CHAPTER – III

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Stream of Consciousness is a phrase for psychologists and it was William James who coined it. According to him, the Stream of Consciousness has different rates of change, and there are various stages in the process of thinking. The process of human thought is comparable to the life of a bird which consists of 'alteration of flights and perching'. Sometimes thoughts are slow and sometimes rapid and racing, William James calls the resting places of thoughts 'substantive parts' and the places of flights 'transitive parts'. But the word 'consciousness' as well as the word 'stream', are used figuratively and hence both are less accurate and less stable. When the term 'Stream of Consciousness' is used as a literary label, it attempts to identify an approach for the presentation of psychological aspects of character in fiction.

A novel that uses the Stream of Consciousness can be identified most quickly, because its essential subject matter is the consciousness of one or more characters. Consciousness covers a larger area of unrestricted mental activities, and should not be mistaken for intelligence or memory. Consciousness indicates the various levels of pre-consciousness to the highest level of reasonable, communicable awareness. But a Stream of Consciousness novel is concerned with not only the rational aspects of human mind, but also its inchoate state.

Serious misreading and unsound evaluations have led to total misunderstanding of the novels that are generally labeled under Stream of Consciousness. Stream of Consciousness technique cannot be identified with the portrayal of incoherence of mind, or the symbolism, or with the 'hypersensitive' as
William Hawkins\(^3\) thought or with the montage as Harry Levin\(^4\) believed. Robert Humphrey remarks:

> We may define Stream of Consciousness fiction as a type of fiction in which, the basic emphasis is placed on exploration of the pre-speech levels of consciousness for the purpose, primarily, of revealing the psychic beings of the character.\(^5\)

The phrase Stream of Consciousness may simply mean ‘inner awareness’. While William James was formulating psychological theory, he discovered that “memories, thoughts, and feelings exist outside the primary consciousness and they appear to one, not as a chain, but as a stream, a flow”.\(^6\) Hence, Stream of Consciousness literature is psychological literature but the concern is not with the psychological theory but with novelistic subject matter. It is visible in Virginia Woolf, in James Joyce, in William Faulkner and in Dorothy Richardson, and fictional art has been enriched by the depiction of inner states.

To Henry James, “experience is never limited and it is never complete”.\(^7\) Hence, consciousness can mean awareness of human experience. By human experience, a novelist may mean sensations and memories, feelings and conceptions, fancies and imaginations and even intuitions, vision and insights. Unlike a psychologist, a novelist includes not only ‘intellectual life’, but also ‘Spiritual life’ under the label ‘mental life’. Hence the twentieth Century writers expected knowledge to include intuition, vision and sometimes even the occult.

A novelist using the Stream and Consciousness technique is concerned with,

> ...mental and spiritual experience – both the whatness and howness of it. The whatness includes the categories of mental experiences: sensations, memories, imaginations, conceptions, and intuitions. The howness includes symbolizations, the feelings and the process of associations. It is often impossible, to separate the ‘what’ from the ‘how’. Is, for example, memory a part of mental content or is it a mental process? Such fine distinctions, of course, are the not the
concern of novelists as novelists. Their object, if they are writing Stream of Consciousness, is to enlarge fictional art by depicting the inner states of their characters.\(^8\)

Time plays as important a role as character depiction in the Stream of Consciousness technique. The characters of Stream of Consciousness fiction are controlled by both chronological and psychological time. The growing sense of uncertainty and the unpredictable changes in society have destroyed stability and assuredness in the modern period, resulting in man becoming more introverted, engaged in constant search. This new conception of time has influenced “The theme, the form and the medium language”.\(^9\)

Stream of Consciousness attempts to transcend or modify the arbitrary and conventional time and space barriers. Virginia Woolf and James Joyce are the most frequently acknowledged brilliant exponents of this. Quality of consciousness itself demands a movement that is not rigid clock progression. The past, present and future intermingle, shift back and forth, thus making the ‘is’, ‘was’ and ‘will be’ into one state of timelessness. David Daiches points out that there are two methods in this narrative technique.

One is that in which the subject can remain fixed in space and his consciousness can move in time – the result is time- montage or the super imposition of images or ideas from one time on those of another; the other possibility of course, is to time to remain fixed and for the spatial element to change, which result in space – montage.\(^10\)

M.T. Vasudevan Nair in one of his interviews recollects his unique experience with ‘the timelessness of time’ on his visit to Nainital. He remembers vividly, how he could feel something in everything waiting, waiting for the arrival of somebody.

It was during the lean season, when there were no tourists, that I made my visit. I saw first the posts being painted, boats being repaired – activities in anticipation of a great inflow of tourists in summer. Nainital impressed me as a place in eager expectation of something.
There was an atmosphere of arrested time waiting in anticipation. It wasn't mere anticipation alone. It looked as if time stood still and stagnant. I thought, the beginning of *Manju* (Mist) should be from here, it should be from Vimala... as Vimala observes her strands of grey hair in the reflection on the mirror.11

"*Manju*" is a highly acclaimed novella, where the fragile mists of memories, emotions and time, weave through the haunting narrative set at the hill-station resort of Nainital. The Protagonist Vimala narrates through the Stream of Consciousness, her waiting of nine long years for a letter or a phone call or a visit from "the trim mustached, dashing twenty-nine-year old spendthrift and wanderer," Sudhir Kumar Misra. She recollects and relives the passionate affair filled with many promises but, her vigil is of no avail. Along with her, Buddu the bastard son of a tourist Englishman waits for his White father with the aid of a faded photograph. The mountain mist becomes a metaphor for the haunting memories that rule the present life and the future longings of the characters.

Stream of Consciousness is the most appropriate technique of narration for the theme of *Manju* because the protagonist transcends the boundaries of clock hours and finds herself continuously vocalising her feelings and emotions, dreams and nightmares, desires and disappointments. She is ever found in conversation with her mind or to put it more technically, in a pre-speech predicament. Her soliloquies have a special significance because they present the subtle complexities of her psyche. Even the technique of Single Consciousness could not have achieved the effect which the Stream of Consciousness technique has achieved in this novel. This is so because, memory is not a content that could be analysed with artistic objectivity, but is a mental process where the speech has to come from within. As this technique is one of the most demanding artistic tools, M.T acknowledges how he had to rewrite the
original version of the story imposing upon him literary hardships. *Manju* put me into lot of difficulties. After completing the first version of the story, I was very dissatisfied. The story ran to lot of pages. It had descriptions on Amarsingh’s household and his life. After the first version, it appeared to me that these details were unnecessary. It looked that they just added to the bulk of the pages, doing nothing substantial to the story. So I pruned it. Yet it wasn’t satisfactory. Then I decided to rewrite it completely and did so, retaining the opening of the story as it was in the first version.12

Thus, *Manju* published in the year 1964, put to acid test M.T’s genius in the handling of the unique narrative tool, the Stream of Consciousness. This novel has won critical acclaim as no other novel in Malayalam has, and has succeeded in introducing the western narrative technique popularised by James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson and Elizabeth Bowen. M.T’s *Manju* reveals that human consciousness has very deep layers, and buried under the conscious are the subconscious and the unconscious. Thoughts buried deep in the unconscious and subconscious surface constantly and portrayal of human personality will not be complete without giving due weightage to these hidden elements. As Virginia Woolf appropriately describes in the ‘Common Reader’:

> The mind receives myriads of impressions — trivial, fantastic, evanescent or engraved with sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms... life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and un-circumscribed spirit, what ever aberration or complexity it may display with as little mixture of the alien and the external as possible? 13
"Manju" is a dramatic lyric as it gives us a peep into the soul of Vimala, the protagonist through a sequence of scenes and moments. With limited number of human beings put within a narrow framework of time and place, M.T makes the reader continually conscious of wider horizons in the life experience that is conveyed. The writer works with a sequence of selected moments from the lives of his characters, both past and present with the anticipations and apprehensions of future, and an artistic order is provided by their emotional links with each other. Manju is not a completed story and there is no summing up. The end indicates an indefinite wait, filled with anxiety and anguish. The omniscient novelist effaces himself, and the reader shares directly the experiences of the characters of the novel and becomes acutely conscious of the experiences that have influenced them.

'Manju' presents a thirty one year old woman, Vimala leading a lonely life as the resident tutor of a local school in Nainital. Her father ran away from his native village in Kerala after a family feud and became a potato research officer and an apple orchard owner at Almora in kumaon hills much later. Vimala's mother had developed a clandestine relationship with one Alfred Gomez, and her younger brother Babu had taken to ganja addiction. Her younger sister Anitha is in love with a local doctor's son. After having taken seriously ill, her father had been bed ridden for more than two years. He has lost his speech almost and most often Vimala has wished death to her father which would only be a blessing. She left her family because she could not put up with her mother's relationship with Mr.Gomez. She met Sudhir Kumar Misra in a morning in May 1995 in a bus. She fell in love with him and developed passionate relationship with him. Sudhir has just kept her waiting for nine long years in futile. With the arrival of every spring, Vimala renews her hope that Sudhir may turn up all
of a sudden along with the tourists as he did one day nine years ago. Like Buddhu, a young local boat man, who awaits the arrivals of his White father as a tourist, Vimala also waits aimlessly for her lover.

That year a Sardarji comes to Nainital, and stays in the boarding house, Golden Nook, a lodge in her neighbourhood. Vimala learns later that the middle aged mirthful, fun loving Sardarji is a lung cancer patient at his exit stage. The news of her father’s death takes her to her family, but she rushes back to her precious privacy in the teacher’s quarters of her school. *Manju* closes with Vimala and Buddhu waiting for the summer season of next year, which they hope may bring along their dear ones.

Vimala, is absorbed in her personal sorrows but her life as seen through her experience shows her willingness to live, the healing power of time, and the various demands and obligations she is compelled to concede for the sake of others. Her present does not minimise the pain of her past, but encourages her to endure.

Like the western masters of Stream of Consciousness novels, M.T also seems to share certain common assumptions of such writers namely, that the significant existence of human beings is to be found in their mental-emotional process and not in the outside world, that this mental emotional life is disjointed and illogical, and that a pattern of free psychological association rather than logical relation determines the shifting sequence of thought and feeling. However, since consciousness is neither a stream nor a thing given to verbal articulation, this technique is also to some extent artificial and convention bound as any other literary technique, though it may appear by giving an illusion of preserving a life like resemblance to real consciousness.
James Joyce, a master craftsman of this technique, has gone to that extent of bringing in physical changes to the graphical representation of pre-speech and speech.

Joyce’s approximation involved the removal of customary signals such as quotation marks, hyphens and compounds, and chapter numbers and titles. By moving the written text closer to the realm of speech, which is normally unpunctuated, Joyce gave the impression, in effect, of moving his discourse from the outer world of the reading eye to inner world of the listening ear.14

Virginia Woolf also held the traditional structure of a novel as a distortion of life because life cannot be divided up satisfactorily into chapters. She believed that, life, to the person experiencing it, is far more chaotic and unpredictable than is usually the case with a story. On reading her novels for the first time, the reader may experience some difficulties that are less commonly encountered when reading a novel written in a more traditional style. The lack of a story, the absence of a narrator who explains a situation, event and character compels the reader to take longer time to understand what is happening. After her novel ‘Night and Day’ her works have no easily recognizable ‘Story’ and her methods of writing make great demands on the reader who may not achieve a global view of the novel until after a second or third reading. Hence Virginia Woolf warns her reader in ‘How Should One Read a Book’ thus:

Wait for the dust of reading to settle; for the conflict and the questioning to die down; walk, talk, pull the dead petals from the rose, or fall asleep. Then suddenly without our willing it, for it is thus that Nature undertakes these transitions, the book will return but differently. It will float to the top of the mind as a whole.15

Similarly M.T, who was influenced by the western masters and their innovative techniques of narration does not offer any help to his reader to gain complete comprehension of Manju in the first reading. The form and content of this novella remain challenging because they are inseparable. Unless the reader acquires a
considerable knowledge about the technique of Stream of Consciousness, he will find it definitely difficult to comprehend beyond the first few lines of the novel. Summarising the story of Manju is bound to be unsatisfactory because the narrative does not function within any definite traditional blueprint. The maximum help a reader receives from the author is in the form of chapterisation, though that also remains unorthodox. As has been felt by James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, life cannot be contained within rigid compartments, and similarly an artistic portrayal of life cannot be chapterised. M.T uses the Stream of Consciousness to fathom the psyche of Vimala, around whom Manju revolves. Characters are symbols and metaphors. They are both individuals and representatives.

Though for structural convenience the novella Manju has fifteen chapters, its existence in the reader's mind is without any such regimentation. It opens in a room of the quarters of the resident tutor of a girl's school in Nainital. With the very first sentence, 'there was nothing to read' the stream begins to flow preparing the reader to take the role of a listener. Vimala has been working in the school as a tutor in zoology for nine years. She is presented in a state of boredom as she attempts to read through some book to kill time. She takes up a book that narrates the story of a voluptuous beauty, who bargained the crown of a kingdom by offering the pleasures of her body. Vimala had read all the books in her room from cover to cover more than once. She reads two or three pages of the book in her hand, and tosses it on the bed and closes her eyes. She feels the chillness creeping through the slits in the closed window. The silence which prevailed is a strange harmony of an orchestra of various sounds. There is no state of complete silence, her mind muses. Perhaps silence is a kind of music. The dust of moth eaten wood that showers from the ceiling
sporadically producing soft noise, the distant cracking of twigs, and the far away cry
of crickets produce the symphony of silence.

Along with Vimala, the reader finds himself listening to the synchronised
sound-effect on a misty day at Nainital. The cry of the cricket reminds Vimala of the
gloomy nights on the monsoon soaked arecanut grooves in Kerala. But the crickets’
chirping even in day time in the Kumaon hills surprises her. She has taught zoology
for nine years, but still hasn’t any idea of the habits and habitats of these insects.

In the Kumaon hills, at day time in the enveloping silence the crickets’
shreaked... Phylum Arthropoda... Class...? O God! What foolish
thoughts! The symphony of silence is drowned by the mist that came
into the room... Woke up on hearing a knock at the door.

(Manju. p.21)

M.T transports the reader from the observer’s state to the state of a confidant,
who listens to the interior monologue of the mind of the character along with the
story. Vimala enjoys a great freedom of processing through her psyche that gets
projected in the form of rapid succession of random thoughts. Psychological free
association of thoughts is an essential component of the Stream of Consciousness.
Vimala’s command over her vocabulary with which she familiarise the reader to her
pre-speech, the working of her sense organs that are sensitized to specific sounds and
sights, and an insight into her thought pattern, throw light on the inexplicable inner
self of her nature. M.T uses a style that was perfected by Virginia Woolf and James
Joyce regarding the written representation of the thought process of the protagonist.
The pre-speech of Vimala is not enclosed with the punctuation marks that go with the
dialogues rendered in direct speech.
M.T reminds the reader that our talks are not confirmed to the present moment as our present actions are. One can recreate any remembered event or thought along side any present thought or feeling in one's mind as Vimala does in the first few lines of *Manju*. The capacity of human mind to coexist simultaneously in the past memory and the present reality is normal, though it may appear an unconscious habit. In the hands of M.T., both past and present gain significance. To give a definite pattern to the indefinite mosaic forms of human mind, he adopts certain typographical techniques. M.T records the external conversations which Vimala has with other characters of the novel within inverted comas and differentiates it from her internal speech through the absence of such specific punctuation marks. As punctuation is the body language of a written text, M.T takes the reader closer to the mind of the speaker, thereby making him a listener rather than a reader. Sentences in the prespeech are framed without subject, the doer. Deliberate dropping of personal pronouns that hint first person narrative by M.T. gives the overall narration the desired effect of objective subjectivity. The mind of the speaker Vimala, does not disclose itself to the reader with the personal pronoun 'I' as is seen in the novels written in traditional style.

M.T's use of punctuation and pronouns take his style closer to that of Virginia Woolf's. The punctuation of 'To the Lighthouse' is often considered puzzling because like *Manju*, it is a book with very little recorded conversation. Such conversations are enclosed in quotation marks and unspoken thoughts or the pre-speech are left without them. Unlike M.T, Virginia Woolf makes an extensive use of parenthesis to indicate the shifting point of view within a paragraph to interpose a different layer of thought and to give the reader a visual image among the thoughts.
M.T while giving a glimpse into the 'inner life' of Vimala in the opening chapter, gives an exposure to the reader her ‘outer life’. A knock at the door awakes her as she expects Amar Singh to be at the door. M.T tactfully bridges the invisible gap between Vimala's thought process and the immediate present in which she lives, as her memory is taken out of focus and reality is brought into the frame of action. “It isn’t the mist in the room, only the eyes to be blamed for the blurred vision as they are covered with a thin film of sleep”. (Manju, p.21)

Vimala finds her student Rashmi Vajpai at the door. She has come seeking Vimala’s permission for leaving home. All the other student boarders have left one by one in the last two days. Only Rashmi is left behind. She is big for her age and is clad in a colourful Kameez with large flowers. Her bottle green woolen cardigan is unbuttoned even in the chill weather. Vimala wonders whether she can detect a gleam of happiness in Rashmi’s eyes as she speaks to her. She even suspects a hidden plan of Rashmi halting at Haldani from where Vimala knew that there is no connecting bus service immediately to Rashmi’s native place. There is a young man standing near the arched entrance, reading the notice board who Rashmi introduces in an indifferent voice as her brother. Vimala is sure of some foul play in her student’s behaviour. As a resident tutor, she has great responsibility towards the physical and emotional well being of her students. Vimala even thinks of sending a telegram to Girija Sankar Vajpai, Rashmi’s father that Rashmi has already left for home. But she can visualise an agitated family hit by an emotional cyclone and a frightened girl standing trembling in a corner. As Vimala’s mental eye keeps painting the picture of the Vajapai’s household at the receipt of the telegram, her physical eye gazes at the girl walking with the young man.
Would Rashmi reach home tonight? The through bus to her place was only the next morning at half-past seven. Remember of a Tourist Bungalow in Haldani. The flush on Rashmi’s cheeks and the dancing flames in her eyes announced the arrival of the moments awaiting her there. (Manju, p.23)

Vimala’s sensitive and observant nature records even the minute detail of her immediate environment. She noticed that the Youngman who had come to collect Rashmi had grey eyes. She wanted to ask Rashmi how her ‘brother’ got those grey eyes. Looking at Rashmi’s face that changed colours rapidly, she could read the painful plea lurking in a sixteen year old overgrown girl. Vimala said to herself “Rashmi, don’t think you have fooled me, girl”.

After her conversation with Rashmi, Vimala goes back to her room and sets right things that were lying all around. Her mind is kept busy with endless thoughts that keep her engaged while cleaning the room. While dusting the paper flowers on the wall stand, faded and enveloped in a film of dust, she notices that the calendar still said that it was January. But in reality, it is April eleventh. Throwing open the windows and letting the cool breeze caress her, she watches the tourist cottage which was once called ‘Chandrakanth’ but has now become ‘Golden Nook’. Her mind wanders over the hill slopes covered with clusters of pine trees, and unconsciously faint memories of another winter come flooding into her mind. Summer afternoons were always beautiful and as the sun shines higher, the snow will melt into small streams. Strangely her mind calls them ‘yesterday’s tears’.

In the entire twenty three bed-roomed house, her room has the greatest blessing of having a window, which opened into the scenic beauty of snow clad mountains glistening in the afternoon sun. It was the notorious Miss. Pushpa Sarkar, who occupied the room before Vimala stepped into her place as a teacher. Miss.
Pushpa Sarkar was accused of having brought a young man to her room in the silence of the night. Terrible things were said about her the moment Vimala stepped into the school premises. But she could not believe that a lean hollow cheeked woman, who never showed even the slightest hint of remorse when she was compelled to resign, was capable of such doings.

Vimala is in a continuous conversation with herself, a listener to the voice of her memories. She has no other choice but to be so. Loneliness educates a person to be his own great friend. Often Vimala steps out of the Stream of Consciousness wondering at her own thoughts. She decides to go out for a stroll for, the bright mellowed evening looked too inviting to resist. The process of her getting ready to go out is also accompanied by her mental preparation for the same. As she stands before the mirror, she looks at herself optimistically and the stray silver lines of her hair reminds her of the comment made by the maid servant of the boarding house, “the Madrasis who come to live in the hills go grey early”. After informing Amar Singh, Vimala goes for her walk, and above the lake and the city flimsy clouds of mist float about like ‘the long-forgotten fragment of a day-dream’ (Manju, p.26).

Like Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway, M.T’s Vimala knows instinctively to select only those impressions and those expressions that are needed to build up a picture. From the very beginning, Vimala takes the reader continuously and convincingly through her thoughts, feelings and impressions of the place and people around. The reader is inside her mind as she reads, talks, dresses and muses. The reader sees her as she sees herself, reading her memories and listening to her voice and knowing people as she knows or has known through the years. The reader is not allowed to follow chronologically through years because everything is in
permanent present. Time stands stagnant though waves of memories cause ripples on the surface of mind. This is what M.T meant when he observed that there was something about Nainital that could arrest time and hold it still.16

Vimala’s essential being is in a continuous flow, painting pictures with words adding colour to the scenes through vibrant words which not only capture the beautiful shades of thoughts but also the unheard melodies of memory. Vimala’s perception of the tangible world around and the abstract world within forces her to exercise great care in the selection of words. Without her help, the reader will not be able to understand M.T’s invitation into his character’s personal and private self.

The first chapter has a number of passages where the reader is introduced not only to the inner and outer worlds of Vimala, but also to her opinions, and judgments, admiration and apprehension about them. For example the reader has no chance or need to formulate a different opinion about Rashmi Vajpai other than what Vimala holds. Her assessment of her own appearance and her attempts to improve her looks do not allow the reader to form any opinion about Vimala objectively. Through the Stream of Conscious technique, M.T incapacitates the reader from holding an individual point of view. To assess and know Vimala, the reader has to be within her mind and with her mind and not with the reader’s mind.

…I am looking less tired. Face is not very pale. As the mirror is fixed in a dark corner of the wall, stray silver lines in the hair are not visible…
The face is dry without moisture. I applied powder, put on lip stick; the darkened lips now took on the colour of blood. Taking the blue coat from the hanger came out and locked the door.
Amar Singh sat on the portico steps smoking hookah. He is barefoot and has worn a shirt and a soiled large knee-length kakki trousers and an unbuttoned sweater full of holes.
“Amar Singh, I am going out”
“Ji”
Puffing out smoke through his nostrils and mouth, he raised his eyes with grey lashes.
“I’ll take a short stroll”
“Ji”
She went down the steps slowly. (Manju, p.26).

Even as early as the first chapter, the reader gets familiar with the psyche of Vimala. Nothing is insignificant and no detail is irrelevant. Every passing moment is intensely lived and intimately recorded and with surprising speed can be instantly recalled. The rapidity with which Vimala could associate one idea to another and the vividness with which she could recapitulate them, surprise the reader because what he sees is an intelligent and intuitive mind at constant work. A glimpse of the snow-clad mountains through the window in her room reminds her of the earlier occupant of the room, the less popular Miss. Pushpa Sarkar. These thoughts directly lead Vimala to ponder over the hearsay reasons for Pushpa Sarkar’s notoriety and the comment she made while handing over the room to Vimala and how the home science teacher from Izzati Nagar used to occasionally renew the memories of Pushpa Sarkar with the latest news, her divorce suits, her three marriages, elopement and change of religion. Before Pushpa Sarkar, it has been the middle aged Miss. Bhat, who was the subject of slanderous gossip. But Vimala has not seen her. Vimala’s mind meanders continuously and the reader can at no point extricate his mind from hers, even to entertain any thought other than what Vimala thinks. None-the-less the journey through her mind and with her mind leaves him strangely refreshed.

Vimala has a sharp aesthetic sensibility and the aesthetic aspects of her perceptions make her contemplative. Her mind meticulously records even the minute details and adds colours to these recorded thoughts and keeps them always ready and available for recollection. Her language is poetic devoid of violent or intense passions. Aesthetic experiences are essentially contemplative, and contemplation is a personal
affair. As a result, Vimala is a lonely figure for whom her inner life alone matters. Even in the company of others, later in the novel, she is absorbed in her own thoughts. While conversing with Rashmi and Amar Singh, Vimala is seen conversing inwardly with the thoughts of the person with whom she is outwardly holding a conversation. This aspect of Vimala’s character takes her very close to Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Ramsay in “To the Lighthouse”. Virginia Woolf’s narration does not put up any sign posts for the guidance of her readers nor does she seem to care for the logical interlinking of the various events, but concentrates her art on the rendering of inner reality. Vimala like Mrs. Ramsay is a living, breathing reality as she is the structural and psychological centre of the novella, Manju. As a source of unity, it is she who holds together various characters and events in the novella. From the very opening chapter, she remains a point of reference, a milestone in the movement of other characters.

The second chapter of Manju is definitely unique because of its synoptic nature. The complete chapter is of just ten sentences. M.T pools the essence of Manju within ten sentences making it resemble the arrested time awaiting the arrival of an unknown person. The theme of Manju is rendered in a capsule form encased with exquisite artistic beauty and passion-packed expressions. Vimala’s language, choice of words, employment of metaphors and mode of expression are definitely those of M.T’s. Like every chapter in Manju, there is a reference to the timelessness of time in the second chapter, more concretely so. Every second in the life span of an individual has a definite place to occupy in the long road of time. The ecstasy of the moment enjoyed by an individual is no accident but is an incident with its mention already
made in life’s calendar. Life itself has been waiting for the individual as the individual in turn awaits the arrival of another.

You feel as though you are standing on the top of the world. Mosquito nets are drawing about you, shutting out the light that pricks on your nakedness through the slits in the windows. As far as your eyes can see, you find only the golden red rays of the evening sun gliding on the distant snow-clad hill tops. Beyond that lie the boundaries of the country for which you have given no loving thought. The moist air has the scent of wet earth and green leaves.
A moment at the end of dark winter.
Just a moment... a moment from life.
"This moment has been there waiting on the long road of time".
Sudhir Kumar Misra
1995 May 19.

Gasping for breath, with feet faltering at last you have come within a hand’s reach of that moment.
The moment that had been waiting for you from time immemorial.
(Manju, p.27)

Vimala does not allow nostalgic pangs to mar the purity of her memories. There is no melancholy when she relives the memory of those beautiful moments she shared with Sudhir Kumar Misra and so her reminiscence does not crave for sympathy in the mind of the reader. The flow of her consciousness is rapid and light-footed, contemplative but never complaining. M.T succeeds in the possibility of creating detachment and feeling at once, working on those emotions which are exclusively meant for poetry. Vimala could distance herself from her memories, strangely memories of her own love-life with a man, who has left her to wait in futility. Unlike the other male protagonists of M.T’s world of fiction, Vimala does not hold anybody responsible for her predicament in life. Waiting aimlessly is an agonising experience, but the agony of one individual experience does not prevent her from accepting and honouring life as it has been given to her. Her agony does not overflow beyond control, thereby spreading contempt and misery in the lives of more
fortunate people. Her personal grief has given her remarkable endurance and aloofness not only from others but also from the pain caused by the experience. Vimala becomes a symbol of time which is both frozen and flowing. M.T through Vimala’s character highlights the paradox of time. Through the flowing Stream of Consciousness, he describes the still state of time. Time continues to stay still in the memories of Vimala. She has never kept track of the nine years that have fleet away leaving her pinned to the one precious moment of her life - the time when she was with Sudhir Kumar Misra on 19th May, 1955.

Like the major characters of Virginia Woolf's works, Vimala’s character is a study of the inner life of individuals, first in solitude then in society. Solitude is a constant theme of Woolf’s works.

It is the native air breathed by Mrs. Woolf’s characters when they are most themselves. In ‘A Room of One’s Own’, she records the importance of seeing “human beings not always in relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky too, and the trees or what ever it may be in them selves...” This is solitude. And since even solitude must have a locus, since you can’t be alone without finding somewhere to be alone, her heroes and heroines enjoy their solitariness, as we should expect, among what Wordsworth called the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. For the point of natural objects is their aloneness. Rocks, plants, rivers have achieved the secret of forming a society without impinging upon one another’s privacy. Virginia Woolf returns again and again to this point of the proud aloofness of natural things... ‘Hills and trees accept one; human beings reject one’, a character in ‘The years’ muses.17

Similarly the scenic beauty of Nainital, the serene atmosphere, Vimala’s profession as a teacher, her distancing herself from her family problems and her innate longing for solitude - make her find mind quiet in the remote hill station. Her reluctance to include any one into her precious solitude is visible throughout.
Her world is by choice thinly populated, only by those whom she permits to be with her. Her mind, the inner world is also equally lonely only with memories of selected few.

As a lover of solitude, Vimala is incapable of any violent action or outburst of passions. M.T has created a world of internal and external peace, peace that promotes the freedom of deep contemplation. Passion on the other hand corrupts and distorts. It hinders the normal, natural flow of the Stream of Consciousness. Vimala is more than an ordinarily intelligent person. Her thoughts are beautiful and their assimilation is refreshing. She tends to become lyrical with utmost ease. She enjoys a Vigorous intellectual life of her own and is prone to boredom both in solitude and amidst the society. She relishes the privacy of her intellectual life and preserves it against any violation. Even sharing her books with a stranger creates unpleasant disturbance in her mind. She does not appear to have strong physical desires though she did appreciate intensely the company of Sudhir Kumar Misra years ago. She has lot of affection to give and to receive though the recipient is exclusively a person of her private choice. She is fascinated as well as repelled by the idea of sharing. She can clearly see the faults of those she loves, but can love deeply just the same. Her sense of uncertainty, discovery and relief, happen to be the main emotions that colour her memories. These traits of Vimala have been undoubtedly the traits of the characters involved in the Stream of Consciousness. Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Ramsay and other women characters of Virginia Woolf are people of sensitivity and integrity. Only through the Stream of Consciousness can an artist portray convincingly the patient efforts of individuals to reintegrate one’s life.
Stream of Consciousness allows the artist of the character to the simplest components – none of Bennett’s bustle or Lawrence’s complications for her – she shows us the pattern of lives which even while harmonising, preserve their individual melodies. Solitude is kept in the midst of society. Sometimes it is kept by a deliberate act of withdrawal.18

So says Bernard Blackstone on Virginia Woolf’s world of fiction. To portray the personality of Vimala, M.T could not have taken up any other technique, but the Stream of Consciousness. She is shown as a woman more matured for her age, subtly preserving her solitude not by overt withdrawal but by willing fusion. This is love for Vimala. This is her way of living life intently. Reality and memory do not exist as separate entities but blend and behave as two aspects of one state of mind.

The third chapter of Manju opens with time in a frozen state. Nainital seems to be hybernating, willing to awake only at the arrival of the tourists. Strangely, waiting is no state of inactivity. It is the state of sharpened and focused activity of mind.

The road was deserted. In one of those many summer houses scattered all over the bank of the lake, a young man in blue was painting the railings and pillars. The sign boards hanging on the shining lamp – posts warned: “CAREFUL. WET PAINT”.

The city was getting ready for the month of May – the season. By the time those unknown travellers and tourists reached the place, the old dim face of the city glistened with new make up. The grey lines of old age were carefully hidden.

The pleasure boats were dozing, tied to thin poles on both the shores of the lake. Ducks swarm in flocks on the shallow waters above the white sands...Vimala sat on a way side seat and looked at the deserted lake. The premises were carefully dressing up after a nap. She could read the heart of this place. They understood each other so well.

In May, when the city roared and laughed spraying scents and colours all around, Vimala used to glance about her with revulsion. What are you waiting for? (Manju.p.28)
Vimala recollects the days when her father had been in search of a job. Mental pictures of the straw thatched house near the aracanut grove and the old dilapidated temple live vibrantly in her mind. Her father never wanted to go back to his native village in Kerala. Her mother said that the climate there was horrible and Vimala wondered if her mother hated only the climate over there. When her father lay groaning with ill health, her mother would visit her friends fully made up. It was during those moments that her mother spoke about the horrible climate. May be she was worried that her father may go back to Kerala. But why should mother go through the compound of Mr. Alfred Gomez every time she went to visit Mrs. Chakravarthy.

Recollections of Kerala rush through Vimala’s mind as she is seated watching the deserted lake. She could vividly recollect another occasion when she thought of Kerala. It was once when she was seated with Sudhir Kumar Misra near the boat club opposite the Alka Hotel. She told Sudhir that she was a mere five year old when she left Kerala for Almora. Yet, Sudhir’s compulsion to brief him about Kerala forced her to draw to surface what little she could recollect.

It was like the knots of a web. Sounds and colours slowly came undone. The ferry boat smelling of cashew nut oil, the green rice fields where the grass hopper sprang here and there, and the folk songs heard from the vettuva huts.

“Come on tell me”

But her heart had murmured: Don’t, please don’t force me to, Sudhir. Do not push me into the past now, when I will have only these moments with you to live on afterwards. Let me live these, when words mingled with the masculine smell of cigarette smoke caress my checks...

“What do you, say, Vimala?

What should I say?

I want only there moments with you...

But she murmured: “We can go there once”

“But we can, we must”
"Yes, we’ll certainly go"
Just to walk like strangers through those fields where she had run and played as a child.
Mr. Sudhir Kumar Misra
Mrs. Vimala Misra

Vimala without any difficulty glides back to the present after having viewed her past with optimum subjective detachment. She has always been a participant witness of her own life. The change in the external life is recorded with the same intensity with which she painted and paced through her vivid memories... she reaches the lake and finds herself invited by the boat men there for a ride. Her favourite boat was ‘May Flower’. Her mind stops for a second to appreciate the name of the boat, for the month of May in her life too was a time of romance and intimate relationship. But her eyes do not fail to notice that the bruises of the years were visible on ‘May Flower’ too – a statement that reminds the reader of the invisible bruises Vimala has suffered because of her forsaken lover.

M.T is seen here weaving intricate patterns of emotions with the thread of time, without causing jerky vibrations during the transit from past to present or vice versa. The reader is seldom aware that he too is a participant in this continuous movement of shuttle of artistry, until her sees all of a sudden the a magic carpet of human life embroidered with passions and emotions, coloured with intensely experienced moments, displayed in gorgeous proportions in front of him. M.T introduces at this juncture, another victim of waiting, Buddhu, the young boat man of the locality who is waiting for his father, a White man.

Vimala comes to know of Buddhu who, she wonders might have been named so by people around because of his silly laughter with the two rows of yellow teeth showing. Some people call him ‘Gora Saheb’ for fun. His father must have been a
white man. It was his mother who told him so. She died before six years. Buddhu has
some how learnt that Vimala is a teacher in the Girls School. He wanted to find out
his stranger father who was with his mother only for a week.

A picture rose in her mind.
Some seventeen or eighteen years ago... how old would he be? Not
more than eighteen some seventeen or eighteen years ago in the month
of May a White man came to the hill station. A pimp might have taken
a young girl to him.
They could not understand each other. He hunter had his prey.
One of the mementoes of that which man’s stay in the lake city was her
sitting at the helm of the boat holding the oar. The boy with grey eyes
and reddish hair.

(Manju, p.32)

Vimala could see Buddhu’s eyes glinting with anticipation because Dinnu’s
aunt living near the bus stand had read his palm and said that he would meet his
father.

“What would you ask if you saw him?”
“What could I ask? I wouldn’t ask him anything. I would just like to
see him. That’s all.”
Vimala did not feel like laughing. She felt a lump of snow melting
some where within her. I don’t want anything. Just to see him…
Would that lad who spoke and laughed like an Idiot understand if she
were to say the same? “What I want too is to see him, Buddhu.
Nothing else…”

Vimala is able to identify another soul waiting anxiously for a glimpse of a
stranger, hoping against the hopeless situation. Buddhu showed her an old photograph
of a young White man seated on his horse. Buddhu has unconsciously touched her
most sensitive cord of mental equilibrium. Vimala could still feel the hurt, the raw
hurt.

Dorothy Richardson, the first exponent of Stream of Consciousness in English
fiction, in her conversation with Vincent Brone had made a unique observation about
Stream of Consciousness.
Stream of Consciousness is a muddled-headed phrase. It's not a stream; it's a pool, a sea, an ocean. It has depth and greater depth and when you think you have reached its bottom there is nothing there, and when you give yourself up to one current, you are suddenly possessed by another... To take a single second, subject it to microscopic inquisition and peer at the wonderful organisms undetected by the normal eye, was to see the nuance, the tendon, the amoeba, the very stuff of creative life, but life and movement and an appalling confusion of speed was intrinsically a part of the moment itself.\(^{19}\)

M.T in *Manju* tries to strike a perfect balance between movement and moment. This is what the Stream of Consciousness technique has always been attempting to achieve, the fusion of the flowing and the frozen. Time represents movement while representing and moment while freezing. The paradox of human mind representing a balance between recollection and representation has been the point of focus in the Stream of Consciousness. Vimala by accident comes to meet Buddhu whose conviction of meeting his 'father' sometime in spring though not this spring, at least in one of the empathy. She could not bring herself to confide in him that her plight is not better than his. Rather her condition is worse because Buddhu does not have an ego to be protected, a social image to be safeguarded. He is immune to mockery and laughter. His uncomplicated simple self chooses to confide in Vimala. She has always been apprehensive of embarrassing questions and is always thankful that they were never asked. For example, as early as the first chapter, Vimala make a hint at her never going home for the vacations.

Between her yesterdays and tomorrows, vacations slowly slipped by. The spring-time of years—many years. Yet the girls probably knew their resident tutor, Miss. Vimala, never went home for the vacations, but so far none of them had asked her, and this was a great relief. *(Manju, p.23)*
As Dorothy Richardson had appropriately put it, Stream of Consciousness is not a stream, but is a pool, a sea, an ocean. M.T holds the same opinion when he makes a specific mention of how time stood still like water collected in a pool. There is a sense of anticipation, hope, apathy and endless endurance. The reader who has so long been inside the mind of Vimala, can see another mind, that of Buddhu, a symbol of patient because it is the fountain head of mixed emotions. It gives both pain and pleasure, killing and rejuvenating. Only very strong minds can wait.

Dorothy Richardson makes an interesting observation about Marcel Proust who has depicted the Bergsonian conception of time, in his ‘Remembrance of Things Past’. She refers:

News came from France of one Marcel Proust, said to be producing an unprecedented profound and opulent reconstruction of experience focused from within the mind of a single individual, and since Proust’s first volume had been published and several others written by 1913, the France of Balzac now appeared to have produced the earliest adventures.20

Marcel Proust tried to immortalise the part through its recapitulation because he believed that eternal truth is locked within emotions and experiences. The duty of an artist is to unravel this through his works. Dorothy Richardson’s work ‘Pilgrimage’ abound in involuntary recollection. The protagonist of ‘Pilgrimage’ is Miriam Henderson who very often sees things in retrospect and her mind moves backward in time. Vimala of Manju is in a similar predicament in the fourth chapter engaged in an introspective analysis with her consciousness moving backward and forward. We see Vimala through her shifts of thoughts and her sensations. In her visualisation of the by gone ages, the past becomes the present and the present merges with the past. Time becomes an indivisible whole that cannot be split up into past, present and future.
Vimala back in her own world, feels relieved to slide under the thick quilt on the fibre bed. “One day, one more day is over.” Her unusually tired mind plays prank with memories pushing her into a never ending abyss, along with the bed, the building and everything. Like a wild monkey, it sprang from one place to another. Vimala suddenly thought of Rashmi at that moment. She thinks of a room in the tourist bungalow at Haldani. She is surprised at her own self. The sounds of laughter, drums and pipes that drifts in, reminds Vimala of a familiar scene—a marriage procession. Her mind visualises the Bridegroom on a horse and the bride in a house between the pine trees.

The whole world is waiting
By the bus stand, or some where in front of a mansion, pressing the old leather purse with the photograph to his ribs, Buddhu the boatman will be sleeping. One day his White Saheb would definitely come.
One day he will come again...
You and I we have all been waiting for ages on the rocks of Time show falls and melts. An again snow forms crests on it.
We all wait
She empathised with Buddhu of yellow teeth and freckled checks. Who ever heard his story would have mocked at him.
But she can understand because she too had been waiting, during April every year, for a dream which she had lost nine years ago.
When the valleys get ready every year to receive the distant travellers, in the deep dark corners of her heart, a rustle will stir.
I am not waiting for any one. She tries to convince her self.
Who is trying to deceive whom? (Manju, p.36)

Vimala has no other choice but to be an observer participant to the seasonal changes of nature in Kumoan hills. The melting and hardening of snow maintains a record of the regularity with which the hill receives the spring. She has started to ignore the changes on the face of nature. “Here time lays imprisoned lake the water in the mountain lake. Those who come there once year would say nothing had changed at all.” (Manju, p.36). But nine years is too long a time to retain anything permanent.
Changes have come over Vimala. Even the name of the rock on which she and Sudhir rested once and felt like conquerors of the whole world has changed its name since.

Vimala’s recollection is rapid pushing her deeper and deeper into the white clouds of memories. She vividly describes how she went with Sudhir for a horse ride. Even after nine years the sound of the horse’s hoofs on the stone paired road remains audible to her mental ears. Through her eyes, the reader could see the dark horse keeper clad in dirty woolen like mist and Vimala is seen living in her memories with full blooded life. The past remains the permanent present for her, sedation for her hurt present.

It was just five days since she met that man who kept on talking. He had come up to her smiling to ask for time near the lake. They happen to sit near each other in the bus the same morning. But five days seem like five years...
Outside the eyes of the city were glistening and in one of the rooms of the capitol beneath the closed windows she lay nestling close to his bosom under the quilt, pillowing her head on the strong arm. She had wanted to shout...
I am not alone... I am not alone. (Manju, p.38)

Virginia Woolf’s comment on the human need for company is so appropriate in the case of Vimala. She needs another person not for consolation but for protection, strangely protection against her own self imposed solitude. And that is the reason for her clinging on desperately to the memories of Sudhir for company in the absence of his real nearness. The urge for meeting him revives her memory and life in loneliness.
M.T has employed the Stream of Consciousness technique to depict the dream world of Vimala where there is everything in fluid state. There is no climax or a turning point. Drifting from memory to reality is done with utmost ease as William James observes it to be possible.

The rush of thought is so headlong that it almost always brings us at the conclusion before we can arrest it, it ceases forth with to be itself. As a snow flake crystal caught in the warm hand is no longer a crystal but a drop, so instead of catching the feeling of relation, moving to its term, we find we have caught some substantive thing usually the last word we were pronouncing, statically taken, and with its function tendency and particular meaning in the sentence quite evaporated. The attempt at introspective analysis in these cases is in fact like seizing a spinning top to catch its motion or trying to turn up the gas quickly enough to see how the darkness looks.

The chapter closes with Vimala continuing her endless fall into the abyss of memory. She seems to be incapable of extricating herself from the memories that torment her. Willingly and unwillingly, consciously and unconsciously, she has her existence rooted to her memories. “From the top of the rock which pierced the bosom of the sky... down to an eternal abyss” (p.38).

Even after nine years, the arrival of a letter sends waves of hopes in her mind. When Amar Singh brings two letters, she is not able to control herself as her heart beats fast. She will cut open the envelope hoping to see purple letters dancing before her eyes – ‘My beloved Vimala’. When ever Amar Singh returns from the post office, a fairy land of expectations and dreams will rise before her eyes. It will instantly vanish like a pricked bubble. This time she has received a letter from her brother, Babu asking for twenty five rupees to be sent immediately to him. The other letter is from her colleague, Shanta who has decided to resign the job and get married. One by
one, the inmates of the boarding house were escaping into life while Vimala is escaping from life by taking refuge into her memories.

Letter from by her brother Babu evokes thoughts of her family living in a house just fifty three miles away from her hostel – her father, mother, Babu and Anitha. Babu is a ganja addict and can be found in a ganja den filled with smoke. He would be playing cards. Vimala’s mother is well aware of her son’s derailment from normal life but pretended not to have seen it. Babu used to blackmail his mother for money using the name of Mr. Gomez as a trump card against her. Her father is bed ridden with a stroke. Mother regularly left the house to visit Mr. Gomez. Anitha, her sister is exchanging love letters with Pradeep Chandra Sharma, the son of a local doctor. Glittering Sari, her lips painted a dirty red, the blackened grey hair showing reddish patches – Vimala can always recollect with repulsion when her mother had her make up on. Vimala even wondered whether her father was aware of her mother’s unbecoming relationship with Mr. Gomez. Her mother did not even have time to look after the house work. She was “battling to fill her hollows and wrinkles with makeup, and dyeing her hair to hide the work of ravaging years” (p.42). Her father’s paralysed tongue cannot say what he wanted to. In the evenings when Dr. Menon and Mrs. Menon visited them, she alone was with her father. Their enquiries about her mother embarrassed her very much. She thought that the Menons would have come to know of her mother’s relationship with Mr. Go. She could never call it a family. She hated everything about it. Now she avoids visiting her family even during vacation. Now she has started waiting for a message from her home reporting her father dead.
What is it?
Father is dead...
Or Saheb has left us Bibiji...
One day...
Let father, who lay listening to the stones of his lost empire disintegrating and scattering slowly about him be fortunate to die.

_Manju_, p.43

The letter from her colleague Shanta about her resigning the job to get married evokes sweet memories of her love life. Vimala decides to stay indoors the whole day and set right her room. While opening her trunk to arrange the clothes, she comes upon a pink sweater with musical notes embroidered in black on it. She has not worn it even once. Sudhir Kumar Misra had bought it at the Old man’s shop in Mallital. She herself had selected it. The sight of the colourful sweater helps her to drift away from reality into her favourite world of memory. She could still recall every detail in it – her visit with Sudhir to a high class restaurant, where she met a student of hers in the adjacent table, and her anxious and unnecessary introduction of Sudhir to her student as a cousin of hers who had come there for season, and so on. She now wonders if the cushions of the hotel are still red plush and if they are still serving their guests the cassata ice cream with a white wing-like wafer stick in the middle.

Vimala relives the intimate moments she shared with Sudhir in a theatre. While staying inside her boarding room, Vimala could yet wander out with the help of her memories. Never does the reader find her in a static state of mind. She does not seem to have an existence outside her memory, and it is extremely difficult to decipher the context of her existence, because she is seen more in her world of memory, visiting the world of reality a bit too scarcely. Even her visits to reality are short lived unless she is compelled into a conversion with some one. The reader
wonders whether Vimala is in conversation with her mind or is it just an interior monologue.

In the Stream of Consciousness technique, the speaker plays a duel role of both the participant and the observer at once. There is no visible friction when the speaker switches roles because the roles are not taken up one after the other but together. The objectivity Vimala maintains while commenting on others and her relationship with them is the same detachment with which she views herself in her memory and in reality. At no point, does she allow herself to enjoy an intimacy with the role she has taken up to play in the story. The difference between the indirect interior monologue of Single Point of View and direct interior monologue of Stream of Consciousness must be clearly understood to appreciate the mastery with which M.T has handled the techniques.

The basic difference between the two techniques is that indirect monologue gives the reader a sense of another’s continuous presence; whereas direct monologue either completely or greatly excludes it... indirect interior monologue in which an omniscient author presents unspoken material as if it were directly from the consciousness of a character and with commentary and description, guides the reader through it. It differs from direct interior monologue basically in that the author intervenes between the character’s psyche and the reader. 22

The most remarkable quality of the technique used in Manju is that M.T has a clear mastery over the execution of Stream of Consciousness technique. Vimala’s character is revealed through the interior monologues and the dramatising of feelings. She is in a dynamic process, always growing and changing, viable and mutable. She is preoccupied with the past, present and future at once. She is represented in retrospect and fall back upon memory or the uncontrolled flow of thought. With this use of pure memory and the treatment of Vimala as a flux, M.T attempts to depict reality.
Vimala receives another letter in the evening and as usual the arrival of a letter excites her. It is from Rashmi Vajpai, stating that she reached home safely. The address on the cover said it was from Ramnagar. Vimala looks at the post mark and smiles involuntarily because the letter is posted at Haldani. She could picture the triumphant look on Rashmi’s face as she handed the letter to the porter of the Rest-house before she walked to the bus stand. Vimala says to herself, “I forgive you, you have earned a night for you to remember till the end” (p.46). Rashmi’s cherished secret of an intimate relationship with her lover during a night halt at Haldani reminds Vimala of the hotel next to the boat club and her stay with Sudhir there. She was sure that, years later

When Rashmi walked along the rest house at Haldani as a wife and mother, she might peep at one of the windows with suppressed glee—
the first sin, the first piercing pain which tore the veil of womanhood,
the first ecstasy, the first bliss.

(Manju, p.47)

The problem of reality, the question of individuality, the impact of time on man and the uncanny mystery of death have engrossed Vimala’s attention throughout the novel. Her reality is erratic. It may be found on a freshly painted pillar or a drifting cloud. Through her, M.T has depicted the psychological time, involuntary memory instincts, and intuition so much stressed by Bergson. Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce were influenced by William James, Bergson and Du Jardin. These three were convinced that interior monologues depict silent thoughts of a character and try to paint them just as they come into the mind in a chaotic form. Some of them are “sensory image-laden and fragmented” and it is difficult to catch them in words. Du Jardin was a symbolist and his book which had been relegated to
oblivion was revived from its obscurity when Stuart Gilbert translated Du Jardin’s novel into English as ‘Ve’Il to the Woods No More’. This French novel has been hailed as the first Stream of Consciousness novel.

Bergson denounced that through intellectual concepts, experience cannot be comprehended. The abstract intellect simply analyses and classifies. But it is intuition which enables a person to understand the experience. Bergson emphasised on experimenting the language to depict reality into words. Hence Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf and Henry James experimented with language to probe into the workings of human psyche. They used interior monologue extensively because the interior monologue showed that personality is always changing. It is composed of states of consciousness, moods, memories and desires which are in a constant state of transformation. The Stream of Consciousness enabled the reader to get a glimpse of the incoherence of the character’s mind. M.T’s accessibility to the advanced narrative technique of the western world enabled him to evolve into a skilled craftsman.

Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine of Manju intensify and increase the frequency of excursions into Vimala’s inner self. She recollects every detail of her visit to the hotel where Sudhir Kumar Misra had taken his lodging. She could not only recapitulate the sights and scenes but also the sounds and voices. Her sense organs are fully focused, surprising the reader at her sensitivity. The red carpeted floor, the cigarette smoke and Paul Anka’s silky soft voice flash in her inward eye. She remembers the look of wonder and disbelief on the young man’s face on seeing her at the doorstep of the room of the lodge. Vimala involuntarily experiences the pain left behind by the memories of those moments when she was a bed-mate to Sudhir Kumar Misra. M.T like Dorothy Richardson uses dots to denote rapid thoughts
that tumble upon one another and fall in fragments. Words, phrases and incomplete sentences represent the predominant silence that defied articulation. M.T attempts to make silence audible because in Stream of Consciousness, silence is as powerful as sound.

Vimala feels a stranger to herself. Sound stood paralysed on her trembling lips while her body felt limp and listless. She felt like a floating wisp of cloud in the sky like a handkerchief owned by no one left to fly in the cyclone sweeping the valley.

All of a sudden, Nainital is on season. It has always been so. Everyday people will arrive and one day season would have started. The valley will come alive. Buddhu is worried that the tourists are not the white people. He is anxious whether all the white people have left the country. Vimala consoles him saying that it isn’t true. Amar Singh with unfailing regularity brings her chappathis and curry for her supper. There is hot milk in the flask. Amar Singh gets freedom only during vacations—freedom to get a bit drunk. On these occasions, he became very vocal about the miseries of his life. Vimala now notices a visitor seated on a chair near the pots of withered fern. He is a Sikh gentleman, a Saridarji, who appeared old.

Vimala had revulsion for the hefty Panjabis with their knotted hair and beard and their eternal stink of onions. They scared her. But she liked their songs. During her college days, she had a Punjabi friend who taught her to love Punjabi songs. This new gentle man must be the guest of that year at Golden Nook. Vimala can hear the husky voice singing to the accompaniment of Iktara.

Vimala felt her eyes moisten
Let me take a bit of my heart for paper, cut my fingers to form a pen, dilute my maskara in fears for the ink, so send you a message of my love.
She chided herself. A thirty one year old woman should not be stirred by a folk song.

(Manju, p.53)

She feels very low and tries to read to divert her attention. She lands upon a book, an anthology of a verse, a book that belonged to Sudhir. She glances through many of the lines that are underlined in violet ink. She comes across his favourite lines also. Time has been fleeting and Golden Nook has been visited by many faces that came and went. But in her room once occupied by the notorious Pushpa Sarkar, life remained a frozen pool.

The ninth chapter is as condensed as the second chapter. M.T uses minimum words to portray the intense loneliness felt by Vimala. There are moments when reality becomes too rigid to allow memories an easy entry. Intense loneliness felt by a forsaken mind can find it extremely difficult to escape into memory too. There are moments when the open window refuses to show the world beyond. Vimala is haunted by the favourite verse of Sudhir Kumar Misra.

The greatest problem of the Stream of Consciousness writer is to capture the irrational and incoherent quality of private unuttered consciousness and in doing so still to communicate to his readers... The purpose of literature is not to express enigmas. Consequently, the writer of Stream of Consciousness literature has to manage to represent consciousness realistically by maintaining its characteristics of privacy (the incoherence, discontinuity, and private implications), and he has to communicate something to the reader through this consciousness. If he is a successful writer, he does this; and he must use ingenuity in doing it, although he has only the basic materials of language and syntax available to all writers and readers.
So, like the European masters of Stream of Consciousness, M.T also had an immediate problem of making his protagonist less enigmatic. As the Stream of Consciousness of Vimala is not the stream of consciousness of M.T, he can present the fiction more or less objectively. He will have to make his reader conscious that he is always presenting a created character’s consciousness and not his own. He has to gain the reader’s confidence also because psychic activity is a very private thing and be presented in a private order. Hence, Vimala’s character can be appreciated only when the reader comes closer to the private relationships of associations. Apart from her speech and pre-speech, her mind also has certain pre-recorded speeches to be used as and when the situation arises. She even has rehearsed reactions for certain contexts. She maintains a mental script for many occasions which may or may not happen in her life. Her heightened sensitivity and immense capacity for wild imagination keep her inner world filled with speeches.

The ninth chapter shows Vimala’s immediate reaction to a new acquaintance the Sardarji, and to a repeatedly rehearsed and often expected situation of receiving the news of her father’s death. The Sardarji has come to borrow from her some books to read as Amar Singh has told him that Vimala reads a lot. Vimala is annoyed with Amar Singh for his having discussed with a stranger her personal habits. As usual, her mind rapidly records every aspect of Sardarji’s external appearance, accompanied by an internal running commentary of unfavourable comments. But she appreciates his sense of humour when he expresses his readiness to read anything—‘an Ayurvedic catalogue, a railway guide and even a telephone directory’ (p. 56). She decides to send him few books.
Vimala has another important work of answering piles of letters lying on her table. She has ready made replies prepared in her mind, replies expressing happiness, inability and false excuses. It is then that she receives the news of a trunk call for her through the postman. She rushes out even leaving her room unlocked. Even while rushing quickly to the post office, her mind keeps whispering, “Something is going to happen. At last, something is going to happen” (p.58). Her mind is very calm when she takes the receiver. It is Babu who tells her that ‘it’ happened in the early morning at five thirty. So what she has been wishing for her father has happened. She is surprised at her own reaction because this is not the way which she had visualised. This is not the way she had it rehearsed. She can still stand outside the post office, observe the sudden arrival of tourists, awakening of Nainital after months of slumber and wonder still why nothing has happened to her.

Vimala could still search for Sudhir’s face amongst a thousand strange faces that have arrived there for the season. She wants to know if there is a pair of eyes searching for a girl met nine years ago – deep dark eyes, below the unruly curls, two deep blue oceans. She even wonders whether a bald man in shorts standing in the crowd was a European. Is he the White man, Buddhu has been searching for, with a soiled photograph in his pocket? Her own strange behaviour shocks her. This is not the way to receive one’s father’s death. “My God! There is something wrong with me. Can’t even cry…” (p.59). Her steps are not unsteady and the news of her father’s death has not made her feel helpless like a twig caught in the whirl of a current. She can feel only a cold calmness in her mind.
Vimala can even, with unbelievable poise of mind inform the inquisitive Amar Singh that the message she received is not about any guest’s arrival but is about the departure of her father for ever. But she slowly starts feeling conscious of her initial numbness to the news breaking and giving way to a swelling of intense sorrow. Each step towards her room gathers heaviness, and with great difficulty she forces herself not to weep. “How long does it take to reach the room?” (p.59).

M.T has been presenting Vimala amidst a crowd in spite of her staying alone. She has always been in company feeling rarely lonely though she lived alone. But in the eleventh chapter, she is seen in reality amidst people and feels lonely. A sense of alienation with her own people, with her family, with her dear ones strikes her hard because this is not the normal reaction. Emptiness envelops her from outside and emptiness fills her from within. Paradoxically, the filling feeling of emptiness can create a suffocating state of mind – emptiness full. Alfred Gomez’s presence and his put on sympathy, annoy her. The whole atmosphere is frozen as well as stirring. The feeling of uneasiness increases as the night set in. Vimala goes to bed expecting a sleepless dreary night but strangely she sleeps away immediately. She is drifted into a dream.

Strangely, the Stream of Consciousness technique includes the subconscious and the unconscious as well. The writer will have to necessarily capture an undercurrent of suspended coherence through the mastery of his craft. The seemingly irrelevant thoughts flood the mind of the character and gain relevance only through free association of ideas. Use of figurative language and classical rhetorical devices is a characteristic feature of the Stream of Consciousness fiction. This is not a decoration or embroidery. There is a definite function for this, and it is to sharpen the sense of discontinuity in the privacy of psychic process. Vimala ceases to have a life without the visitations of her memory. She rather has become memory personified. If
she does not live in memory while living in reality, it is compensated by living in memories while at sleep.

Mist shrouded everything around. Ripples, soft ripples, running here and there, floating; not floating but riding in a swan-shaped boat. It was Buddhu who started rowing. When he talked, his face changed. A clean shaven face with a greenish tinge... It was not Buddhu's. The blue veins twitched on the face. An unruly curl on the forehead. "Don't row there" "Why?" "There's a whirlpool. You have to throw in coins" "There are better ways to spend money" "It is said that those who do not believe in God will be drowned" "Are you afraid to die?"

Life is in full bloom; everywhere. One could not even think of death. Even when the boat, caught in the current, whirled on the surface, there is no fear in Buddhu's eyes. Buddhu's face changes again. It isn't Buddhu. It is the face on which blue veins twitched. The whirling boat seems to touch the sky. Suddenly deeper... deeper...

(Manju, p.62)

The next morning Vimala decides to take the eight thirty bus to return to her boarding house at Nainital. She ignores the irritation of her family and leaves the house. She feels greatly relieved when the bus started moving. She returns to her own world, a world filled with travellers hungry for hills, mists, valleys and lakes, with sounds of footsteps around her tomb.

The chapters twelve to fourteen portray Vimala's friendship with the Sardarji, who has come to the Golden Nook as a tourist of the season. Her return from home after her father's death brings her to a Nainital, filled with tourists whom the city was waiting. Buddhu is desperately clinging on to the only need of his heart - meeting his white father. Vimala is harbouring the hope of Sudhir's return. The Sardarji to some extent forces his company on Vimala who by choice like to remain a loner. She is reluctant to allow his probing question that invades into her privacy, compelling her to
open up for relationships of warmth and compassion. Her inability to decline the Sardarji’s company is as real as her revulsion at the sight of him. But the Sardarji’s persuasive nature, genuine love for life and the living, subtle sense of humour compel her to reconsider her evaluation of him. He gives her company in her walk up a high slope. His enquiry about her father’s death is not done in the routine sickeningly sympathetic way. He wonders, “who can sympathise with whom?” Vimala could feel the eyes of the Sardarji travelling to the remotest corners of her heart. “Death is a clown with no stage sense, isn’t that so, Teacherji”. (p.66). His words are very carefully selected revealing his contemplative mind. He makes frequent reference to his guardian. His comments on various issues keep her mind busy. Vimala is happily surprised at the delightful company he could give her. She feels as if this stranger is slowly taking liberties with her. She tries to move away but he, closer. He even succeeds in getting an engagement with her for the next evening. But before taking leave he stops to tell her, “Don’t fret thinking of the dead. There are enough living ones on the earth (Manju. p.69).

He sends a note stating that he would like to read books on human beings unlike the ones she has given which have only angels and devils in them. He seems a strange creature. His writing is beautiful. He has not crossed the border of casual acquaintanceship. He never said anything about himself nor has Vimala asked.

The Sardarji has succeeded in minimising Vimala’s frequent visits to her memories. May be for the first time in the Novella, she has been listening to someone in totality without listening to her inner voice simultaneously. The next day the Sardarji is not able to make it as promised. Vimala just receives a note from him stating that his guardian has prescribed rest for him that day and he can’t but obey
him. None the less, Vimala takes a walk down the lane that leads to the lake and finds the city is all ready and dressed up for the season. Buddu invites her for a boat ride perhaps to create an occasion to talk with Vimala. He expresses his disappointment over not meeting the ‘Gora Saheb’ among the many white Sahebs who have come there for the season. Yet he consoles himself stating that “this time he will come, he surely will”.

Vimala instantly compares his visible anguish that gets easily vocalized, with her invisible anguish which is audible only to her ears. The sorrow of not being able to share sorrows is a very personal tragedy.

We are all waiting, Buddhu. Each year the city is also waiting. In the mean time days go by. The bubbles scattered at the stroke of the oar. There is a photo of a Gora Saheb for you to wait for. A face with twitching blue vein, for the other.

(Manju, p.73)

Here, M.T uses an extremely difficult aspect of the Stream of Consciousness technique, a glimpse into the psyche of Sudhir Kumar Misra through the interior monologue of Vimala. The passage will appear out of context and irrelevant. The lead question for this sudden deviation from Vimala’s consciousness to Sudhir’s mind is uttered by Buddhu – “What are you thinking, Mem Saheb?” (Manju, p.73)

Vimala in no place in the in the novel has made her pre-occupation with memory conspicuous expect in this context. The initial difficulty experienced by the reader can be overcome only when the reader remembers the linguistic competency of Vimala and her style of expression. For the first time, Vimala is a listener to another voice in her interior monologue.
The writer of a Stream of Consciousness fiction like all serious writers, has something to say, some sense of values he wants to communicate to the reader. Unlike other writers however, he chooses the internal world of psychic activities in which to dramatise these values... Consequently, the Stream of Consciousness writer has to do two things. 1) He has to represent the actual texture of consciousness and 2) he has to distil some meaning from it for the reader. This presents a dilemma to the writer because the nature of consciousness involves a private sense of values, private associations and private relationships peculiar to that consciousness.

Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf have partly overcome this dilemma by sacrificing objectivity. They have allowed the author’s interference because they are less difficult and their realism is also less perfect. But James Joyce and William Faulkner were more objective by not allowing the author to interface into the Stream of Consciousness of the character. M.T has also remained totally objective like James Joyce and William Faulkner by not interfering with the stream of consciousness of Vimala. Only a Vigilant reader can understand that the speaker of the next two passages that follow the question of Buddhu, are by Sudhir Kumar Misra. M.T does not provide any signboard to make comprehension easy for the reader. Only on the third reading does an average reader realise that he is not listening to Vimala’s voice but along with him she too is listening to another person’s voice, here, Sudhir Kumar Misra’s.

After Vimala’s night stay with him, he reveals to her, his earlier experiences with women. The reader can imagine the shock with which Vimala would have received the love episodes of Sudhir. Her state of reverie is disturbed by Buddhu’s call “Mem Saheb”. If only one could tear open the veil of years standing on the peak of time, if only one could peep in, then one could say that Buddhu will meet “on such and such a day, on a street named so – and – so, at a fixed time” his Gora Saheb.
Sudhir’s voice is again audible:

This meeting is not an accident, Vimala Devi! The pretty, twenty one year old Vimala Devi, girl with very delicate growth of hair above the upper lip, meets a twenty nine year old Sudhir Kumar Misra, a spendthrift and a Vagabond, in a bus in the morning of May 3rd, 1955. It is written so, on the page of time even before we are born. I wandered about leaving my place only to reach this moment. Your father severed connections with his native place, only for that. The widower Mr. Gomez became your mother’s lover and you quarrelled with your mother and left to work for a living – even that, is for this moment.

This is not a trivial event, Vimala Devi; it is a great moment when the fulfilment of life begins. (Manju, p.74)

Vimala is intently listening to the voice of Sudhir Kumar Misra, though distanced from her by nine long years. Even Buddhu could observe that her mind is far away. She consoles him that his father, ‘Gora Saheb’ will come back sometime.

She goes back to her room feeling unusually tired. She takes up the same path she walked on for the past nine years. The half asleep watchman, wheat chappathis and dal and the cold bed will be waiting for her.

The next day, Vimala receives a letter from her sister who has asked whether she too can join Vimala in Nainital. The condition at home has become insufferable for her. Vimala wonders what has come of her sister. In the evening, while standing near the lawn, the Sardarji comes down to meet her with a greeting on his lips. He surprises Vimala with his acute insight into her thought process. ‘I can read your mind like an open book. You generally like to watch things standing aloof from the maddening crowd’ (p.76). The reader also observes that while talking with Sardarji, Vimala is rooted to the present and finds it impossible to visit the past through her memories. She does not have a parallel dialogue going on in her mind, while in reality she is conversing with the Sardarji. He does not make any attempt to impress her and there is something refreshingly sincere about his comments. Flashbacks or flash
forwards become impossible for Vimala when she is with the Sardarji. His conversation surprises her thoroughly because it is filled only with statements. No questions, no appeals.

“I like you. There is no reason for it though”.
She saw a flush playing on his pale dry face. She was embarrassed.
“Oh. There is nothing to worry about. I won’t waylay you as you go. I won’t send you love letters. I will do nothing of that sort. Nor imagine any kind of relationship. I just... I like you very much”
Cold words. No emotion or appeal. Did not expect a reply either. She was stunned.
She attempted to say something. In an effort to be natural she said “you don’t even know who I am”.
“It should be so. I can get all the details about you from others. A hundred details. When I put everything together there will be a thousand roots, branches and leaves in your picture. You are only a speck in it. It is better this way”. (Manju, p.77)

Vimala is taken off her guards. She is left speechless because she has come across a human being who fixes her in the present and accepts her for what she is now. Chains of past and future need not arrest one’s perception of the present. The Sardarji has only one request for Vimala. He just asks her never to forget the blessed gift of laughter. After her conversation with the Sardarji, Vimala shows visible dislike to return to her precious loneliness. Her room, the books and everything about it – the same old things – for the first time she finds them disgusting. It is not boredom, its revulsion.

It drizzled a number of times during the day. Vimala’s mind thinks about the Sardarji’s guardian and wonders why he has allowed the Sardarji to sing. She hears someone knocking at the door early in the morning the next day and to her surprise finds that the Sardarji has come to take leave of her. She does not have anything else to say but to murmur that they will meet again.
He laughed: “I am not sure. At the most I have four months left. That’s what my guardian says”.
The flaps of sleep fell down from her eyes.
“Oh. Even that is a gain to me. I must thank God for that! One year is the time limit for a lung cancer patient. I have gained a few more bonus months!” (p.79)

The Sardarji before leaving reminds Vimala that the borrowed evening is still valid. She finds Amar Singh on the Varanda all in smiles. The Sardarji has tipped him ten rupees. Vimala also learns that the Sardarji was after all alone in his room. Vimala realises that the guardian, the Sardarji frequently mentioned, is his killer ailment, the lung cancer.

The novella, *Manju* concludes with a disturbing conversation between Buddhu and Vimala. Buddhu regrets that the season is over too soon and no one came. By ‘no one’, Buddhu means his ‘Gora Saheb’ and Vimala, Sudhir Kumar Misra. Buddhu assures Vimala that they will wait for the next year. His instinct tells him that Vimala’s mind is else where and asks loudly a more specific question, “He will come, won’t he? Mem Sahib”. With a nod all that Vimala can say is, “Yes, he might”.

*Manju*, first published as early as 1964 shows, M.T’s mastery over a western technique propounded and practiced by literary giants like Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, William Faulkner and D.H. Lawrence. Stream of Consciousness is a very demanding technique because the writer needed additional devices to convey the unconventional movement and enigma of privacy on the pre-speech levels of consciousness. The ingenious mind of M.T could script the whole novella in such a way that *Manju* has become a fiction adaptable for cinema also. Free association of thought and the techniques of flash back, flash forward, fade out and slow up give necessary support to the over all rendering of the novella. He broke even
the conventions of punctuation while recording the pre-speech of his characters.

The Stream of Consciousness technique has come to stay. Concept of time and human mind in flux are the two aspects which challenge a present day writer. Philosopher psychologists William James and Henry Bergson convinced the following generations that:

Consciousness flows like a stream and the mind has its own time and space values apart from the arbitrary and set ones of the external world. Thus flux and *durée* are aspects of psychic life for which new methods of narration had to be developed if writers were to depict them. The mind is a private thing. The problem this posed was simply, how could, what is private be made public and still seem to have the qualities of privacy? 6

Though the basic techniques present in Stream of Consciousness in literature are not the inventions of the twentieth century, the awareness of the importance of drama that takes place inside the boundaries of an individual’s consciousness is essentially a present need. The consciousness in its pre-speech level has no rigid pattern. It exists independently of action. Yet, the novelist will have to accommodate the chaotic material of consciousness into a literary frame and render it as a work of art. M.T has made use of indirect interior monologue and direct interior monologue in his novels and has proved himself to be a willing experimenter of western narrative techniques to unravel the mysteries of human mind.

M.T is an explorer of man’s psyche, both his normal and neurotic personality. Time and again, the reader finds M.T investigating human personality through verbalising the unuttered consciousness of man. In *Manju*, M.T excels in familiarising the reader with the psyche of a woman who by choice is a loner. Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf have had the first hand knowledge of the workings of a woman’s
psyche. As Dorothy Richardson herself stated that she experimented in new techniques in order to present the "feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism". Virginia Woolf figures imagination as a woman fishing, and through the Stream of Consciousness technique, she wanted to analyse the central problem of women that of expressing body and its passion. James Joyce and William Faulkner also choose to articulate through the Stream of Consciousness, the hidden aspects of a man's psyche. But M.T has wonderfully analysed a woman's mind with total detachment that at no point of time the reader is reminded that it is a man's genius assessing and analyzing a woman's psyche.

Very few literary geniuses of world class have achieved the greatness of looking at men and women as human beings and not as two different beings. Fewer are those who have maintained optimum objectivity while employing the narrative technique of Stream of Consciousness and M.T is certainly one of the rarest master minds.
NOTES


12. Ibid. 268.


18 Ibid. 33.


25 Ibid. 63-64.

26 Ibid. 120.
