

The NEHU Journal

Special Issue on Literature

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NEHU

The Writer and the Community: A Case for Literary Ambidexterity

Literary ambidexterity is essentially a discourse on the virtues of knowing two languages and writing well in both. In a vast and complex country like India, these languages would mean one's mother tongue and the language of interaction. In my case, they would mean Khasi, the language of my tribe, and English.

Heard and spoken since birth, the mother tongue is of fundamental importance to creative literature. This also relates to the nature of creative writing itself and the need for communication.

As a practitioner of poetry, I believe in a poet who is a witness, one with the seeing eye, a retentive memory and the innate instinct to catch the soul of his generation. My own poetry is deeply rooted and I see my role as a poet as that of a chronicler of subjective realities. I have talked, in my poems, of leaders lording "like the wind" and fickle "like Hindi film stars changing dresses in a song." I have talked of my impoverished land, and with sardonic humour, of real people who are at once individuals and types. I have tried to capture the changing times, aspects of my culture and issues on the fringe.

But chronicling realities is not an end in itself. Pablo Neruda believes that a poet should always live close to his people: "I have gone into practically every corner of Chile, scattering my poetry like seed among the people of my country." Neruda seems to point up the poet's need to communicate with his people. If the foundation of a poet's art rests on his people's life and character, then what

better audience is there than his own people? And if the audience is his own people, then what better language is there to communicate with them than his mother tongue?

I too wish to address my people directly. I would like to tell them of the colossal threat to our land posed by the ceaseless flood of humanity and the growing aggressiveness of migrants. I would like to speak to them of the perils of terrorism and the greater peril of lawmen turning terrorists. I would like to tell them of the absurdity of trying to deny their own roots and the anarchy that follows in forgetting their own identity. I would like to talk of our great festivals, of Weiking, and the vitality of their part in our social life:

Weiking! Weiking!

Spring is back, begin your whirling motions
and let our life live on.

.....
Whirl on, whirl on,

what if some of us
sneer at us for fools?

We are not here to pay obeisance
to the gods for a plentiful harvest
(do we ever have a harvest now?)

whirl on, whirl on to a time
when women stood by their men
and men were tigers guarding
their homes with jealous swords.

(‘Weiking’: self-composed)

But most of all I would like to remind my people, as a poet raconteur, of the virtues of their ancestors’ ways and the necessity of perpetuating them. I would like to talk of our myths and legends and let those, who will, cull lessons from them:

Faraway
from the year dot

Ren, the Nongjri fisherman,
Ren, the beloved of a river nymph
Ren, who loved so madly
 who left his mother and his home
 to live in magic depths
also left a message:

“Mother,” he had said,
“listen to the river,
as long as it roars
you will know that I live”.

(‘Ren’: self-composed)

Symbolically, Ren is asking later generations to listen to the sound of his people’s life. But the sound of a people’s life and their ways can be voiced only through the mother tongue. The mother tongue is the sound of life itself, and in this sense, writing in it would mean for me helping the sound of my people’s life grow stronger.

Czeslaw Milosz and his poem “My Faithful Mother Tongue” have only strengthened this conviction. But the shocking reality that Milosz speaks of his mother tongue as “a tongue of the debased, / of the unreasonable, hating themselves” is unfortunately true of the Khasi language as well. As Milosz again puts it, “perhaps after all it’s I who must try to save you [mother tongue].”

It is in trying to do this, that literary ambidexterity can play a critical role. It is neither desirable nor profitable to keep one’s own writings confined to one’s own language or the language of interaction.

A native author’s work with any literary merit must be brought to the notice of other literatures. As Neruda suggests, it does not matter if one’s poems have sunken their roots deep into one’s native soil; it does not matter if they are born of indigenous wind and rain or have emerged from a localized landscape. If they are worth their salt they must “come out of that landscape... to

roam, to go singing through the world....”

To do this the author must be able to translate his own work into the language of interaction. But if he is not ambidextrous in this sense, then his work must risk lurking forever in the dark recesses of his own small world.

On the other hand, if he writes only in the language of interaction, he must be able to translate his work into his own mother tongue or risk being cut off forever from the heart and mind of his own people.

Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih
Associate Editor

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The Holy Dip

ANIMA DUTTA

Anima Dutta has recently retired as Professor of Assamese from Gauhati University. She is the author of a number of short stories and has to her credit a number of research articles on Assamese literature. The present story is translated from the Assamese by Liza Das.

She, about whom I am going to tell you, was an Englishwoman about two score or so of age. Her name was Rosa Margaret Field. She stood five feet tall in her slight frame and, with her pale blue eyes and short honey-coloured hair that glistened with a few time-wrought streaks of silver, she was indeed beautiful. She had always attracted me right from the time I got to know her, this simple Englishwoman who, apart from that light shade of lipstick on her lips, never took recourse to any unnecessary adornment, who never wore expensive clothes but stuck to simple cotton apparel, who never drank in clubs to dance herself silly. She led a simple life, and her husband was the manager of a sprawling tea estate at the foothills of the Naga Hills. I first met her at an art exhibition held in the town. And, gradually, there grew a deep friendship between the two of us.

One day, at her invitation, I went to her house. That there could possibly be such an enchanting environment in a place so far away from the town, in an area so filled with woods, was quite beyond my imagination. The bungalow in which they lived belonged to those days when tea plantations had first been established in Assam. This old house was given a contemporary look by newly-constructed rooms, verandahs, a car-porch, and air-conditioned

bedrooms. At the back of the house was a breathtakingly beautiful lawn —green, spacious and sloping. And here and there you could see the yellow petals of the *sonaru* strewn like beads of gold on the greenery of the lawn. Rows of flowerbeds stood beneath a number of trees – fir, silver, oak, gulmohar, and a score of other trees whose names I did not know. My eyes were totally captivated by the sheer beauty of the scenery. And my ears were taken by surprise when the mynah in the cage on the verandah called out sweetly – “*Sakhi K-r-i-s-h-n-a!*” Diana and Teresa, Mrs. Field’s two pet dogs sat on the steps of the verandah, their tails wagging, while the cat frolicked on the green grass with her two young ones that were tiny and soft as cotton balls. I sat down. Mrs. Field and I talked about a lot of things over tea and sandwiches.

“Your house is truly beautiful! I don’t remember ever having seen a garden as beautiful as yours,” I said.

“It’s not *our* house, Geeta. It belongs to the Company and we have been asked to stay here. But yes, it’s true, for I look after the garden very well, this house has retained its beautiful environment.”

“Where exactly in England do you come from, Mrs. Field?”

“From the place where the poet Wordsworth had lived.”

“Oh! So you come from the land of daffodils! Do you really like staying here after having lived in such a beautiful place?”

“I don’t see why we should not. Actually, every place in this world is beautiful, once we know how to really appreciate it. Each place has its charm, its uniqueness. True, there are no daffodils here. But what about those *sonaru* blossoms? You call them “*sonaru*”, don’t you? Where else will I find these trees that can strew beads?” Mrs. Field craned her slender neck to look at the trees that stood at a distance.

“And will I ever come across your Sankardev, Madhabdev, and Madhab Kandali in my land?”

“Have you heard of these great poet-saints of Assam?”

I was absolutely taken by surprise. Mrs. Field didn't say anything. But she smiled and took me into the living room. On the bookshelf in the corner stood gleaming Madhab Kandali's *Ramayana*, Sankardev's *Dasam*, and Madhabdev's *Naamghosa*. I gaped at those books in astonishment. Once again I heard the mynah whistle, “*Sakhi K-r-i-s-h-n-a!*”

“Mrs. Field, who has taught the mynah to say this?”

“I had bought it about a month ago at the *haat*. And from that day I have heard it whistling thus. May be its previous owner had taught him. Isn't the name 'Krishna' beautiful? This word – Krishna – doesn't it mean an experience of joy and peace? Isn't that what your Lord Krishna is about? A sense of joy and well-being? At least that is how I understand it.”

I looked at the sedate smile on her serene face and said, ‘Krishna’ means ‘beautiful and joyful’.

Suddenly, I was taken by more surprise as Mrs. Field began reciting a couplet from the *Naamghosa*:

“*The word 'Krish' is indicative of Earth;*

'Na' subsists in happiness.”

I was confounded as the lady from across the seven seas began to sing in broken words the lines from the *Naamghosa*. This instance of a foreigner's love for Assamese language and literature took me back to the glorious days of the *Arunodoi*, to glorious women like Mrs. Bronson and Mrs. Brown. But this lady here was even more admirable – not only did she love our language, she loved our religion too.

“You seem to know a lot about our religion.”

“I know a bit about all religions. I have read the scriptures of all religions – from a literary point of view, of course. I have read the *Koran*, the *Bible*, the *Tripitakas*, the *Naamghosa*, too. ‘I do

know religion, yet I have no inclination', Rosa Field said and laughed.

Mrs. Field now began to tell me about herself. Her daughter studied in a School of Art in Paris. Her son was a research scientist. As for herself, she was engaged in research on the folk literature of Assam. She wrote stories about Assam for children in her land. To collect tales she would go to a few of the villages nearby. And the village folk would gather around this lady from another land that knew Assamese so well. She would sit on a low stool over the carefully swept floor and listen to an elderly person telling stories about Piyoli, Dukhiram and Teton. Sometimes, upon hearing the clucking of a lizard on the wall, they would pause for a while and then get on with the stories. In the glow of the afternoon sun that seeped in tunnels of light through the mesh of leaves, Rosa Field would sit and write down those stories in a notebook. After partaking of the smoky tea and rice-cakes offered by the lady of the house, Mrs. Field would take her leave. And it was this Mrs. Field – the lady who had derived so much happiness upon hearing the story of young Piyoli who was helped by none other than Lord Krishna himself as he trembled at the thought of crossing the woods on his way to school – who asked me that day: "Isn't that your Lord Krishna, a sense of joy? A golden feeling of content?"

My eyes fell on a portrait of a turbaned man, which was hung on the pale blue wall of the living room.

"Whose portrait is that?" I enquired.

"He is Ramlal, the old chowkidar of this bungalow. I have done this pencil-sketch. I had taken a few tips on art from my daughter. She will be teaching in a school in Sheffield this year once she completes her course."

By this time I was absolutely stunned. There hung no portraits on the walls of this beautiful room, with its mosaic flooring. Save one – that of the old chowkidar of the bungalow. And then I realized that here was a woman with an extraordinary personality.

And so the days rolled by. My friendship with Mrs. Field remained a close one. Soon she had finished writing the book on stories from Assam. Then suddenly one moonlit evening, in the month of Kaati, Mrs. Field visited our house and told me:

“Geeta, if I asked you, would you come with me on a short trip? Would your parents allow you to come with me for a few days?”

“Of course they would”, I said. “Everyone in our family knows you well. But where are we going?”

“To Majuli. I am told that on Rass-Purnima – isn’t that the day of the full moon this month? – in the Sattras one gets to see beautiful dance-performances that celebrate the glory of Lord Krishna. I want to go there to see those performances.”

I agreed to accompany her to Majuli.

“I have read somewhere that Majuli is the biggest river island in the world. And I have also heard that one can see a variety of birds there. It would be a marvellous experience. And wouldn’t it be wonderful to cross the mighty Brahmaputra on a motorboat?” Mrs. Field said excitedly.

Soon, one misty morning, we reached Nimatee Ghat en route to a particular Sattra in Majuli. With us was my sister Preeta. The morning was breathtakingly gorgeous. Far away in the horizon was the glimmering green of Majuli. And beyond it the white clouds that seemed to descend from the bosom of the blue mountains. The rippling waters of the Lohit glistened as the rays of the morning sun played on its tiny waves. The tall swaying reeds on the banks of the river made the grandeur of the morning complete.

“Geeta!... Isn’t it so pleasant?” Mrs. Field cried out in ecstasy.

The string of pearls that hung from her neck and over her blue cotton dress began to gleam in the soft morning sun. Peering through the binocular set, she exclaimed:

“Oh, that lovely river island! It’s so warm and green and inviting! How I love the waters!”

A flight of martin-like birds soared over our heads and Mrs. Field let out a peal of laughter. We sat on the sandy river-bank and had the tea and snacks we had brought along with us. Soon we boarded the motorboat that would take us to Majuli. As we were about to reach Majuli we saw baby tortoises among the water-reeds near the river’s edges that leaped into the water, startled by the agitation caused by the motorboat.

We camped for three nights in a *dak* bungalow in a particular Sattrā of Majuli. And in that Sattrā – a veritable repository of Assamese culture – the Maha Raas festival was celebrated over two days of grandeur. Mrs. Field, with her immense knowledge of Vaishnavism, was thoroughly taken in by the beautiful dances performed.

“I had always known that India was famous for its beautiful dances. But I had never dreamt in these remote villages of the country there could possibly be such serious pursuit of dance-forms,” said Mrs. Field.

In the evening before we were leaving the bungalow, we sat on the verandah. The moon had scattered silver light all over the skies and the narrow lane that disappeared into the bamboo grove too gleamed in the moonlight. A faint scent of sewali blossoms wafted in with the breeze. Mrs. Field asked me a few things relating to the dance performances she had witnessed the night before. I couldn’t help asking:

“How did you come to have such interest in our religion, Mrs. Field?”

She smiled and replied, “I really have no great interest in religion per se. I’m drawn more towards literature and culture.”

I was a little startled by her crisp reply and I wondered if my question had offended her. I quickly tried to change the topic of

discussion: "So ... do you like Majuli?" I asked.

"Oh yes!" said she. "I loved watching the wild birds on the banks of the river. And those baby tortoises – I loved watching them too! The children have this tender sweetness in their faces. They seem to have no inkling of the world that exists beyond these waters. And they seem to be in the pink of health, too!"

For a while we were silent. And when, suddenly, my sister Preeti asked: "What day of the week is it, baideu?"

"Sunday," I replied. And turning to Mrs. Field I asked, "Don't you have two services in the Church today? You've missed them." Actually, I wanted to gauge her devotion towards her religion.

"Geeta, I don't go to church. I don't attend services. In fact, no one in my family goes to church. You'll probably be very surprised, but we are not Christians."

We were truly surprised! This beautiful woman... what an enigma!

"We were Christians once, of course. But after my experiences in life I have lost all interest in religion. To use the right word – I suppose we are atheists. My children, too, have adopted my views."

I stared at Mrs. Field in utter amazement. And suddenly I felt this profound distaste welling up in me. I felt diffident – almost repelled. This attractive woman ... not only was she irreligious, she didn't even believe in God! *She was an atheist!* To think that she had even recited the *Naamghosa* to me ... and now she says it was the literary aspect merely! She wouldn't allow any weakness in the name of religion. For us it was impossible to entertain such thoughts. It would be sinful...

Unable to collect my thoughts I fell silent. I felt there wasn't any Mrs. Field in front of me. All around was this haze, this mist in which the face of this learned Englishwoman seemed to gradually

disappear. Soon, I recovered my senses and saw her soft face shining in the moonlight.

“Geeta, it’s getting cold. Come, let’s go in. Preeta must be sleepy. We’ll have to cross the river tomorrow. So we’d better go to bed soon.”

It was after about a month that I went to her bungalow. The sun was setting. I saw her sitting beneath a weeping willow on the lawn, reading a book. She greeted me warmly with a smile and asked me to sit. The book she was reading, it was her book of stories of Assam published by a firm in England. The day before a parcel of copies had arrived and there was one for me too.

“I have just come from the school,” said she.

“From the school?” I asked, puzzled.

“I teach English to the children of the labourers. Twice a week. There is great happiness in teaching young boys and girls. They love me and sometimes, when I don’t turn up, they come looking for me.”

I was touched by her greatness. What tremendous resources and energy she seemed to possess! She was engaged in research, wrote books, went to villages to collect stories, painted, and looked after her home and family too. And then she had the time and the energy to teach the children of tea labourers!

We talked about other things over tea. As I got up to leave, something happened. A thin, straggly four-year-old boy came running towards us. Mrs. Field held out her hand and touched him lovingly on the cheek. Drawing him close to her, she told me.

“He is our driver Mohan’s son. His health has always been poor. I take good care of him but he seems unable to pull himself up.”

The boy looked at her with vacuous eyes. She paused for a while and continued: “Geeta, you write stories, don’t you? Why

don't you write a story on our driver Mohan's life? The poor thing – he's so unlucky! He had fallen in love with a Christian girl from the tea community. They had to overcome many a hurdle because they belonged to different communities. Of course, true love triumphed eventually. But soon after the birth of the son, the girl died. There was no one to take care of the baby. His health became worse. The mother's parents refused to take responsibility for the child. Mohan's father too – the baby had Christian blood in him, you see."

She paused for a moment and continued:

"But I couldn't let this child die, could I? I made arrangements for his treatment and he gradually became healthy. But there's brightness in him ... he is like an unwanted visitor in this world."

Her eyes brimmed with tears as she said: "These things remind me of the words of Oscar Wilde – 'we have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.' Please, don't misunderstand me – I'm not saying this to influence you. Forgive me if I have said something wrong."

I stood dumbfounded. Not a word came out of my lips by way of a reply. There was no place in my mind for other thoughts. In the faint light of the evening I saw the image of a pure, motherly figure. The Madonna and Child – the beautiful, compassionate and loving Mother who transcends all religions.

Book Review

Anthology of Contemporary Poetry from the Northeast edited by **Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih** and **Robin S. Ngangom**, NEHU Publications, Shillong, 2003, pp.270 + xii, Rs. 230/- .

Undoubtedly it is poetry that unites us. It is the poets who will *not* keep us away from one another, who will not separate us. This is the strongest feeling one gets when one reads these poems from the very different regions of the Northeast of our country.

History and time become the subsequent strengths of these poems, although these are not immediately noticeable in the lines of many poets. It is strange that a poet from Mizoram might be speaking of the same values as a poet from Assam or Manipur; the humane intensity of the poems remains a matter of understanding and ultimate celebrations:

One by one we'll recover
the ornaments of grace.

In a number of poems one is touched by the poet's treatment of the local and the personal, that moves toward an involvement in the collective longing for renewal and the search for a better world.

I have seen several times
the sighing hand of his
among countless hands.

It was Robert Frost who said once that politics deals with grievances, poetry with grief. I do feel that it is important for us to have this anthology at this time, now when a lot of turmoil and violence has shaken the peaceful air of the Northeast. The poems help us see that devotion and anger, hunger and passion, desire and loyalty are not supportive of each other, but lift our minds.

for managing to love
an object of scorn,

although

they place around my neck
a garland of threats.

These poems have a universal appeal that cannot be denied. Their reach is more to sympathy than to rightness, and more to compassion than to belief. But from the poetry of these peoples, of different cultures, the miseries of contemporary dilemmas are apparent. I felt both pleasure and pain in reading the poems; they pointed out to me what all good poetry in the world is about, irrespective of where they are written, in their insistence that to expect justice out of a long history is impossible to attain. They certainly convey, in spite of our differences, our commonality and mutuality.

This is a remarkable anthology; there is much hope, and considerable faith in these seemingly simple lines that come from places where

the haunting *madhavi* escapes the rustle of spring,
acid with the smell of gunpowder.

Jayanta Mahapatra, a renowned Indian poet writing in English. He currently edits **Chandrabhaga**, a prestigious literary journal. He lives at Tinkonia Bagicha, Cuttack, Orissa, 753001

Translating Nations, edited by **Prem Poddar**, Aarhus University Press, Aarhus, 2000, 269p.

The notions of nation and nationalism have engaged the minds of social scientists for over two centuries now and yet they seem as elusive as they were in the beginning. Scholars from various

disciplines have come together to come to grips with these notions at different times but more vigorously during the last fifty years or so. No other notions have perhaps sustained the academic interest for so long and across the disciplinary boundaries. There are lull periods in the history of these notions but there never has been a total cease. With the publication of the book under review it is clear that young scholars in the field of literature have taken these notions in a big way though there is no dearth of senior, and indeed very influential, writers from literature in this field. Further some of the most exciting theories and debates related to these notions have been seen in the post-colonial literature. One of them is about their future, which has been a matter of much speculation by both anthropologists and literateurs.

Translating Nations is one of the latest works in this field. It includes ten articles, including the introductory one by the editor. The book is a collection of different voices on the nation but spoken in similar language, or made similar by the editor's translating! The vocabulary of the nation that has been built up over the years is abundantly distributed over the various chapters; often making the authors appear interchangeable. This is a serious problem in any translation of culture, whether it is a cultural idiom or a cultural symbol. This well justifies the focus of this book which deals with the problems of representing nations by translated texts for they are not only translated but are often transformed.

One of the current themes in social sciences in many parts of the world is violence. The study of violence is intimately connected with the field of human rights studies, which is also a growing field today. This theme has not escaped the attention of the contributors to this volume and they have been able to touch areas that a social scientist normally cannot reach due to her/his obsession with facts and evidences. In fact, the violent aspect of the nation is one of the most important, if not the most important, themes of this book, as evident from the introductory chapter itself.

There is no dearth of dilemmas in the book, often lurking behind innocuous concepts. The authors, including most prominently the editor himself, show a strain between nationalism and trans-nationalism. While they articulate various identities, they show their own ambivalence about it. Nationalism seems to indicate personal security but intellectual insecurity whereas trans-nationalism gives intellectual security but personal insecurity. There is some kind of craving in this book for both, for one can easily blend both, harbouring one inside and the other outside. In short, this book depicts what most of us intellectuals truly are. It is a naked form of ours that many of us might not have seen. It is certainly worth seeing in black and white for our own benefit.

T.B. Subba, a Professor of Anthropology, NEHU. He is the Editor of The NEHU Journal.

Humanities and Pedagogy : Teaching of Humanities Today edited by **K.C. Baral**, Pencraft International; New Delhi, 2002 price Rs.100/-; PP 159.

Humanities and Pedagogy Teaching of Humanities Today attempts at a constructionist's viewpoint on the teaching of humanities today, particularly in the Indian context with its association of inter-disciplinary (post modern?) concepts. The essays holistically brought together are part of an international seminar held in Shillong under the auspices of the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages.

The essays are structured on two largely defined points or categories, one is the need for modern or post-modern dialectics cutting across disciplinary barriers and the other attacks the very need and basis of such a *diktat*. For example J.C. Mahanti's essay: "Literature as a Discipline of Thought: the Why of Literary

Pedagogy” demythicises the need for “the new critical, structuralist, post-structuralist, post-colonial nationalist, post-modern Marxist and Feminist...” modes of pedagogy pleading on the other hand for the innate good sense of literature with “teachers who proceed from their experience of life and literature...”

Similarly S. Nagarajan’s critique restores the Keatsian sense of ‘negative capability’, which is the intrinsic logic of a text. He contends that this is the spirit or ‘approach’ to the study of literature. However Nigel Joseph’s “The Idea of ‘Truth’ in the Humanities” is a radicalisation of the teaching of humanities; “A greater openness, within each humanities’ discipline, to developments in the other humanities as well as to those in the social and natural sciences”. The cornerstone of today’s pedagogy as one might put it is the “opening out of disciplines”. Nigel Joseph’s exegesis refreshingly avoids jargon and clichés to speak for a humanistic yet inter-disciplinary approach to the study of humanities. Cross-cultural some might call it yet Joseph’s metabolism is shorn of any jargon-hype or the present polemics of post modernism.

This then evinces that the essays hinge on an internal dialectic of ‘truth’ on the one hand and the sophism of modern thinking and intellectual trends on the other. By highlighting an inter-disciplinary yet pragmatic rationale Joseph does not deliberate any idiom or an arid Waste Land. His is “a plea for cultural rapprochement ...a genuine eclecticism.” The cross-cultural hypothesis is indeed very much present in the essays, the ‘Indian’, reading of an American or English text. That is why perhaps as A.V. Ashok in “English in India Today: Discipline, Post-discipline and Indiscipline” asseverates (almost triumphantly one senses) there is today the prevalence of English Literature “deconstructors”. So we have the departments of English Studies and not necessarily that of English Literature. The pedagogy borders on this kind of subversivism. This also is perhaps a heresy: a decolonising of literature (i.e. English Literature) and thought. English studies in India today remain largely disturbed as a result of such a refrain: a post-modern clique has attempted some kind of an iconoclasm, or a transcendence of certain verities.

The language literature / epistemological connection is Mohan Ramanan's answer to literary problematics. On the one hand there are the advocates of the *bhasa* primacy as the dominant cultural synergy and on the other there are at times the effete-ness of English teaching. What should the teachers of English do in such a crisis caught as they are in troubled tunes or in that of a post-modern indiscipline, its wave of antipathy attacking the very citadels of a cherished tradition? Mohan Ramanan's "English Agonistes, Reflection on English in India" debates with fortitude on the middle path, 'the humanist centric vision of teaching and learning. Once again this to my thinking is an invitation to cross-culturalism to invade the territories of our higher education in the humanities disciplines.

There is thus "modernism's epistemological failure" as Glenn Bowman argues in the last essay of the book: "Constituting the Space of Identification in Anthropological Discourse". The epistemic or knowledge processes are caught in this tangle between theoretic devices and the need to synergise, the need to synthesize. This is the basic problematic, which the book articulates in attempting to revisit dichotomously the epistemic domains of literature, philosophy and culture. M. M. Agrawal's "Education as a Cultural Process" speaks critically of a "cultural alienation of education". Has education served its purpose of cultural assimilation or has it led to the growth of more alienation? This is the ontological question here. The essay is a nostalgic reflection on getting 'education back to where it belongs'. K.C. Baral's "Critical Theory and Pedagogy" applies certain critical precepts to the author/text/reader polemics. Literature is applied criticism, which seems to go against the Arnoldian standpoint of criticism.

The essays/papers are interrogative in nature asking some very fundamental questions as to the need of addressing the teaching of the humanities with discourses or subtexts. However pedagogy is some kind of a given assumption, most of the essays fail to take into account the cognisable reality or the 'why' of pedagogy: the teaching methodologies as it were.

Today the scenario has witnessed a virtual expansion of the classroom; such ramifications have been due to the influence of the media and technology. In this cultural context the essays of D. Venkat Rao and Bernard Sharrat capture this new technological revolution and ambience; applying it to the practices of teaching / learning. D. Venkat Rao in his "Critical Pedagogy and Global Networks, Re-turning English Today" argues that "Digitalacy is literacy...in digital media;" a seminal statement. Sharrat in his essay "Teaching, Multimedia and the Internet" delightfully countenances the argument for a virtual classroom. On-line learning is self-learning. The essay borders on Distance Education aspects of pedagogy.

The book collectively provides not only ample food for thought on dialogic discourses but is a daunting intellectual exercise in the need for a re-defined pedagogy mostly shorn of exhibitionism or vapid writing which is clichéd. The articles are insightful, evolving cultural contexts or broad frameworks to take us into the embattled areas of knowledge /information dichotomies.

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NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

1. All contributions should be sent in electronic form as well as hard copy printed on A4 size paper in double space and with adequate margin on the left side. Notes and references should be numbered in Arabic numerals, with details provided as endnotes. The title of the paper, the author's name and address should be typed on a separate cover-sheet. Telephone & fax numbers, e-mail ID's and **a brief biographical sketch** should be provided.
2. Non-English words should be italicised or underlined. Spelling should be British. Quotations should be reduced to a minimum and where used should be put under double inverted commas or if necessary indented. Quotations of more than 50 words from published or copyright sources should have the permission of the author/publisher enclosed with the manuscript.
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