Introduction : (De-)Limiting the Scope

Critical Alternatives

Current critical scene is crowded with a plethora of critical theories and paradigms, advocated and proposed as viable alternatives towards the evolution of Indian literary aesthetics. Before the recent resurgence in criticism, Indian English poetry was primarily studied through Western critical perspectives of imagism, symbolism, formalism, structuralism etc. without any opposition from the Indian academia. Dr. C. D. Narsimhaiah the patriarch, of English Studies in India observes:

...we tended to look up to Western models—first English, then European—for our writing and look at Western literature exclusively through Western eyes, both of which led to a complacency which made us dependent on Western critical criteria and even values in dealing with our own literatures and inhibited exploration of viable Indian alternatives.¹

Critical formulations of critics like T. S. Eliot, Cleanth Brooks, I. A. Richards etc. were applied to this poetry overlooking completely the cultural ramifications of such an incompatible exercise. Bruce King’s Modern Indian Poetry in English (Delhi: OUP, 1987) marks the culmination of such critical (mis-)adventures. Micheal Garman, Christopher Wiseman, Fritz Blackwell, Oliver Perry, William Walsh, David McCutchion alongwith a number of other British and American professors reviewed Indian poetry in English through the parameters of Western theories. Most of the Indian professors too indulged in such a non-productive and a-cultural practice of studying Indian poetry through alien perspectives. These professors were more interested in displaying their hard-earned skill of appropriating Western jargon than in
the responsible evaluation of indigenous poetry.

The cultural incongruity of judging the native through the alien brought in the question of responsibility of such a critical exercise. By 1980\textsuperscript{2} the intentions of the so-called secular, rational and global Western critics and the anglicized Indian critics came under heavy critical scrutiny giving way to an open critical environment. In such an environment of critical speculations Dr. Krishna Rayan, K. Krishanamoorthy, Kapil Kapoor etc. seek a revival of Sanskrit poetics as a distinctly Indian answer to Western poetics. In his *The Burning Bush* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1988) and *Sahitya : A Theory* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1991), Dr. Rayan, hailed in critical circles as modern Kuntaka\textsuperscript{3}, has tried to extend the scope of Anandvardhan’s doctrine of *dhvani* by applying the basic tenets of his *Dhvanyaloka* to diverse forms of contemporary literature in India.

Another group of scholars advocates a synthesis of the Western and Indian poetics, for a simple revival of Sanskrit poetics, they feel, would be too inadequate to study modern and postmodern literature(s). Moderate in their approach, these critics led by Dr. C. D. Narsimhaiah want to retain the best of both the literary traditions. A seminar was held in January 1984 at Dhvanyaloka, Mysore to consider the possibility of reaching consensus on the ‘Formulation of a Common Poetic for Indian Literatures Today.’ In June 1984 a working group, under the chairmanship of Dr C. D. Narsimhaiah constructed a new tentative poetic “which will suit the genius of India.”\textsuperscript{4}

Another school of Indian critics led by Dr. G.N. Devy proposes another revivalist option of reconstitution of our native traditions to counter any monolithic literary paradigm from West and India both. Underlining the multicultural nature of Indian society these critics explore the native literary traditions associated with the growth of different vernacular literatures in India. G. N. Devy’s nativist stance “relates neither to the Sanskrit tradition of poetics nor to the Western literary thought. It relates to literary criticism in the modern Indian languages, or, to use the traditional term, the *bhasas*.”\textsuperscript{5}

Yet another school of Indian critics seeks to construct a working literary
theory from the works of recent Indian theorists like Tagore, Aurobindo, Ananda Coomaraswami etc. The post-colonial critics both in India and abroad add to the complexity of critical scene in India. Their constituency is not limited to India alone. They seek to emancipate entire Third World from the hegemony of the colonial West.

Absence of “Responsible Authority”

This baffling medley of critical alternatives does decenter the position of Western poetics in India, but at the same time it leaves behind a trail of confusion and intellectual chaos. John Oliver Perry in his critical survey of Indian criticism discovers a lack of authentic direction in contemporary Indian criticism: "absent authority' reigns both in India as a nation and society and in Indian English writing of poetry as well as criticism." In this cacophony of critical options, the researcher is left practically with no option. The Western aesthetics, both the new "short-range hedonistic-pragmatic-capitalistic" aesthetic and the older "Western-classical-Christian" approach, happen to be remote and alien to indigenous creativity. The application of such aesthetics to Indian poetry can create cultural distortions. The acceptance of Sanskrit poetics as an indigenous critical framework has its problems. With its rather legalistic and ritualistic perspective on literature, this framework hardly offers any critical manoeuvrability to the researcher. Moreover, its relevance to the study of Indian English poetry is quite limited. The application of Sanskrit poetics to (Indian) English poetry could be culturally as misleading as the application of Western aesthetics on Indian vernacular poetry. The nativist option too proves rather inadequate and even irrelevant in the study on Indian English poetry, for neither English is a language of native India, nor does it have a tradition of centuries to sustain it.

The post-colonial criticism, with its "broad anti-imperialist emancipatory" intent, adds only an "overtly politicized dimension" to related work in the field of Commonwealth Studies. Secondly the entire "bandwagon of
postcolonialism has been hitched up by the West; that is both the notion of postcolonial literature and much of the theoretical discourse developed to understand and interpret it is, for us, an importation. As such postcolonialism may be considered to be the brainchild of an imperialistic cultural system as commonwealth studies before it was."11

Even a critical paradigm based on the works of modern Indian art theorists from Tagore to Coomaraswami does not answer the needs of the contemporary Indian researcher for a number of reasons. Most of these thinkers are the children of Indian renaissance that was triggered and inspired by Western science and empiricism. At best they too seek a synthesis of the East and the West. Their love-hate relationship with the West does not offer a researcher any clear-cut choice. Ashis Nandy, a neo-Gandhian and a champion of modern Indian aesthetics himself points out the basic contradictions in Gandhi and Aurobindo. About Aurobindo he writes: "As a part of his struggle for survival, the West remained for Indian victims like Aurobindo an internal human reality, in love as well as hate, in identification as well as in counter-identification."12 Gandhi also did not antagonize the entire West: "Albeit a non-Westner, Gandhi always tried to be a living symbol of the other West."13

Besides these conceptual and in-built inconsistencies, the theoretical models extant in cultural criticism are in the process of evolution. Only vague broad outlines of a possible critical schema do not equip a researcher sufficiently. He will have to spend much of his time in the reductionist exercise of hammering out a detailed and sustainable critical model from these broad outlines, before actually taking up his main task of criticizing the poetry under study. Moreover, all these indigenously proposed critical theories invoke the cultural past in one way or the other. It becomes quite difficult to choose one alternative to the total exclusion of other alternatives. Thirdly all the current critical paradigms are backward-looking. Such paradigms, even after modifications, have only a partial relevance in the study of present Indian literature.
Comparative Approach — A Plausible Alternative

The monologic character of various critical options necessitates a search for another non-exclusive critical perspective which could provide a comprehensive analysis of contemporary Indian poetry in English. The study of this poetry through some other vernacular poetry or poetries within the matrices of culture could well be one such plausible alternative. John Oliver Perry foresees an utmost relevance of such a comparatist perspective in the study of multi-cultural Indian literature:

For, I hope, well argued and fully explained reasons, I have found that a multidisciplinary, somewhat comparatist approach to each poet's work emphasizing its polycentric character and its individual relationships to diverse cultural norms and literatures is the most intellectually productive in the contemporary literary critical situation.¹⁴

Such a comparatist model generates a dialogue between poets and poetries necessary for the enlargement of creative vision as well as for the expansion of critical frontiers. Shoshana Felman, a Professor of French and Comparative Literature at Yale University, underscores the importance of such a dialogue:

Dialogue is thus the radical condition of learning and of knowledge, the analytically constitutive condition through which ignorance becomes structurally informative; knowledge is essentially, irreducibly dialogic.¹⁵

The dialogic character of comparatist approach does not privilege any one poetry over another; rather it opens hitherto closed channels between different "muses [singing] in isolation".¹⁶ Even today Indian English poetry remains exclusive and even alienated from the mainstream Indian literature. Similarly Hindi poetry continues to be on the margins of world literature as mere regional poetry. Surely, only a comparatist approach can break the barriers between the so-called regional and the so-called international, (through its
inherent dialogic nature) thus liberating both from their restricted constituencies.

Being dialogic, the comparative study generates a non-prescriptive analysis which puts as much emphasis on unity, semblance or identity as on difference and deviance between the binary components of the study. This non-prescriptive analysis however is not non-logocentric or totally decentered as post-structuralists would expect. Under this approach one literary text reconstructs another text engendering fresh possibilities interpretation within the broad matrices of national culture. Such a cultural foregrounding of the comparative analysis forecloses the possibilities of any irresponsible critical free-wheeling; at the same time it reveals the polysemic nature of culture as such. Such a (multi-)cultural framework as an external reference does no way, limit the scope of meaning, rather it impregnates the text(s) with meaning(s).

As in this approach neither of the texts compared is valorized as more authentic or sacrosanct vis-a-vis the other, narrow parochial considerations of self-assumed superiority of one text or one stream of poetry or on the macro-level one culture over another are rendered irrelevant. Some sort of a cultural relativism is always at the back of all comparative studies. "Cultural relativism" is usually restricted, however, to an anthropological doctrine most forcefully expounded by Melville J. Herskovits (1895 --1963) according to which the values and institutions of any culture must be taken to be self-validating. According to this belief, beliefs and principles, particularly evaluative ones, have no universal or timeless validity but are valid only for the age in which, or the social group or individual person by which they are held." In a comparative framework both the components of comparison are taken as self-validating with none lesser than or inferior to another.

Comparative Approach in the West

No critic or a creative writer can escape comparison as a strategy of thinking and speculation. Some critics practice comparative method of
evaluation in a conscious and direct manner, while others resort to comparative outlook unconsciously. Wordsworth's theory of poetry and poetic diction does not spring from a vacuum, it comes as a literary alternative to prevailing neo-classical theory of literature advocated by Pope. Coleridge's theory of imagination advances Wordsworth's debate on imagination by way of comparison only. The point is that the march of mankind to this current phase of postmodernism and post-colonialism from unrecorded pre-historical has been a saga of unending comparative outlook and vision. Comparison between the old the new, the former and the latter, the pre- and the post-, the past and the present etc. — this unintended pattern has always dictated the evolution of mankind. All human thinking is comparative. No thinker or writer can afford to overlook or ignore completely the contemporary as well as past currents of ideas. It however does not imply a timid or unchallenged adherence to some already established canons or traditions. Even a radical rupture from the existing tradition is a two-fold process as it requires firstly the acknowledgment of tradition and later on a break from it. Comparison is thus an inevitably intrinsic component of all assenting/ dissenting human thinking.

In English literary critical tradition, in 1668, John Dryden in his Essay of Dramatic Poesie, through an imaginary dialogue of four friends makes a comparative study of Classical, French and English drama. This is regarded as the beginning of comparative approach proper. Dryden's comparisons of Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Ben Jonson are regarded as milestones of comparative criticism. Dr. Johnson uses comparative method in manner similar to Dryden to study the lives of great literary personalities. He prefers "to make a grand comparison between different kinds of genius, as in his celebrated comparison between Dryden and Pope in his The Life of Pope." Matthew Arnold insists that a literary critic should be well-versed in at least one literary tradition other than his own. As a culture critic, Arnold discovers great similarity between modern culture and ancient Greek culture. In the light of this similarity, he desires modern creative effort to be compared
with classical Greek literature. T. S. Eliot also lays significant stress on the application of comparative method towards the analysis of a literary work.

Comparative Study in the Indian Context

In India, comparative literature has not flourished in the real sense, both quantitatively and qualitatively to match its development in the West. "Several literatures are taught and studied in the same university without any inter-relation." The lingering vestige of Macaulayan arrogance has prevented English studies in India to have any constructive and creative relationship with native literature(s). Only Jadavpur University, Calcutta has a full-fledged department of comparative literature. In other chosen universities, it is taught as a subsidiary / optional course at M.A and M. Phil. levels, but the attitude is still not very receptive towards this discipline.

In a multi-lingual and multi-cultural society like the one in India, comparative literature as a discipline has greater relevance particularly in light of the current debate on the possible emergence of a national literature. Also, whereas in the comparative Western literature the focus is on the study of different national literatures; in comparative Indian literature the focus is on the study of literatures of one nation, or according to some, of one national literature written in many languages. In comparative Western literature the main concern is to counteract the notion of the autonomy of various national literatures to explore the possibilities of some 'universal literature'; in comparative Indian literature the effort is to deprovincialize regional literatures to arrive at some pan-Indian concept of literature. This process of "deprovincialization" does not in any sense aim at homogenizing the diversities of literature(s). Rather the emphasis is on the relationships between literatures; this relationship is established in terms of resemblances as well as differences, convergences as well as divergences. The present "work is simultaneously a labour of association and of disassociation"
Scope of Comparative Approach in the Study.

Comparative analysis in the present study is not simply incidental or implied, rather it is intentional. True it is "that anybody wanting to single out the special characteristics of a work compares it unconsciously almost automatically, with similar works"\textsuperscript{25}, but in this project comparison becomes a conscious method of analysis. Also the comparison between two streams of poetry is undertaken not simply in terms of influence that one stream of poetry may exercise on other and vice-versa,\textsuperscript{26} i.e., it is not undertaken merely to explore the intertextual relationship between two streams of poetry. Nor is comparative approach restricted to influence study,\textsuperscript{27} i.e., study of influence of, say, Upanishads or Western poetry on our national poetry(ies). In its intent, emphasis and execution, the present study is explicitly comparative. The two streams of poetry have been treated as two separate, distinct and autonomous streams of poetry. It is because of this autonomous character of the two streams, that their simultaneous study automatically attains the character of a full-fledged comparative study. Also the purpose of the present comparative enterprise is not just to study one poetry in detail and depth through a broader knowledge of another, rather it is to study both stream of poetry on the same wave length.

Secondly the present comparative research has "an inter-language perspective"\textsuperscript{28} but this perspective is not international, rather it is intra-national. Although the literatures compared are conceived in two languages, i.e., English, the international language, and Hindi, the regional language, yet the dimensions of present study remain essentially national or intra-national. English despite its colonial and alien background, could not be disowned or disowned by the post-colonial nations partly because it had been drilled into young indigenous population in an irrevocable manner, and partly because of its acceptability as inter-national language. English in course of time was co-opted and even assimilated by the respective post-colonial societies in their distinct ways. Local linguistic and cultural habits inter-mingled subtly with the colonial language to generate distinct varieties of English viz. African
English, Canadian English, Indian English etc. English co-existed with other regional vernaculars enriching the cultural and linguistic diversity of post-colonial nations. In the present study English is also taken as much a language of Indian creative effort as various regional languages are. Indian English poetry is not evaluated in any international context but it is studied as very much a part of Indian literature along with Hindi poetry and other regional languages.

Problem of Reference

Besides, the broad external framework of (national) cultural within which a comparative analyst operates, a reference within this framework (as signpost of culture) must be explored from within the binary components comparison to further streamline the study. In a non-referential comparative study, the findings remain vague and general. A proper reference not only streamlines the study, it also provides a focus to evaluate relatively the respective positions of the binary components of comparison. The selection of an appropriate reference then holds the key to the over-all effectiveness of comparative study. The choice of reference is always project-specific.

This reference must not be imposed upon the research from above, because such an exercise sets palpable designs on the entire operation and the results of comparative study. This reference must emerge from within the two components of comparative study. If two authors, for instance, write a great deal on the importance of the divine in human life in their works; then 'importance of divine' emerges as an automatic choice as a reference for comparative study of the two. Or if two poetries speculate a great deal on, say, the end of civilization in their own distinct ways, 'the end of civilization' comes up as the focal point of comparative research. Normally the recurrent concern/motif in two streams of poetry could prove as a proper reference for comparative analysis of the two. Comparative research discovers dissimilarities within the framework of similarities. This framework of similarities
constitutes the framework of reference for comparative analysis.

In the present project, the two streams of poetry involved, hinge around the theme of evolution of man in terms of awareness of culture in their own distinct ways. Extra-human considerations of divinity, religion, nationalism etc. do appear, but only as subsidiary factors augmenting the primary concern, i.e., the theme of evolution of man. Clearly this theme emerges as the natural leitmotif/ reference for comparative analysis of the two. The direction of growth, the level of growth, the speed of growth, the future of this evolution etc. are the various co-ordinates of this reference.

The conceptual framework of ‘the unfinished man’, as outlined, in the next chapter, might give the impression that the comparative research has been realized within this extraneous framework. In fact this framework does not dictate comparison, rather comparative analysis necessitates a theory-building so as to situate the exact status of man in two streams of poetry on some cogent graph. The concept of the unfinished man has been propounded in anticipation of research findings.

Moreover, man as a reference has infinite possibilities primarily because it is not a homogeneously defined centre. This problem of consensus on the evolution of man engenders desired complexity in the reference itself. The problematic potential of the reference has its own advantages. The flexibility in reference ensures a non-paradigmatic evaluation of the phenomena under study. Secondly such a reference does not tamper with the complexity of phenomena. A reductive reference, no doubt, introduces a sharp edge in the over-all findings of research, but the risk of simplification always looms large in such a study. A complex and unstable reference like that of man, placed as he is in the multicultured framework of India, not only retains the complex heterogeneity of experience, it also enriches it horizontally as well as vertically. Man is not an easy structuralist reference because it is not one of the "self-evident givens of understanding" which one can rely without any doubt or self-criticism.
From the post-structuralist point of view, man as reference may appear too stereotyped and conventional to hold any fresh promise. But since man as the most intelligent creature of the universe is instrumental in not only sustaining civilization, but also animating it constantly with his thinking faculty, he as a reference can never get stale or outdated. Any post-modern attempt to disassociate art from the all important context of man and the culture within which he defines himself, therefore is self-defeating. Art's relation with man is eternal. this relationship can be overlooked only to the disadvantage of art and its commitment to man.

Translatability of Poetry: “Anxiety of Authenticity”

Since a comparative study entails an inter-language perspective, its efficacy as a strategy of reading depends mainly on the possibility of translation of different works of literatures. Translation thus is indispensable to all comparative perspectives. In the present project the researcher has translated relevant quotes of Hindi poetry alongwith chosen critical comments of different Hindi scholars, taking due cognizance of the inherent risks involved in such an exercise. These risks are too many.

First, “the translator is an ineffectual angel; he cannot incarnate the ideas in the manner of a poet” If, as Plato puts its poetry is twice removed from reality, the translation of such a poetry becomes four times removed from the original reality. The gap between a writer and his translator despite the best efforts of the latter remains insurmountable. This holds true even when the writer becomes his own translator, because what matters most is not so much the gap between the two persons, i.e., the writer and the translator, as it is the gap between two acts, i.e., the act of creativity and the act of translation. The former is an act of organic originality, the latter is an act of transposing alien aesthetic structure on the former.

Since language is not only writer specific, it is space and time specific
too; the very act of re-writing a text in another genetically dissimilar language in a different space and time matrix becomes almost an improbable proposition. During this research, a number of problems pertaining to this cultural gap cropped up revealing the limits of translation. At times it was felt that the strong vocal protest of Hindi poetry was toned down considerably by its translated English version. At times the original Hindi word is retained in the translation in italics for the simple reason that in target language a culturally parallel word is not available. Naresh Mehta's language, heavily loaded as it is, with mythical references at times becomes virtually intranslatable. Here is one randomly lifted example from his verse showing the virtual intranslatability of his poetry:

\[ Kaisi kevade ki gandh hi akeli/ dhoop-Krishna ka naam le/ mun ko vrinda kiyte deti hai/ Ees prabhurupa Radha-rupa ko/ kabhi thakur kah baanshi mein pukara hai? \]

Binary Components of Comparative Study

In this comparative work, two contemporary streams of poetry of contemporary India have been compared, revealing different levels of acceptance/assimilation/experience of 'modernism' by the poets of the two streams.

New Hindi Poetry (Nai Kavita)

Since 'new Hindi poetry' as a movement within contemporary Hindi literature continues to hold the centre-stage even now, it is prudent, from the point of view of research, to delimit its sprawling canvas to manageable limits. In the present work this is achieved through a selective study of three 'Saptak-poets', namely Sarveshwar Dayal Saxena, Bhavani Prasad Mishra and Naresh Mehta. These poets are selected without any palpable design. However, the consideration of their being leading and established practitioners of new Hindi poetry did play a decisive role in this exercise of selection. Moreover it was realized that so far only Ajyeya and Muktibodh have
monopolized the critical limelight in the name of new Hindi poetry. Since
new Hindi poetry is a variegated creative response to contemporary Indian
reality, it was critically imperative to broaden its perspective through a study
of poets who were often sidelined by the critics for their being dissident and
different from 'the canonical new Hindi poetry' best represented by Ajjeya
and to an extent by Muktibodh.34

In the present project only the selected works of these three new
Hindi poets have been undertaken for a number of reasons. First since the
project covers the time span of roughly 1960 to 1990, only those poems/
works which were published during this time-frame have been taken up.
Secondly, various khand-kavyas or prabandha-kavyas written by any of the
three new Hindi poets have been dropped from the study because in modern
Indian English Poetry there is a clear dearth of such such sustained narrative
poetry. Also these kavyas are narrative in their over-all design, they do not
fit in in the theme-based comparative study of the two streams of poetry. At
places references, most preferably in notes, have been made to these narrative
kavyas.

In the last chapter before conclusion, two narrative poems — Atmajayee
by Kunwar Narain and Jejuri by Arun Kolatkar — have been compared
transgressing the above suggested lines of delimitation. This chapter is
conceived in the form of a case study. It is for this reason that these two
texts have been incorporated in the present research project. This also in a
way, ensures that the narrative poetry either in Hindi or English does not
remain untouched.

ii. Modern Indian English Poetry

After the metaphysical and romantic poetry of Tagore and Aurobindo
during the pre-independence period, a new young breed of English poets
descended on the Indian literary scene promising to veer the direction of
poetry from mere transcendental and abstract notes to real and concrete
aspects of life. These intellectual poets dismissed the rarefied poetry of
Tagore, Aurobindo, Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu as other-wordily and mystical. Here are some of the chosen comments by these new poet-cum-critics:

...it is rather unfair to pick on Sri Aurobindo because no other Indian poet was half as bad, none so nebulous or verbose or who so thoroughly confused the inflated with the sublime.

— K. N. Daruwalla.

It [the poetry of Tagore, Aurobindo etc.] has spoilt a good deal of the Indo-Anglican past; it can without exaggeration spell ruin for the future...Poem is not a spasmodic emotion, but a delicate choreographic pattern within a state of balanced tension produced in a refined sensibility. ...— P. Lal and K. Raghavendra Rao

These new poets of the 'post-Aurobindo' phase are termed as modern in the present project for not only they veered away from the traditional Miltonic hangover of the earlier poets, they also were open to modern literary and non-literary influences. With a visibly greater accent on the private and the immediate these new poets rebelled against the moralizing attitude of the earlier poetry. In terms of outlook, these poets revealed an agnostic, highly critical and eclectic attitude towards life.

In the present thesis three leading Indian English poets have been taken up for study as representative of modern Indian English poetry. These three poets — Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan and Jayanta Mahapatra — have been selected not because they offer any easy one-to-one comparison with the three new Hindi poets or that they offer any easy and well-defined common paradigm of aesthetics and values. Their sustained poetic endeavour and their inclusion in almost all the anthologies of modern Indian English poetry happen to be the two important considerations for their selection as leading poets of English in India in the present thesis.
A Word on Notes

In the comparative framework of the study, notes/references attain gather special significance for primarily two reasons. First, sometimes comparison has been realized through notes only, particularly when it was found difficult to incorporate such (minor) comparisons in the running argument. Secondly, the complexity of the argument often has its own fall outs; it is to accommodate such vital fall-outs of the arguments that notes, at times extended notes, have been placed towards the end of each chapter. These notes at times, out do the chapter in terms of their import. As such in the present study notes are not mere accessories or fillers they are inseparable part of the thesis. Notes, extend and qualify the logic in the main text of the chapter(s).
Notes


2. Professor C. D. Narsimhaiah, in 1965, summarized a conference on *Literary Criticism: European and Indian Traditions* with the bleak (and very Indian English) expression: "Responsible criticism isn't there." Subsequently to remedy this situation, he organized through his Dhvanyaloka/Literary Criteriaon Centre a number of seminars, conferences and collection of papers: *Indian Literature in English* (1977), *English in India* (1982) and *The Climate of Criticism* (1983) -- this information is culled from John Oliver Perry, *Absent Authority: Issues in Contemporary Indian English Criticism* (Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1992). Henceforth this book is referred to as *Absent Authority*.


6. Homi Bhabha, Ihab Hassan, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak Chakravorty etc. are the leading champions of the post-colonial theory abroad. Aijaz Ahmed, Meenakshi Mukherji, Ashis Nandy, Makarand Paranjpe etc. are the Indian advocates of post-colonialism. Neo-Marxists and neo-Gandhians are included among the post-colonialists.


9. Ibid., p. 33.


13. Ibid., p. 48.


17. Culture, as a critical framework for the present comparative study, has neither been invoked with its traditional universalistic implications, nor with its new historicist discursive connotations. If universal culture is an absolute totalizing fallacy, an unqualified celebration of the local
culture(s) at the expense of a 'national culture' is gross libertinism. New historicists with their strategy of reading 'history as text' have problematized culture to chaotic and almost decultural levels. Influenced by new critical theories of deconstruction and post structuralism, new historicists see national culture as a pure fiction, something unreal, an essentialized abstraction. Lynn Hunt, a new historicist insists on interpreting culture in terms of current literary theories; he says, "... a culture cannot be simply read as a transparent representation of some more basic set of codes; it has to be interpreted, and interpretation involves issues like those current in literary theory." ("History Beyond Social Theory" in The States of Theory: History Art, and Critical Discourse, ed. Darid Carroll, California: Stanford University Press, 1990, p.98). Alvin Toffler, a contemporary sociologist of Future Shock fame, also sees a decentering of cultures: "Cultures, too like products are demassifying. And the very multiplicity of media accelerates the process". (Power Shift, New York & London etc.: Bantam Books, 1990, p.341). Raymond Williams, a culture critic with marxist leanings contests Leavisite holistic conceptions of culture in favour of "mass civilization versus minority culture topos" (quoted by Andrew Molner, "Cultural Materialism, Culturalism and Post Culturalism: the Legacy of Raymond Williams" Theory, Culture and Society, Vol 11, No.1 Feb. 1994, p.46)

Notwithstanding this current rhetoric of multiculturalism, the present study believes in the sanctity of 'national culture' -- a culture understood not merely in terms of an arithmetical aggregation of local cultures within the nation, but as one that is built on collective history and shared cultural experiences. Indian culture has definite cultural, philosophical and historical national sign posts transcending the local and the regional. For instance, the epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana provide a cultural backdrop to practically all cultures of India. Mahatama Gandhi also did not 'belong to a region, he had his appeal throughout India. Gandhi as 'man of flesh and blood' with his nation-wide appeal poses challenge to new historicist stance of dubbing the national' as
mere fictional. The philosophic ideal of advait or non-duality continues to be a cherished ideal of all sub-cultures (minority or majority) in India. Colonial past, as a collective experience also ossifies the so-called abstract nation into a living reality. Here Fanon's observation on the role of colonial post towards the solidification national consciousness is quite relevant:

We believe that the conscious and organized undertaking by a colonized people to re-establish the sovereignty of that nation constitutes the most complete and obvious cultural manifestation that exists. It is not alone the success of the struggle which afterwards gives validity and vigour to culture; culture is not put into cold storage during the conflict . . . . (Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, London: Penguin Books, 1963, p.197)

Indian culture has its definite boundaries, set down by its mobile ancestors. Mahatama Gandhi observes:

.... our leading men travelled throughout India either on foot or in bullock-carts. They learned one another's languages and there was no aloofness between them. What do you think could have been the intention of those farseeing ancestors of ours who established Setubandha (Rameshwar) in the South, Jagannath in the East and Hardwar in the North as places of pilgrimage? You will admit they were no fools. They know that worship of God could have been performed just as well at home. They taught us that those whose hearts were aglow with righteousness had the Ganges in their own homes. But they saw that India was undivided land so made by nature. They therefore argued that it must be one nation. Arguing thus, they established holy places in various parts of India. And we Indians are one as no two Englishmen are. (Mahatama Gandhi, Selected Letters I, Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1960, p.40).

In the Indian context, therefore 'nation' and 'culture' are not two distinct constructs, rather they tangibly and inevitably overlap; they bear a symbiotic relation with each other.

Stallybrass (London: Fontana Press, 1986 rpt.), p.736. Henceforth the dictionary is referred to as DMT.


20. "Matthew Arnold, translating Ampere's use of *histoire comparative*, was apparently the first to use the term in English (1848). The French have preferred the term used earlier by Villemain, who had spoken of *littérature comparée* (1829), after the analogy of Cuvier's *Anatomie comparée* (1800)." -- Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, "General, Comparative, and National Literature" in *Theory of Literature* (London: Penguin Books), p.46.


22. "Comparative literary theory seeks universals through particulars, which it interprets in a wider perspective. The intersection of the particular and the universal as well as of the historical and the timeless is essential to a comprehensive theory of literature . . . ." -- K. Chellapan, "Comparative Literary Theory: An Indian Perspective" in *CL*, p.305.


26. Such cross-fertilization, in the post-structuralist jargon is called 'intertextuality'. Jaidev reflects on intertextuality thus: "Intertextuality tends to make the text meta-criticism, a commentary on how texts are 'manufactured'. It is the most effective way of demonstrating how a new text recycles or rearranges the old texts, how literary production resembles bricolage" -- "Intertextuality and Influence: Connections and
Boundaries" in CL, p.139.

27. "In influence studies the comparative method does not consist only in
the tracing of sources and models. It is a matter of showing what the
receiving author has made of his model, how he has reshaped it in
subordination to his own artistic intentions..." -- Inder Nath Choudhary,
Comparative Indian Literature: Some Perspectives, p.4.

28. Ibid. p.2.

29. "Deconstruction and Post-structuralism" in CLC, ed. Robert Con Davis,
p.206.

30. "To talk of the nature of truth, like that of God or self, is an unprofitable
subject. There are no absolute referents in the form of `intrinsic nature'
or `pure essence'..." -- Gurpreet Mahajan, "Reconsidering Postmodernism: What is New in the Old Lamp". Economics and Political

31. K. Ayyappa Panikar, "The Anxiety of Authenticity: Reflections on Literary

32. Pabitra Kumar Roy, "A Reflection on the Translatability of Poetry and
the Odyssey of a Song" in CL, p.309.

33. Naresh Mehta, "Dhoop-krishna" in Utsava (Allahabad: Lokbharti
Prakashan, 1979), p.28.

34. For instance even E. V. Ramakrishnan's Making It New (Shimla: IIAS,
1995) centres around the "high modernist" Ajyeya and "avant-garde"
Muktibodh as two authentic champions of new Hindi poetry. Sarveshwar,
Bhavani and Naresh Mehta are conspicuous by their absence for the
simple reason that do not fit in in his arbitrary scheme of high modernism
and avant-garde ect.. Kedar Nath Singh "a peripheral voice" (according
to author) has been taken up for study but only under the category of
"Living on the Fault-line: Art and Activism". The author discovers a
"dissident sensibility" in his poetry negating in a way, his own thesis of 'high modernism' and 'avant-garde' as the hallmarks of new Hindi poetry.
