achala to Suresh. In the sense that he is a cold and distant man whose moral uprightness produces negative results in the actual circumstances in which he and the two other characters find themselves, he is an antagonist. Mahim, however, is a very unwilling culprit. In being himself, he just cannot help representing to Achala and Suresh the embodiment of the community conscience. Though he is not so fully and sympathetically presented as the two other characters, however, he, too, has a complex mimetic portrait, revealing a character who is simultaneously an antagonist-protagonist, a colorless personality whose shadow, magnified and backed up by society, stands between Achala and Suresh. Self-righteous and

phlegmatic by temperament, he serves as an effective foil to them who, with their volatile temperaments, suffer because they cannot be themselves.

Like Achala and Suresh, Mahim acts according to an inner logic which, considering the society in which he lives, is based on his conformity to the norms and values of the Hindus. He does not take Hindu beliefs seriously, but his insight into life has been blurred by his wish to conform to the patterns that have been set by the Hindu majority for ages.

A more detailed account of the scenes in which they appear will be given below to show how deeply sympathetic the implied author is in depicting Achala and Suresh, the real protagonists, and how detached he is in presenting Mahim's predicament, though he depicts him with no less understanding than the erring lovers.

Suresh's first appearance on the scene shows his tendency to deceive himself as well as others. Before he meets Achala, he reproaches Mahim, a Hindu, for getting engaged to marry Achala, a Brahmo girl. Suresh himself is not a serious believer in Hinduism, but he professes to be concerned with what their Hindu friends and relatives would think of Mahim. Acting as an elder brother, he makes Mahim promise that he would not see Achala for a month while he, Suresh, is arranging Mahim's marriage to a girl from the Hindu community. Once Suresh goes to

Achala's house in old Calcutta to catch Mahim and scold him for breaking his promise not to see the Brahmo girl. Suresh's motive, as he understands it, is to save Mahim, his childhood friend, from a Brahmo marriage. He does not realize that he has gone to the village out of curiosity to see the girl that has attracted his reserved friend. To his surprise, he finds himself attracted to the "reticent Brahmo girls." On the assumption that he is protecting both Achala and Mahim, he tells the girl's father that the latter's concealing his poverty is a good reason to break up the engagement.

Achala's calmly telling him to his face that Mahim has not concealed anything from her impresses him. Though he thinks that she is inferior to him in education, and perhaps in everything, he is won over to her after just half an hour's talk "solely by the force of her universal self-restraint." Suresh's attempt to rationalize his attraction to his friend's betrothed is quite transparent. While he believes that he is drawn to her because of her reticence, a trait he hates in Mahim, it is evident that it is her candor and other traits similar to his that attract him. Her upbringing enables her to tell him bluntly that he is wrong about Mahim. In turn, his bluntness and daring prove more appealing to her than Mahim's reserve. Contrary to what Suresh believes, it is not their differences from each other but their similarities

that draw them to each other. Consciously thinking of Mahim but unconsciously concerned about his own feelings for the girl, Suresh concludes that it is no misfortune for any man to win her. On her part, Achala tries to delude herself into believing that Suresh's vivacity and other traits similar to hers and, above all, his wealth do not matter to her, because she outwardly believes in the Hindu ideals of passivity and voluntary poverty. In spite of their self-deceptions however, they remain mutually attracted to each other.

Achala's lack of sense of identity and her dependence for her self-respect on the approval of others have their counterpart in Suresh's following a code of honor not much different from hers. Both are, however, often easily overpowered by their stronger feelings for each other. Outwardly, they both try to conform to what they believe is right, based on established Hindu norms of conduct; but inwardly, they succumb to their secret desires.

Priding himself on his fairness to others, Suresh releases Mahim from his promise not to see Achala for a month, though he wants her now for himself. Apparently, to be able to think well of himself, Suresh tries to do the opposite of what he feels. Nevertheless, he decides to see Achala and her father once more on the pretext of asking forgiveness for his previous mistake about Mahim.

Actually, he just wants to see the girl again but cannot admit the truth to himself without losing his self-esteem. But he cannot hide the truth from himself for long. Gladly, he accepts her father's invitation to take a meal with them and impulsively declares his love for the girl. Encouraged by her father, who is in dire need of money to pay his pressing debts, Suresh asks for Achala's hand in marriage, completely forgetting Mahim.

Following the traditional taboo on seeking material security, Achala tries to go against what she secretly wishes; she refuses Suresh's offer of marriage even though her father now disapproves of her engagement and marriage to Mahim. Acting on what he believes to be the right code of honor, Suresh decides to give the loan that Achala's father has asked for and requests Achala not to reveal her refusal to marry him to the old man till after the loan transaction is over. Achala gives in to Suresh's request but listens with distaste to her father's reference to Suresh's coming into their lives as God's will, for she has observed all the falsehoods and trickery for self-protection to which her debt-ridden father has been reduced in recent days. She herself is impressed by Suresh's generosity and wealth; but because of her need to think well of herself by being thought well of by others, she decides that she cannot break her engagement to Mahim. But she does so just the same, after

convincing herself that it is her shame over her father's taking advantage of Suresh that has made her decide to accept the latter. Apparently, she cannot do what her heart dictates without coming up with a good, if dishonest, reason to salve her conscience. In this way, she believes that she can retain her self-respect. But because she cannot help feeling guilty about her faithlessness to Mahim, she treats him intimately with affection before returning his ring to him. Worse still, for her sake, if not his, she plays the role of the sympathizer, in place of the deceiver that she really has been, by revealing Suresh's "treachery" to Mahim. At this stage, her mimetic picture shows her confusion and puerile attempts to exculpate herself while putting herself in the position to enjoy the fruit of her self-deceit.

Suresh's mimetic portrait, likewise, reveals that he is going through the same process of pretending to do what he believes is right while giving in to his impulsiveness that often compels him to act as he feels. Under the impression that Achala and her father have played a dirty trick on him, as, in fact, they have, he sees them to denounce them before disappearing out of their life. To forget Achala and his remorse for having allowed them to deceive him, he busies himself by giving free medical advice and service to poor people in a remote village.

Abandoned both by Mahim and Suresh, Achala finds herself subject to the painful "necessity" of having to save face. She is now willing to do anything to stop people's gossip about her broken engagements first to Mahim and then to Suresh because, in old Calcutta, public opinion serves as a kind of community conscience. Thus, she agrees with her father to marry Mahim in spite of the fact that she now feels strong aversion to his poverty, reserve, and coldness of temperament, especially after she has known the contrast offered by Suresh's wealth, vivacity, and candor. As before, she decides to do what she thinks she should, according to people's expectations, rather than what she feels strongly within herself. Remorse overcomes her when Suresh comes back to attend her marriage to Mahim, without making any attempt to stop it, as she secretly wishes. In spite of her predicament, she decides to go on with her marriage to Mahim, for her pride forbids her from changing her mind again.

In subsequent scenes, Achala's and Suresh's mimetic pictures appear even more complex, showing their confused reactions to circumstances that conspire to draw them to each other. Once more, what they feel in their inmost beings proves stronger than their wish to conform to people's expectations.

Shortly after her marriage to Mahim, Achala receives a shock on her first actual contact with poverty in Mahim's village. Being a city girl with only second-hand information and romantic ideas about village life, she is totally unprepared for the kind of life that awaits her in Mahim's village. The shocking reality of poverty proves stronger than her regard for her husband who, she has managed to convince herself, is a good and honest man, notwithstanding his aloofness.

Achala's difficulty in adjusting herself to village life is intensified by the fact that being a Brahmo girl, she is ostracized by the people in the orthodox Hindu community. She is not bothered by doubts about the wisdom of her beliefs compared to theirs but by the isolation and loneliness that she has to endure by herself. Her reserved husband Mahim is of no help. Neither is the old maid who has accompanied her to the village. And her misgivings about their marriage increase when she meets Mrinal, Mahin's adopted sister. Mrinal's coarse jokes bring to light the fact that she has been previously engaged to Mahim, that even now the two of them are still close to each other, and that Mrinal is not in love with her old ailing husband. Though Achala is helpless at the start without Mrinal's company and help in household chores, she hopes that "this uneducated, poor village girl" would leave Mahim and herself in peace. With

apprehension, Achala notes that Mrinal is not really anxious to go back to her husband's home, as she claims, that Mrinal is fond of cooking for Mahim, and that Mahim flushes shamefacedly whenever Mrinal makes jokes about their previous engagement. The jealousy aroused by Mrinal, the ostracism she suffers from the villagers, Mahim's poverty and aloofness all draw her away from her husband into thoughts of Suresh.

Psychologically, there is hardly anything in her marriage and life with Mahim that would make her love him, considering the fact that she has married him only to salvage her pride. In staying with him for some time, she is just following the Hindu ideal of the wife's being faithful to her husband no matter what difficulties she suffers. By the time Suresh returns to the scene, she is prepared to renew relationships with him.

Suresh's mimetic picture at this stage is still that of a confused man indulging in pretenses. Ostensibly, he pays a visit to Achala and Mahim just to see how they are getting along in the village, but actually he wants to see Achala because he now believes that the self-control he has imposed himself is merely self-deceit. In other words, while stripping himself of one kind of self-deceit, he takes refuge in another. Mahim himself has a big hand in driving Achala to Suresh. Refusing to see the implications of Suresh's prolonged visit and to discuss the

matter openly on the pretext that he has more important things to do, he encourages the bold Suresh.

There is consistency in Achala's and Suresh's mimetic portraits. In previous scenes, their impulsiveness makes them admit the truth about their feelings. Now in one of Mahim's frequent absences, Suresh tells Achala how much he has missed her and shows how happy he is when she admits that she feels for him, too. Frankly, she asks him not to leave her in the village to keep house for a man she does not love. When Mahim arrives and joins their discussion, she declares that she would go back to her father's place in Calcutta in the company of Suresh. Impulsively, Suresh intercedes with Mahim not to use force on her since she is a Brahmo girl. In this scene, Achala and Suresh dare speak openly, without admitting that they are in love with each other.

Mahim, however, is not completely lacking in understanding. Being sensitive himself, he understands Achala's jealousy when she tells him of her chance discovery of Mrinal's letter to him. Regretting his "blindness to her deep mental anguish," he tells her that they will discuss things the following morning. In this scene as well as others, it is shown that Mahim has the tendency to put off facing problems as long as he can to the point of courting disaster. During the night, his ancestral house is set on fire by the vindictive villagers

who want to punish him for marrying a Brahmo girl. The introduction of the Hindu-Brahmo conflict hastens Achala's return to her father's house in Calcutta in the company of Suresh.

Impulsively, Achala offers Mahim her jewels and asks him to join her at her father's place. In her pity for him, she forgets his pride. To her disappointment, he refuses her "offer of charity," as he has refused Suresh's repeated offers of help during their student days. Hurt, angry, and insulted, Achala goes ahead with her previous plan to go to her father's place in the company of Suresh. Again her pride and impulsiveness prevail over her wish to conform to social norms for her self-respect.

In subsequent scenes, Achala's sensitivity and dependence on people's opinions are depicted. Back in Calcutta, she is hurt by her father's suspicions about her relationship with Suresh. She is outraged when she hears the old man cross-examining the maid servant, sho accompanied her to the village, about Mahim, Mrinal, and herself. She feels that she has become contemptible to her own father, her husband, and even Suresh for telling Mahim that she does not love him. She has impulsively spoken the truth before but presently regrets the blow to her self-esteem.

Suresh himself goes back to Mahim's village and, finding Mahim seriously ill, takes him back to his own house in Calcutta on the assumption that his proud friend would not like to join Achala in her father's place. Achala takes offense, recalling that her greatest grievance against Mahim is that although she is his wife, he has never shared his difficulties and worries with her. She is upset when she finds out that Mahim is seriously ill with pneumonia and that it is the newly widowed Mrinal who has been taking care of him in the village and now at Suresh's place. Achala becomes even more jealous of Mrinal when her father and Suresh praise the latter for her professed faith in God and her decision to go back to her village to take care of her ailing mother-in-law. It is characteristic of Achala that while she indulges in self-deceit to be able to think well of herself and be thought of well by others, she cannot tolerate self-deception in others.

Suspecting Mrinal of being still in love with Mahim, while posing as an exemplary widow faithful to the memory of her husband and eager to serve her mother-in-law, Achala impulsively suggests that Suresh should marry Mrinal. Her jealousy knows no bounds when Suresh answers that Mrinal would not agree because she is a virtuous wife, insinuating that she, Achala, is not. Hoping to be respected by Suresh, Achala bitterly resents the fact

that Suresh, who covets her though she is another man's wife, should pay "such reverent tribute to chastity." She hates Suresh for his hypocrisy but is drawn to him, nevertheless, because Mahim's coldness leaves her little alternative.

Nursing Mahim back to health at Suresh's place, Achala undergoes mental anguish, torn between what she feels and how she wants to appear to others. To her surprise, she realizes that she wants Suresh to love her and wonders if she has come to love him unknown to herself. To protect herself from this terrible possibility, she hardly leaves her husband's side. Moreover, to disprove Suresh's insinuation that she is not a faithful wife, she enthusiastically offers to accompany Mahim to the West to recover his health. Determined to keep her self-esteem by following society's concept of a good wife, she looks forward to a new life with Mahim to avoid the temptation that Suresh offers. If Mahim had just been a little more affectionate to her, it is possible that she would have had the will power to resist Suresh's influence. As it is, it takes only a little show of affection on Mahim's part to make her hope that everything would turn out well between them. She is happy and grateful when Mahim defends her against her father's charge that she is negligent in taking care of Mahim. When Mahim speaks for her, she responds with warmth, showing that, in part, it is his coldness that has alienated her from him.

But Suresh just would not leave her, thus renewing her inner conflict. When Suresh shows up just before the scheduled trip to the West, she impulsively invites him to join Mahim and her. Realizing immediately, however, that Mahim would consider her invitation to Suresh improper, she does not tell Mahim about it. Her wish to appear proper boomerangs on her, for when Suresh shows up at the train station, Mahim once more becomes suspicious of their relationship. Worse still, Suresh has come to believe that she is seducing him. In reality, she is, without being fully conscious of it.

The consequences of a stormy-night trip by train prove simultaneously a nightmare and an eye-opener to both Achala and Suresh, painfully stripping them of their pretenses. At the height of the storm, he goes to the women's compartment and tells her to go down and transfer to another train. Knowing that she would be unable to go with him without any pretext of innocence, however, he does not tell her that Mahim has been left behind. Later when she discovers the truth, she weeps bitterly and reproaches Suresh as if he alone were to blame. Refusing to accept her complicity in the affair, she denounces him, "You can do everything. You wanted to burn him to death by setting fire to our house" (p. 190). Self-righteously, Suresh feels "thoroughly embittered against the deceitful woman" who, he belives, has shut her eyes to what is right

and has tempted him to do what is wrong. At the moment, neither is ready to accept blame and the burden of their mutual guilt. Though they have both given in to their impulses, they now play the game of being innocent; hence, their mutual recrimination. Between them are thoughts of the morally upright Mahim and the people who will condemn them when they find out sooner or later about their elopement. Though society gives greater allowance for a man's moral lapse, Suresh cannot admit his guilt to himself. Knowing that society's verdict against her would be even harsher, Achala wants no blame heaped on her head either.

To save her self-esteem and his, for they both wish to appear guiltless, Suresh promises to drop Achala wherever she wishes and send her wherever she wants to go in the morning. Unconsciously, however, he takes refuge in illness so that she would not be able to leave him and return to her convalescent husband Mahim. Seeing Suresh motionless in the isolated hut where they are waiting for day, Achala is overwhelmed by the fear that Suresh has committed suicide. Recalling "his terrible self-condemnation for his wrong-doing, his farewell, his assurance--and above all, his repeated, cruel hints about expiation," she realizes "her own guilty role in the whole affair" and "all the desires, yearnings, mistakes, infatuation, deceptions, impulses and emotions that transpired

between the two of them ever since their first meeting" (p. 175). It takes the threat of Suresh's death to make her admit their mutual guilt.

Driven to self-realization by extreme fear, she finds to her relief that Suresh is not dying but just sick. Even at this point, she can still turn back, but two thoughts give her an excuse to go on with Suresh, that he needs her and that her husband is not going to take her back. Thus, she takes Suresh to the house of the girl she has met in the train and poses as his wife, even taking the name Susana to hide her real identity. In her mind, she is no longer the old Achala who has concealed her true feelings for Suresh for the sake of her self-respect. But still, the old Achala dependent on society's verdict still intrudes, preventing her from fully giving herself up to Suresh when he recovers.

As for Suresh, he has come to terms with himself, at least for the moment. Thus, he goes on with the romantic idea of the old man, Ram Babu, and his daughter that Achala and he have married for love and have run away from their irate parents, relatives and friends. Achala, however, cannot be at peace with herself. Within her, she is torn between conflicting wishes, to live with Suresh and still have his respect. To her, society now appears in the person of Suresh, who alone knows her real state. Above all, she wants "God's understanding of her transgression" (p. 193).

Achala's confusion is at its worst at this stage. Though she feels that the house Suresh is building and the furnishings he has specially chosen for her are signs of his "limitless love for her," she does not consent to live with him as his wife and is reluctant to move with him into the new house. She regrets that what could have been hers by right had she married him instead of Mahim is not so and wonders what she would do when people find out about their true relationship. She cannot go on with what she really wants because she must have Suresh's respect, people's approval, and God's understanding to maintain her self-esteem.

At this point, Ram Babu, the old man, helps her overcome her resistance to what she really wants. Thinking that Suresh and she are just having a lovers' quarrel, he encourages her to join Suresh in his room in the new house. She knows that the old man does not know the truth about her and Suresh when he assures her that there is no shame or guilt in what she is doing and that everything would come out right at the end. Obviously, the old man is under the delusion that Suresh and she are married. But she believes that it is the old man's importunate insistence to "reconcile" her with Suresh that breaks down her resistance. Obviously, he could not have convinced her if it were not her real wish.

Suresh triumphs over Achala but soon realizes that his victory is not complete. Just when it seems that he has won her over from Mahim, he realizes that he cannot have her wholly to himself. Within her, she suspects that Suresh mocks her even as he lavishes affection and things on her. If Suresh had not praised Mrinal for being a chaste wife and widow, it is possible that Achala would not feel degraded and would be able to live at peace with him. Knowing his professed belief in the Hindu ideal of woman, she feels that to him, she is not a true wife but just a mistress whom he cannot respect and will probably discard when he meets a woman like Mrinal. Their dilemma arises from the fact that though they have isolated themselves from society, they are still subject to its double standard of morality.

Still proud though humbled by the realization that Achala cannot be wholly his, Suresh goes to a remote plague-stricken village to treat the sick in spite of Achala's pleas not to expose himself to death on her account. Unlike before, when he has taken refuge in illness to hold Achala by his side, he now seeks death because he has convinced himself that she cannot love him because she loves Mahim.

Even at his deathbed, Suresh cannot accept the whole truth about himself. When Achala arrives by his side, he makes it a point to tell her that he has taken

all the possible precautions not to get sick but an accidental cut on his hand has contaminated him with the plague. Not content with defending his pride before her, he even begs her to tell people that he could not avoid death and that he has no wish to die. The truth is that he is dying because he has allowed his dependence on her and her dependence on the opinion of others to stifle him. But to him, as to her, reputation is of paramount importance in maintaining one's self-esteem.

Suresh makes another attempt to conceal the truth to himself, Achala and others. He sends for Mahim and declares in Achala's presence that he is not seeking Mahim's forgiveness. Left alone with Mahim, he tells the latter his realization that it is Mahim that Achala loves, not him. But proud as ever, Suresh wants it known that he still does not believe in God's existence, implying that he is not repenting for what he has done to Mahim. Apparently, he wants to be forgiven by God and Mahim but his pride gets the better of him.

Suresh's denial of God's existence at his deathbed is itself an inverted affirmation of his belief. It seems that at the moment of death, he fears that taking Achala away from Mahim and courting death are unforgiveable sins. Apparently, he tries to deny that there is God to avoid the punishment that he fears is coming to

him.[4] He is going to die with some of his illusions about himself. Nevertheless, he is presented with full sympathy by the author.

Mahim's last appearance on the scene clinches his portrait as a cold, distant, self-righteous man. He takes no pity on Achala even though he knows that she has been abandoned in the plague-stricken village by the old Brahmin who has unwittingly helped her fall into the hands of Suresh. Before leaving her, however, he gives her his half-hearted forgiveness. Still suffering from the terrible blow to his manly pride, he gives her no hope as to being taken back as his wife but considers the possibility that someday he might find it in his heart to forgive her completely, conveniently oblivious of his own weaknesses, errors in judgment, and inaction that have driven her to Suresh. Mahim's self-righteousness springs from his moral and psychological blindness. Moreover, his propensity for self-deceit is so deep that he never becomes aware of it. Thus, he plays the role of the betrayed husband, unmindful of his self-betrayal which has led to his betrayal by his wife and friend.

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[4]It is not clear if he conceives of God as Brahman or the avenging God of the Christians. It is clear, however, that he does not speak of Karma or of any fear of what kind of life awaits him in a future incarnation, as a consequence of his transgressions.

As for the abandoned Achala, she carries such a heavy burden of guilt that she feels obliged to make atonement. Having transgressed against the accepted norms and found herself unable to live with her conscience, she is eager and anxious to expiate her sins. But her calmness and courage show that essentially she has not changed and that someday her old independent spirit might emerge to the surface. Her anguish has made her realize that she cannot be wholly independent from others, notwithstanding her rebelliousness. This realization confirms her belief, hitherto undefined, that society will not change for her sake and that she should, therefore, adjust herself to it. The implied author neither confirms nor contradicts her sad conclusion but sympathetically shows how much she suffers, with little hope for relief.

The tragedy of Achala and Suresh springs from their possession of traits that lead them to go against the accepted beliefs and practices. Their inability to be themselves and be free of society's verdict for their sense of worth and identity intensifies their anguish. They are no rebels; in fact, they express no wish to change society as it is but try their best to fit it. In presenting their story, the author does not attack society but simply shows how the two protagonists and Mahim, the antagonist-protagonist, suffer as captives of a social system which in itself is a victim of its own cultural neuroses.

As has been shown, the emphasis in the novel is on the mimetic portraits of the three characters, especially of Achala and Suresh, through the detailed rendition of their personal experiences, their inmost thoughts, feelings, action, reaction, and interaction with each other and other characters. The accent is on their psychological reality as haunted figures in a love triangle caught between their hearts' desires and stifling social customs and traditions. They are dominantly mimetic characters in a novel of psychological realism that achieves artistic unity because the author, unlike other Indian writers, takes his protagonists for what they are instead of trying to fit them into a pre-conceived scheme to prove a thesis.

Raju in Narayan's The Guide is an individual presented and depicted mainly for his own sake. Narayan makes no attempt to interpret him as an embodiment of some Indian values or of the Hindu world view. Raju is far from being a typical Indian who would suffer pangs of conscience if, tempted by circumstances, he allows himself to be known as a saint. The thought of punishment in the next incarnation(s) would deter him from such sacrilege. Raju's experiences can possibly happen only in India, but his decisions and actions are primarily his own. The Indian cultural milieu merely provides him the opportunities to do as he desires. He is himself, an individual Indian.

The novel is no conscious study in depth psychology. Yet the psychological reality of Raju is projected so vividly that its impact is felt immediately. His mimetic portrait, multi-dimensional and multi-faceted, is drawn in detail with the representation of his unique experiences over a number of years in his various roles as a resourceful child, a popular tourist guide, a seducer and impresario, a model prisoner, and finally as a swami fasting against his will to produce rain. Raju loses himself in these various roles, like an actor who cannot distinguish between his histrionic role and his role in actual life. Apparently, Raju has no sense of his own identity nor of his worth as a person. As a result, he constantly resorts to expediency to gain material advantages that give him a false sense of security.

The diverse roles of Raju are unified by his dominant trait, his opportunism, which he uses to his best advantage with the aid of his histrionic ability, audacity, quick-wittedness, shrewdness, selfishness, materialism, versatility, presumptuousness, recklessness, and indifference to the rights and feelings of others.

On the affirmative side, it is shown that Raju is sensitive to beauty and responsive to people's regard for him. But these traits of his are subordinated to his tendency to resort to expediency. The altruist in him is often submerged beneath the egoist, for he is the

aggressive type of neurotic whose compulsion is to dominate rather than the compliant type whose compulsion is to submit in order to please.

One device used by the author to round up Raju's mimetic portrait is its presentation from two time angles shuffled back and forth. The short flashbacks on his past roles are interwoven with his current role as a counterfeit swami looked up to as a miracle-making saint by the gullible village people. The device reveals aspects of his character as they have developed over the years. Raju as he is at present is juxtaposed with Raju as he was in the past, showing that he remains essentially the same man in spite of external changes in circumstances.

Another device used by the author that adds solidity to Raju's mimetic portrait is the use of two points of view. The omniscient author recounts the present, while Raju, the first person narrator-protagonist, relates the past to Velan, the man who has cast him into the role of savior and saint. Depicted from the broad point of view of the omniscient author and the close point of view of the first person narrator, Raju's mimetic portrait emerges from two angles of vision that constantly shift. The shifting gives not only depth and breadth but also solidity to his portrait which, if given from a fixed point of view, would appear less dynamic.

The first person narrator-protagonist tries or rather pretends to be honest with himself and to Velan to whom he is telling his story to prove that he is no saint. But Raju seldom succeeds, for, on the whole, he is an arch-deceiver who deceives everybody, including himself. His attempts to rationalize his mistakes and weaknesses further add dimension to his mimetic portrait.

It is revealed that Raju has a strong motive in telling the story of his past life full of frauds to Velan. Faced with the prospect of fasting against his will to produce rain for a drought-stricken countryside, Raju relates what he believes to be a true account of his life. As he relates his experiences, however, he rarely shows regret for his past deceits, except when they worked to his own disadvantage. His confession is thus shown not to be for an altruistic but an opportunistic motive, to escape from the predicament he has created for himself. He is not a genuine saint confessing his sins to purge his soul and conscience but still a rogue trying to get away from the consequences of his deceits.

Aside from the explicit analysis made by Raju as the first person narrator and the comments given by the omniscient author, there are also implications and suggestions made by the implied author that go beyond the level of what can be immediately apprehended, making Raju's mimetic portrait appear even more complex than how it is on the surface.

As a swami telling the story of his life to Velan, Raju recalls that even as a child, he was an opportunist. In the evenings at home, as his mother sat by his side, waiting for her husband's return, Raju "put her proximity to good use." He asked her to scratch his head and demanded a story, not because he was interested in it but because it put him to sleep.

In his father's old hut shop, he managed things shrewdly to his advantage. As a swami, he recalls, "If by chance I had happened to take four greens (peppermints) out of the big bottle, I swallowed the fourth in order to minimize complications."[5] Even at this early stage, he not only deceived his father but also enjoyed himself without being bothered by his conscience. Obviously, he could have minimized complications in computation by returning the extra peppermint, but he just could not allow such an opportunity to pass.

A bigger opportunity offered itself to him when he got transferred from his father's old hut shop to the new store at the railway station. And, of course, he did not let it pass. Hating school, he willingly took over the management of the new store. Later, he recalls, "All this business expansion in our family helped me achieve a very desirable end--the dropping off of my

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[5]The Guide, (New York: The Viking Press, 1966), p. 11.

school unobtrusively" (p. 33). Even as a child, he made the most of his opportunities to do what he liked. As he recalls the past incidents at this stage of his life to show Velan that he is no saint who can save the people from drought, Raju seems amused rather than remorseful at his shrewdness, thinking that it is an asset that has given him undue advantages.

Raju, however, also seems aware that his opportunism is, in a way, a positive trait that has enabled him, as a youth, to break away from the bonds of past traditions and conventions. He recalls that he tried to improve himself by reading books left with him for sale. Aware that he had more talents than just keeping store and too ambitious to be satisfied with the role he had inherited from his father, he prepared himself for a better future. He paid no heed to his mother's wish that he should follow the footsteps of his father to whom shopkeeping was a good enough vocation in life.

Raju recalls further that his father's sudden death gave him the opportunity he had long wanted, to be really on his own. Seeing no sense in handing out biscuits and accepting money for them, he converted the railway store into a bookstore, specializing in school books, including stolen ones. Later, with obvious self-admiration, he recalls:

> I bargained hard, showed indifference while buying and solicitude while selling. Strictly

> speaking, it was an irregular thing to do. But the station master was a friendly man who not only obtained unlimited credit for anything he and his children took from my shop, but also enjoyed the privilege of drawing his reading material from the stack growing in front of my shop (p. 36).

Raju curried favor with the station master so that the latter would close his eyes to the irregularity of his buying and selling stolen books at his store. In telling about the incident to Velan, Raju shows not the least compunction, showing that he has remained the same opportunist that he was in his childhood and youth, with the difference that he has become even more callous.

Raju relates to Velan that when he became a tourist guide, he made use of his talents to exploit his opportunities to the fullest. One of his talents was sizing up people and treating them accordingly for the sake of his business. He recalls:

> . . . it was all the same to me, and the age I ascribed to any particular place depended upon my mood at that hour and the type of person I was escorting. If he was the academic type I was careful to avoid mention of facts and figures and to confine myself to general descriptions, letting the man himself do the talking. You may be sure he enjoyed the opportunity. On the other hand, if an innocent man happened to be at hand, I let myself go freely. I pointed out to him something as the greatest, the highest, the only one in the world. I gave statistics out of my head. I mentioned a relic as belonging to the thirteenth century before or the thirteenth century after Christ, according to the mood of the hour. . . . I had all the satisfactory answers ready. I generally took time to answer the latter question as to where I was going to take him first. It depended. I awaited the receipt of certain data

> before venturing to answer. The data were how much time and money he was going to spend. Malgudi and its surroundings were my special show. I could let a man have a peep at it or a whole panorama. It was adjustable. I could give them a glimpse of a few hours or soak them in mountain and river scenery or archeology for a whole week. I could not really decide how much to give or withhold until I knew how much cash the man carried or, if he carried a checkbook, how good it was. This was another delicate point . . . (pp. 42-44).

As a tourist guide, he subordinated his interests to those of his clients, provided they paid him well. Now he tells Velan, "Don't imagine that I cared for elephants personally, anything that interested my tourists was also my interest. The question of my preferences was secondary" (p. 47). He did not efface himself for nothing; his self-effacement had an ulterior motive--to further his interests as a guide to tourists. His histrionic ability, however, convinced his clients that his interest in them was genuine.

Raju's recollections of his career as a lover and impresario reveal his satisfaction over his success and his regret not for his deceitfulness but for his naivete which worked to his disadvantage. Seeing Rosie, "the divine creature," taunted by her husband because of her interest in a cobra dance, Raju readily took the opportunity to assume the role of lover. He took advantage of her loneliness and being rejected and mocked by her husband, who looked on her dancing as street acrobatics and "a monkey trick with nothing intelligent or creative about

it." Raju himself had no interest in dancing, least of all, in a cobra dance, but he pretended that he had in order to win Rosie's love.

Fondly he recalls:

> I praised her dancing. I spoke my love, but sandwiched it conveniently between my appreications of her art. I spoke of her as an artist in one breath and continued in the next as a sweetheart. Something like, "What a glorious snake dance! Oh, I keep thinking of you all night. World's artist number one! Don't you see how I am pining for you every hour!" (p. 61).

To his joy, his pretended passion in her art resulted in "a fresh intimacy" and brought them close together. His audacity and histrionic ability convinced her that his interest in her art was genuine.

In recounting his exploits as a lover to Velan, Raju reveals no regret over his opportunism, showing that he has remained essentially the same man. It is his inexperience as a lover that he bewails because it damaged his reputation as a tourist guide and led to his bankruptcy. So far, his opportunism had given him material advantages. At this time, he lost everything he had gained in his pursuit of a beautiful and talented woman married to another man.

Raju recalls that being full of fear and anxiety, he overspent on his clothes and toiletries. His finances seemed unreal to him, the only reality in his life being Rosie. When she decided to go back to her husband, Raju

was genuinely hurt. He resumed his work as a tourist guide, but he no longer had any interest in it nor in the money that he earned. His depression showed that his interest in her was not purely mercenary in motive. It was true, however, that his wish to have her to himself was, at bottom, a selfish wish to appear a successful lover in his eyes. It was his loss of reputation as a tourist guide that he bewails at present.

Again, it is with remorse that he remembers how he completely lost his head in welcoming Rosie to his house when she came back without her husband. His remorse arises from the fact that his affair with Rosie led to the loss of his ancestral property and his estrangement from his friend Gaffur and his mother. With Rosie back, Raju became again the fussy lover, neglecting his business as a guide to tourists. Because of his instability, he antagonized his creditor, the sait, with his jokes and brought about a court suit on himself and the loss of his ancestral house to the sait. With his haughtiness, paradoxically born of fear and pride because of his success as a lover, he made an enemy of Gaffur, his only remaining friend. With his indiscretion, he antagonized even his own mother who, as a consequence, left to stay with her brother in the village. Raju tried to get rid of his guilt feelings by rationalizing, "After all, her brother is dear to her and he will look after

her. Why should she come here and live all alone?" (p. 132). He tried to convince himself that it was impractical for him to pay rent to the sait. While he could not help feeling guilty for what he had done to his mother, he still tried to maintain the fiction that he was not really a bad son. He deceived himself because he did not want to be bothered by his conscience. And as a swami telling his story, he still does not admit his guilt.

With obvious pleasure, Raju relates to Velan his successful career as an impresario to Rosie. When he realized that she was bored with all their love-making, he became his old resourceful self again on a grander scale. Making use of Rosie's talent as a classical dancer, he renamed her Nalini, bluffed, and succeeded in making people believe that it was his skill as her manager that had made her an overnight success. In her shows, he always took the middle sofa, creating the impression that he was in full control of everything she did. Now he recalls how proudly he paraded her "through the gaping crowd" and how he had pretended otherwise. Swelling with pride, he played the role of the impresario. With his audacity and adeptness at picking up the necessary jargon, he convinced people that he really knew his business as impresario. It is only as he relates his story to Velan that he comes to realize his mistake in congratulating himself for Rosie's success. Being a consummate actor,

he deceived not only other people but also himself. But even as he admits his mistake, he seems to be still excited by the thrill of remembering his "success."

Likewise, Raju enjoys recalling the sense of power that he felt over Rosie's success which he mistook for his. In their rented stylish house, he lived lavishly with Rosie. He classified their guests, as he had classified tourists before and treated them according to their "grades." With musicians and aspiring musicians, he acted the superior, treating them as supplicants. On the other hand, he entertained "the high grade of visitors" who made him feel that he was indeed a successful man. Similarly, he loved to hob-nob with men of power and influence whom he considered "friends of the inner circle." With Rosie's artistic group, however, he felt irritated, for he felt that he was an interloper in their circle. He liked her to be happy but only in his company. The fact was that he had come to think of her as his property and treated her accordingly.

His possessiveness had its counterpart in his greed for the checks she received for her numerous engagements which he accepted without consulting her. His craving for money, however, was merely a reflection of his hidden craving for popularity. His materialism had its basis in his wish to assert the fiction of his superiority. He thought, "If I were less prosperous, who would

care for me?" To Rosie, he explained, "We spend 2000 because we have to. We have to maintain our status" (p. 139). Maintaining his status includes playing cards for days at a stretch and drinking though he himself cared little for drink, for the "permit-holder" title added to his prestige. As he relates these incidents to Velan, Raju still relishes the sense of power and glory that he enjoyed during the days of his "success." He does not seem aware that his craving for popularity was a reflection of his futile attempt to find his identity and a sense of his personal worth in the adulation of other people.

Raju recalls that "in the flow of this radiant existence," he forgot all about Rosie's husband Marco, showing how deeply he was intoxicated with his "success." He was bothered but he did not give much thought to Rosie's moodiness and growing discontent with her "circus existence." Apparently, he had no intention of slackening her heavy program of dancing engagement, for he did not want to lose the money she earned to maintain their status. His cocksureness at the height of his "success" brought about his downfall which he now regrets. He tells Velan that in spite of his misgivings, he forged Rosie's signature on a letter addressed to her, asking for the release of a box of jewelry left in the safe custody of a bank. Through Marco's charge of forgery, Raju was arrested, tried, and sentenced to prison for two years.

Overwhelmed with self-pity, he blamed Rosie, conveniently forgetting that he had brought his troubles on himself. To Velan, he now admits:

> I can see that it was a very wrong kind of thought to adopt. But how could I help it. It was only such perverse lines of thought and my excessive self-pity that enabled me to survive those moments; one needed all that amount of devilry to keep oneself afloat. I could give no time for others. I could not bother to think of her own troubles, of the mess she had been led into, of the financial emptiness after all those months of dancing and working, of the surprise sprung upon her by my lack of--what should I call it, judgment? No, it was something much lower than that. Lack of ordinary character! I see it all now clearly, but at that time I still clung to my own grievances, and could watch without much perturbation her emotional tantrams (p. 156).

At the time, he vengefully laughed at her for wishing to go back to her husband. Unable to bear the thought that he had lost control over her and jealous of her self-reliance, he forgot that she went on with her dance engagements, in spite of her loss of face on his account, to be able to get a lawyer to defend his case. This mistake he admits to Velan, but it is the only mistake of his that he admits, without regretting the disadvantageous consequences.

Raju's account to Velan of his career as a prisoner for two years reveals that essentially he had not changed. Still the opportunist, he made full use of his histrionic talent and audacity to be able to stand above other prisoners. Very soon, he attained the status of a model prisoner, for even in prison, he wanted to excel and gain

advantages for himself. As before, he became the master of the show, visiting "all the departments of the prison as a sort of benevolent supervisor" and relieving his warders of their jobs in watching other prisoners. Talking to homicides and cutthroats or highwaymen, he told "stories and philosophies and what not" so that he came to be known among them as Vidhyan, or teacher, a title which gave him prestige and not a few privileges.

To further improve his position in prison, Raju endeared himself to the jail superintendent. To Velan, he recounts:

> He had only to look ever so slightly to his left, and I knew what he wanted. I dashed up and called the warder he was thinking of calling; he had only to hesitate for a second, and I knew he wanted that pebble on the road to be picked up and thrown away. It pleased him tremendously. In addition, I was in a position to run ahead and warn warders and other subordinates of his arrival--and that gave them time to rouse themselves from brief naps and straighten out their turbans (p. 161).

Raju's reward was to gain the good will of everybody who could give him the sense of worth that he badly needed at the time.

It was in prison that Raju's sensitivity had the chance to manifest itself. He recalls:

> I worked incessantly on a vegetable patch in the back yard of the superintendent's home. I dug the earth and drew water from the well and tended it carefully. I put fences round, with brambles and thorns so that cattle did not destroy the plants. I grew huge brinjals and beans, and cabbages. When they appeared on their stalks as tiny buds, I was filled with excitement. I watched them develop,

> acquire shape, change color, shed the early parts. When the harvest was ready, I plucked them off their stalks tenderly, washed them, wiped them clean to a polish with the end of my jail jacket, arranged them artistically on a tray of woven bamboo (I'd arranged to get one from the weaving shed), and carried them in ceremoniously. When he saw the highly polished brinjals, greens and cabbage, the superintendent nearly hugged me for joy. He was a lover of vegetables. He was a lover of good food, wherever it came from. I loved every piece of this work, the blue sky and sunshine, and the shade of the house in which I sat and worked, the feel of cold water; it produced in me a luxurious sensation. Oh, it seemed to be so good to be alive and feeling all this--the smell of freshly turned earth filled me with the greatest delight. If this was prison life, why didn't more people take to it? (pp. 161-162).

The sensitivity of Raju, however, was overshadowed by his dominant other self, the opportunist. He not only tried to please the superintendent but also convinced himself that prison, which was his home for the moment, was truly a nice place not only for himself but also for others.

While consoling himself with the idea that "no place could be more agreeable," he was filled with gall that Rosie could go on dancing without him and that "her empire was expanding rather than shrinking." Maliciously, he chuckled at the thought that she must have been missing trains after every performance and that super-tax swallowed "what she so laboriously piled up with all that twisting and writhing of her person!" (p. 163). His vengefulness was a reflection of his frustration over his inability to control her life. Now he rationalizes to Velan, "My

troubles would not have started but for Rosie." His account to Velan of the story of his affair with Rosie, however, clearly shows that he was largely responsible for his troubles. Contrary to his claim, he was not Rosie's innocent victim but rather her opportunistic victimizer.

As has been shown, Raju's account of his past life to Velan throws light on his character at present, much of which he is not aware, since he is still adept at deceiving people, including himself. The omniscient author's account of Raju's career as a swami confirms in detail Raju's opportunism and similar traits.

At the opening of the novel, Raju is shown taking advantage of the credulity of Velan and the other villagers to pass himself off as a holy man in order to insure his livelihood. As before, he achieves his opportunistic intent with the use of his histrionic ability and audacity. In the process of deceiving others, however, he proves susceptible to his own deceitfulness.

Posing as a holy man, Raju himself comes to feel that he is a saint, especially when Velan prostrates himself to touch his feet. Raju begins to feel that Velan's adoration for him is inevitable because he deserves it. Without any qualms of conscience, he accepts the basket of food that Velan lays at his feet. Making use of his histrionic talent, he even goes through the farce of ceremoniously offering the food to the stone

image in the temple before partaking of it. Feeling grateful for the food, however, he helps Velan convince his recalcitrant younger sister to marry the man chosen for her, by making enigmatic statements interspersed with even more enigmatic silence. As a result of the girl's consent to the marriage, which Velan attributes to Raju's mysterious influence, Raju's reputation as a miracle-making swami spreads in the village and the neighboring villages. And he makes the most of his observation that the essence of sainthood lies in one's ability to utter mystifying statements.

Contrary to his claim, Raju has the chance to make an honest living by going back to the town of his youth or somewhere else. Obviously, for a man with his talents, there are a number of opportunities. Taking the easy way out, however, he accepts the role that Velan thrusts on him, after deluding himself that there is no other alternative. He accepts the role of swami because it will give him a great opportunity to make use of his histrionic ability and his talent to manipulate people to his advantage.

In jail, Raju must have enjoyed the role of teacher; now he wants to enjoy the power and prestige that go with being a spiritual leader though he knows well that he deserves neither. Superciliously, he commands the villagers to tell the schoolmaster to see him "with

the air of a president summoning a defaulting assistant master" (p. 33). When the schoolmaster comes, he talks to him so patronizingly and grandly that the latter is cowed into accepting his leadership. To the village boys, Raju speaks of godliness and cleanliness, the Ramayana and the characters in the epics and other topics he has no right whatsoever to teach. But hypnotized by his own voice and "impressed with the grandeur of the whole thing," he feels himself growing in stature. It is the case of the deceiver being deceived by himself.

To enhance his "spiritual status," Raju even grows a beard and makes his long hair fall on his back. And as his influence grows, he not only chants holy verses and discourses on philosophy but even prescribes medicine for the sick and settled disputes and quarrels over the division of ancestral property. The sense of power he achieves gives him satisfaction and a semblance of the sense of personal worth that he lacks.

Personally, Raju has no real concern for the village people who deify him. When they start complaining about the drought, he thinks of looking for a new place, showing that he has no interest in them, except what he receives from them that benefits him. When they start fighting with people in a neighboring village, all he can think of is that "the best thing for them would be to blow each other's brains out" (p. 69). The fact that

he feels pity for Velan who is "down with an injured skull and bruises," however, shows that though he is callous, he is not entirely devoid of gratitude to the man who has elevated him to a position he does not deserve.

Raju would have fared well making a living and enjoying power and prestige as a swami if he had not overreached himself. His success in deceiving others proves his undoing. Thinking that the village would be occupied by the police if the people fight and that he would lose the security he has been enjoying, he tells Velan's half-witted brother that he would not eat unless they are good. Previously, to divert the people's attention from the drought, he has told them of a penance to be undertaken by a pure soul, a great soul, to bring the rains down. He has said, "When the time comes, everything will be all right. Even the man who would bring you the rain will appear, all of a sudden" (p. 78). This idle talk of his, together with the cult of saintliness he has assiduously cultivated, and the words he has carelessly spoken to Velan's half-witted brother, make the villagers conclude that he is the great soul who can save them from the drought. Far from being a victim of circumstances, he has brought the situation upon himself. Now the people expect him to fast in order to save them from the drought.

Raju realizes that he has created "a giant with his puny self" and regrets "the enormity of his own creation." But the showman and hypocrite in him still has the upperhand. Mysteriously, he tells Velan:

> Listen to me Velan; it is essential that I should be alone tonight. It is essential that I should be alone through the day tomorrow too. And then come and see me tomorrow night. I'll speak to you tomorrow night. Until then . . . neither you nor anyone else should see me. Yes, yes; absolutely alone (p. 79).

Even after he has told the story of his deceitful life to Velan, Raju still continues to play the role of the enigmatic swami. But his sole intention in wishing to be left alone during the night and through the following day is simply to be able to have a chance to gorge himself with food before his involuntary fast.

During the night, Raju thinks of running away from "the whole thing" but decides that this is not a practical solution to his problem. Having been used to being served, he has lost the quick use of his legs. Besides, he is moved by his "recollection of the big crowd of women and children touching his feet" and by the thought of their gratitude to him. There is a mixture of self-adulation, born of self-deception, and sincere responsiveness to the regard of others in this reaction of his. Both for positive and negative reasons, he decides to stay.

Nevertheless, the opportunist in him is ever-present. When nobody is watching him, he gulps down a meal

and conceals some food for his second meal at night in preparation for the next day's fasting. He himself does not believe that his fasting would bring down the rains "immediately but maybe sooner or later in their natural course." "He would not like to cheat them altogether about his fast if he could help it" (p. 80). Scoundrel though he is, there is a streak of honesty in him which, however, gets entangled with his deceitfulness. For its dramatic impact on the drought-stricken villagers, he decides to go on with the fast, provided he can get food at night. Giving the people the spectacle of a swami fasting and risking his life for their sake would satisfy Raju's histrionic self and, at the same time, give the people some measure of relief at the thought that they are being helped.

Raju's confession of the truth about himself to Velan is another indication of his opportunism, his wish to extricate himself from the predicament he has created for himself. If he stands to benefit from his deceptions, he would surely continue concealing them and go on enjoying the advantages, power, and prestige that go with being a spiritual leader to the villagers. He confesses what he believes to be the whole truth about his life to Velan, unaware that even in the process of trying to tell the whole truth, he still deceives himself. He concocts a mixture of truth and falsehood to convince Velan and the

other villagers that he is not the great soul that he has made them believe he is and thus save himself from the involuntary fast, even at the risk of incurring their wrath and vengeance. Unfortunately, his confession makes Velan revere him more than ever as a great saint whose early experiences in life have simply prepared him for the "miracle" of producing rain to save the drought-stricken countryside.

In the last scene depicting the highlights of his fast, Raju manifests his well known traits--his showmanship, ambitiousness, and above all, his opportunism. At night, he eats stealthily whenever he can. When he runs out of his hoarded eatables, he realizes that he can no longer escape and he accepts his doom. It is this realization that helps him get through the trial with resignation. And in spite of his anger with Velan for his present plight, he is touched by the latter's attempt to make his fasting a success. Raju's opportunism, now disguised as altruism, once more asserts itself. He speculates, "Why not give the poor devil a chance?" (p. 169). Now that he has no more chance to retreat, he convinces himself that he will fast for Velan's sake. Moreover, he begins to believe that he really is a saint who can produce the miracle of rain. In this crisis in his life, the opportunist in him saves him from despair and enables him to think of himself as a true <u>swami</u> instead of the

counterfeit that he knows he really is. Thus, the fast no longer appears futile to him.

After a few days of fasting, Raju finds the satisfaction of having the biggest audience he has ever commanded in his prescence, drawn to the village by a wandering American newspaper correspondent. The showman in Raju once more reveals himself in his answers to the questions of the news correspondent:

> "I am only doing what I have to do; that's all. My likes and dislikes do not count."
> "How long have you been without food now?"
> "Ten days."
> "Do you feel weak?"
> "Yes."
> "When will you break your fast?"
> "Twelfth day."
> "Do you expect to have the rains by then?"
> "Why not?"
> "Can fasting abolish all wars and bring world peace?"
> "Yes."
> "What about the caste system? Is it going?"
> "Yes."
> "Will you tell us something about your early life?"
> "What do you want me to say?"
> "Er--for instance, have you always been a Yogi?"
> "Yes; more or less" (p. 173).

Even in his weakened, starved state, Raju still has the presence of mind to invent lies for their dramatic effect. He consents to be photographed by the American correspondent for movie films and television shows to be taken to the United States. In his mind, he has come to believe the role he has assumed merely to take advantage of the village people.

Raju's eleven-day fast ends in self-delusion. Though barely able to stand, he looks about and exclaims, "Velan, it's raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs" (p. 176). The opportunist who has deceived many people now deludes himself into believing that he is of real help to the drought-stricken villagers. Hunger and weakness must have produced the delusion that the knee-deep water in which he has been standing for eight hours is rain coming down from the hills. But it is the showman and opportunist in him that has led to this supreme self-deception.

The omniscient author makes no comments on whether Raju is merely deluding himself or is truly enlightened and transformed into a genuine altruist. In the light of Raju's own story, the manner in which he mixes truth and falsehood, and the omniscient author's account of Raju's career as a saint, it can be deduced that Raju's opportunism has made him convert a disaster into an opportunity to achieve glory. He deceives himself into believing that his fast has really produced the miracle of rain.

Raju's characteristics, particularly his opportunism, are those of an individual Indian. They run counter to the accepted Hindu values of self-renunciation and abnegation. He indulges himself at the expense of others. He is not, however, a symbol of the disapproved

values, for the author makes no attempt to make him a thematic character to prove a thesis. He is presented mainly for his own sake and the experiences that he undergoes from childhood to the time he acquires the reputation of a miracle-making saint. He is depicted as an individual who has no sense of his own worth as a person. It is shown that his lack of sense of his own identity has led him to assume different roles to gain the material advantages that give him a fake sense of fulfillment. The detailed rendition of his experiences from two shifting points of view and two shifting angles of time give depth and vividness to his mimetic portrait. Raju is presented mainly as a mimetic character whose multi-faceted traits are unique and interesting in themselves. Notwithstanding the prestige of the thesis novel and the novel of social realism in India, Narayan has written a novel in which the main focus is on the central character. He succeeds in his intention because he takes Raju for what he is, an interesting, if roguish character, instead of a symbolic vehicle of meaning.

Pather Panchali: Song of the Road by B. Banerjee is one of the few Indian novels that depict characters primarily for their own sake. Of the four important characters, the boy Opu and his sister Durga have the fullest and most complex mimetic portraits. "The story is

about them; and the reader lives and grows with them, feels with and for them, looks through their eyes, and knows the world and the people in it as they know them," writes T. W. Clark in his "Introduction" to the English translation of the novel from Bengali.[6] The story is sharply focused on the two children. The omniscient author refrains, whenever possible, from intruding into their consciousness and depicts people and incidents as the children see and experience them. He gives comments only on a few situations which the children are too young to interpret.

The other important characters in the novel are the parents of the two children, Shorbojoya and her husband Horihor Ray, an impoverished Brahmin priest. All together, the four characters appear authentic. Speaking of the novel, T. W. Clark observes, "Its naturalness, its realism and its faithfulness to detail would seem in large measure to derive from the autobiographical foundations which underlie its conception." The fact is that these four major characters are patterned after people that the author has actually known in his life: Opu after himself as a boy, Durga after a favorite cousin of his, Shorbojoya after his own mother, and Horihor after his father Mahenda

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[6]Translated into English by T. W. Clark and Tarapada Mukherji (London: Allen and Unwin, 1968), p. 16.

Banerji, "an impractical scholar and dreamer, a man who in spite of his obvious talents was found wanting in the ordinary duties of a father and husband" (p. 16).

It would have been difficult for the author to assign specific thematic roles to such characters with autobiographical antecedents and whose mimetic portraits are drawn in depth, and he makes no such attempt. As a result, he avoids the weakness of Raja Rao's autobiographical novel, The Serpent and the Rope; that is, the too specific symbolic roles assigned to the major characters whose mimetic portraits are too complex to fit a neat thematic analysis.

Yet Banerjee's portrayal of the four characters reveal that they are not entirely devoid of symbolism. Opu and Durga are like many other poor children the world over who, on the whole, remain innocent, imaginative, loving and lovable in spite of their early experience of poverty. Shorbojoya is the archetypal poor mother fighting against overwhelming odds to give her children, particularly her son, their basic needs, like food and love. Horihor is the archetypal impractical scholar and dreamer who proves an inadequate family man. Being individuals with mimetic portraits that transcend the Indian socio-cultural milieu, these four characters appear to be universal characters rather than distinctly Indian social types. Their symbolic roles are so closely interwoven

with their mimetic portraits that they remain primarily themselves and only incidentally thematic characters. On the whole, the author presents them mainly for their own sake; and, as such, they appear unique. Yet in being themselves, they remind us of people like them the world over. In other words, though they are very particular individuals, they remain essentially human, and, hence, familiar and recognizable to anyone.

Part I, actually a prelude to the novel proper, introduces the characters mainly in relation to Indir Thakur, a distant widowed relative of Horihor. With this old woman as reflecting mirror, the outstanding traits of the characters are brought out right from the beginning. Horihor Ray is shown to be a passive recipient of values handed down through the ages. He is a poor Brahmin living on the meager rent from a tiny plot of land that he has inherited from his father and some fees paid to him by a few households that he serves as family priest. And yet he takes on the burden of supporting Indir Thakur, since giving food and shelter to one's own kin, no matter how distant, is an accepted practice in a Hindu community. Possibly, he accepts her presence in his household, too, because the land on which he is living with his family once belonged to her uncle. But mainly, he takes on the responsibility of supporting her in her old age because it is the proper thing to do,

following the accepted norms of Hindu society. As for love and affection for the old woman, he seems to have none.

Of the four major characters in the novel, Horihor seems to be the most distinctly Indian in the sense that he is passive in his acceptance of a conventional Hindu practice. Yet, he transcends his Indianness; he is like other people in Asia where the joint family system has been institutionalized. At the same time, he is like other men the world over who are respected as scholars but are impractical when it comes to the affairs of everyday life. But primarily, he is himself, a particular individual subject to the contingencies of time and place.

In her relationship with Indir Thakur, Horihor's wife Shorbojoya is shown to be a woman who can be both tender and cruel and who loves and hates intensely. Her antipathy to the old woman arises largely from her concern for her children, especially her son. She begrudges the food given to the old woman because she knows that it is something her children need badly. Shorbojoya is also jealous of the latter, who is loved by Shorbojoya's little daughter Durga. In her cruelty to the outsider and her fierce protectiveness and jealousy for her children's sake, Shorbojoya is like other poor mothers who have to fight for their children's survival. But like her husband Horihor, she is presented mainly as an individual.

Durga, the six-year old girl, is introduced in relation to Indir Thakur as a thoughtful and affectionate child with a great capacity for love and joy in spite of the poverty to which she is born. Durga does not begrudge the old woman the food that she would like to have for herself but is very appreciative if the latter remembers to give her a little. She cares for the old woman and the wonderful stories she tells. Opu, the baby of the family, is too young to show any direct, personal reaction to the old woman; but it is shown that the latter is fond of him, a delicate, lovable child given to laughter and play.

Both children are merely introduced in Part I of the novel. It is in Part II that their mimetic portraits are fully depicted. Part II, the novel proper portraying incidents that take place four or five years after the death of the old woman, reveals in greater detail the mimetic portraits of the principal characters laid down in Part I.

Though less fully developed than those of the children, the portraits of Horihor and Shorbojaya emerge as solid. Away from home most of the time to look for better sources of income, Horihor is shown to have less contact with the children. But he is deeply attached to them and frustrated that he cannot adequately provide for them. Within the limits of his modest capacity as a

teacher, however, he inspires his son Opu with love of books and learning. He teaches the boy how to read and write and takes pride in his intellectual superiority to the children of money-lenders. It is shown, too, that in spite of the perpetual shortage of money in the family, Horihor manages to bring home a few reading materials for his son, paid for with money that is badly needed for food and other basic necessities. In the few scenes in which Horihor is presented, either with the children or away from them, he is drawn as a loving, if ineffectual father. It is not his being a learned Brahmin that is stressed in Part II of the novel but his frustrations in his attempts to provide his children not only food for their stomachs but also for their minds.

Shorbojoya, who is more often depicted together with the children, has a fuller mimetic portrait than her husband. She is shown to be a woman always burdened with household chores and the difficult problem of providing food and other necessities for the children with her husband's meager income. It is suggested that her partiality to Opu arises largely from her hope that when the boy grows up, he will be able to put an end to their poverty. And her harshness to Durga, a reflection of the cruel streak in her first made evident in her relationship with the old woman in Part I, springs from her frustrations as a woman. Unconsciously, she must be reliving her own sad

experiences in her daughter's life. She feels that Durga, being a girl, is just like her, born to suffer the lot of women in a society that gives preference to men. In her frustration, Shorbojoya vents her anger on her own daughter.

Shorbojoya's mimetic picture shows that she is more practical than her husband. Born into a poor family and married into one, she believes that there is no use for Horihor's hesitation in associating with low-caste but rich people in order to get better opportunities for the family. Sometimes, however, because of her desperate wish to improve her family's lot, she becomes subject to what Horihor calls wild ideas. With Opu and Durga, she hopes that the sparkling thing they have found while playing is a diamond, but her hope is shattered when it is confirmed that is is just a piece of plain crystal glass used in chandeliers. Again, she hopes that her daughter Durga would find escape from poverty by marrying a young man with property who has become fond of her. Beside her ineffectual husband, she is shown to be a strong woman. It is she who gives security to the children in the midst of their poverty. Her mimetic portrait is that of a poor woman who gains stature and dignity through her dedication to her family. Her weaknesses, her harshness to her daughter and her partiality to her son, are flaws in her character that make her appear human.

The two children, the most important characters in the novel, are much more amply depicted than their parents. Their mimetic portraits reveal that they are just like other children the world over and yet are uniquely themselves, a brother and a sister with a deep bond between them. Their experiences are universal and, at the same time, individual and personal. As far as they are concerned, poverty is not always a great burden. To them, the world is new, and there is much to discover and unravel. They feel close kinship with trees, fruits, flowers, birds, clouds, the sky, and the evening sun, which to them are all living beings. On the whole, they lead an outwardly impoverished but inwardly rich life. Their poverty becomes a burden to them only in the rare instances when they glimpse the abundant privileges enjoyed by the rich, and they realize what the other one of them is missing.

The detailed presentation of the two children's physical appearance, their actions, and, above all, their thoughts and feelings which reveal their salient traits, give depth and distinctiveness to their mimetic portraits. At the opening of Part II of the novel, Opu is six or seven and Durga is ten or eleven. Opu is described as fair, while Durga is rather dark and has dry hair. Both of them, however, are very good-looking, with their dark expressive eyes. Both are shown to be sensitive and

imaginative and to have a great capacity for happiness that brings them close to each other. At the same time, they are shown to be different from each other, Durga having more commonplace interests, hopes, and wishes and Opu being a dreamer and an artist even at a tender age. Their mutual respect for each other in spite of their differences strengthens the tie between them.

A deeply introspective and imaginative child, Opu has an inner world of his own inhabited by characters from the Mahabharata, his favorite being Karna, who has suffered from persecution in the hands of people of wealth and prestige. In the forest close to their house, Opu reenacts the ancient battles of the Pandavas and the Kuravas. Only Durga knows this secret world of his. And amused though she is, she does not divulge Opu's fancies, daydreams, and games to their elders. In unspoken gratitude, Opu is drawn closer to his sister than to their mother whose favorite he is.

Opu, who does not go along with Durga in her constant search for fruits and toys in the forest behind their house and their neighbors' backyards, understands why she acts thus. He knows that, unlike other children, they have very little to eat and play with. He deeply sympathizes with his sister when he hears their neighbor Shebou denouncing Durga as a greedy girl, always hanging around people's houses, having taken after her

mother. He is shocked when their own mother Shorbojoya beats and drives Durga out of the house after telling Shebou that there is no crime in children's picking up fallen mangoes from their neighbors' backyard. When he finds out that Durga has also taken the bead necklace from Shebou's daughter's doll house, he understands that Durga has fancied it but cannot have one like it unless she gets it by stealth. He would not have taken it himself, but he knows why she has done it. What he cannot understand is why his mother who loves him dearly should punish his beloved didi (elder sister) very severely. Though still a child of six or seven, he aches to help his sister, to make up for all the things she has to do without, and to save her from being scolded, beaten, and driven away. But since he cannot possibly do all these, he can just shed sympathetic tears.

Most of the time, the two children are depicted together, their juxtaposed mimetic pictures reflecting both their individualities and similarities to other children. They are shown playing with old toys and other toys of the poor, like cowrie shells and seeds. Sometimes, they quarrel, just like other children. Once Durga thoughtfully gives Opu some slices of green mangoes forbidden by their mother, and he unwittingly blurts out their secret when Shorbojoya arrives. For his indiscretion, Durga scolds and slaps him on the back as soon as their

mother's back is turned. This little scene reveals the authentic picture of two children playing and quarreling like other children the world over. Their relationship with each other brings out their childish and childlike characteristics which round up their mimetic portraits as children who, though precocious in some ways, are still essentially children.

It is shown, too, that sometimes the children's quarrels lead to a reconciliation that strengthens the bond between them. A conflict over a mirror leads to a fight between brother and sister. When their worn-out mother loses patience and throws Durga's doll house, "her life," out of the house, Opu feels that the punishment is too harsh. In his remorse, he weeps bitterly. Durga assures him that she is not angry with him anymore and tells him stories to pacify him. Her immediate concern is to keep him quiet for fear that their mother might beat her again if she hears him weeping. But the incident ends by bringing them closer to each other.

Other scenes depict the bond between the two children deepening as they encounter experiences that tend to shatter their carefree world of childhood. In one scene, the two children are driven away and deprived of the fallen mangoes they have picked from their neighbor's orchard. Another scene shows Opu's world ruined when his mother accidentally cuts the "telegraph wire" he has

painstakingly put up. As usual, it is Durga who consoles him. She helps him build a toy shop where they buy and sell things in play. When the rich boy Shotu, apparently encouraged by his mother's harshness to the two children, runs away with the red makal fruit and humiliates Opu further by throwing dust into his eyes to prevent him from getting the fruit back, it is Durga again who comforts him. Seeing him, who hardly cries, weep silently in frustration, she gives him all her cowrie shells and picks more red makal fruit for him. In scenes like these, the author reveals how the bond between brother and sister deepens as they encounter unpleasant experiences together.

Some scenes portray the children meeting experiences apart from each other. While Opu eagerly listens to the stories told by friends of the schoolmaster in school, Durga visits her auntie or boudi, Binoda Ray's daughter-in-law, and is shocked to see her cruelly beaten by her husband Gokul. Durga's own painful experiences have not inured her to the sufferings of others but have made her, in fact, sympathetic with them.

On his part, Opu, very active and inquisitive, often proves a trial to his parents, amused though they are by his antics. The first scene in Part II pictures him on his first trip away from home, with his father. He pesters the latter, who is busy talking with a friend, to ask about a hare, a blue-throated jay, the old factory,

the train, and the like. Back home, his harrassed, tired father complains to Shorbojoya, "He runs here, there, everywhere. I never know where he is. And he went and grabbed hold of some cow-itch flowers, too" (p. 66). Opu, however, is not aware that he has been a nuisance. To him, everything is a source of wonder on this first trip of his so far away from home. Just like other children, he is curious, inquisitive, and eager to learn.

At home, when Durga is out looking for fruit and toys, Opu plays hide-and-seek with the spices that his mother uses for cooking. Once when Shorbojoya, busier than usual, speaks sharply to him for running away with the spices she needs at the moment, he disappears for a while and comes out of hiding, covered with an old sacking that has the dust of ages. His mother laughs in spite of her annoyance. Like other normal children, Opu is a playful, mischievous child, especially when Durga is not around to play usual children's games with him.

Another scene shows the imaginative and sensitive Opu frightened out of his wits by Aturi, an old lonely woman reputed to be a witch. When he returns home and fails to get the warm welcome he has expected from his mother, he throws a tantrum and dashes out of the house, vowing never to go back. In self-pity, he relishes the thought of his mother's grief and remorse for allowing him to go out in the dark and be eaten by ghosts. But

it is with relief that he goes back home when his mother and Durga find him and take him back into the house. This is a vivid picture of Opu, depicted for its own sake, showing him as a pampered, favorite child.

A trip away from home with his father enables Opu to see a different kind of life from the one he has always known with his family. In the house of their host, a very prosperous man and one of his father's clients, Opu receives a warm welcome. Here he sees "many astonishing things" that he has never seen before and has his fill of rich food that his doting but very poor mother cannot possibly give him. On seeing the girl Omola's toys, he realizes more than ever what his sister Durga has never had, and his heart wells with sadness. Though away from Durga, his thoughts are still with her. And on his return home, he tells her not about the toys that she can never have but about the train that he has failed to see because his father would not let him wait for four or five hours to see it pass. Young though he is, Opu tries his best to spare his sister knowledge that would only hurt her.

Their mimetic portraits also reveal that like other growing children, Opu and Durga teeter between the worlds of childhood and adulthood. Sometimes, like carefree little children, they play, unmindful of their mother's pleas to help her with the household chores. But,

at times, when their games bring them close to the threshold of adulthood, they act like grownup people, without the prejudices of the latter. Moreover, because of their capacity for happiness and the deprivations brought about by their poverty, they experience the joys of childhood more keenly than most other children do. Once, in a hidden spot in the forest close to their house, they have a picnic. For the first time, they cook real food from the kitchen that their mother is not likely to miss. To these children, a picnic is a rare treat that they enjoy immensely. It does not matter that Durga has forgotten to put salt into the fried eggplant, nor that it is a little burned. They share their joy with Bini, a girl from a high-caste Brahmin family that has gone down in the world by associating with low-caste yogis. To Opu and Durga, who have not been contaminated by the prejudices of their elders, Bini is just another child like them. Her family's loss of caste does not matter to them, and they allow her to eat with them and drink water from their own glass. Opu and Durga act like grownups in the sense that they manage to cook by themselves. But their childlike innocence makes them more humane than adults who would not share food and drink with someone whose family has lost caste. Having reached the threshold of adulthood without wholly entering into it, the two children act truly as themselves, children untainted by adult prejudices.

Like other adolescent girls, Durga experiences a conflict between the child and adult within her. With her though, the thought of marriage comes early, not only because it is the practice in the Hindu community, but also because her family's poverty has made it an urgent necessity. While still playing with dolls, she thinks that marriage with a wealthy man would put an end to the deprivations suffered by her family. Finding a shudorshon, or good luck bettle, she earnestly prays that her family would be safe and that Niren, a young man who has come to the village for the partition of the ancestral property, would marry her, as her mother wishes. The simultaneous occurrence to her of thoughts of marriage and her family's safety reveals the maturity forced on her by the difficulties suffered by her family. It seems though that the child in her still persists, for she is equally preoccupied with thoughts of a gay wedding feast and a long train ride afterwards. As to life with a man like Niren, she seems to have no thoughts to spare. What grieves her is the possibility of being separated from her family, hard though their lot has always been.

Like Durga, Opu wavers between childhood and adulthood. His precocity and perceptiveness remove him from the usual world of childhood enjoyed by other boys in the neighborhood. Yet his lack of contact with children his age makes him naive in some ways. Simultaneously, he

is both too wise and too innocent for his age. Unknown to Durga, with whom he usually shares his secrets, he comes to believe that he can fly. Having read about the properties of mercury when applied to vulture's eggs from An Anthology of Philosophical Works, he allows himself to be tricked by a cowherd boy into buying two crow's eggs. But his gullibility is just a manifestation of his rich imagination which opens to him a world unknown to other children. His precocity and perceptiveness also bring him into close contact with Norottan Das, an aged Vaishnava teacher renowned for his wisdom. And "the happy intimacy" that develops between them becomes a part of himself, like "the communion he had with fresh earth and birds and trees when the leaves were on them" (p. 196).

Being children from a poor family, however, Opu and Durga experience more than the usual suffering undergone by children. Suddenly, they are jolted out of their carefree world of childhood once more when Durga is mercilessly beaten by their neighbor Shebou for stealing a golden jar of vermillion powder belonging to a guest of hers, Tuni's mother. Opu suffers in silence as he shares his sister's pain. He does not tell their mother about the incident, for fear that Durga would be subjected to another beating.

With the coming of the Chorok festival, however, the unhappy incident is soon forgotten by the children. Now it is the performance of the jatra plays for five nights that captures their imagination. Opu is excited and thankful when the boy actor who plays the lead role of Prince Ajoy befriends him, goes to their home to share their humble meals, and praises his singing. When the jatra party leaves, Opu starts writing plays, entering still another world of possibilities and enriching his inner life further.

The two children, however, feel the full impact of the anguish of life early, again because of poverty. With their father Horihor away on one of his trips to look for better opportunities and unable to send money, the two children and their mother have to eat the leaves of wild yams to stave off hunger. They see their mother selling treasured wedding presents but still unable to get enough money for their immediate necessities. There is no food nor medicine in the house when a storm comes, making things worse for them, especially for Durga, who is sick of malaria. Drenched by water from their leaking roof, she becomes delirious in her sleep. When she regains consciousness she talks with Opu, who has been watching at her side. Assured by his promise to take her to see a train someday she goes back to sleep, never to wake again. When Horihor returns with a little money

and some gifts for the family, he learns from Shorbojoya about the death of Durga.

With Durga's death, the novel focuses mainly on Opu's mimetic portrait. It is shown that with his sister gone, Opu faces life alone. With pain, he sees his poor mother snubbed by the newly arrived widow of his father's rich cousin, Nilmoni Ray. He himself is snubbed by his rich cousins who have gone to school in Calcutta. And now there is no Durga to console him. Being imaginative and unusually gifted, he takes to writing, using as models characters and stories from his father's old books and newspapers.

It is shown, too, that Opu does not brood over the loss of his sister. Aside from reading and writing, he attends Brahmin feasts, packs up bundles of food to bring home and share with his mother, goes with his father to his clients' homes, and, most of all, goes fishing though he seldom catches fish. He also develops a close friendship with Potu, the boy with whom he was playing cowries on the day they were attacked by the fisherlads. Besides, he goes by the river to read and dream. He has no doubts and fears for the future, so certain is he that when he grows up, all his hopes and dreams would come to pass.

With the loss of Durga, Opu becomes more independent. Assuring his mother that he is no longer a baby,

he makes a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Sidheswari at Gangadanphur on behalf of his mother. It is his first journey away from home by himself. His shyness makes him suffer intensely when he arrives at his uncle's place, but his aunt takes an instant liking for him and welcomes him warmly. Opu wins her over completely by his ways. And to his doting mother, he proves that he can manage all by himself.

It is shown, however, that in spite of Opu's attempt to live a normal life after Durga's death, he cannot help missing his sister's prescence. He has expected the Spring Festival in honor of Rama, the Chorok Puja to Shiva, and the Krishna ceremonies to be "a season of inexpressible joy," as they used to be. But this year's festivals prove "a hollow thing" to him. For the first time since Durga's death, he realizes that without her, things will never be the same again.

By the middle of April, Opu, with his father and mother, prepares to leave the village of Nischindipur to transfer to Benares. It is while sorting out things to pack that he discovers the small jar of vermillion powder for which Durga has been beaten. For his deceased sister's sake, he goes out and hurls the jar into the heart of the grove where the bushes grow thickest. He never tells anybody about the gold jar, not even his mother, for he wants to keep Durga's secret from others. He has remained

true to her when others have branded her a thief. To him, she was just a child who could not resist the fascinating gold jar which she could never have if she did not take it. The bond between them has persisted.

When the family leaves for Benares, Opu experiences his first train ride to which he has looked forward for years. But as the train starts, he sadly remembers Durga and his promise to take her to see a train someday. Though she has been dead for a long time now, he has always felt her "living though invisible presence" in the places where the two of them have lived and played together. Now he feels that he is being parted from her forever. He realizes that except for him, nobody has ever really loved Durga, not even their own mother; and that now, nobody, except himself, is sorry that she is being left behind. Aware of her watching him, he struggles to send her the message, "I'm not really going away, Didi. . . . I haven't forgotten. . . . It's not that I want to leave you. . . . They are taking me away" (p. 303). The bond between them has persisted though she has been dead for years.

In the numerous scenes focused on the children, their mimetic portraits are presented primarily for their own sake. While it is true that the inequalities and injustices fostered by the Indian social system that make the poor suffer are depicted, these revelations are just

incidental to the portrayal of the two children and their personal experiences which can never be duplicated in their particularities. And though they possess traits common to children the world over and undergo experiences similar to those of other poor children, they are uniquely themselves, a brother and a sister drawn together by a bond that goes beyond the boundaries of time and space. Their joys, secrets, and sorrows, the love of nature they share with each other, the games they have played together, and even their quarrels have strengthened the bond between them so that even long after her death and on his departure for Benares with his parents, Opu still feels his sister's presence. The detailed rendition of their inmost thoughts and feelings, their actions and reactions to specific situations make them appear like real children with individual identities. They are among the few characters in Indian fiction with mimetic portraits memorable for their own sake.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

To a large extent, the success or failure of Indian novelists depends on their use and treatment of characters. Some of them present dominantly thematic characters. Those who, like Venkataramani in Murugan, the Tiller and Kandan, the Patriot, present idealized protagonists in the ancient manner and rely heavily on rhetorical assertions in spite of the fact that they have no rich mythological background and pre-established identities in the past nor authentic mimetic portraits as contemporary individuals, inevitably fail to dramatize their themes. As propaganda figures, such nondescript protagonists prove ineffective. Worse still is the case of writers who, like Sheorey Anant in The Volcano, present thematically idealized characters whose vaguely drawn mimetic pictures reveal that they are psychologically ill. With the clash between such characters' thematic and mimetic functions, such novelists cannot but fail.

Other writers who present dominantly thematic characters in the form of comic types, however, succeed because they follow the norms of the novel of manners, which, by convention, presents mainly the striking traits

of the characters. Novelists, like Ruth Prawer Jhabvala in Amrita and The Nature of Passion, achieve their satiric intentions by depicting characters whose follies are stressed, even exaggerated.

Writers of theses novels and novels of social realism usually present characters with dual roles, which are difficult to integrate. Those who succeed are novelists who, like Rabindranath Tagore in Binodini, Gora, and The Home and the World, Mulk Raj Anand in Untouchable, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala in Esmond in India, and Manohar Malgonkar in The Princes, reconcile the thematic functions of their protagonists with individualized mimetic portraits drawn in some depth. Similarly, novelists like Raja Rao in Kanthapura and S. Nagarajan in Chronicles of Kedaram succeed in dramatizing their theses by presenting places as protagonists undergoing spiritual transformation by sustaining their thematic roles with vivid composite mimetic pictures. If, however, like Khuswant Singh in Train to Pakistan, writers depict places as protagonists vividly but individual protagonists inadequately, their achievements remain just partial successes.

A more common reason for mixed achievements arises from the fact that some novelists, like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in Khrisnakanta's Will and Chandra Shekhar, Anita Desai in Voices in the City, Raja Rao in The Serpent and the Rope, and Bhabani Bhattacharya in Shadow from

Ladakh, follow the ancient tradition of presenting characters with symbolic roles though their protagonists are dominantly mimetic. Moreover, since theses novels and novels of social realism with functional characters are more prestigious in India than novels of psychological realism with characters presented primarily for their own sake, they succumb to the temptation to give illustrious roles to their protagonists even though they are psychologically sick. The result is a glaring disparity between their thematic functions and their mimetic pictures. Nevertheless, such writers achieve partial success, which is notable in itself, the portrayal of dominantly mimetic protagonists with complex personalities explored in depth.

A few Indian novelists, however, successfully depart from the ancient tradition of character presentation by depicting protagonists that properly belong to novels of psychological realism. Such writers, like Sarat Chandra Chatterjee in The Fire, R. K. Narayan in The Guide, and Bibhusan B. Bannerjee in Pather Panchali, take their individualized characters for what they really are. These protagonists, drawn with memorable mimetic portraits, are exceptions in the Indian novel which still carries overtones of the ancient literary tradition of presenting symbolic characters charged with meaning.

On the whole, in spite of some weaknesses and failures, Indian writers have made significant contributions

to the realistic novel genre. Writing in a medium adopted from the West and modifying it within the limits allowed by the central tradition of realistic fiction, they have developed the Indian novel to the point where it has thrived and come into its own. By integrating the Indian tradition of character presentation with the established norms of the Western novel, they have made the Indian novel not just an exotic variant but a valid literary variation of the realistic novel as a modern genre.

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