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One of our biggest Composite Heritage is our leaders who had extraordinary courage to stand for their beliefs and values. Savitribai Phule is one among them. With this issue of SACH once more we remember great personalities like Savitribai Phule and Roquiah Khatun. They dreamt of a very different world. In their dream world women had dignity, respect and equal rights. They not just dreamt of that world, they worked towards realizing their dream. It is through their dreams and struggles that they shaped possibilities for future generations. They opened new ways for people to think and act differently. For women to believe that change is possible. For young girls to dream for their future and their rights. For people to join in their struggles. It is not an ordinary dream. And it is not easy to realize this dream.

We should at least have the decency to recognize and remember their contribution in not just shaping the future of so many deprived people but also in setting the tone for struggle for women's rights.

Rise to Learn and Act

by SAVITRIBAI PHULE

Weak and oppressed, Rise my brothers
Come out of living in slavery.
Manu-follower Peshwas are dead and gone
Manu is the one who barred us from education.
Givers of knowledge-the English have come
Learn, you have had no chance in millennium.
We will teach our children and ourselves learn
Receive knowledge, become wise to discern.
An upsurge of jealousy is in my soul
Crying out for knowledge to be the whole.
This festering wound, mark of caste
I will blot out from my life at last.
In Bali Raj's kingdom, let's beware
Our glorious mast, unfurl and flare.
Let all say, "misery go and kingdom come"
Awake, arise and educate
Smash traditions, liberate.
We will come together and learn
Policy, righteousness, religion.
Slumber not but blow the trumpet
O Brahman, dare not you upset.
Give a war cry, rise fast
Rise, to learn and act.

Savitribai Phule : First Woman Teacher of India

Teachers of this country may feel proud that there is a day when they are remembered with honor by the politicians, government officials and the masses of India. They are remembered for their contributions, they do towards the mental, social and cultural development of Indian Society. It is a different thing that this event of Teacher's day is celebrated on the birthday of such a person who have nothing special to offer to make the education more learner oriented and accessible to the marginalized communities of this country who have been in



January 3, 1831—March 10, 1897

a high need of education for their progress. But the First women teacher of India who started first ever school for the such marginalized communities and specifically for girls and untouchables who always had been denied education since centuries, is still an unknown figure in the history and history books and usually not remembered by the majority of Indian society for the pioneering role she played as a teacher and a woman liberator in the second half of nineteenth century.

What and how much do we know about the first woman teacher of India? What different thing did she do for she should be called the first women teacher of this country? This is rather a very unusual question and has never been asked or addressed in any of our school text books like other questions such as Who was the first Prime Minister of India or who was the first Indian who touched the surface of Moon? You may find a chapter about Jhansi ki Rani Laxmibai who fought against British as per the history written till now. There may be a chapter about Bachendri Pal who recently marched to the top of the Mount Everest and even a chapter on Aishwarya Rai, the Glamorous actress of Hindi films. Surprisingly

though, you don't find even a mention if not a special chapter about the first woman teacher of India. This may be one of the reasons that we could not familiarize ourselves with the revolutionary figure.

But why? But why is it so that we either know nothing or know very little about the first woman teacher of India? One really wonders that why she is missing from the school text books of most Indian States. The curriculum makers and historians cannot claim to say that they could not find information on her life and work. Ample numbers of books

till now have been published in Marathi and English most of which depict her grand life and mission in detail.

I think that this is rather a simple case of Caste and Gender biased mindset of the curriculum makers and historians. This is all due to the patriarchal and brahmanical mindset and prejudices deeply rooted in Indian society which claim that the most intellectual personalities come from the caste Hindus and lower cast or marginalized communities can never produce such extraordinary personalities at all. However, the first woman teacher of India happened to come from a lower caste and thus she remained unacknowledged on the pages of school text books. Moreover, she has been continuously mentioned mostly only as wife of social reformer Jyotiba Phule and the account is more or less the same even in the history of Dalit Movement also for so many years due to the patriarchal mindset of Dalit intellectuals.

Apart from her identity as Jyotirao Phule's wife, The Modern India's first woman teacher, Savitribai Phule was a radical advocator of female and untouchable's education, a champion of women's rights, a milestone of trailblazing poetry, a courageous mass leader

who stood strongly against the forces of caste and patriarchy certainly had her independent identity for her contribution. Her life and struggle deserves to be appreciated in a wider perspective. Thanks to Dalit Women Movement who brought this woman again to the main pages of history and present of Dalit movement and put her to the top of the list of Nation Builders of India.

Savitribai Phule worked not only for the girls and women of Dalit community but for the betterment and upliftment of the people of the whole Indian society. She internalized and strived hard to implement the thought of her husband Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, the founder of modern Dalit movement and a great social activist in second half of nineteenth century who worked for the upliftment of Dalits and women all through his life. Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai were the first in modern India who came out with first major anti-caste ideology and led a mass activism against anti-Dalit, anti-women Brahmanic casteist cultural and religious norms and values of Indian society.

Jyotirao Phule's dearest dream was to see that the women of India would be able to enjoy their full human rights. And in his opinion, this was possible only through the power of education. He was deeply convinced that education of a woman is certainly an important tool if the downtrodden communities have to go forward. He was quite determinant of the opinion that Female schools are more necessary than male ones. This thought was later appreciated

by Dr. Ambedkar. Savitribai and Jyotirao had a hard struggle to implement the right to education for the women and Dalits in Maharashtra during the Peshwas rule in Maharashtra during those days. It is appropriate to say that it was an era of darkness in Maharashtra as far the education to women is concerned. In that era of darkness, Savitribai and Jyotirao flamed the torch of education in Maharashtra. Savitribai was Jyotirao Phule's first and most important ally in the mission of Dalit women's education.

Savitribai was born on 3rd January, 1831, in Naigaon of Satara district in Maharashtra. She was born on after the thirteen years of

British rule in India and end of Peshwa rule in 1818 in Maharashtra. It was a common practice those days to marry a girl at the age of early childhood. In spite of her desire to study, Savitribai was also married to Jyotirao at the age of nine. She remained with her parents because Jyotirao was studying in a missionary school at that time. Here one feels highly obliged to Christian missionaries who opened up doors of education to untouchables though they are being attacked by a particular religious – political group now a day.

Jyotirao being a visionary and convinced of the opinion that every woman must be educated, started teaching English and Marathi to Savitribai when she came to live with him. At the age of twenty, Jyotirao passed the matriculation examination. Till that day, Savitri became very good at English and Marathi. She was still a teenager when she got herself involved in her husband's work. The Phule couple decided to start a school for girls, especially from the shudra and atishudra communities so that parents of girls could send their daughters without bothering much. But there were no women teachers at all. In 1846-47 Savitribai with another woman Fatima Sheikh who happened to be her partner for all through her life, Studied in a formal school in Ahmednagar and got trained as teachers.

On January 14, 1848, Jyotirao started a school for girls. This school was opened in a corridor of a house at Budhwar Peth which belonged to Mr. Bhide's, a friend of Jyotirao in Pune. This was the first school which was opened especially for girls for the first time in India. Savitribai was given the charge of the school and hence, she became the first woman teacher of India. This school had nine students in the beginning. Sadashiv Govinde, another friend of Jyotirao, sent books for students from Ahmednagar. The school functioned for about six months and then had to be closed down. Another building was found and the school reopened a few months later.

Though it had been very difficult job for Jyotirao, Savitribai and their friends to establish the school but it was very difficult for Savitribai to keep that school running during those days when education for girls was understood as a

sin. Since most of males were against the very existence of kanyashala, so it became very difficult for Savitribai to get a male teacher for the same. She alone had to work hard to run the school. Moreover, the patriarchal complex ridden people had been constantly creating hurdles in her way. Many conspiracies were planned out against her and the school. Leaving the house in the morning and going to school was an ordeal for her. Whenever she went out of her house, group of orthodox men would follow her and abuse her in obscene language. They would throw rotten eggs, cow dung, tomatoes and stones at her. She started taking an extra sari with her to wear at school. This ordeal continued for a long time till she had to slap a person who tried to molest her.

Savitribai was very clear and determinant about her job. The first challenge for her was to keep the girls coming to school. She started distributing sweets among girls when they had to go their homes back. After knowing the fact that girls are being tired at their studies, she started sports sessions. Further she started short stories session to make learning more interesting and enjoyfull. The girls took much interest in those short stories because those were based on the conditions of women's lives, their desire to learn and be free. She also started composing and reciting poems before them. Her way of teaching was simple, participatory and activity based. In a way she herself created the methods which we may call now the alternative and learner oriented methods of teaching. She also focused upon the complete development of girls. Education for her was not merely alphabetical learning but a means of igniting the mind and personality of women and Dalits. What was the impact of Savitri's teaching upon girls can be seen in the essay written by Muktabai - an eleven year old Dalit girl. This essay is about the grief of the two Dalit communities-Mangs and Mahars. She writes, "Oh, the mahars and mangs, you are poor and sick. Only the medicine of knowledge will cure and heal you. It will take you away from wild beliefs and superstitions. You will be righteous and moral. It will stop your exploitation. People, who treat you like animal, will not dare to treat like that anymore. So please work hard and study."

Savitribai was very kind hearted and careful about her students. She used to help the girls and their parents in many ways whenever she found them in need. Now a day we see that all the time the parents are running to the schools to know the position of their ward. But Savitribai started visiting their parents at their house to tell them about the learning experience that the girls were having at school. In the situation that any of the girls was not coming to the school, she used to go her home. In case any girl found to be ill, she used to arrange for the doctor and medicines. She became the most famous and respectful women very soon in the area. Gradually people started sending their girls to the school themselves. There were twenty five students in the school in the end of the year out of which were ten brahmin, six Maratha, two chamar, two mahar, one matang, one gadaria, one julaha, one Sali and one mali castes. The number of girls increased from twenty five to seventy during 1849-1850. It was a great number indeed during those days.

After that school, Savitribai, Jyotirao and their friend opened up many more schools in Pune city and nearby villages. More information about these schools is available in volume seven of Pune education gazette. On first May, 1852 Jyotirao started a school for the children of untouchables. There had been no tradition of education among untouchables during those days. In fact, there were no schools for untouchables. The Brahmins never allowed them any right to education. Moreover, over the centuries the Brahmins taught them that education was a sin for them and the act of sending their children to schools could have brought more atrocities from Brahmins to them. So they have developed a tendency to be reluctant and indifferent towards education. Savitribai had to struggle a lot to get their children to the school. This school happened to be the first school of India which was opened up for the untouchables. In his book Mahatma Phule Aani Sansodhan (Phule and Social reforms) Dr. Mangoolkar wrote, "This was the first effort for the upliftment of untouchable in the history of India." In the issue of May 29, 1852, the Pune Observe took notice of this school. It says: "A person, mali by caste, has

started a school for untouchables on his own expenses. This is a great news for social reformers of India. Being situated at Vetal Peth, here the children of castes like Mahar, Mang and Pakhari are taught in this school.”

The jurisdiction of a teacher’s work is not limited to a school only but one has to take whole of the society as the field of his/her work. Savitribai Phule was mainly a teacher but she did not confine herself to a limited role and scope of a teacher. She took her role in a wider and comprehensive sense. In this sense, Savitribai was not only a good teacher but had been a great social activists too. Untouchability was a very common and cruel practice during those days all over India. But it was much deeper in Pune than any other city of India. Untouchables were not allowed to take water from the wells situated in the upper cast muhallas. Untouchable women had to wait long hours and to keep on requesting the upper caste women for water. Seeing this, Savitri invited all the women to her private well and said, “Take water as much as you can. It’s your own well now from today. You may come at any time and take water anytime.”

After realizing the cast discrimination prevailing among women, she started organizing meetings and Til-Gur Festivals. In these meetings and festivals women of any caste could participate. Thus she provided a platform where women of all castes could have an effective sharing of views and discuss about their problems with each other. This was the first kind of effort to unite the women on their issues and problems. Later on Savitribai realized that coming of women together is not enough. She came to the conclusion that the plight and worse condition of women is due to patriarchal values and mindset of the people. Thus women should be organized in a manner that one should feel the power of collectiveness and could fight against the atrocities done to her in the society. It was due to her efforts that a Mahila Mandal was formed in Pune in 1852. It was a very hard task indeed during those days. This Mahila Mandal started working for the empowerment and liberty of the women. As a leader of this Mahila Mandal, Savitribai organized several cultural and social programs

where the patriarchy and Brahmanism were used to be attacked in several ways.

Those were the days when women irrespective of their cast and class were very much oppressed in all fields of life. There were many patriarchal and brahmnical traditions, values and rituals which were atrocious to the women especially Dalit women. To resolve the dowry problem, she started organizing simple group marriages for which she had to bear the opposition from all sides. But she never gave up. When woman at any age happened to be widow, she was forced to have her head shaved so that she could easily be identified as a widow. Savitribai was moved by the plight of widows. In this regard, she met the people of barber community and persuaded them not to shave the heads of widows. After a long pursuance, she along with Jyotirao and friends could organize a strike of barbers. This was the first strike of its kind. The upper cast communities got infuriated with Savitribai due to the step taken by the barbers.

There were a large number of widows in the Pune and the nearby villages during days. Adolescents and young girls were happened to be more among widows. It was very common with these widows that they used to be victimized very easily by the males of the society in terms of sexual exploitation. So they had to be harassed for the reason for which they had not been responsible. Most of the time, they happened to be pregnant due to lack of contraceptives or other measures. Women had to lose their life due to unhealthy ways of abortion. Many a times they had to leave their homes. On January 28, 1853 Savitribai started Balhatya Pratibadhak Griha - a delivery home for such women. In this delivery home, they could give birth to their children and leave them there. Sixty six women gave birth to their children in that shelter up to 1873. This was a great historical work that Savitribai did at that time. Later on this delivery home started working as a full fledge hospital. Savitribai did not remain as one who served to widows but she went further in this regard. She adopted a child from this delivery home and thereby gave a message to the progressive people of the society. This adopted child was Yashwant Rao

who later became a doctor.

Not many people know that Savitribai Phule was a trailblazing and intensely committed poet of modern Marathi. Her poetry and her letters to Jyotirao bring out her sensitive and revolutionary mind. Savitribai's greatest literary contribution is her collection of poems titled *Kabya Phule (Poetry's Blossoms)* which she published in 1854. This pioneering work has value as a historical document of her thought and struggle. This collection covers subjects as varied as education, nature and, most importantly, the caste system, where the poet becomes more creative in form and revolutionary in content. Savitribai followed this up with another anthology in 1893. Titled *Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar (The Ocean of Gems)*, this collection is a biography of Phule that reiterates his critique of the brahmanical constructs of the times. Savitribai's essay on debt, 'Karz', deserves special mention. She condemns the practice of incurring loans to celebrate festivals, due to which the borrower is caught in a debt trap.

How much Savitribai imbibed the radical vision of her husband and what was her own orientation in regard to social change, is clearly visible in the three letters that she wrote to Jyotirao when she was away from him. The letters reveal that Savitri's spousal love was inseparable from the larger commitment to the salvation of the downtrodden through education. She says: "There are many idiots here, as in Pune, who poison people's minds and spread canards against us. But why should we fear them and leave this noble cause we have undertaken? It would be better to engage with the work instead. We shall overcome, and success will be ours in the future. The future belongs to us."

There was a great famine in Maharashtra during 1875-77. People were dying due to hunger and thirst. Savitribai put out all her energies to serve the victims of famine. Satyashodhak volunteers helped famine-affected people in the leadership of Savitribai. She started 52 free food hostels in western Maharashtra.

The sudden demise of Mahatma Phule in 1890 at the age of sixty there was a great shock

to Savitribai. She was left alone. But she did not give up the battle. She worked intensely during another famine in 1896 in Maharashtra. she also put pressure on British government to start relief camps. After famine, it was plague which attacked on Pune in 1897. Plague victims were treated like animals by the British. Savitribai could not bear this. She worked hard to serve the plague victims in all ways. By a strange and cruel irony, she herself got infected by the fatal disease while nursing a sick child and died in 1897.

Savitri's struggle encouraged and inspired a whole generation of outstanding campaigners for gender justice in Maharashtra. Dr. Anandibai Gopal Joshi, Pandita Ramabai, Tarabai Shinde and many others have been inspired by her efforts. She played a revolutionary role during the era of darkness in Maharashtra and gave a message for the whole Nation that how intelligent and brave could be a women of Dalit community. She was not only the first women teacher but the first women social activist of India too. Her poems and other writings are still hold a message of inspiration to us. On March 1998, a stamp was released by Indian post to honor her far-reaching contribution to Indian society. In order to honor her, the 10th March is celebrated as Indian women's day every year by the National Federation of Dalit Women in some parts of the country.

(The concise version of the booklet presented as paper at the Orientation Programme held by CPDHE, University of Delhi, on March 3, 2003. I acknowledge my thanks to liberators from National Federation of Dalit Women, Delhi and I am also thankful to Dr. Parmod Mehra for helping me in refining the language of the content.)

Source books

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Courtesy : <http://mukeshmanas.blogspot.in>

Sufism through My Eyes

Mushtaq Ahmed Bhatti

Rawalpindi, PAKISTAN

INTRODUCTION :

History is witness to how human beings have misused religions for their personal gains and spread intolerance, hatred and division among people. Each person believes that his/her faith, sect and religion is true and believers of other faiths are not true that is why there are divisions, misunderstandings and hatred among human beings.

On the other hand progressive and open hearted have been trying to disregard religious fundamentalism and hatred and preach brotherhood, love and unanimity and tried to create a peaceful community in our society where there is no religious fanaticism and animosity. Where people do not force others to change their religion and religious fundamentalism and extremism have no existence. Where people accept other religions and faiths and preach communal harmony. These people whether they are religious or not they are called Sufis and their teaching is called Sufism.

WHAT IS SUFISM?

As in human body each part of body is alive and active and works in harmony, in the same way in Sufism each member of society is important and holds Godly powers in his human personality. In Sufism the intellectual capability is not essential but

rather a peaceful and loving heart is required to reach out to its fullness. Leaving everything behind for God and loving humanity more than any worldly possessions is called Sufism.

A Sufi is one who is looking for inner peace and surrounding and to isolate himself to live as hermit and keeps himself away from these sophisticated belongings. He

speaks about inner harmony, forbearance and acceptance to others and lives life of self-discipline.

SUFISM IN SUB-CONTINENT :

In the South Asian Sub-continent, Sindh is called the land of Sufis and saints. In this sub-continent there have been many Sufis who have preached

humanism. Shah Jalal, Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti, Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki, Nizamuddin Aulia, Baba Fareed Ghanj Shakar, Bari Amam Datta Ghanj Baksh Hajweri, Shammas Tebrez, Hazart Naqish Band, Jahania Jahan Ghashat Khawaja Zaman Lawari Sharif, Asoota Baba and many more are well known Sufis.

There are people of all faiths, religious backgrounds and ethnicities who believe Sufism in Sindh and even few Hindu saints have declared themselves as Sufis. Sindh is called a land of Sufis and preaches equality for all human beings whether they are Christians or Hindus or Muslims or belong to any other religion. Kabeer Das preaches peace and equality in his poetry by saying



“Kabeera is standing in the middle of the road and asks for blessings for all, he has neither friends nor enemies”

SUFISM IN SINDH :

The land of Sindh is full of Sufis, mystics, nanaks and hermits such as Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, Sachal Sarmast, Abdullah Shah Isahabi, Abdullah Shah Ghazi, Shah Inayat Shaheed, Bhari Shah Kareek, Makhdoom Nooh Halai, Sadar-ul-Din Shah, Jhol-e-Lal of Udero Lal and Kalander Shahbaz. These people with their character, good work and teachings have made this land a garden where colorful flowers grow together to spread their beautiful smell of joy and love for this world. They have made this land a land of peace and joy.

The Sufis preached inner peace and harmony and to gain this spiritual peace and strength and love of God, they isolated themselves from the world. They loved God and preached people to love God, love human beings.

Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai is not only Sufi but great poet in Sindh who preached love, brotherhood, and peaceful living in his poetry. If a Sufi is also a poet he can preach in better way through his experience and write in poetry about his inner feelings. He can be well accepted through his poetry because he writes through experience and preaches what is true (fasting and prayers are good practices but there are some other good deeds that God likes you).

Odero Lal's Sufi Jhul-e-Lal is respected by both Hindus and Muslims and they pay tribute to him by visiting his shrine. Similarly in Jhook Sharif hundreds of thousands of people visit shrine of Shah Inayat Shaeed and get spiritual nourishment.

In Hyderabad district of Sindh there is a famous Sufi place called Basanat Laj (Hall) and when it was inaugurated the famous theosophical activist Anne Besant came from Chennai, India. This building was constructed with kind support and generosity of Hindus, Christians and Persians that is why this lodge

was given a name as Anne Besant.

A famous characteristic of teachings of Sufis in Sindh has been tolerance, equality and love for human beings, that is why Sufism spread rapidly in Sindh. Religious fundamentalism and hatred in Sindh is very less in comparison to other parts of Subcontinent. Hindus, Sikh, Christians, Muslims and Persians lived together in peace, love and harmony and shared joys and sadness of each other with open heart and lived peacefully.

A famous historian Ali Sher Thattvi writes in his book, “TofaTulkraam” that Arab's Syed from the tribe of Syed Abas, migrated to Sindh in 4th Century Hijri and among them were many Sufi Saints who preached faith and ethics to local people and made them open minded and optimistic towards others. A famous poet Sachal Sarmast also preached Sufism in his poetry and presented a concept of human dignity and welfare of society. He teaches Oneness of God and says “I am insane, and know just God and do not know anybody other than Him. I am God's lover.

Baba Bulleh Shah a famous Punjabi Sufi saint also preached God's love and writes that “I know only God and I have no knowledge of anything else. Alaf stands for Allah and when I try to read anything other than God, I do not understand. The sayings of Alaf clean my heart. They are always in search of their lover. A famous Sufi poet Shah Abdul Latif writes, “there are thousands of doors and windows in the palace, and in every window I look I find only my lover”.

CONCLUSION :

In this present era wherever we go we experience lot of disturbance, terrorism, discrimination and uncertainties but if we follow the foot prints and teachings of Sufis we can make this world a paradise and all human beings will live in union, intimacy and harmony. There will be no more war or hatred and human beings will live peacefully.

A Page from My Diary

My Personal Composite Heritage

Mahnaz Rahman

Aurat Foundation, PAKISTAN

After completing BA final, I came back to Shikarpur to stay with my parents. I wanted to go to Karachi to get admission in the University. My father was a little reluctant: 'BA is enough for girls,' he had said but my mother was on my side. She could not complete her education because of partition of India and was adamant that her daughter should get higher education so my father had to concede. My mother with my youngest brother Faraz who was hardly four years at that time, came with me to Karachi by train. In Karachi, we stayed at my friend Nasreen's place. She was my friend from Hyderabad days. She was my roommate in hostel and we had developed a strong bonding with each other.

Nasreen's father was DSP (Deputy Superintendent of Police). One of his inspectors took us to university in his Volkswagen car. Dr. Ehsan Rasheed was the head of economics department at that time. He was the son of famous writer Rasheed Ahmed Siddiqui who had stayed back in India and years later, Ehsan's sister Salma Siddiqui married Krishan Chander, one of the most famous Urdu writers of India. At that time, I did not know that years later, as a journalist, I would interview Salma Siddiqui but unfortunately by that time Krishan Chander had died.

After having a meeting with Dr. Ehsan Rasheed, my mother took me to girls' hostel to meet the warden, Mrs. Qureshi. She asked her to introduce me to a girl whose hometown is near mine so that we could travel together during vacations. Mrs. Qureshi called a girl; she was wearing a housecoat and had put rollers on her head to curl her

hair. Her hometown was Sukkur, half an hour drive from Shikarpur. Her name was Mumtaz studying Biochemistry and this was the beginning of a lasting friendship. Other members of her group also accepted me with open arms. Leader of the group was Nuzhat Sultan. Her father Sultan Muhammad was ambassador of Pakistan in China and that was something which no one could ignore. At that time I did not know that one day on behalf of Pakistan's government, he would be playing a key role in normalizing the diplomatic relations of USA and China. Nuzhat was doing her Masters in English. The second senior member was Talat Shahnaz who was studying Physics. Bilquis whom we called Billi was studying physiology, Naseem was in department of political science and some months later Roohi Pirzada also joined us, who later contested the election of joint secretary of Students'union.

The building of girls hostel was newly built, every girl had a small single room while in Hyderabad Zubeda college's hostel, four girls used to share one big room. The quality of food was far better. Mumtaz was a member of mess committee and used to prepare weekly menu. But I was a restless soul, wanted to bring change in society. I had not read Marx's Das Kapital but I had read Sahir Ludhianvi's poetry and that had lit the flame of revolution in my heart. Shaukat Siddiqui's 'Khuda ki Basti', had also motivated me to fight against the injustices of the society and system. I wanted to do some thing but did not know what and how but soon I found myself having hot arguments with the people who supported capitalism and/or political religion.

I don't know how I became progressive and leftist but since my childhood I used to feel strongly about the problems and

deprivations of poor people. During my college days I came to know about students' movement through my friend Qamar, sister of famous student leader Mukhtar Ali Rizvi who was one of the 12 prominent student leaders, including Mairaj Mohammad Khan, who had waged a valiant struggle against General Ayub Khan. For his active role during his association with the National Students Federation, he was arrested in 1958 when General Ayub Khan imposed martial law on the country. He was arrested again along with many students who held protests in Karachi against riots in Jabalpur, India and observed "Jabalpur Day". Later, he was shifted to the Lahore Fort and sentenced to one year long imprisonment. Following the ensuing protests by students against the crackdown and conviction, the government released him and many other students. Mr. Rizvi, along with Fatehyab Ali Khan, Iqbal Jafferri and Mairaj Mohammad Khan, was rusticated from the university of Karachi for leading a movement against the government's decision to convert the two-year degree course to three years. The movement forced the government of General Ayub Khan to withdraw the decision. In 1966, he joined the National Awami Party's Bhashani group. He was arrested again and jailed for taking part in a movement against General Ayub Khan in 1968.

The period of 1967-70 had brought so many pleasant moments for us. A country where it was a sin to talk about socialism, there emerged a party with the manifesto of Socialism. Zulfiqar Ali Butto, whom people liked very much because of his speech in UNO after 1965 war, founded the Pakistan People's Party in Lahore on November 30, 1967, establishing a strong base of political support in Punjab, Sindh and amongst the Muhajir communities. Bhutto's party became part of the pro-democracy movement involving diverse political parties from all across Pakistan. PPP activists staged large protests and strikes in different parts of the country, increasing pressure on Ayub to resign. Bhutto's arrest on November 12, 1968

sparked greater political unrest. These were the days when I was looking for a platform to realize my dreams of a just and equal society. The news of Bhutto's arrest came as a blow to me, I did not know what to do and whom to contact. An inner voice kept on telling me that I had to do something. It was weekend and most of the girls in hostel had gone to meet their relatives; only Billie had stayed back with me, we prepared posters to protest against the arrest of Bhutto.

'Do not let the torch of democracy be extinguished, Release Bhutto'. In the evening we went out and by hoodwinking the watchmen pasted those posters on the walls in different departments but next day when we went to attend the classes, all posters had been removed by the administration.

This was my first act of political activism in Karachi university. While Billie had nothing to do with politics, she had taken part for my sake. Now when I look back, and think what made me a student leader, I think the stage was prepared by following events:

- Examiners were very stringent in those days and there were only two students in Economics department who had got first division in B.A. One was a boy from some Karachi college and second was me from Zubaida college Hyderabad and other students used to come to look for those two students who got first division.
- Islami Jamiat Talba (IJT) had distributed a questionnaire among newcomers to know their ideas about religion and promised to keep the responses confidential. I filled that questionnaire and of course they must have found my responses outrageous. Like Allama Iqbal, I was also against the 'Mulla' and his obscurantist ideas. Allama Iqbal always emphasized on 'Ijtihad' in interpreting Islam according to the demands of modern times. IJT was dominating the political scene in Karachi university and were after the progressive students. After reading my responses, they must

have blacklisted me but because of the promise of confidentiality, they could not come up in open against me. Besides, till then I had not become active in students' politics but when I did, the IJT really created problems for me and tried to use that questionnaire against me.

- As mentioned in previous pages, I organized a strike against the teacher who said that girls take admission in university for husband hunting.
- I was a writer and after getting admission in Karachi university, one of my stories appeared in the short story number of quarterly Seep which was a prestigious literary magazine (and still is) that used to publish the writings of senior and well known writers only. It was really a great honor for a young student that her story was selected. My class fellows were really impressed, some of them found it hard to believe that I had written that story. Interestingly this story revolved around the character of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, and how he disappointed the youth after taking power.
- The incident that put the stamp of confirmation on my leadership status, happened when management of university announced to hold convocation after a gap of a few years. NSF (National Students Federation) decided to protest during convocation as students did not get jobs after getting degrees. At the morning of convocation when my hostel mate and friend Nasreen Talpur (whose father Rasool Bakhsh Talpur later rose to fame as Pakistan Peoples Party senior leader and became governor of Sindh) reached the site of convocation. We could not see any one but after few minutes we saw our friend Karamat appearing from a corner and raising slogans. Before we could reach him, four or five boys of JI appeared and started beating him.

Karamat fell on the ground and the next thing I saw was that one of the Jamiat boys was holding a big stone and was about to crush Karamat's head. I screamed and then those boys realized our presence and spared Karamat but I had gone mad with rage. Nasreen and I went to Arts faculty and I started telling students about Jamiat's violent act, students started gathering around me and I kept on speaking about Jamiat's malpractices. Next day students were telling each other that Mahnaz delivered a very good speech and I was thinking, "was it a speech or hysterical outburst after seeing a friend about to be killed". Years later Karamat formed 'Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research'(PILER) and has played a key role in promoting people to people contacts between India and Pakistan.

- And finally my election victory which made me the first ever female vice president of Economics society of Karachi university during 1969-70. This victory had great significance as Islami Jamiat Talba thought that if a leftist/NSFian candidate wins in university then message will go out that PPP will also win in 70s national election as it had come up with progressive slogans. So they tried very hard to defeat me in the election but I won, thanks to my team. Also, it was after a 7 years long wait since Husain Naqi's election victory that a candidate of NSF finally won the election, at a time when the Jamiat had strong hold in university of Karachi and Ejaz Shafi Gilani of Jamiat had won the election of president of students' union. Husain Naqi afterwards rose to fame as a progressive journalist and intellectual. Nowadays he is working with Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

To be continued...

Nature and Inter-Faith

Sarita Chouhan

INDIA

Nature has been my continuous pre-occupation as an artist and looking at the ecology and our engagement with it at the physical and the spiritual level, how we are relating to our environment is a constant process. My studies on inter-faith support me in seeing how through millions of years existed a variety of life-forms that are part of us and we are part of them in the divine scheme of bio-diversity. All the religions and scriptures of the world have emphasized that it is responsibility of mankind to take care of ecology.

In my previous article on inter-faith that was published in issues of SACH earlier, I looked at how all the religions spoke of brotherhood, non-violence, love, peace and humanity. The article pointed out that all religions speak of oneness of God and God abides inside us and the fight should be with our own negative tendencies that hinder our growth and evolution in bringing peace within us and we can only spread peace around if we are peaceful. True religion is a path of truth, spirituality and joy.

There are few who are on this path of seeking liberation, seeking joy whereas in the past and as we are witnessing increasingly in present scenario there are many who interpret religion according to their selfish gains, in narrow perspectives and from becoming believers of

human values turned fanatics, bent on proving supremacy of their religion over other religions, and these followers of blind rituals, wear the tags of their religions with hatred and conceit ignoring the very intrinsic principles of tolerance and love.

Religions speak of the inherent order and balance that exists in nature and on bringing that order and balance in our lives so that we live in harmony with the Universe. Our ecology and this eco system is our life and one human-being's life is just a tiny little speck in this vast Universe. We all need to ask ourselves: this air that we are breathing, are we taking it for granted? The water that we are drinking are we realizing its worth? This soil, this earth, do we

feel any connection to it? Do we often look at the sun, the moon and the sky and thank them for being there? Do we have any reverence for the seed, fruit, vegetable, plants, trees that make our food? Do we just marvel at the beauty of nature? Does our heart feel for rivers, mountains, forests, birds and animals? We are all interconnected and we have forgotten this becoming closer to machines, our life styles are becoming day by day distant

from nature, creating imbalance in our lives and life outside.

We need better lives, development and growth at the stake of what? For man his Self, his ego, his greed and his desires have become so huge, he wants to win over nature and manipulate what is natural, changing the natural



course of things with science and inventions. The logic that is often given is that the development and growth is vital to meet needs of huge population and for advancement of our society.

To go further away from nature is that development? Our true nature will be always in conflict, creating anxieties and diseases, disorder and disparity the more we move away. Unfortunately, our short-sightedness is not making us realize this. People in villages, indigenous people have always known the importance and stayed closer to nature along with trees, plants, animals, birds around them. Even developed economies that have experienced extremes of consumerism are moving more and more to eco and environment friendly means.

This whole cycle of demand, supply, and increasing consumerism is a vicious cycle leading to increasing inequality between rich and poor and taking human-beings away from leading balanced and happy lives, as if the whole purpose of life today is to have more and achieve more. On the other hand for a poor person to have basic needs is a huge challenge.

If growth and development means more malls, more hotels, modern buildings and structures with many air-conditioners running at the same time, wash rooms having twenty-four hours water supply with sensor taps where for seconds the water keeps flowing implying we are fine with wastage, for those who can spend money they are paying price to have all the luxury whereas just outside a poor woman still has to walk miles to fill up a pot of water. So is growth and development just for those who can pay its price?

We forget we are all paying a heavy price. This is just one example, to meet the requirement of many air-conditioners we need to set up nuclear power plants, increase coal mining and it comes with its own environmental hazards and any lapse could be loss for lives and generations... There will always be more demand with growth and with it rise in supply, a vicious cycle; exploiting natural resources, disturbing eco-system and polluting the air. We don't see immediate effect when we talk of air pollution or climate change whereas luxurious life-style is tempting, making life easier and alluring blinding

us to the slow poisoning. We are not only poisoning our lives, life around, the entire ecosystem and the big question is what we are leaving for the future generations...

Even the food that we eat, today is poisoned with pesticides, instead of growing it naturally, it is tampered to such a large extent that it is losing its nutrient values and becoming harmful for our bodies. If only we become more sensitive to our environment, be more conscientious in our lives and begin by making small changes from doing no wastage, recycling, water-harvesting, use of solar power, and eating and promoting organic farming... With smaller changes occur big changes. Most important is to begin loving ourselves, to live more holistic and healthy lives should be our motto and then we will on our own start appreciating other lives around.

Nature that we have worshipped for generations, we have held sacred, we are ignoring and are behaving ruthless and powerful, trying to control, exploit and change it. Even the land that the farmer tills with his sweat and labor is going from his hands. We are losing the green belts, polluting rivers and sea. We all need to think in a larger perspective what we are losing. The current deplorable environmental crisis demands a spiritual response. A fundamental reorientation of human consciousness, accompanied by action that is born out of inner commitment, is very much needed.

All the religions of the world have messages for preservation of environment and ecological balance. Nature, or Earth, has never been considered a hostile element to be conquered or dominated. In fact, man is forbidden from exploiting nature. He is taught to live in harmony with nature and recognize that divinity prevails in all elements, including plants and animals. Ecology has been an inherent part of a spiritual world view.

All the religions believe that it is God, the supreme creator of all and it is on us human-beings he has bestowed the responsibility to take care of this planet Earth and all its beings.

In a hymn from Isha Upanishad :

Everything in the universe belongs to the Supreme God. Therefore take only what you need, that is set aside for you. Do not take anything else, for you know to whom it belongs”.

Bhagavatam (Volume 2, Chapter 1, Verses 32-33) says

“The air is His breath, the trees are the hairs of His body, The oceans His waist, the hills and mountains are His bones, The rivers are the veins of the Cosmic Being (Brahman), His movements are the passing of ages”.

In Quran it is said

“It is Allah who made for you the earth a place of settlement and the sky a ceiling and formed you and perfected your forms and provided you with good things. That is Allah, your Lord; then blessed is Allah, Lord of the worlds.” (Qur’an, 40:64)

“And it is He who sends down rain from the sky, and we produce thereby the growth of all things. We produce from it greenery from which we produce grains arranged in layers. And from the palm trees - of its emerging fruit are clusters hanging low. And [We produce] gardens of grapevines and olives and pomegranates, similar yet varied. Look at [each of] its fruit when it yields and [at] its ripening. Indeed in that are signs for a people who believe.” (Quran 6:99)

And it is He (God) who has made you successors (khala’ifa) upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that He may try you through what He has given you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful.” (Qur’an 6:165).

Interestingly, this idea resonates in the Bible also in order to understand the functionality of earth and be in awe of its beauty.

John 1:3

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made

Job 12:7-10

7 “But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; 8 or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. 9 Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done

this? 10 In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.

The holy text of Sikhs Sri Guru Granth Sahib says that God created the whole of universe including the earth.

“You Yourself created the earth, and the two lamps of the sun and the moon” (SGGS p83);

“He creates planets, solar systems and galaxies;” (SGGS p1162).

And, “Many millions are the moons, suns and stars” (SGGS p275).

You created the vast expanse of the Universe with One Word! Hundreds of thousands of rivers began to flow.” (SGGS p3)

He who created the worlds, solar systems and galaxies - that God cannot be known. (6). From the lamp of God, the lamp within is lit; the Divine Light illuminates the three worlds.” (SGGS p907)

In Buddhism, every sentient being—even insects—have **Buddha nature**. The seed of **Buddha** means consciousness, the cognitive power—the seed of enlightenment. All life is interrelated and interdependent. Our Natural Environment is alive and conscious. Its deeper reality is not separate from our fully enlightened nature (Buddha-nature) Enlightened beings do not harm sentient life. If they did, they would not be enlightened beings. They have compassion for all.

“He who lays down the rod, who neither kills, nor causes the death of creatures, moving or fixed, he is the Brahmin” (405, The Dhammapada)

To take care of earth and cause it no harm also echo in the following lines from Atharva Veda Book X11

Earth, upon which this moving, breathing life exists;

May she bestow on us the finest of her harvests!

Earth, the all-sustaining, treasure-bearing, resting-place;

Golden-breasted Earth, home of all life,

Who bears the sacred fire.

Pleasant be thy hills, O Earth,

Thy snow-clad mountains and thy forests.

On this Earth do I stand,

*Unvanquished, unslain, unhurt.
Set me, O Earth, amidst the nourishing
strength
That emanates from thy body.
The Earth is my mother, her child am I;
Infinite space is my father,
May he fill us with plenty.
Peaceful, sweet-smelling, gracious Earth.
Whatever I dig from thee, O Earth,
May that have quick growth again,
May we not injure your vitals or your heart.
Full of sweetness are the plants,
And full of sweetness these my words.
And with things that are full of sweetness,
I prosper in a thousand ways.
Atharva Veda Book XII*

In Judaism there is great emphasis on divine plan. The fact that God is Creator endows all of creation with an intrinsic significance and importance. The Talmud observes : *"Of all that the Holy One Blessed be He created in His world, He created nothing in vain (superfluous)."* Nothing in creation is useless or expendable; everything manifests some divine purpose. It follows; therefore, there is a divine interest in maintaining the natural order of the universe.

Jewish tradition also addresses itself to the problem of the endangered species. An *aggadah* in the Talmud recreates the scene from the ark and has the raven rebuke Noah, saying: *"You must hate me, for you did not choose [to send a scout] from the species of which there are seven (that is, the clean birds of which Noah was commanded to take seven pairs), but from a species of which there are only two. If the power of the sun or the power of the cold overwhelms me, would not the world be lacking a species?"*²¹ This concern over the destruction of a species is also invoked in the taking of a bird with her young (Deuteronomy 22:6). *"Scripture will not permit a destructive act that will cause the extinction of a species, even though it has permitted the ritual slaughtering of that species (for food). And he who kills mother and sons in one day, or takes them while they are free to fly away, is considered as if he destroyed that species."*²²

The basic tenet of Jainism is "Ahimsā Parmo Dharmah" (Non-violence is the supreme religion). From an ethical point of view Dharma means duty - Compassion is the supreme duty of an

individual. From a religious point of view, Dharma means the true nature of a substance - Compassion is the true nature of a human being.

Ahimsā is a principle that Jains teach and strive to practice not only towards human beings but also towards all nature. The scriptures tell us : *"Do not injure, abuse, oppress, enslave, insult, torment, torture, or kill any living being including plant and vegetables."* The teaching of Ahimsā refers not only to the avoidance of wars and physical acts of violence but also to the avoidance of violence in the hearts and minds of human beings. Ahimsā also refers to an active concern and compassion for fellow humans and other living beings. Ancient Jain texts explain that the intention to harm and the absence of compassion is what makes actions violent.

From Jain Text, The Ayaranya Sutra

1,1,6,6 : *"He who injures these (animals) does not comprehend and renounce the sinful acts; he who does not injure these, comprehends and renounce the sinful acts. Knowing them, a wise man should not act sinfully towards animals, nor cause others to act so, nor allow others to act so. He who knows these causes of sin relating to animals, is called a rewarding sage."*

Having compassion and causing no harm to other life-forms has been part of all the religious tenets. If people have faith in their religions, how can they ignore its essential teachings and follow only what suits them. If that is so, they are not true believers and construe religion according to their distorted perceptions and self-centeredness.

Land, rivers, trees, plants, seeds and other-life forms are created by God and claiming rights on them and exploiting them, disrupting the order in nature and manipulating with life-forms is against nature's law, it is inhuman and unethical. It is certainly not power and growth. We must realize this reality and the sooner we do the better.

"We can change the world and make it a better place. It is in your hands to make a difference"

– Nelson Mandela

Sultana's Dream

Roquiah Khatun, later known as Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein was born in 1880 in the village Pairaband of Rangpur district in Bangladesh. She grew up in the later days of colonial environment of India in a Muslim family before the partition of the sub-continent. Her conservative family did not allow her to go to school and not even to learn Bengali and English. But Roquiah and her sister Karimunessa, who also later appeared as a famous writer, learnt Bengali and English with the help of their brothers. It was not possible to do that during the day, so both sisters learnt at night.

In 1896 Roquiah married Khan Bahadur Sakhawat Hossein a Deputy Magistrate of Bhagalpur. According to Roquiah, the path to women's emancipation is to break the chain of gender division of labour and creation of social, economic, political and cultural condition so that they can undertake any profession in the society.

As a social reformer she established a school for Muslim girls, called Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School in 1909 with only 5 girl students.

Roquiah Sakhawat Hossein

One evening I was lounging in an easy chair in my bedroom and thinking lazily of the condition of Indian womanhood. I am not sure whether I dozed off or not. But, as far as I remember, I was wide awake. I saw the moonlit sky sparkling with thousands of diamond-like stars, very distinctly.

All of a sudden a lady stood before me; how she came in, I do not know. I took her for my friend, Sister Sara.

'Good morning,' said Sister Sara. I smiled inwardly as I knew it was not morning, but starry night. However, I replied to her, saying, 'How do you do?'

'I am all right, thank you. Will you please come out and have a look at our garden?'

I looked again at the moon through the open window, and thought there was no harm in going out at that time. The men-servants outside were fast asleep just then, and I could have a pleasant walk with Sister Sara.

I used to have my walks with Sister Sara, when we were at Darjeeling. Many a time did we walk hand in hand and talk light-heartedly in the botanical gardens there. I fancied, Sister Sara had probably come to take me to some such garden and I readily accepted her offer and went out with her.

When walking I found to my surprise that it was a fine morning. The town was fully awake and the streets alive with bustling crowds. I was

feeling very shy, thinking I was walking in the street in broad daylight, but there was not a single man visible.

Some of the passers-by made jokes at me. Though I could not understand their language, yet I felt sure they were joking. I asked my friend, 'What do they say?'

'The women say that you look very mannish.'

'Mannish?' said I, 'What do they mean by that?'

'They mean that you are shy and timid like men.'

'Shy and timid like men?' It was really a joke. I became very nervous, when I found that my companion was not Sister Sara, but a stranger. Oh, what a fool had I been to mistake this lady for my dear old friend, Sister Sara.

She felt my fingers tremble in her hand, as we were walking hand in hand.

'What is the matter, dear?' she said affectionately. 'I feel somewhat awkward,' I said in a rather apologizing tone, 'as being a purdahnishin woman I am not accustomed to walking about unveiled.'

'You need not be afraid of coming across a man here. This is Ladyland, free from sin and harm. Virtue herself reigns here.'

By and by I was enjoying the scenery. Really it was very grand. I mistook a patch of green grass for a velvet cushion. Feeling as if I were walking on a soft carpet, I looked down and found the path covered with moss and

flowers.

'How nice it is,' said I.

'Do you like it?' asked Sister Sara. (I continued calling her 'Sister Sara,' and she kept calling me by my name).

'Yes, very much; but I do not like to tread on the tender and sweet flowers.'

'Never mind, dear Sultana; your treading will not harm them; they are street flowers.'

'The whole place looks like a garden,' said I admiringly. 'You have arranged every plant so skillfully.'

'Your Calcutta could become a nicer garden than this if only your countrymen wanted to make it so.'

'They would think it useless to give so much attention to horticulture, while they have so many other things to do.'

'They could not find a better excuse,' said she with smile.

I became very curious to know where the men were. I met more than a hundred women while walking there, but not a single man.

'Where are the men?' I asked her.

'In their proper places, where they ought to be.'

'Pray let me know what you mean by "their proper places".'

'O, I see my mistake, you cannot know our customs, as you were never here before. We shut our men indoors.'

'Just as we are kept in the zenana?'

'Exactly so.'

'How funny,' I burst into a laugh. Sister Sara laughed too.

'But dear Sultana, how unfair it is to shut in the harmless women and let loose the men.'

'Why? It is not safe for us to come out of the zenana, as we are naturally weak.'

'Yes, it is not safe so long as there are men about the streets, nor is it so when a wild animal enters a marketplace.'

'Of course not.'

'Suppose, some lunatics escape from the asylum and begin to do all sorts of mischief to men, horses and other creatures; in that case what will your countrymen do?'

'They will try to capture them and put them back into their asylum.'

'Thank you! And you do not think it wise

to keep sane people inside an asylum and let loose the insane?'

'Of course not!' said I laughing lightly.

'As a matter of fact, in your country this very thing is done! Men, who do or at least are capable of doing no end of mischief, are let loose and the innocent women, shut up in the zenana! How can you trust those untrained men out of doors?'

'We have no hand or voice in the management of our social affairs. In India man is lord and master, he has taken to himself all powers and privileges and shut up the women in the zenana.'

'Why do you allow yourselves to be shut up?'

'Because it cannot be helped as they are stronger than women.'

'A lion is stronger than a man, but it does not enable him to dominate the human race. You have neglected the duty you owe to yourselves and you have lost your natural rights by shutting your eyes to your own interests.'

'But my dear Sister Sara, if we do everything by ourselves, what will the men do then?'

'They should not do anything, excuse me; they are fit for nothing. Only catch them and put them into the zenana.'

'But would it be very easy to catch and put them inside the four walls?' said I. 'And even if this were done, would all their business – political and commercial – also go with them into the zenana?'

Sister Sara made no reply. She only smiled sweetly. Perhaps she thought it useless to argue with one who was no better than a frog in a well.

By this time we reached Sister Sara's house. It was situated in a beautiful heart-shaped garden. It was a bungalow with a corrugated iron roof. It was cooler and nicer than any of our rich buildings. I cannot describe how neat and how nicely furnished and how tastefully decorated it was.

We sat side by side. She brought out of the parlour a piece of embroidery work and began putting on a fresh design.

'Do you know knitting and needle work?'

'Yes; we have nothing else to do in our

zenana.'

'But we do not trust our zenana members with embroidery!' she said laughing, 'as a man has not patience enough to pass thread through a needlehole even!'

'Have you done all this work yourself?' I asked her pointing to the various pieces of embroidered teapoy cloths.

'Yes.'

'How can you find time to do all these? You have to do the office work as well? Have you not?'

'Yes. I do not stick to the laboratory all day long. I finish my work in two hours.'

'In two hours! How do you manage? In our land the officers, – magistrates, for instance – work seven hours daily.'

'I have seen some of them doing their work. Do you think they work all the seven hours?'

'Certainly they do!'

'No, dear Sultana, they do not. They dawdle away their time in smoking. Some smoke two or three choroots during the office time. They talk much about their work, but do little. Suppose one choroot takes half an hour to burn off, and a man smokes twelve choroots daily; then you see, he wastes six hours every day in sheer smoking.'

We talked on various subjects, and I learned that they were not subject to any kind of epidemic disease, nor did they suffer from mosquito bites as we do. I was very much astonished to hear that in Ladyland no one died in youth except by rare accident.

'Will you care to see our kitchen?' she asked me.

'With pleasure,' said I, and we went to see it. Of course the men had been asked to clear off when I was going there. The kitchen was situated in a beautiful vegetable garden. Every creeper, every tomato plant was itself an ornament. I found no smoke, nor any chimney either in the kitchen — it was clean and bright; the windows were decorated with flower gardens. There was no sign of coal or fire.

'How do you cook?' I asked.

'With solar heat,' she said, at the same time showing me the pipe, through which passed the concentrated sunlight and heat. And she cooked

something then and there to show me the process.

'How did you manage to gather and store up the sun-heat?' I asked her in amazement.

'Let me tell you a little of our past history then. Thirty years ago, when our present Queen was thirteen years old, she inherited the throne. She was Queen in name only, the Prime Minister really ruling the country.

'Our good Queen liked science very much. She circulated an order that all the women in her country should be educated. Accordingly a number of girls' schools were founded and supported by the government. Education was spread far and wide among women. And early marriage also was stopped. No woman was to be allowed to marry before she was twenty-one. I must tell you that, before this change we had been kept in strict purdah.'

'How the tables are turned,' I interposed with a laugh.

'But the seclusion is the same,' she said. 'In a few years we had separate universities, where no men were admitted.'

'In the capital, where our Queen lives, there are two universities. One of these invented a wonderful balloon, to which they attached a number of pipes. By means of this captive balloon which they managed to keep afloat above the cloud-land, they could draw as much water from the atmosphere as they pleased. As the water was incessantly being drawn by the university people no cloud gathered and the ingenious Lady Principal stopped rain and storms thereby.'

'Really! Now I understand why there is no mud here!' said I. But I could not understand how it was possible to accumulate water in the pipes. She explained to me how it was done, but I was unable to understand her, as my scientific knowledge was very limited. However, she went on, 'When the other university came to know of this, they became exceedingly jealous and tried to do something more extraordinary still. They invented an instrument by which they could collect as much sun-heat as they wanted. And they kept the heat stored up to be distributed among others as required.'

'While the women were engaged in scientific research, the men of this country were busy increasing their military power. When they

came to know that the female universities were able to draw water from the atmosphere and collect heat from the sun, they only laughed at the members of the universities and called the whole thing “a sentimental nightmare”!

‘Your achievements are very wonderful indeed! But tell me, how you managed to put the men of your country into the zenana. Did you entrap them first?’

‘No.’

‘It is not likely that they would surrender their free and open air life of their own accord and confine themselves within the four walls of the zenana! They must have been overpowered.’

‘Yes, they have been!’

‘By whom? By some lady-warriors, I suppose?’

‘No, not by arms.’

‘Yes, it cannot be so. Men’s arms are stronger than women’s. Then?’

‘By brain.’

‘Even their brains are bigger and heavier than women’s. Are they not?’

‘Yes, but what of that? An elephant also has got a bigger and heavier brain than a man has. Yet man can chain elephants and employ them, according to their own wishes.’

‘Well said, but tell me please, how it all actually happened. I am dying to know it!’

‘Women’s brains are somewhat quicker than men’s. Ten years ago, when the military officers called our scientific discoveries “a sentimental nightmare,” some of the young ladies wanted to say something in reply to those remarks. But both the Lady Principals restrained them and said, they should reply not by word, but by deed, if ever they got the opportunity. And they had not long to wait for that opportunity.’

‘How marvelous!’ I heartily clapped my hands. ‘And now the proud gentlemen are dreaming sentimental dreams themselves.’

‘Soon afterwards certain persons came from a neighbouring country and took shelter in ours. They were in trouble having committed some political offense. The king who cared more for power than for good government asked our kind-hearted Queen to hand them over to his officers. She refused, as it was against her principle to turn out refugees. For this refusal

the king declared war against our country.

‘Our military officers sprang to their feet at once and marched out to meet the enemy. The enemy however, was too strong for them. Our soldiers fought bravely, no doubt. But in spite of all their bravery the foreign army advanced step by step to invade our country.

‘Nearly all the men had gone out to fight; even a boy of sixteen was not left home. Most of our warriors were killed, the rest driven back and the enemy came within twenty-five miles of the capital.

‘A meeting of a number of wise ladies was held at the Queen’s palace to advise as to what should be done to save the land. Some proposed to fight like soldiers; others objected and said that women were not trained to fight with swords and guns, nor were they accustomed to fighting with any weapons. A third party regretfully remarked that they were hopelessly weak of body.

“If you cannot save your country for lack of physical strength,” said the Queen, “try to do so by brain power.”

‘There was a dead silence for a few minutes. Her Royal Highness said again, “I must commit suicide if the land and my honour are lost.”

‘Then the Lady Principal of the second university (who had collected sun-heat), who had been silently thinking during the consultation, remarked that they were all but lost, and there was little hope left for them. There was, however, one plan which she would like to try, and this would be her first and last efforts; if she failed in this, there would be nothing left but to commit suicide. All present solemnly vowed that they would never allow themselves to be enslaved, no matter what happened.

‘The Queen thanked them heartily, and asked the Lady Principal to try her plan. The Lady Principal rose again and said, “before we go out the men must enter the zenanas. I make this prayer for the sake of purdah.” “Yes, of course,” replied Her Royal Highness.

‘On the following day the Queen called upon all men to retire into zenanas for the sake of honour and liberty. Wounded and tired as they were, they took that order rather for a boon! They bowed low and entered the zenanas

without uttering a single word of protest. They were sure that there was no hope for this country at all.

'Then the Lady Principal with her two thousand students marched to the battle field, and arriving there directed all the rays of the concentrated sunlight and heat towards the enemy.

'The heat and light were too much for them to bear. They all ran away panic-stricken, not knowing in their bewilderment how to counteract that scorching heat. When they fled away leaving their guns and other ammunitions of war, they were burnt down by means of the same sun-heat. Since then no one has tried to invade our country any more.'

'And since then your countrymen never tried to come out of the zenana?'

'Yes, they wanted to be free. Some of the police commissioners and district magistrates sent word to the Queen to the effect that the military officers certainly deserved to be imprisoned for their failure; but they never neglected their duty and therefore they should not be punished and they prayed to be restored to their respective offices.

'Her Royal Highness sent them a circular letter intimating to them that if their services should ever be needed they would be sent for, and that in the meanwhile they should remain where they were. Now that they are accustomed to the purdah system and have ceased to grumble at their seclusion, we call the system "Mardana" instead of "zenana".'

'But how do you manage,' I asked Sister Sara, 'to do without the police or magistrates in case of theft or murder?'

'Since the "Mardana" system has been established, there has been no more crime or sin; therefore we do not require a policeman to find out a culprit, nor do we want a magistrate to try a criminal case.'

'That is very good, indeed. I suppose if there was any dishonest person, you could very easily chastise her. As you gained a decisive victory without shedding a single drop of blood, you could drive off crime and criminals too without much difficulty!'

'Now, dear Sultana, will you sit here or come to my parlour?' she asked me.

'Your kitchen is not inferior to a queen's boudoir!' I replied with a pleasant smile, 'but we must leave it now; for the gentlemen may be cursing me for keeping them away from their duties in the kitchen so long.' We both laughed heartily.

'How my friends at home will be amused and amazed, when I go back and tell them that in the far-off Ladyland, ladies rule over the country and control all social matters, while gentlemen are kept in the Mardanas to mind babies, to cook and to do all sorts of domestic work; and that cooking is so easy a thing that it is simply a pleasure to cook!'

'Yes, tell them about all that you see here.'

'Please let me know, how you carry on land cultivation and how you plough the land and do other hard manual work.'

'Our fields are tilled by means of electricity, which supplies motive power for other hard work as well, and we employ it for our aerial conveyances too. We have no rail road nor any paved streets here.'

'Therefore neither street nor railway accidents occur here,' said I. 'Do not you ever suffer from want of rainwater?' I asked.

'Never since the "water balloon" has been set up. You see the big balloon and pipes attached thereto. By their aid we can draw as much rainwater as we require. Nor do we ever suffer from flood or thunderstorms. We are all very busy making nature yield as much as she can. We do not find time to quarrel with one another as we never sit idle. Our noble Queen is exceedingly fond of botany; it is her ambition to convert the whole country into one grand garden.'

'The idea is excellent. What is your chief food?'

'Fruits.'

'How do you keep your country cool in hot weather? We regard the rainfall in summer as a blessing from heaven.'

'When the heat becomes unbearable, we sprinkle the ground with plentiful showers drawn from the artificial fountains. And in cold weather we keep our room warm with sun-heat.'

She showed me her bathroom, the roof of which was removable. She could enjoy a shower bath whenever she liked, by simply removing the roof (which was like the lid of a box) and

turning on the tap of the shower pipe.

'You are a lucky people!' ejaculated I. 'You know no want. What is your religion, may I ask?'

'Our religion is based on Love and Truth. It is our religious duty to love one another and to be absolutely truthful. If any person lies, she or he is....'

'Punished with death?'

'No, not with death. We do not take pleasure in killing a creature of God, especially a human being. The liar is asked to leave this land for good and never to come to it again.'

'Is an offender never forgiven?'

'Yes, if that person repents sincerely.'

'Are you not allowed to see any man, except your own relations?'

'No one except sacred relations.'

'Our circle of sacred relations is very limited; even first cousins are not sacred.'

'But ours is very large; a distant cousin is as sacred as a brother.'

'That is very good. I see purity itself reigns over your land. I should like to see the good Queen, who is so sagacious and far-sighted and who has made all these rules.'

'All right,' said Sister Sara.

Then she screwed a couple of seats onto a square piece of plank. To this plank she attached two smooth and well-polished balls. When I asked her what the balls were for, she said they were hydrogen balls and they were used to overcome the force of gravity. The balls were of different capacities to be used according to the different weights desired to be overcome. She then fastened to the air-car two wing-like blades, which, she said, were worked by electricity. After we were comfortably seated she touched a knob and the blades began to whirl, moving faster and faster every moment. At first we were raised to the height of about six or seven feet and then off we flew. And before I could realize that we had

commenced moving, we reached the garden of the Queen.

My friend lowered the air-car by reversing the action of the machine, and when the car touched the ground the machine was stopped and we got out.

I had seen from the air-car the Queen walking on a garden path with her little daughter (who was four years old) and her maids of honour.

'Halloo! You here!' cried the Queen addressing Sister Sara. I was introduced to Her Royal Highness and was received by her cordially without any ceremony.

I was very much delighted to make her acquaintance. In the course of the conversation I had with her, the Queen told me that she had no objection to permitting her subjects to trade with other countries. 'But,' she continued, 'no trade was possible with countries where the women were kept in the zenanas and so unable to come and trade with us. Men, we find, are rather of lower morals and so we do not like dealing with them. We do not covet other people's land, we do not fight for a piece of diamond though it may be a thousand-fold brighter than the Koh-i-Noor¹, nor do we grudge a ruler his Peacock Throne². We dive deep into the ocean of knowledge and try to find out the precious gems, which nature has kept in store for us. We enjoy nature's gifts as much as we can.'

After taking leave of the Queen, I visited the famous universities, and was shown some of their manufactories, laboratories and observatories.

After visiting the above places of interest we got again into the air-car, but as soon as it began moving, I somehow slipped down and the fall startled me out of my dream. And on opening my eyes, I found myself in my own bedroom still lounging in the easy-chair!

1. The Koh-i-noor ('mountain of light') is the name of a large and exceptionally diamond in the possession of the Mughal rulers of India, currently part of the British Crown Jewels. To Indians, it is a symbol of great wealth.

2. The Peacock Throne is a famous jewel-encrusted throne built for the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, also known for the Taj Mahal. It was carried away from Delhi by the Persian invader Nadir Shah. Its current location is the cause of much speculation. Many think that one of the thrones displayed in the Istanbul Museum is the Peacock Throne. It is a long-standing symbol of royal power and splendor to Indians.

CHAPTER IV

ENGLISH POETS

Christopher Caudwell

...Continued from previous issue

II

As primitive accumulation gradually generates a class of differentiated bourgeois producers, the will of the monarch, which in its absoluteness had been a creative force, now becomes anti-bourgeois and feudal. Once primitive accumulation has reached a certain point, what is urgently desired is not capital but a set of conditions in which the bourgeois can realise the development of his capital. This is the era of 'manufacture'—as opposed to factory development.

The absolute monarchy, by its free granting of monopolies and privileges, becomes as irksome as the old network of feudal loyalties. It is, after all, itself feudal. A cleavage appears between the monarchy and the class of artisans, merchants, farmers and shopkeepers.

The court supports the big landowner or noble who is already parasitic. He is allied with the court to exploit the bourgeoisie and the court rewards him with monopolies, privileges or special taxes which hamper the development of the overwhelming majority of the rising bourgeois class. Thus the absolute 'will' of the prince, now that the era of primitive accumulation is over, no longer expresses the life principle of the bourgeois class at this stage.

On the contrary the court appears as the source of evil. Its glittering corrupt life has a smell of decay; foulness and mean deeds are wrapped in silk. Bourgeois poetry changes into its opposite and by a unanimous movement puritanically draws its skirt's hem away from the dirt of the court life. The movement which at first was a reaction of the Reformed Church against the Catholic Church is now a reaction of the puritan against the Reformed Church.

The Church, expressing the absolute will of the monarch and the privileges of the nobility,

is met by the individual 'conscience' of the puritan, which knows no law but the Spirit—his own will idealised. His thrift reflects the need, now that primitive accumulation is over, to amass the capital in which freedom and virtue inheres by 'saving' and not by gorgeous and extravagant robbery.

Donne expresses the transition, for he is torn by it. At first captivated by the sensuality and glittering brilliance of the court, the insolent treatment he receives produces a movement away from it, into repentance. The movement is not complete. In Donne's last years, filled as they are with death-thoughts and magniloquent hatred of life, the pride of the flesh still tears at his heart.



Poetry, drawing away from the collective life of the court, can only withdraw into the privacy of the bourgeois study, austere furnished, shared only with a few chosen friends, surroundings so different from the sleeping and waking publicity of court life that it rapidly revolutionises poetic technique. Crashaw, Herrick, Herbert, Vaughan—all the poetry of this era seems written by shy, proud men writing alone in their studies—appealing from court life to the country or to heaven. Language reflects the change. Lyrics no longer become something that a gentleman could sing to his lady; conceits are no longer something which could be tossed in courtly conversation. Poetry is no longer something to be roared out to a mixed audience. It smells of the library where it was produced. It is a learned man's poetry: student's poetry. Poetry is read, not declaimed: it is correspondingly subtle and intricate.

But Suckling and Lovelace write court poetry, the simple, open poetry of their class. They stand in antagonism to puritan poetry, and maintain the tradition of the Elizabethan court lyric

The collective drama, born of the collective spirit of the court, necessarily perishes. Webster and Tourneur express the final corruption, the

malignantly evil and Italianate death of the first stage of the bourgeois illusion.

III

The transitional period moves towards Revolution. The bourgeoisie revolt against the monarchy and the privileged nobility in the name of Parliament, liberty and the 'Spirit' which is nothing but the bourgeois will challenging the monarchical. This is the era of armed revolution, of civil war, and with it emerges England's first openly revolutionary poet, Milton.

Revolutionary in style, revolutionary in content. The bourgeois now enters a stage of the illusion where he sees himself as defiant and lonely, challenging the powers that be. With this therefore goes an artificial and *consciously* noble style, an isolated style, the first of its kind in English poetry.

Bourgeois revolutions, which are only accomplished by the help of the people as a whole, always reach a stage where it is felt that they have 'gone too far.' The bourgeois demand for unlimited freedom is all very well until the 'have-nots' too demand unlimited freedom, which can only be obtained at the expense of the 'haves.' Then a Cromwell or Robespierre steps in to hold back coercively the progress of the Revolution.

Such a bourgeois halt must always lead to a reaction, for the bourgeois class thus destroys its own mass basis. A Robespierre gives place to a Directory and then a Napoleon; at an earlier stage a Cromwell gives place to a Monk and a Charles II. The wheel does not come back full circle: there is a compromise.

To those who expressed directly the interests of the petty bourgeois, the puritans, this final stage of reaction is a betrayal of the Revolution. Therefore in *Paradise Lost* Milton sees himself as Satan overwhelmed and yet still courageous: damned and yet revolutionary. In *Paradise Regained* he has already rejected power in this world in exchange for power in the next. He scorns the temples and towers of this world; his reward is in the next because he will not compromise. Hence this poem is defeatist, and lacks the noble defiance of *Paradise Lost*. In *Samson Agonistes* Milton recovers his courage. He hopes for the day when he can pull the temple down on the luxury of his wanton oppressors and wipe out the Philistine court.

Did he consciously figure himself as Satan,

Jesus and Samson? Only consciously perhaps as Samson. But when he came to tackle the bourgeois theme of how man, naturally good, is everywhere bad, and to give the familiar answer – because of Adam's fall from natural goodness as a result of temptation – he was led to consider the tempter, Satan and *his* fall. And Satan's struggle being plainly a revolution, he filled it with his revolutionary experience and made the defeated revolutionary a puritan, and the reactionary God a Stuart. Thus emerged the towering figure of Satan, which by its unexpected disproportion shows that Milton's theme had 'run away with him.'

In *Paradise Regained* Milton tries to believe that to be defeated temporally is to win spiritually, to win 'in the long run.' But Milton was a real active revolutionary and in his heart he finds this spiritual satisfaction emptier than real defeat – as the unsatisfactoriness of the poem shows. In *Samson Agonistes* he tries to combine defeat and victory.

Of course the choice was already made in Comus, where the Lady spurns the luxury of the court and allies herself with the simple virtue of the people.

Note how already the bourgeois illusion is a little self-conscious. Milton is consciously noble – Shakespeare never. The Elizabethans are heroic: the Puritans are not, and therefore have to see themselves as heroic, in an archaistic dress. The verse and vocabulary of the Latin secretary to the Provisional Government well expresses this second movement of the illusion, The theme of the poems cannot at once be noble and in any sense contemporary. Poetry is already isolating itself from the collective daily life, which makes it inevitable that the prose 'story' now begins to appear as an opposite pole.

Of course the transition from the court, like all other movements of the bourgeois illusion, is foreshadowed in Shakespeare. In *The Tempest* Prospero withdraws from corrupt court life to the peace of his island study, like a Herbert or a Milton. Shakespeare did the same in life when he retired to Stratford-on-Avon. But he could not write there. His magic wand was a collective one. He had broken it with the breaking of his tie with the court, and the cloud-capp'd palaces of his fancy became empty air.

To be Continued...
Courtesy—*Illusion and Reality*

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