The NEHU Journal

Special Issue on Literature

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EDITORIAL THEME

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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Gangacharan's *Chompreng*

DEBABRATA DEB

Debabrata Deb *(b.1956) is an important short story writer from Tripura and has received many literary awards. He edits* Mukhabayab, *a short story quarterly in Bengali. The present story is translated from Bangla by* ***Bonomali Goswami.***

The half-moon was ascendant in the sky. It would shine overhead any moment now signaling Rabichandra's departure. Birankanya had already systematically arranged the utensils, oil, salt and chillies in a big bamboo basket. The camp would remain open for three days and there will be a fairly big crowd.

"But how on earth do I prepare those fries of pulses?"

"You can easily do that."

"Never done it."

"Doesn't matter. Here is the recipe. First 'grind' the pulses, mix onion, chillies and then...."

"Easier said than done."

Nothing doing —Rabichandra had thought it over and over again. Jhum cultivation was real costly these days. He had no ploughing bulls for the little land he had prepared on the hill slopes. No loan would be provided by the banks for such a little plot of land. His attempt to grow paddy by borrowing/hiring bulls yielded no results. It had all been fruitless labour.

Crouching on the mud verandah and meditating, his eyes got fixed on the high mound on top of the hillock. His thoughts began spilling over like boiling milk in the silvery moonlight. As a child he would stare in astonishment at his father Gangacharan, sitting atop

the hillock and playing the *chompreng* throughout the night, spreading magical waves of music in all directions, hypnotizing the dark, distant forests. Rabichandra heaved a long, deep sigh that came out quivering a little.

"Aren't you going?" Rabi did not know when Biran had squatted behind him. All he knew was that the moonlight had been wiped away from his meditating mind.

"Oh, yes..."

"Get up. A little sleep would do you good."

"Ah, sleep!" Rabi Dev Verma yawned, rose to his feet, stepped into the hut and lit the kerosene lamp. In the mild red glow he sullenly looked over Sindhukumar and his four siblings sleeping peacefully with half-filled bellies. He did not quite know why the thought of the *chompreng* had invaded his mind tonight. Well, he would repair the instrument when things took a turn for the good, he told himself. Gangacharan could not climb the hill in his old age and had hung the musical instrument from the roof. Rabi would love to sit upon the earth mound atop the hillock on moonlit nights like his father used to do. Some kind of a fascination linked the hilltop, *chompreng* and moonlit night — he nodded knowingly.

"Eat something before you leave." Biron muttered in a soft voice, as was her usual habit. The woman could even tell you interesting stories in her soft, halting tone of voice, Rabi thought.

"The children have eaten somehow. Don't you worry about Purna."

"Oh, it's all right. I don't have to eat anything now." Rabi knew pretty well how much Biran was aware of what was there inside his stomach. Yes, you don't have to worry about the little girl, Purna, so long as there is a little milk in her mother's breast. Rabichandra had known its taste — watery, not at all tasty. Purna, the youngest of their five children was lying in a corner of the mattress and a mere look at her brought back memories of her

birth. He could remember the presence of Kamdar and Abhiram in his hut while Biran had been moaning with the birth pang, sweating profusely. And then the bamboo door shook with violent kicks, and was shattered with six gunshots. "Open the door, Rabichandra, you bastard." The intruders had yelled as if in tune with Biran's final scream of anguish when Purna appeared on the devastating scene smeared with gunpowder and dust. And that strange scene had saved them that night. The intruders had dashed into the room and their faces had assumed a bewildered look. After a few anxious moments they had gone out into the dark, slowly closing the broken door behind them.

It all seemed like a nightmare now. He recalled how the next day he had been wondering if he ought to go and inform his in-laws beyond the five hills about the newborn when the police, symbol of terror, invaded the village.

"Tell us, you there! Where are Kamdar and his comrade?" The stick had struck him right on the spine. Rabichandra stumbled, steadied himself and cried piteously, "I don't know, babu!"

"You don't know! Son of a bitch!"

Many of them, including Bahuchandra, the old villager, had been injured by police atrocity.

"Son of a bitch even last night in your room . . .. Alright, you got the thing at home, don't you? Country, I mean."

Rabichandra straightened himself with difficulty. His whole back was aching. He had borrowed five bottles of country liquor from Saral to celebrate Purna's arrival on this charming planet, which he carried out now from the hut, his face distorted with repugnance and pain.

"Don't forget to report to the Out Post thrice every week. You get me?" The Policeman raised his small stick threateningly. Rabichandra nodded.

When he reached the campsite about five miles away trudging

across hills and through the jungles, the eastern sky was getting brighter. The mud path from the main road had been widened and covered with pieces of brick, and the electric bulbs glowed brightly all over the place that had once been a god-forsaken forest. On one side there were big earthen ovens under a tin shed for use of the cooks from town. Rabichandra hastened his pace looking for a suitable place, found one and unloaded the heavy basket. There was hardly any time to lose and he lighted the fire.

"Can I have a glass of tea, uncle?" Some one called in the semi darkness.

"Sorry. Only fried pulse."

"All right. How much for two rupees?

By nine in the morning twenty odd vehicles came from the main road and the microphones blared announcements from several directions. He could not make out a word of it. At ten o'clock sharp, there was the grave, shrill sound of a siren and a man emerged from a glossy car— the minister. The policemen instantly lined up, raising their guns. Rabichandra had witnessed the same proceeding innumerable times while working as a contractor's labourer at this site. The rehearsal was over today. A police van was followed by a few nice-looking cars that whizzed past him towards the big pandal covered on all sides by milk white cloth. He turned his head and looked intently at the boiling oil in the frying pan, wondering from where Kamdar and his comrades collected the money, clothes and ornaments at regular intervals. And the police visited the village regularly looking for them, leaving reddish marks of their misadventures on Rabichandra's back and face. And on the bodies of others, too. And still they lived, as did Kamdar and his comrades, visiting them as guests for a night, keeping everyone starving in the household. Rabichandra remembered how on one occasion they had been shepherded to town in trucks to attend meetings and Kamdar hobnobbed with the ministers to show them his prowess. Rabichandra knew everything and yet could not understand why

they never mentioned hunger; instead asked him to join them.

"How much fries for a rupee?"

"Ten". Fire was raging in the oven; he pulled out two burning logs, half blinded with rising smoke.

"Here is five rupees". The customer lowered his voice and flashed him a conspiratorial glance. "Got that thing?" "I can't get you". Rabi's face showed annoyance.

"Bottle."

"It's not my business. See? The police ... of course they just snatch it away and pay you with a hard smack of their stick." Rabi felt a surge of anger warming up his head. Make liquor? He thought: there is hardly any rice to feed the children and —

"I wonder where to find one."

"I told you it's not my business, didn't I?" Rabi put back the logs into the fire with an expression of exasperation.

At that moment the microphone blared out something unintelligible and eight big buses came over and stood heaving before the camps raising a thick cloud of dust all around the place. He lost count of the people: the bellies of the vehicles gurgled off in a hurry and then he recognized four of them — Kamdar, Comrade, Bhagirath and Malin. And he recognized the things slung across their shoulders; the things that were very closely associated with the birth of his youngest child, Purna.

Did Kamdar glare at him out of the corner of his eyes before entering through the gate? He wondered and gave a start. Leaving his boiling oil behind, he made slowly for the camp, elbowed his way through the crowd and leaned against the fence. The men who had got down from the buses deposited their weapons on a large table and then went away towards an enclosure reserved for them. Rabichandra smiled knowingly. They were surrendering the arms before the minister who stood there with folded hands and

the policemen carried these away to another room. He stood still, motionless. Malin was surrendering his weapon now — the one that had boomed at the moment of Purna's birth. They came one after another — Bhagirath, Comrade and lastly his boyhood companion, Kamdar. Rabi wondered if Kamdar looked askance at him and chuckled as he had done a long time back. And immediately his mind went back to a certain day when Kamdar, his boyhood companion, had exhorted him, almost cajoled him lovingly: "What the hell are you doing, tilling others' fields for a few bucks, unable to fill up so many bellies! Better come along and be independent as we are. Why, just look at what I have got from yesterday's struggle." Kamdar had pulled out a bunch of notes, a pair of gold ear-rings and necklace from his side pocket and laughed out with satisfaction. Rabichandra's body was shaking with repulsion. He had heard all about the incident. In all five persons had been killed, including a woman.

"No use. I'm quite pleased — with what I'm doing." "Go to hell. It's no good trying to help you. Go and work with your spade on which is written your death sentence. If you knew how easy it all is with a single piece of pipe. Ah."

Rabichandra was aware of the existence of machines for cutting pipes in a nearby slum, of the presence there of unknown faces from time to time. And the only way to save oneself from the clutches of the police and Kamdar's men were to keep mum. Rabichandra had neither the time nor any liking for Kamdar's way of life. He had still quite a few unfulfilled dreams, one of them being able to play the *chompreng* at moonlit nights, engrossed in the ever-spreading web of music. A dream inherited from his father. An unfulfilled dream though. He could never play it as his father Gangacharan used to do...

As a child, he had once carried goat's blood in a coconut shell to the old God's house wishing for the fulfilment of Gangacharan's dream. He dreamt, too, about his eldest son, Sindhukumar. Would this son of his be ever able to guess what

Rabichandra dreamt about him?

Rabichandra awoke from his daydream with a start and watched Kamdar smoking leisurely within the enclosure. Did he smile at him? Something flared up inside his head and he hurriedly snaked his way through the thick crowd of men and ran towards his oven. A pariah dog was sucking at the dish of fried pulses. He dashed wildly at the beast.

The gate of the camp was closed late in the night. Rabichandra along with Saral and others trudged back heavily towards their village. Saral was telling him in a weary voice about the seventy-seven goats butchered at the camp that day and about other eatables he was not familiar with.

Rabichandra sat down heavily beside Biran on the dark varandah. The sale proceeds had exceeded by thirty rupees today, he calculated inwardly as he looked at her in the dark. Inside Purna was whimpering in her sleep.

"Have you not seen Sindhu over there?" She asked softly.

The words meant nothing to Rabichandra. He sat stiff and motionless.

"He went there, you know."

"Did he?"

"To the camp. Didn't you see him?"

"No".

"But he went there all right." Biron's soft voice was almost inaudible, soundless.

Rabichandra felt puzzled. Sindhukumar usually spent the days collecting twigs in the jungle, he thought, and there surely was no harm in his going over there. But then what should he go there for? What on earth did she want to convey to him?

"He's come back with this piece of pipe." The soft,

expressionless voice sounded in the dark.

Rabichandra went into the room and fumbled in the dark for Sindhukumar lying on the floor and hit him with the pipe again and again. The boy bore the torment in silence, sat up and leaned against the mud wall. The endless whining of the hungry baby was the sole sound that disturbed the silence.

"Stop her, will you?"

Biran sat quite still, motionless and did not utter a word. Perhaps she was hurt; may be she cursed herself. May be she was thinking of nothing in particular.

It had all happened in the dark and Purna had grown silent. Rabichandra thought he could see the *chompreng* in the pitch-dark and almost wished it were in his hands. Was it a full moon night? Was there any flood of moonlight outside? May be. The darkness seemed to have a great speed and the night was coming to an end. It was in such a moment that the futility of air on earth dawned upon Gangacharan. It was of no use to the old man any more.

Rabichandra did not doze even for a moment. He contemplated. Why did Sindhukumar not moan at all? Could he understand the new language of the hills? Who had given him that blasted piece of pipe? His fancy for the pipe, well.

He stiffened and remembered Kamdar's smile and what Saral had said after counting seventy seven goats in the camp. It was all like a dream. Rabichandra borrowed Saral's eyes and watched the gorgeous scene of the grand feast.

The scene changed the next moment and he visualized Sindhukumar, his head shaven and bare-bodied, the coconut shell in his hand holding nothing but darkness in it that filtered down into a hole in the middle of his hanging pipe...

He felt sick. It was awful. He felt as if the snow in his chest

had started melting, falling in drops into the coconut shell in Sidhukumar's hand and crystallizing once more.

Rabichandra could not understand why he sprang to his feet and then stood in the courtyard. The gloom of the moonlight about him seemed to grow to a point he did not imagine or understand. The green hills and forest land in the distance looked ominously dark to him. He stared down at the piece of pipe he was holding, examined it again and again and suddenly Kamdar's absence started tormenting him. All of a sudden he remembered the big oven he had left at the campsite, covered with a polythene sheet. He imagined himself crouching atop the oven on the snowy hills and felt the flames engulfing his body and spreading with a great ferocity across the world he knew.

Gangacharan's abandoned *chompreng* could no longer remain beyond his reach, could it? The moment that thought flashed across his mind, Rabichandra flung the piece of pipe into the night with an irretrievable audacity. He did not care at all to see where it had landed.

He did not need it. Never did.

Rabichandra went into the room with a rush. He needed the *chompreng* today; at this very moment. If he could not get it right now he was likely to lose Sindhukumar for good. It was the naked truth that faced him now.

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,
acrid 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 advocators of the *bhasa* primacy as the dominant cultural synergy and on the other there are at times the effeteness 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 "Digitaracy 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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