INTRODUCTION

The Semiotics of Conceptual Structures of *Shri Durga Saptashati* and *The Waste Land* is the title of this doctoral thesis. This doctoral research in Comparative Literature involves presentation of architectonic structure of two texts: (a) *Shri Durga Saptashati*, a text of undetermined period of ancient India and (b) *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot, written in the early years of the twentieth century.

These two texts, represent different conceptual traditions and a study of their semiotic structuration reveals the creative process in two major traditions (European and Indian) in the world. It so happens that these texts are highly structured conceptual wholes with sections, sub-sections and micro-sections. The formal structural process presents a syntagmatic progression and inter-linkage of expression and content with overlapping paradigmatic relationships. It is obvious that these two texts of extreme cultural importance have their respective ideological bases which are set both in the extreme past and a living present. Their differences in period of articulation do not pose very serious problems. In any case I have unfolded their respective structures of signification and their architectonic processes of conceptual constructs attributable to their ideological field of utterance.

The architectonic processes of these two different discourses reveal how human beings situated in diametrically opposed philosophical and cultural settings have endeavoured to resolve their existential predicament informed by pain, sufferings and afflictions through immanent conceptualisations of divergent order.

METHOD

The methodology for this research is appropriated from the realm of semiotics. The semiotic approach helps us to ferret out structures of signification from a discourse. The manifest contours of empirical reality constitute structures where each ensemble and sub-ensembles which are internally structured are pointers to empirical and sensuous experiences which gets reconstituted as a mental image before its articulation in a literary discourse. This is the macro-structure which governs structuration of internal units,
thereby underscoring the invariable dialectics between the micro-structure and the macro-structure. This figurative discourse becomes a product of intellection, transcending spatial and temporal realities, through sensuous and empirical mediations.

The creative process in literary discourse is basically an intellective process. It is based on the faculty of man that defines him to be a thinking being. The faculty of thinking allows man to analyse or reflect upon the socio-economic, political, cultural or any other existential situation he finds himself in. This analysis helps him to underscore the immanent contradictions in the ongoing dialectical process. With this analysis inspired by the consciousness of his being (existence) and a desire to resolve the predicament he is caught in, he transposes the manifest empirical reality that surrounds him into a certain specific constitution of signifiers which lead to a creative dialectics, a dialectics which plays a mediatory role in the cultural continuum, transforming its inherent contradictions into a revolutionary process of cultural change.

The human condition is the subject of every literary discourse. The human condition is the condition of violence. Man's desires, dreams and aspirations are constantly frustrated engendering pain, sufferings and afflictions. But man does not submit himself to the catastrophic avalanche of an existential situation. The intolerable conditions, spawned by myriad factors (within the socio-economic, political, cultural and historical framework), push him to react but man transforms this physical reaction into human consciousness, and with the innate faculty of reason, he perceives the basic contradictions of violence. His awareness leads him to the creative act, the act of dialectical transformation. His certain specific perception or conceptualisation of empirical reality is transposed into a literary discourse with the help of a new constitution of signifiers. He creates a new discourse transforming the original individual significance of the signifiers by introducing them into new relationships and new contradictions. In other words, creating a literary discourse is in fact creating a new structure of significance, a structure which is not a simple imitation of human reality, but a structure which presents a specific perception, and what is more important, a specific interpretation of that human reality. Human perception is not simply meant to understand a given situation but the main purpose of constituting a new discourse is to be able to control it. Thus, from the violated human condition to the creative manifestation of the discourse marks a movement which is from acute consciousness of extreme helplessness
to the pulsational force of interacting dialectics resolving the supposedly unresolvable contradictions.

A literary discourse has a syntactic manifestation. However, the constituting process of the discourse is not syntactic or sequential. The syntactic progression or the metonymic constitution is actually based on metaphoric paradigmatic choices. This constitution, even though it is a resultant of a metaphoric operation, remains metonymic and imposes on its discourse a linear order. As we go along the line of progression, the metonymic chain becomes longer and longer, leaving no possibility of going back and forth to establish new manifest relationships. One is left with no choice except to establish latent semantic relationships correlating signifiers and sequences which do not find themselves in close physical proximity of metonymic combinations. In order to comprehend this discourse one will not only have to follow metaphorically constituted metonymy expressed in the linear order or the unfolding of the discourse, but also look at immanent relations purely at the semantic level which combine signifiers in a non-sequential order, i.e., establishing certain new semantic relations in a heterogenous paradigmic order. The elements of a literary discourse are put together in an ensemble on the criterion of the correlation of their semantic combinations.

The semiotic meditations derived from the Cartesian ideological field emphasize that the signification is realised by a complementary structure, by an "ensemble" of significatory elements, corresponding to a "totality" of significance. The empiricist Condillacian conceptualisations of the eighteenth century gives the method of analysis which is extremely relevant for my research. To analyze, Condillac says, is to decompose, to compare, and, to apprehend the rapports between objects. But, analysis decomposes only to show the "origin" and "generation" of things (objects). Thus it must present partial ideas in a domain, where one can see the reproduction of the "whole" that one analyses. Analysis is thus the "entire decomposition" of an object and the "distribution of parts in the order in which the generation (of the whole) becomes easy". In short, the Cartesian ideological field constitutes the principles of semiotic analysis.

The methodology for my doctoral research is modelled upon Prof. H.S. Gill's semiotic analysis of Gustave Flaubert's narrative of St.Julien l'Hospitalier. That is the basic model. But adjustments have been made according to the exigencies of the nature of the text. Since the architectonic structure is deduced from the text, adjustments with
respect to methodology become inevitable. Adjustment leads to certain development or evolution of the model.

LAYOUT OF THE THESIS

Chapter 1 is the Introduction. It deals with the scope and method of this doctoral research, along with the layout of the dissertation. There is also a qualified statement concerning bibliography and research.

Chapter 2 contains the English translation of Shri Durga Saptashati done by me from the original Sanskrit in consultation with other translations.

Chapter 3 deals with the architectonic structure of Shri Durga Saptashati. It has two sections. Section (A) contains the introduction to Shri Durga Saptashati and Section (B) its architectonic structure. Section (A) introduces the text which is culled out from Markandeya Brahmapurana, but circulates as an independent document, apart from its Puranic moorings. It gives a brief resume of the formal structure of the text along with its narrative. Section (B) which presents the architectonic structure of Shri Durga Saptashati has thirteen independent architectonic units of significance corresponding with the thirteen sections of the text. Each section is equated with an 'ensemble'. The architectonic structure of each signifying ensemble is preceded by an introduction discussing the formal structure and the narrative of that section.

The alphabetically numbered micro-ensembles used in the syntagmatic analysis of Shri Durga Saptashati in Chapter 3 corresponds with the micro-ensembles of the text in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

The presentation of the architectonic structure of Shri Durga Saptashati involves syntagmatic analysis of the text. The syntagmatic analysis demonstrates that the constituting process of the narrative-discourse is not sequential i.e., one sequence following another but bypasses the sequential order. Another significant point in this analysis is the notion of ensemble. The process of signification is carried on by means of the process of "abstraction" and "contraction". It is the assemblage of a large number of abstracted semantic features from a number of objects or micro concepts that a concrete significance emerges. The smallest unit of significance, the so called signifier is an ensemble, which alone corresponds to an "idea", "an image" of significance.
The first ensemble in the text refers to the absence of moderation i.e., the balance of Too Much and Too Little and thus marks the inception of existential crisis. The second ensemble pertains to the destruction of the armies of the Great Ego. The third ensemble refers to the elimination of the Great ego. The fourth ensemble refers to the praise of the Goddess. The fifth ensemble refers to the envoy of Self-Conceit. The sixth ensemble pertains to the slaying of Sinful Eyes. The seventh ensemble refers to the elimination of Passion and Anger. The eighth ensemble signifies the death of the Seed of Desire. The ninth ensemble pertains to the slaying of Self-Deprecation. The tenth ensemble refers to the elimination of Self-Conceit. The eleventh ensemble refers to the Gods' song of praise. The twelfth ensemble pertains to the fruits of presenting the Glories of the Supreme Goddess. And the thirteenth ensemble refers to the crisis-resolution by way of the granting of boons by the Mother of the Universe.

Chapter 4 deals with the Paradigmatic Relations in Shri Durga Saptashati. Here the narrative-discourse is presented as a series of semiotic conceptualisations as a crisscross of the strands of significance. This gives us an overall view of the unity of the discourse, and also demonstrates, how the various interlinked strands were perceived in the context of the discourse as a single comprehensive unit of significance. This analytical process also shows how the manifest form and the immanent form are interlinked. This chapter has three sections. The first is entitled "The Sensuous Universe - Existential Realizations". This corresponds with the sensation in the domain of experience, that is, in the world of sense-objects. This experience is significant because it provides a point of departure which is essential for the constitution of the discourse of Shri Durga Saptashati. The existential crisis belongs to the world of sense-objects. The second section is entitled "The Universe of the Imaginaire-Reflections." It is in the domain of the imaginaire that the intense experiences, pain, sufferings and afflictions are reflected upon leading to the Negation of the Self. And the third section entitled "The Universe of Intellection - Resolution" refers to the domain which provides the space for crystallised intellection. This crystallised intellection gets articulated in the literary discourse of Shri Durga Saptashati offering a specific perception, and more importantly, a specific interpretation of human reality.

Chapter 5 deals with the architectonic structure of The Waste Land. It has two sections. Section (A) contains the introduction to The Waste Land and Section (B)
contains its architectonic structure. Section (A) introduces the formal structure and the narrative of the text. Section (B) which presents the architectonic structure has five independent architectonic units of significance corresponding with the five sections of the text. Each section is equated with an ensemble. The architectonic structure of each signifying ensemble is preceded by an introduction discussing the formal structure and the narrative of that section.

The presentation of the architectonic structure of *The Waste Land* involves syntagmatic analysis of the text. It shows that the constituting process of the narrative-discourse is not sequential but bypasses the sequential order. There is also an attempt to identify the ensembles by abstracting semantic features from the micro-concepts embodied in the text.

The first ensemble in the text refers to the fear of death and fear of rebirth. The second ensemble signifies the escape in the face of absolute meaninglessness and nothingness. The third ensemble pertains to the infernal existence where there is nothing but 'burning'. The fourth ensemble refers to the movement from nowhere to nowhere or the peregrination with no destination in sight. The fifth ensemble refers to the defiance of the law of the thunder, where the quester fails to give, sympathize and self-control.

Chapter 6 deals with Paradigmatic Relations in *The Waste Land*. Here the narrative-discourse is presented as a series of semiotic conceptualisations as a crisscross of the strands of significance. These semiotic meditations underscore the unity of the discourse besides showing the interlinkage between manifest and immanent forms. This chapter has three sections. The first section is entitled "The Sensuous Universe - Existential Realizations". This refers to the world of sense-objects which engenders human predicament informed by pain, sufferings and afflictions. The second section is entitled "The Universe of the Imaginaire - Reflections". It is in the domain of imaginaire that the existential experiences of agony, anguish, distress and turmoil are meditated upon. "The Universe of Intellection - Resolution" is the third section which dwells upon the potential resolution of the human predicament. This gets articulated in the literary discourse of *The Waste Land* through a specific perception of the triple law of the thunder.
Chapter 7 presents the Architectonics of Conceptual constructs of *Shri Durga Saptashati* and *The Waste Land*. It shows that these are two different discourses from different philosophical and cultural traditions following different logical structurations. Each discourse has a structural autonomy and also unique immanent structures. Comparison between them can be made only at the level of discourse (as a whole), at the level of abstraction or pure form and not at the level of elements. Each element derives its significance from a structural relationship of the discourse it is part of. Outside the structural relationship of the discourse an empirical reality is, by definition, inconsequential. It is the contextualisation of the elements which gives them signification.

There are thirteen major concepts in *Shri Durga Saptashati* constituting an ensemble. Likewise the five major concepts in *The Waste Land* constitute an ensemble. At the level of abstraction or pure form these are two ensembles pertaining to Salvation or Truth, but in effect, they are different discourses with different logical structurations.

**A NOTE ON BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESEARCH**

No attempt has been made to give an exhaustible list of books and reading material. This does not fall within the scope of my thesis. It is primarily a close reading of the above-mentioned texts. Suffice it to say that I have consulted primary commentarial material required for the purposes of my research.

I was awarded Fulbright Fellowship to do my doctoral research in the Universities of Harvard and California. This gave me an opportunity to work with leading lights in my field of research in the USA. The libraries of the Harvard University, Houghton and Widener among others, have been of immense help. I had access to rare manuscript materials and inexhaustible holdings, with on-line catalogue facility. The libraries of the University of California and Stanford University supplemented my research. Working with Prof. Eloise Knapp Hay at the University of California opened up new avenues in Eliot scholarship. The MLA convention in 1995 at San Diego was an eye-opener. Prof. David Perkins, Prof. Diana Eck and Prof. John Carman at the Harvard University and Prof. Gerald Larson at the University of California made significant contribution towards shaping my doctoral research project and academic sensibility. Doing a number of courses in the US gave the much needed inflection to my research.