Explications of English Literary Texts

Poetry, Fiction, Drama

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Preface

Multiple interpretations of literary texts are the result of the impact of development in modern literary theory during the last half of 20th Century. Post Structuralists' view that text is multi dimensional and there is no single theological interpretation of any text, encourages reinterpretations in studies of English literature. New research in other disciplines such as Linguistics, Psychology, Sociology, Ethnography, Social Sciences and Environmental Studies, has enriched the experience of the scholars, studying English literature (Core English literature as well as other English literatures of India, Africa, Canada and America). They have been looking at literary texts from various dimensions and every master of a particular ideology tames the text to speak his/her own point of view.

Stylisticians study the functions of language in a literary text and find how ordinary language turns to be literary and how it constructs message of the author. Language is viewed as discourse and a text alone cannot convey meaning so they study a literary text as a discourse. This trend began during 1960s under the influence of philosophers of language namely J.L. Austin and J.R. Searle, Roland Barthes etc.

Another trend of studying literature is to consider the influence of Philosophical thoughts and Political movements. In 1950s works of French anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss and literary critic Roland Barthes started an intellectual movement known as Structuralism. Structuralism believes that things cannot be understood in isolation and they have to be seen in the context of structures they are part of. This

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movement became popular during 1980s in all over the world. Under the influence of this movement, the critics analyze narratives and they relate the text to some larger structure and particular literary genre or the projected model of an underlying universal narrative structure. The scholars interpreting literature from a structuralist point of view apply the concept of systematic patterning and structuring of the whole field of western culture and across cultures. They consider culture as "a system of signs"; their interpretation of literature is in terms of a range of underlying parallels with the structures of language.

In the late 1960s Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" and in 1968 Jacques Derrida's lecture on "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" announced the demise of structuralism and the birth of Post Structuralism. Post Structuralism encourages the "Deconstruction" of the text.

A scholar engaged in the deconstenctive reading of the text discovers the unconscious dimension of the text. He fixes upon the surface features of the words similarities in sound, the root meanings of words, a dead or dying metaphor and brings these to the foreground to decide the overall meaning. It is also shown that the text is disunity rather than unity. The shifts and breaks of various kinds in the text are seen as evidence of what is repressed or glossed over in silence by the text.

Another trend in literary criticism is known as psychoanalytic criticism in which techniques of psychoanalysis are used to interpret literature. This practice is based upon Freudian and Lacanian theories of how the mind, the instincts and sexuality work. In such literary interpretation, the importance is given to the distinction between the conscious and the unconscious mind. The overt context of the literary text is associated with the conscious and the 'Covert' with the unconscious. A close attention is given to the unconscious motives and feelings. These motives or feelings may be of the author or of the characters depicted in the work. Various

complexes such as Oedipus complex or Electra complexe in characters are studied.

Feminist angle of looking at literary text began under the influence of the Women's movement of the 1960s. Feminists started to rethink the cannon aiming at the rediscovery of texts written by women and reveal women's experience. They examine and challenge representations of women in literature by men who regard women as "Other" as "Lack" as part of nature. Power relations in texts, in life and the role of language in constructing roles of women are closely examined. Psychoanalysis is used to explore the issues of female and male identity.

Marxist criticism influenced by Karl Marx (1818-1883) Friedrich Engles (1820-1895) and Louis Althusser (1918-1990) is a significant trend. A Marxist researcher makes a division between the surface and latent content of a literary work. Then the covert subject matter of literary work is related to class struggle. Social class status of the author is decided by the context of his work. The nature of a whole literary genre is explained in terms of the social period during which it is produced. It is also claimed by these researchers that literary forms are determined by political circumstances.

American critics Stephen Greenblatt in 1980 started a movement called "New Historicism" which initiated a method of Parallel reading of literary and non literary texts, usually of the same historical period. Equal weightage is given to both texts. The focus of the researcher is on issues of state power and how it is maintained on patriarchal structures and their perpetuation and on the process of colonization, with its every facet of reality is textualized and Foucaulet's idea of social structures as determined by dominant discoursive practices are used by these interpreters. Another term which became popular in 1985 was Cultural Materialism used by Jonathan's book '*Political Shakespeare*'. In this critical method attention is given to historical context, theoretical method, political commitment and textual analysis.

Postcolonial reading of literature began in 1990s under the influence of Frantz Fanon and Edward Said. This reading pays attention to issues of cultural differences in literary texts. The claims to universalism made on behalf of colonial western literature are rejected. Postcolonial critics celebrate hybridity and the situation in which individuals and groups belong to more than one culture in their views states of marginality, plurality and perceived otherness are sources of energy and potential change.

Narratology, a significant method of reading literature, is developed by Russian formalists such as Vladimir Propp during 1930s. This method was made popular by Claude 'Levi Strauss in 1970s. A researcher using this method, looks at individual narratives seeking out the recurrent structures which are found within all narratives. The focus is on the teller and the telling.

"Green studies" term is used to denote an approach which studies the relationship between literature and the physical environment. The critical approach began in the USA in the late 1980s in U.K. In the early 1990s, Cheryll Glotfelty is the founder of 'ecocriticism' another term used for Green studies. In this criticism, special emphasis is given to writers who foreground nature as a major part of their subject matter.

The brief sketch of different critical approaches given above is prepared from different resources available in the form of books.

The scholars whose research papers are selected for this book interpret literature under the influence of the critical approaches briefed in the first half of preface. The research papers selected for this book focus on different issues.

There are papers in which Indian literature in English has been studied from different perspectives. Dr. Mousumi Paul looks at Amitav Ghosh's "The Shadow Lines" as "An aftermath of partition and its Darkar shades of consequences" in which she focuses on the victims of partition. She makes an attempt to show how partition uproots people both physically and emotionally. Samandeep Kaur and Kanwaljit

Kaur exploit Reader Response Theory to interpret the tragedy of Partition in their respective Papers. Mamta Mahendru has shown the condition of Diasporic Indians. She has studied cultural clash in their lives. Dr. Navdeep Kaur has studied the role of violence and horror in "Train to Pakistan". Mulk Raj Anand's "Untouchable" is analysed by applying the theory of Cultural Materialism by Vijay Bernard who finds in this novel a social injustice against long time practiced and cherished hatred for the lowest, the sweeper class called Bhangis.

Sawant Singh has presented "Waiting For Godot" as a post modern play. He has tried to show how life of people has changed after World war II with the help of characters Vladimir and Estragon. Dr. Jaswinder Kaur Aulakh studies Man-women relationship in Ibsen's drama A Doll's House. Her study is from socialist perspective. She studies Ibsen's concern with society and its impact on the individual as well as his virtual obsession with the importance of the affirmation in human life. The focus of the paper is to highlight the attack on conservative practices and on the institute of marriage. Aulakh looks at literature as a mirror to society and seeking a new social order. Daljeet Singh has studied Katherine Mansfield's "The Doll's House" from Utopian Quest presented with the help of symbols in the story. Gurpreet Singh has presented the cultural upheaval and colonial repercussions in "Heaven is not Closed". The story encapsulates the contrasts of the two cultures and tries to point out the innocence of the colonised in their belief to assimilate into the traditions and practises of the invading culture. Sharman Kaur has chosen Oscar Wilde's "A Woman of No Importance" for her study. The Victorian society gave men the absolute right to decide the position of women in the society. The law favoured the males and relegated females to the secondary position where only in the role of a mother they assumed a some what respectable and an important status. Lord Illingworth along with the hollow institutions of law and religion become the symbols of oppression in the play *A Woman of No Importance*. Satpal Singh has studied Feminine search for identity in

Shauna Singh Baldwin's novel "What the Body Remembers". The theme of women's Quest for self-identity forms the crux of this novel. Her feminism is an integral part of her critical approach. Both as writer and critic Baldwin has time and again stood up as an advocate of women's right, taken up current issues of emancipation, and exposed the dangerous deficits of established patriarchal hierarchies.

"Style as patterning, deviation and choice" by Ujjal Jeet is a simplified introduction to Michael Halliday's concept of transitivity and its application in the explication of literary texts.

The preparation of this book would not have been possible without the advice and expertise of my colleagues Dr. Jaswinder Kaur and Prof. Vijay Bernard. I am thankful to all the contributors. I want to express my gratitude to Principal Dr. Mehal Singh and to my senior colleagues Prof. Sukhmeen Bedi (Head of English Department and Dean Academic Affairs), Prof. Anupam Sandhu, Prof. Supninderjit Kaur, Prof. Parneet Dhillon. My vote of thanks goes to my wife Mrs kawaljit Kaur and my daughter Ishtpreet and my son Amrit Shehbaz Singh Sran. Iam grateful to Almighty God and my mother Sardarni Charanjit Kaur for all blessings. Ms Shelly Mehra deserves special thanks for typing the material.

Malkinder Singh

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Daljeet Singh is Asstt. Prof. of English in P.G. Dept of English, Khalsa College, Amritsar. His present contribution to this book is on Katherine Mansfield's story "The Doll's House".

Gurpreet Singh is Asstt. Prof. of English in P.G. Dept of English, Khalsa College, Amritsar. He teaches English Language and Literature . He has contributed his research papers to various national and international journals and books. His present contribution is on Cultural Upheavals which is very thought provoking.

Dr. Jaswinder Kaur, Asstt. Prof. of English in P.G. Department of English, Khalsa College, Amritsar, has specialization in Systemic Functional Linguistics. Several researches papers published by her show her rich research experience in the field of functional linguistics.

Kanwaljit Kaur, is Asstt. Prof. of English in Guru Nanak Dev University College, Verka (Amritsar). She has been contributing research papers to various national & interna- tional journals.

Mamta Mahendru, Asstt. Prof. of English in P.G. Deptt. of English, Khalsa College, Amritsar (Punjab), has several research papers to her credit. She has submitted her Ph.D. Thesis. Her present contribution to this book is thought provoking.

Dr. Mousumi Paul, Head Deptt. of English and Cultural Studies, Mahila College Chaibasa Kolhan University, Jamshedpur (Jharkhand) has been teaching

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English language and literature. She has Published Seven research Papers in different national and international Journals and contributed chapters to books. In this book she has written on Amitav Ghosh's Novel "The Shadow Lines".

Dr. Navdeep Kaur is an Associate Professor of English in Khalsa College for Women, Sidhwan Khurd, Ludhiana. She has to her credit various scholarly research papers in different national and international journals and books. She has studied Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan from a different perspective. She has tried to work on violence and horror in the novel.

Puneet Randhawa is an Asstt. Prof. of English in Guru Nanak Dev University College Verka, Amritsar. She is the head of dept. there. She has been contributing to various national and international research journals and books. Her present contribution is on Indian Ethos and cultural Reflexes in Nissim Ezekiel's "Night of the Scorpion".

Samandeep Kaur is working as Asstt. Prof. of English in Khalsa College for Women, Amritsar. She has contributed her paper on Punjabi renowned author Amrita Pritam's poem on Waris Shah.

Satpal Singh teaches English in P. G. Dept of English, Baring union christian College, Batala as Asstt. Prof. He has recently submitted his M. Phil thesis in P.G. Dept of English, Khalsa College Amritsar. The selection in this book is from his thesis.

Sawant Singh Manto is Asstt. Prof. of English in P.G. Dept. of English, Khalsa College, Amritsar. He has recently submitted his Ph. D. thesis. He has been teaching English Language and Literature. He has to his credit various research papers published in different national and international journals and books. His present contribution is on "Waiting For Godot".

Sharman Kaur is Asstt. Prof. of English in Chandigarh University, Gharuan. She has to her credit various research papers. She has contributed a paper on the interplay of

oppression and resistance in Oscar Wilde's "A Woman of No Importance".

Dr. Ujjal Jeet is teaching English language and literature in Deptt. of English, Khalsa College, Amritsar. Her area of specialization is also functional linguistics. In her Present contribution, she has simplified Hallidayan concept of transitivity and tried to show how it can be applied to interpret any text. She has published research papers in various journals.

Vijay Bernard has taught English Language and literature in various colleges. Presently he has been teaching literary theory and language in P.G. Dept. of English, Khalsa College, Amritsar. His rich research experience and practical knowledge in interdisciplinary field can be witnessed from his contribution to different national and international journals and to this book.

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1

Train to Pakistan: A Study of Violence and Horrors

Dr. Navdeep Pannu

Khushwant Singh is one of India's distinguished men of letters with an International reputation. A brief account of his achievement as a novelist, short story writer, historian, essayist, sketchiest, journalist and editor is sufficient to establish him in Indian writing in English as a versatile genius. He has produced four novels-*I Shall not Hear the Nightingale, Train to Pakistan, Delhi* and *In the company of Women* and a considerable number of short stories, an authentic history of the Sikhs which reveal his thought and feeling of a great writer. As a novelist, he is famous for *Train to Pakistan* (1956) which made him internationally known. This novel won for him Grove Press India Fiction prize for the year 1956. It was the time of partition which greatly moved him. The harrowing events and turbulent days drastically changed his outlook to life. His faith in the nobility of human race was shattered. This paper aims to examine his presentation of violence and horrors in his *Train to Pakistan*.

Dr. Navdeep Pannu, Associate Professor, Department of English, Khalsa College for Women, Sidhwan, Khurd, Ludhiana

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Train to Pakistan is Khushwant Singh's first and most important realistic novel. It is grim story of individuals and communities caught in the whirlpool of partition of the sub-continent in two states- India and Pakistan in 1947.Stark realism is its predominant quality:

> The impact of partition on small village on the indo-Pakistan border is shown here with pitiless realism of description and the swift tempo of the narrative carries the reader along (M. K. Naik 1-2).

In *Train to Pakistan,* Khushwant Singh has shown how the serene and peaceful life of Mano Majra, a small village on the border of India and Pakistan, gets disturbed by the evil effects of Partition in 1947. Mano Majra is a representative of thousands of small villages along the border between India and Pakistan, where innocent Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims were helplessly caught up in the bloody event of Partition.

The first unusual happening in the village, in the event of partition is an armed dacoit with murder at the house of money lender Ramlal. We see on one heavy night in August, Malli, the leader of the gang, raids Ramlal's house in Mano Majra. They break open the door of the house, encounter two women and a boy of seven and elicit the information of money-lender's whereabouts. The gun men catch-hold of the old man, demand the keys of the house, the money-lender was beaten with butts of guns and spear handles and kicked and punched. He sat on his haunches, crying and spitting blood. Two of his teeth were smashed. But he would not hand over the keys of his safe.

In sheer exasperation, one of the men lunged at the crouching figure with his spear. Ramlal uttered a loud yell and collapsed on the floor with blood spurting from his belly. The men came out. One of them fired two shots

in the air. Women stopped wailing. Dogs stopped barking. The village was silenced. (Singh 10) Thus, the dacoity shows that humanity itself has been robbed of and the world has been looted of its human values. This gruesome murder with dacoity creates a sense of violence and horror among the villagers. On their way back, they fire shots in the air and drop bangles (marks of impotence and womanliness) in the house of Juggut Singh, a dreaded criminal of the village.

In the very first part of the novel, the novelist has introduced Juggut Singh as a confirmed criminal who has served several jail terms on various charges. Prior to the dacoity, he has been released on the guarantee of good behaviour. Like his father, Jugga is also the strongest and the tallest man in the village. Due to the previous record of his father with the police, Jugga has also been registered as a bad character (badmash number 10). He is not allowed to go out of his house after sunset. He has been asked to report to the police station regularly.

On the night of dacoity and murder of Lala Ramlal, Jugga is out in the field with Nooran, his beloved. He returns to the village only to find the people gravely disturbed by the dacoity and the murder. The dacoits had dropped bangles in his house challenging him to be impotent and womanly. He is a rare combination of the criminal and the lover. He is not a badmash for his fellow villagers rather he is a man of strong fellow-feelings. Though innocent, he is arrested for the murder of Lala Ramlal only because of his past record with the police.

After the scene of violence, we have many scenes of horror. The morning after the dacoity the Mano Majra railway station is more crowded than usual. The trains also present the scene of horror: they were crowded with Sikh and Hindu refugees from Pakistan or Muslims from India. People perched on the roofs with their legs

dangling or on bedstead, wedged in between the bogies. Some of them rode precariously on the buffers...(Singh 32). Again the novelist gives a horrifying scene. The arrival of the ghost train in broad day light created a commotion in Mano Majra. People stood on their roofs to see what was happening at the station (Singh 78). The ghost train is full of dead bodies with not a single person alive in it. The magistrate, alarmed at the sight of train load of corpses, is frightened by its violence and its magnitude. As K.K. Sharma and B.K. Johri (1984) rightly comments:

> The entire picture is, indeed, very terrible.
>
> It unfolds the horrible drama of communal violence –
>
> the sinking of human values in the mire of communal frenzy.(72)

The ghost train is the first cause of worry which is increased by the collection of kerosene oil and firewood from each of village inhabitants through the village lambardar, Banta Singh on the order of police for burning the bodies which the train brought from Pakistan. Khushwant Singh describes the bizzare scene of cremation thus:

> The northern horizon, which had turned a bluish grey, showed orange again.
>
> The orange turned into copper and then into a luminous russet.
>
> Red tongues of flame leaped into the black sky.
>
> A soft breeze began to blow towards the village.
>
> It brought the smell of burning Kerosene, of the wood…

> The village was stilled in a deadly silence. No one asked anyone else what the odour was…(Singh 88)

After cremation of the massacred corpses the village was stilled in a deathly silence.

> The sight of so many dead had at first produced a cold numbness (Singh 84).

The train which was suggestive of life and action in the pre-partition day now stands for death and disaster after the partition. Thus, the train happens to be a dual symbol a creative and strange atmosphere as it brings day light.

At the time of parting of the Muslims from Mano Majra, the reader is horrified when he sees the villagers wiping off the tears from their faces and turning back homes with heavy heart as to what would happen next. It is also not without horror looking at Malli's gang unyoking the bullocks, looting the carts and driving the cows and buffaloes away. It also creates panic and terror in the hearts of the Mano Majrans. Train loads of people coming over to Manomajra is the centre of horror. The river Sutlej is flooded with corpses. The people are inside doors. The people are left to pray and wait. Thus Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* pictures the *brutal,* realistic story of Political hatred and of mass passions during the tragic days that preceded and followed the partition of India. Trains were detained and the unfortunate passengers were brutally murdered. Men, women and children became victims of mad communal frenzy. They were molested and killed by armed groups of men. Khushwant Singh has lent significance to his narration on the theme of partition, as the novel expresses concerns of the people, and their anxieties at the dehumanization and degradation of human values. The novel can be described as a micro-level presentation of life before and after partition.

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2

An Aftermath of Partition and Its Darker Shades of Consequences With Special Reference to Amitava Ghosh's The Shadow Lines

Dr. Mousumi Paul

A geographical and physical division, in no way has weakened the emotional bond between the people living across the border and those who crossed over to this side following the separation of India. The sense of belonging of Pakistan for India and the crisis of Identity of Pakistan, have its roots in the human aspects of the history of the partition that play its role in determining the fate of both the nations. The human dimension and the theme of displaced sensibility, the byproducts of the partition, provide ample scope for the literary reproduction of the event. one of the most tragic and serious problems that emerged as the instant by-product of the partition was the transfer of population. Beginning with months before 15Aug1947, the migration was largest in human history.

'The forty – five miles of road side from Lahore to Amritsar along which so many passed became a long, open graveyard…….and every yard of the way….. there

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was a body, some butchered. Some dead of cholera. The vultures had become so bloated by their feasts they could no longer fly and the wild dog so demanding in their taste they ate only the liver of the corpses littering the road'. (Ali 1967:161)

The shadow lines (1988), Amitav Ghosh's second novel deals with three families spread over three countries across the world viz. Dhaka, Calcutta and london. The three families narrate their own experiences of cultural, religious and national differences/indifferences along the generations. Written against the milieu of civil strife in east Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and riot hit Calcutta, the novel reveals during its course the various traumas and crisis faced by the immigrants and left over natives in east Pakistan. It also tries to show that such communal riots do not have borders, they spread like wild fire and cross territorial borders. The events in the novel essentially revolve around Maya Devi's family, their friendship with the English friends – the prices, and thamma, the narrator's grandmother and Maya Devi's elder sister. The novel deals with the experiences and links with her ancestral city Dhaka. The narration revolves around a number of decades and also covers the riots of 1964 which kills Maya Devi's uncle 'jethamoshai'. Tridip the central character of the novel, and khalil, the rickshaw puller. Their deaths seems to shroud the issue of inter-cultural understanding and friendship in contemporary social structures divided by vague lines called national boundaries. The novel therefore revolves around two families – The Datta-Chaudhries of Bengal and the Prices in London. And in the cross– transactional attributes between these two families and their generations. As A.N.kaul explains in his essay : Towards the end the story also crosses the newly created frontiers between India and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), engaging or acknowledging along the way the proximate presence of other foreign countries and continents