

the basis of the attitudinal differences too. The characters belonging to the middle class are usually reticent in challenging the traditions. The questioning and the tentativeness of the protest are mediated in most of the stories through the character of the girl child belonging to the middle class background. On the other hand, this conservative middle class attitude is countered by strident opposition of the women belonging to the marginalized sections of the society as reflected in the two stories, in which the female rebels have the same name, Muniyakka. The mythological tropes are used by the author to underscore some startling analogies between the sufferings of women situated in different time and space. The disconcerting questions asked by the girl child in "Because..." not only represent an alternate reading of the *Ramayana*, they also attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the tradition endorsed by the epic, creating a tumult in the comfort zone of the cherished conventions. Even the modern ideals are not spared. The discourse of feminism is questioned in "Simone de Beauvoir And The Mane". Beauvoir with her writings as an iconic feminist is deconstructed in the story by juxtaposing her unconventional personal relationship with Jean Paul Sartre with that of the contemporary urban educated Indian woman who feels stifled by the modern man's expectations of her as an intellectual embodiment of Beauvoir and her unconventionality on one hand, but a submissive partner on the other. Through the protagonist, the writer highlights this dilemma in the feminist legacy of Beauvoir that also tries to grapple with the mismatch in Beauvoir's unflinching devotion to Sartre despite his infidelity in a truly conventional mould with her avant-garde writings, like *The Second Sex* that have been the inspiration of the feminist movements. Ultimately, the modern Indian woman charts her own feminist trajectory in "Simone de Beauvoir And The Mane," the recurrence of which we find in the novella, *Another Hour, Another Hue*. Interestingly, the feminine of the word *novello*, this novella deals with the sexual politics that working women confront in their workplaces, especially in an intellectually liberated university environment, where gender hierarchies are supposed to be minimal. In fact, the duplicity of the modern man is highlighted, who on one hand wants a modern woman and on the other hand, resents her self confidence and independence. Whether it is in "Just Think About It", "Maria" or "Another Hour, Another Hue," the narratives expose the hypocrisy of the patriarchal behaviour that is recast in the modern assertion of the traditional sexual power and sexist attitudes. The bruised male ego in "Just Think About It," in which the man is unable to take the rejection by his wife, ignoring his own instrumentality

in it, the insensitivity of the male attitude that mocks at female homosexuality while glorifying the male homosexual behaviour in "Maria" and the oppressive sexual assertion of a superior who manipulates the careers of his women co-workers reducing them to helplessness, though not for very long in "Another Hour, Another Hue" tell us that gender equality in our society has a long way to go.

The trials and tribulations of a workplace are brought out sensitively in "The Maze" and "Zeroing In" that highlight the stressful professional situations in which mediocrity manipulates and marginalizes excellence and loyalty is given precedence over merit. The frustrations, helplessness and dejection experienced by the protagonists are easily identifiable by readers irrespective of gender. The documentation of real life experiences into sensitive narratives in the stories point to the existential predicament resulting from continuous oscillation between traditions and modernity. Caught between the two ends, the characters struggle to grapple with the sense of self and preserve their individual identities, something that dominates the real life experiences. The stories dealing with life and death are surrealistic giving an even pace to the narratives making a reader to introspect about the questions of life.

Clearly there is a distinct literary style within which the stories are grounded that makes Kanan a part of the distinctive genre of postcolonial Indian writers. Theorizing this style of Indian writers, especially of those who write in English as well as other regional languages, becomes important. Bracketing Kanan's works as 'Gothic' or 'Marxist' as analysed by C.T. Indra and Christine Gomez in the first part limits the spirit of the text, imposing categories that may not be inappropriate.

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Rajee Seth, *Not Without Reason and Other Stories* Trans. Raji Narsimhan, New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2012, Pp.119, ₹ 210.

This collection of short stories entitled *Not Without Reason and Other Stories* comprises of nine stories by well known Hindi writer Rajee Seth translated into English by none other than Raji Narsimhan whose English translation of Maitreyi Pushpa's Hindi novel *Alma Kabutari* was shortlisted for the Crossword Translation award in 2006-7. As the translator has aptly remarked in the Introduction to this collection of short stories, that to call Rajee Seth a

feminist writer would not be wrong but it would be a half-truth. Seth's penetrating engagement with the nuanced experiences of emotional and mental agony transcends gender, class and caste specifications as the narrator in the story "Morass" observes: "But it's not the pains and wounds of the body that are the problem, sir. They heal. It's the pains and wounds of the mind that are bigger, unhealing" (108). Such experience of pain as felt by the partition victims in the early as well as late post partition period, is the lot of the humble, docile servant of "Yatra", and the childless, socially stigmatized woman in the title story or the separated woman in "The Same Jungle Again".

For a vast majority of people in the Indian sub-continent, partition, even today is a multi-layered tragedy of immeasurable depth and unspeakable magnitude which has left indelible scars on the victims' psyche. Three stories, - "Meeting", "The Outsiders" and "Wait Intezaar Hussain" are foregrounded in the experience of partition. For the fifty nine year old Roshan of "Wait Intezaar Hussain" the cathartic moment of release occurs after a prolonged interval of forty years, incidentally, on India's Independence Day. The day coincides with his personal freedom in terms of the purgation of emotions. While reading Intezaar Hussain's partition novel *Basti* the protagonist relives and revisits the painful memory of forty years old Lahore riots that subsumed his beloved. Located in the immediate post-partition period that witnessed massive exodus of refugees from both sides of the border, the first story of this collection, "Meeting" unfolds incisively the humiliating pain of a proud and self respecting individual soliciting assistance in the form of some 'work' and not a crateful of charity from the government agency. "I don't want relief. I want work" (3). Despite all sympathy and human understanding it is simply not possible for the non-participants of a tragedy of such magnitude, - the humane Collector Tripathi ('Meeting') and the young sensitive woman ("The Outsiders") for instance, to relate and identify with the victim's location. These two partition stories poignantly problematize the insider-outsider dichotomy and the twofold paradigms of subjecthood and distancing.

This is not to say that Seth is apathetic to feminist issues and concerns. The feminist issues of gender marginalization in a patriarchal dispensation repeatedly surface in the text and sub text of these stories. As a welcome point of departure, the focus is not so much on the glorified depiction of pain as on the crucial moments of feminine self assertion and self actualization. The impotent and manipulative husband in the title story "Not Without Reason" may conveniently transfer the blame and stigma of childlessness to his wife Deepali

subjecting her to unqualified humiliation in the private as well as public domain but finally it is the wife's rising sense of rebellion that imparts a feminist strength to the story. The pivotal point in this story is not the victimization of Deepali as a childless, stigmatized woman but her resistance to the coercive patriarchal authority expressed in her "decision not to come back". Correspondingly, the marginalized location of widowed Amma of "Amma's Gold" dumped into a dingy room by her opportunist son is redeemed to a fairly large extent by the reclamation of her right in the form of her gold bangles which she intends to donate to the Defence Fund in the wake of the Indo-China war. Refusing to oblige her selfish son she 'makes her hand her voice, her tongue'. "A palm stretched thus on an invisible platform of air — motionless, still, a palm demanding the restoration of her rights of ownership" (27).

In the feminist canon, economic empowerment for women has been proclaimed as one of the defining imperatives for empowerment. As a working woman, the unnamed separated wife of "The Same Jungle Again" is located in an empowered centre but economic empowerment is not always the prerequisite for female agency in view of the male whims and fancies in terms of male pride ('Morass') and male superiority complex ('My Option', 'Not Without Reason'). The challenge before Aarti of "Morass" who is as the sole bread-earner of the family after the accident of her egoist husband is not delimited to economic empowerment or the feminist postulates of identity or subjecthood but to the mundane issues, — to keep her family and home going at all costs against all odds. The challenge for the unnamed battered-up and runaway protagonist of "The Same Jungle Again" is far more intriguing and multifold. She has willingly surrendered her rights of motherhood to her sister-in-law for the betterment of her daughter. In this open-ended story her decision to agree to meet her rival and co-victim could be construed as an act of sisterhood.

The "feminist" temper manifest in most of these woman-centered stories is not militant or aggressive but feminine. The feminist fury is not demonstrated in words or actions but kept well within control by the battered and bruised women. The personal is not the political for the home maker Aarti or the mute sufferer of "The Same Jungle Again," the feminist coordinates of identity, subjecthood and agency are not even an issue for them.

One story that cannot be defined by any of the above categories is "Yatra." The pen-portrait of the stereotyped subaltern vis-a-vis his son, the modern subaltern is a subtle comment on the diffusing class boundaries in the nation state. The old servant's decision to finally agree to set up home with his son and thus sever the bonds of

age-old servitude is suggestive of the paradigmatic shift in the centre/margin and maalik-servant/master-slave dyad.

Translation as a theoretical and practical paradigm has attained a new dimension in the present global context in social, economic, cultural and political terms. Translation studies are found to be increasingly useful and beneficial as a means of forming a 'dialogue' and 'communication' not only in linguistic terms but as a viable form of cultural linkage as well. This work is a vindication of this fact. Raji Narasimhan's lucid translation reads like an original text. In fact some of Rajee Seth's Hindi titles - "Akaaran to Nahee" and "Usi Jangal Mei", for instance, sound much better in English translation. Seth's syntactical constructions, specifically her use of prepositions in Hindi are often unconventional and unusual. These linguistic lacunas in the original have been improved upon in the English translation of the book.

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Rana Nayar, *Inter-sections: Essays on Indian Literatures, Translations and Popular Consciousness*, New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, Pp. xxvii+276, 2012. ISBN 97-881-2504-55-40, ₹ 445.

Rana Nayar's *Inter-sections: Essays on Indian Literatures, Translations and Popular Consciousness* is a timely and welcome addition to the books on contemporary literary and cultural concerns. It validates approaches of literary evaluation in multiple ways as they shape popular consciousness. Nayar deals with history of literary games, traces brief histories of Indian English fiction, drama, Punjabi literature and Theory and Practice of translation. He deals with these obsessions thematically, classifying his essays into the sections 'Reading Indian and Indian English Literatures', 'Punjabi Literature: Some Context and Texts', 'Reading Translation(s)' and 'Power, Hegemony and Mass Media: Case Studies in Popular Consciousness.'

Besides classifying thematically Nayar also analyzes their tonal (irony and anger) and textual (the challenge to the tyranny of discourse and gender and the interrogation of a seemingly natural language system) nuances. If these phrases seem abstract and bland- such abstractions do tend to lose their power through detachment from experience- this is definitely not so of the literature which Nayar goes on to talk about, there is little of the either the insipid or abstract in the works of

fiction, drama, translations or Punjabi literature discussed in *Intersections* because all are potent texts which deal with the complexity of human existence and experience. This is an accomplished resource book for research students and for general readers and even the beginners who are interested in details of bibliography and even individual texts taken up for dialogue. As Nayar points out in the 'Preface', "In its own distinctive way each essay becomes an undeniable act of protest and resistance, a way of articulating and legitimising the discourse of alterity" (xxv). As a matter of fact, it is suggested that 'alterity' intrinsically has in it points of convergence and divergence. *Inter-sections* is a guide which does not assume a close knowledge of the texts since it was thought many would be unfamiliar (especially texts of Punjabi Literature) to a number of readers, this will be the most adequate addition to the shelves of teachers and students of 'interdisciplinary approach to literature'. Nayar's investigation is finely tuned and poised the analysis made are, I think, the main strength of this volume. Directed as they are to the uninformed and initiated reader of contemporary interdisciplinary nature of literary studies, which have now been rechristened as cultural studies too, they are delicately poised between a sensitive critical analysis and the simple task of recounting the story and a rousing the interest of future readers. Nayar achieves advisable balance. Few would dispute his selection of writers, texts and genres. It is particularly pleasing to see his recognition of importance of, 'Rediscovering Humanities in Life and Literature', as an 'Epilogue' to the volume.

The first essay in the each section of the book discusses important issues of the related themes of the respective sections and how the Indian academia perceives it. In the essay "Locating/Dislocating Indian Literatures: A Metacritical Narrative", deconstructs the notions of 'Location' and 'Dislocation' and connects them with postmodernist and postcolonial intercessions, Nayar concludes: 'The location of Indian literatures, as we have seen is an extremely problematic but not entirely unfamiliar territory' (32).

Correspondingly, the essay, "Punjabi Literature through the Prism of History", surveys Punjabi poetry from the twelfth-century to the growth, expansion and progress of fiction and drama in present times. Nayar gives a comprehensive view of Punjabi literature and its history but keeping in view the scope of the essay he deliberately excludes Punjabi prose and criticism as well as writings of Punjabi Diaspora in the west. One of Nayar's fixations as a translator (from Punjabi to English) is the way he outlines the 'theoretical and contextual'