Desani’s All About H. Hatterr

I. Introduction: G.V. Desani has won the acclamation of the critics for his lone novel All About H. Hatterr which has remained a hidden literary treasure for not less than a quarter century. One of the reasons for such a superlative praise is that it anticipates an altogether new corpus of literary output which was to come into existence a quarter century later.

Desani is an interesting personality. He held various positions as an academician, as a reporter and as a creative writer. Besides All About H. Hatterr, he has also written a poetic play entitled Mali and several short stories. With the world wide recognition for All About H. Hatterr, Desani has been hailed as an important icon in the Indian Fiction in English.

All About H. Hatterr is a story of Hindustanwala Hatterr whose encounters with five sages, three women and a common man, are hilariously described. The sages include the Sage of Wilderness, Always Happy, Sage Master Anand Gri Gri, the Naga Sadhu and Punchum. His experience in his encounter with the five sages has been depicted in a humorous manner. He learns to unlearn many things in the company of the sages. The women, by whom Hatterr is conducted into an other expedition, include the washer woman, Rosie/Smyths and Hatterr’s wife. Hatterr is disillusioned in his relation with these women. Hatterr becomes victim of another kind of deception in Mysore. This time Hatterr is deceived by an unknown man in Mysore. He arouses sympathy for him by narrating his acute poverty and makes him borrow a loan on his behalf. After sometime, he stops his correspondence with Hatterr due to which he is prosecuted for repayment of the loan amount. He is repeatedly exploited and thereby he learns to redefine the meaning of Life.

II. Subversive Themes: There are two subversive themes in All About H. Hatterr. They are (i) Subversion of the notion of the Upanishadic Tradition and (ii) Subversion of the notion of One Truth.
(i) Subversion of the Notion of Sage-Disciple relationship of the Upanishadic Tradition: The Upanishadic tradition has been one of the popular themes in Indian literature both in the vernacular and in the English language. There are several novels that dwell upon the theme of the Upanishadic tradition in the Indian Fiction in English. For example, Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* deals with this theme in the portrayal of Moorthy as Guru and the people of the village as a collective Shishya at one level and at another level Gandhi as Guru and Moorthy as Shishya, *The Serpent and the Rope* in the portrayal of Guru in Travancore and Ramaswamy as Guru and Shishya, *The Cat and Shakespeare* in the portrayal of Govind Nair and Ramakrishna as Guru and Shishya, *The Guide* in that of Raju and Velan as Guru and Shishya and *Kim* in the portrayal of Lama and Kim as Guru and Shishya.

One of the major themes, with which *All About H. Hatterr* is also woven, is the Upanishadic tradition but in the subversive mode. The author inserts the theme of the Upanishadic tradition in the narrative of *All About H. Hatterr*, and subsequently subverts the received notion of the Upanishadic tradition, which has permeated the Indian life from time immemorial. This is where *All About H. Hatterr* parts way with the aforesaid novels, because while the former depict the tradition with a great sense of reverence, the latter has done the same with a great sense of irreverence. Depicting the Upanishadic tradition topsy-turvy to the antique notion of that tradition makes *All About H. Hatterr* a post-modernist text.

The whole plot of the novel is described by N.N. Banerji in a nutshell “There are seven long sections, each of which begins with H. H consulting a sage”. But it speaks only about the exterior semblance of the narrative. In order to unearth the hidden notion of subversion in the novel, it is essential to interrogate the original nature of the seven sages with regard to their identity, their spiritual lineage, their aim in pursuing asceticism and more importantly their teaching of wisdom.

There are seven chapters and each one of them contains a pair of characters—a sage and a disciple. But the peculiarity lies in naming the sages after the seven prominent cities in the colonial India. It shows the subversive
tendency of the novel towards the Vedic tradition, in which names are sacred. The irony runs throughout the novel to indicate its dispute with the said tradition. It is also essential to know the definition of the Upanishad in order to understand its contradiction in All About H.Hatterr. As Chandradhar Sharma defines: “The word (Upanishad) therefore means the sitting down of the disciple near his teacher in a devoted manner to receive instruction about the highest reality which loosens all doubts and destroys all ignorance of the disciple”.

In the first chapter, the Sage of Calcutta is introduced. This sage appears as the Sage of Bitterness who resides with his disciple in his hut outside the town. H.Hatterr happens to meet him for writing a report about the secret of his austerities as a sub urban reporter of 'Bazzar'. H.Hatterr enters the hermitage of the sage after having drunk toddi (beer of tropics). There is a deliberate attempt at satirising the Sadhudom in Hatterr's paying a visit to the sage after having drunk, for drinking toddi is forbidden in the ashrama dharma. The disciple is portrayed as fat, big bellied and overeating.

H.Hatterr is taken aback to witness the sage’s severe practice of simplicity in matters of clothing, food and the meditative posture. It is quite natural for anyone to become emotional and to feel reverence for the sage as Hatterr himself does: "I am in the presence of one of the greatest living!". The portrayal of the sage of Bitterness reminds one of 'Ramakrishna Paramahamsa' and 'Mahatma Gandhi' with regard to the principle of austerities.

But Hatterr's illusion does not last long, because he soon comes to know that both of them are fakes actually, when he is made to forego his clothes and belongings by force there. Subsequently, Hatterr loses his job. He becomes disillusioned when he comes to know the truth about them. The truth is that though both of them act as sage-disciple, they are brothers from Lucknow where they were dealers in the business of second hand clothes and materials. Still they continue to be in the same line in the present disguise by collecting the clothes of the devotees that visit them in the name of charity. The sage admits this: "We still continue to be in business ... But the method of collecting stock is
the one witnessed by you. From this, the text’s purpose to undermine the
Upanishadic tradition is self-explanatory.

His fame as the author of commentaries on Panini’s Sanskrit Grammar
turns out to be an utter lie. He explains that his brother happened to get a
worthless exercise book while he was purchasing second hand materials and
brought it to this city from Muttra. His account of how it became a great book
shows that he is not sacred but notorious: “It was mingling with ash in this hut,
till a pundit came to honour me. On sighting the exercise book, lo! the learned
one wept with delight at the contents. I was silent, and my brother mutely
signalled him agreement that I had composed the work. Thereupon, for an
offering, a publishing works company of Benares printed it.’ Duly enlightened,
I gave it to him in the celebrated vernacular.

And his act of catching and giving the mosquitoes to the devotees,
including Hatter, to throw them out comes to light not as aphorism but
merely as the weakness of the devotees who over read it that throwing the dead
mosquitoes outside means that they should throw out the unnecessary elements
which lie in their life. On the contrary, the sage has caught the swarming and
biting mosquitoes and hands them over to his devotees to throw them outside
because he is unable to tolerate their pricks. This is a mockery of the notion
of Upanishadic tradition about which a belief prevails that the highest truth is
imparted by the Guru to Shishya.

Through the encounter of Hatter with the Sage of Bitterness, the sage’s
original identity gets exposed. About the sage’s personality, background and
aim M.K.Naik precisely writes as follows: “The sage of wilderness (in Calcutta),
who is really a second-hand clothes dealer, induces him to part with all his
clothes and drives him away dressed only in a dirty towel marked
‘G.I.P.Railway.’

A second hand clothes merchant as a sage practicing strict austerities,
being treated as an authority on Panini’s Sanskrit Grammar, imparting wisdom
to protect the devotees from their miseries, depriving them of their clothes in
the name of charity and manhandling them to prevent them from disclosing the
secret to the others can never be admitted to the Upanishadic tradition. By
portraying such characters as the Sage of Wilderness as the Guru and his brother as a sacred disciple in the text, its mistrust in the said tradition is made manifest. Hatterr's attitude in visiting the ashrama of the sage after having consumed local wine is also an example of willful irreverence to the ashrama tradition.

In the second chapter, the sage and disciple paradigm occurs only in the INTRODUCTION. Nevertheless it is important for its undertone of irony on the asharama dharma. This time the sage is introduced as the Sage of Rangoon. There is an element of satire in the very way he is introduced: "The Sage of Rangoon (now resident in India) had finished his toilette. He had had Ganges-bath, and, presently, had refined his body by besmearing it with ash." This seems to suggest that the activities like toilette, bath, ash coat are the only qualifications and principles for a sage to possess.

The sage preaches that the desire for woman is the root of all problems in this world. Hence he insists that the biological urge in man should be eliminated. Hatterr does not accept and follow the advice of the sage like an obedient shishya as said in the tradition but he nurtures his passion for his wife. Ironically, it is not Hatterr who leaves his wife but it is his wife who has already given him up, while he still longs for conjugal love. Benarrji brings this news to Hatterr: "... Anyway, I am saying, now that Mrs Hatterr has left you".

In other words, the advice of the Sage of Rangoon is antithetical to H.Hatterr's sermon, which recommends conjugal life. By making Hatterr disobey the Guru's instruction, the narrative seems to tease the Upanishadic tradition.

In the third chapter, The Sage of Madras makes his debut in the 'INTRODUCTION'. He admits that he was in the stock exchange business, before becoming a sage. His elevation in his business had caused a rift with his own father. So he was separated from his family for four years.

As he had acquired a huge wealth, he pursued his second passion of touring across the world. While doing so, he had violated his home culture of vegetarianism by tasting all sorts of meat, including beef. Beef eating is treated as a sin and is forbidden in the Hindu culture, for offering protection to cow is
the primary duty of Hindus. Thus it becomes clear that his act of eating beef has made him impure. The irony to be noted in this is that a person who had such a background has become as a sage. He does not carry out his duty as a sage also. He drives his disciple Baw Saw away without blessing him with initiation on the ground that he is very ignorant.

Then the disciple approaches another sage 'Sheik' who mentions that he charges one thousand rupees for teaching. It appears, at this moment, that he is a very wise person. But his act of compromise to teach Baw Saw just for five rupees strikes one as a great irony: "The Sheik: . . . As all affluent men, I need money at all times, and I need it sore!

Baw Saw: I have but five, Sheik. My previous calculation misguided me somewhat.

The Sheik: I bow to thy bargain!".9

The Upanishadic tradition, which is known for its sacred duty of imparting wisdom (Revelation), which has flown from the mouth of God, has been replaced by a mode of business in the episode of The Sheik and Baw Saw. The marks of disqualification can be detected in their desire for money and in being charlatans. The Shaik and Baw Saw indulge in the acts of mutual cheating, which ridicules the notion of the traditional sacred relationship between the sage and the disciple.

In the Life Encounter, Hatterr comes across the sage Sadanand XX, i.e., Always Happy XX. The Roman numerical XX may be an indicator of his age because Hatterr addresses him as boy and the sage addresses Hatterr as uncle. There is also a hint of irony because the tradition does not approve of the guru-disciple relationship where in the guru is younger than the disciple by thirty years. The original nature of the sage further reveals itself, and shows how the sage is unfit and unacceptable according to the tradition because: "Before running away from home, and helping himself to a religious title, he was a commission agent for a privately-run lottery".10 Hatterr enters into an agreement with him to cooperate as a disciple under his pseudonym the Bitter One. He also agrees to share the profit in the ratio of sixty and forty between the sage and himself. Their relationship is a mockery of the age-old guru-disciple relationship.
relationship, as it is a commercial contract. There is also sufficient mockery in the aphorism the sage quotes in the name of his father: "Privacy is essential for attacking enemies, offering prayers, casting spells, eating of the forbidden meat, administering poisons and sexual intercourse. These enterprises, uncle, must not be attempted in the presence of the public!".11

The sage is portrayed as being envious too. This is expressed well in the sage's act of attacking his professional rival by name Hiramane Multi who supersedes the sage in charlatanism. One midnight he takes along with him four more men, including Hatterr and goes to attack his rival. On his suggestion, they cross the river naked with their bodies smeared with oil. He behaves with his rival barbarously. Fearing death, he agrees to go away from there at once.

The sage is a traitor too. He deceives his confidant Hatterr himself. He misguides his devotees by mentioning that he has saved Hatterr from the uncontrollable sense of lust by administering the tenth Sadhana. This is false because only four Sadhanas are identified in the tradition. According to Wood "they are Viveka, Vairagya, Shatsampatti, and Mumu Kshutwa. The term sadhana is also applied in general to the practice of all methods leading to the acquisition of psychic powers (siddhis) and the furtherance of the religious attainments.12 Moreover one shudders to think of their tenth Sadhana which is self-castration. M.K.Naik brings out the hidden meaning of the last sadhana: "And when Hatterr reports how sage Always-Happy wanted to parade him in the nude before the devotees, Banerji immediately jumps to the absurd conclusion that Hatterr must have actually performed the last sadhana (i.e, self-castration) and goes into ecstasies over his friend's putative 'true saintliness'.13

The act of self-castration as an extinguisher of lust misrepresents the Sadhanas of asharama Dharma. It is so because Brahmacharya is a voluntary act in the process of attaining the state of Brahman. It is achieved through strict observance of meditation and fasting as prescribed by the ashrama dharma not by unnatural and inhuman act of removing the sex organ itself in order to get rid of lust. Here the text clearly subverts the ideal values of the Upanishadic tradition.
The sage Always - Happy’s trick works out as anticipated, for the Hatterr, who has been hiding behind a bush since the last night he is naked quietly, quits the place in order to escape from further humiliation of walking naked before the public the next day. In the end Always Happy XX stands exposed as a schemer. Thus this chapter, like the previous ones, reveals the text’s tendency to contradict the sage-disciple relationship of the age-old tradition.

The ‘INTRODUCTION’ of fifth chapter introduces, the Sage of Bombay, who preaches direct lesson to his disciple. The sage narrates an anecdote as an indirect lesson apropos of a princess. What is signification about ‘INTRODUCTION’ is that it provides the concept of antagonism towards woman (misgynism) which is developed in the LIFE ENCOUNTER section.

Then Banerrji tells Hatterr to attend a music concert to honour Anand Gri Gri. The entry to the function is open only to the high caste mystics. This seems to be a reflection of the caste system, which came into practice in the later Vedas. Hatterr is attending the felicitation function in the guise of a Brahmin: But inasmuch as the gathering is very high-class, to partake of good music, only high- caste Indian mystic ladies and gentlemen are invited to be present. Nevertheless, I can arrange matters to your satisfaction. You please go to the function disguised as a high- caste Indian mystic gentleman: “No body shall then be the wiser as to your actual origin, class or caste.14

This appears as an ironical comment on the notions of purity, pollution and untouchability that prevail in the Hindu tradition. Though the above notions were not in the early Vedas, their existence since the arrival of Manu till now cannot be denied. Many reformers have viewed the rigid caste system as a social evil. What Pratima Bowes, in her essay “What is the Hindu Religious Tradition?” says about this aspect is very significant: “especially the Brahmans, who thought that it was right and proper that lower castes should be left without the benefit of high culture”.15

The rigidity of the caste system is not spared by G.V.Desani. The Man of the ceremony mistakes Hatterr, who does not belong to the high caste, for the reputed Brahman Pundit Lolly who is supposed to be a great writer of
commentary on the swayamvara. He is kissed and embraced by the high-caste mystics. Above all, Anand Gri Gri, who is a renowned musician and mystic, is overwhelmed with emotions, and pays highest respect to Hatterr as follows: “He got up from the dais, embraced my knees and washed my feet with his tears!” And he goes to the extent of compelling him to accept the mystic brotherhood and to stay with him.

However, the true nature of Anand Gri Gri is revealed that very night itself, when he wakes up at the middle of the night and approaches Hatterr claiming that his present self is a ghost. Then he goes on changing his self from one to another as God, flower, fish, opal, amber, cock, and donkey. Anand Gri Gri's behaviour creates suspicion in Hatterr about his conduct. Regarding this, What A.S.D. Pillai says is apt: “There is presumably suggestion of homosexuality and incest here.” Viewed in the light of this remark, all his previous acts of affection and admiration for Hatterr, his objection to entertain woman i.e., heterosexuality, pretending to be a misogynist, and his persistence to retain Hatterr with himself in the name of mystic brotherhood indicate his obsession with homosexuality.

Anand Gri Gri's pseudo belief that all creatures are same is nothing short of a mockery of the Upanishad notion of Pravritti-marga. His act of seeking pleasure from his own male follower proves to be an irony of 'Pravritti-marga' which advocates that the true happiness consists in expanding the souls in every direction and reaching out, in brotherly union with other souls, to that universal spirit who is the perfection of knowledge, beauty and love and in whom people live and move and have their being, though, being congenitally blind, they do not know it.

In the fifth chapter, the Sage of Delhi is introduced along with his disciple. They differ from each other regarding the reality of the world. While the sage argues that the world is filled with mystery, the disciple says that it is filled with terror. The sage defends his viewpoint through a parable. He proposes a concept called Appearance-Reality. He highlights that the world, which may be a terror in appearance, is a mystery in reality. It serves as a preface to the Life Encounter also.
In the LIFE ENCOUNTER, Hatterr comes into contact with the sage called the Order of Nagas. He wears a thin lion cloth around his waist, and, moreover, it is transparent and torn. He resembles the god digambara.

The sage shows a deep concern for the welfare of Hatterr by cautioning him to be careful about his money, saying: "Always guard your money!". His sermon is "If charity is not administered, know, money shall act upon them as poison. The poison shall cause hunger, insatiable hunger, for more money, more and more, and they would spend their lives exchanging money, till they die, overloaded with wealth, their souls bloated with sin. Their souls would carry with them the accursed sin-load of Karma. That action - Karma will set up evil tremors, from one birth to the next, for countless lives till the souls are purged", and his declaration that - "I seek nothing. I seek no goods, no gains, no luxuries. ... One passenger should not rob another passenger. I therefore instructed thee, Mind thy purse! Look after thy money! Caution! Caution". All this rouses an irresistible admiration in any one, as it does in Hatterr, for the sage.

But all his words prove to be satanic utterances when the secret is revealed that the sage has done all this only to find out where Hatterr has hidden his money. Subsequently, Hatterr is betrayed thus: "I have blown away in the wind thy currency papers, thy sin-load! Ha,ha,ha,ha!". Through his verbal jugglery, he makes Hatterr disclose the secret that he is keeping his money in his lion cloth. Subsequently, the sage steals his money by disrobing him through the trick of mock wrestle. The sage's identity as an imposter is exposed. Thus his deceptive nature comes to light.

In the sixth chapter named 'Kismat' the Sage of Mogalsari Varanasi is introduced. Kismat means fate. The sage preaches his philosophy by stating that man is better than woman and advocates the philosophy of submission. Though, it reminds the readers of the theme of The Cat and Shakespeare, it does not share the tendency of The Cat and Shakespeare in adhering to the principle of the Upanishad. The justification of the title will be found a little later in the text itself.
Life ENCOUNTER deals with music in the Upanishad. It must be remembered that an asharama was regarded as a center for learning, health and art. The aspect of music as a form of art is undertaken in this chapter. As Hatterr has lost all his jobs, Banerji arranges for the convocation function to confer the title of “Sangeeta Kala Sagara” on him. The programme is to be held among only five members. They include Mr. Keemat Shastri, his wife, Mr. Bhola Singh, his mother and wife. Among them, Mr. Bhola Sing, who is also known as the Roarer, is to deliver the convocation address as the chairman of the function. The act of the sage to give the parting instructions to his disciple at the end of his disciple’s career would form the convocation address in modern times. The text of this convention address is important to expose how the convocation address in the novel is false. Hence the following from the essay of Nivedita Nanda: “Speak the truth. Observe Dharma. There should be no deviation from duties towards gods and ancestors. Study and teaching should be kept up. Actions for one’s own protection and prosperity should not be neglected. Worship mother, father, teacher and guest as gods”.

The irony is that both of them are mean minded priests who collect money for their incantation. They are also drunkards. Hatterr has seen them in the police station. Still Banerji selects them as the chief guests for the convocation. They are not qualified to conduct abhisheka according to the Upanishad principles.

Mr. Bhola Sing’s speech must be closely scrutinized to highlight the features that offend the Upanishad. Hence the following:

A sweet heart’s-wife, her abdomen endowed her by no other than the goddess Sachi! Forehead by Shakuntala! Buttocks by Ahilya! Navel by Mandodari! Legs by Kadambari, Belly by Madhavi! Nipples by Ramba! Teeth by Hidamba! Chin by Chitrangada! Nose by Sita! Insides by Urvashi! Veins by Devaki! Elbows by Savitri! Tongue by Gargi! Head by Kunti! Bones by Madari! Divine, immortal heroines all! Mana by Radha, Shakti, Parvati the mother of gods! O the smiter-of-hearts! O the fay! A sweet hearter-wife, a sweet hearter-wife, blessed with an angels-envied bosom, as seductive as a lake of honey! Ah! the clinging sweetness of her lips.
The speech is an irony of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad in which Yajnavalkya tells his wife Maitreyi that it is not for the love of wife that the wife is dear, but for the love of the Self that the wife is dear.

In his speech, Mr Bhola Sing has offended the Vedic texts by misusing his knowledge of the Vedic literature, which contains the details about the deities and their beauty in at least three ways. Firstly, he has admired the physical beauty, which actually stands for the moral virtues rather than the physical features and hence he should have respected her. For instance, S.P.A. Ayyar has compared Radha with St.Theresa in their love for Krishna and Jesus Christ respectively. Secondly, he has applied the physical features of the goddesses to describe the beauty of the physical features of his wife herself. Finally, he has done so in the ceremonial function to award Hatterr a ritualistic title.

This section reminds one of the ancient sages Vatsayana who is said to be the author of erotic texts and of Toaism and of Tantricism. Thus the act of Mr.Bhola Sing proves to be contrary to the Upanishadic tradition, which is endorsed by Raghavacharylu as: “The Killer and the Roarer are professional and mercenary con-man whose raid on the inarticulate involves the exchange of litany of Dandakas or Strotas of divine praise misapplied to the ribald convocation of which Hatterr is waiting impatiently to receive the title of Sangita Kala Sagara”.

The traits of hypocrisy are visible in both Hatterr and Mr.Bhola Sing. While the former aspires for Sangitha Kala Saagara, the highest title for musicians, which he does not deserve at all, and tries this as a strategy to regain the love of his wife, which he only hopes against hopes, the latter proves himself a charlatan. Thus the text subverts the notion of the Upanishadic tradition through its mistrust in their accessibility.

In the Introduction of the last chapter, the Sage of All India is introduced. The disciple pleads with the sage to utter a few words of wisdom for a period of two years from now onwards. After a long duration of enjoying the service from the disciple, he grants him his request saying: “Verily my son, an aphorism of all the aphorisms, the doctrine of all the doctrines, the rune of all the runes, the Hinduism, the mantra-supreme, and the reward for thy two
years' labour is now uttered as follows: Abscond from charlatans and deceivers as thou wouldst from venomous snakes! I comprehend, may the Merciful make me the husband of my own widow! That night, the disciple absconded.”

Apart from being farcical, it tells something more about the Upanishad. The act of absconding from his own ‘guru’ by following his Guru’s aphorism reflects on the morality of the sage himself. This is a fine example of self reflexivity. The sage is exposed as a charlatan and deceiver. In other words, his words hit him back like a boomerang. In addition, there is a mockery of Hinduism as he has claimed his aphorism as the Hinduism of all the Hinduism. Thus the irony functions as a double edged sword that cuts both the sage and Hinduism at once.

Finally, Hatterr encounters the last sage called Pundit Punchum. He organizes sastangas at various country sides. He himself is the chief and attends to the grievances of the disciples in the form of open confession. Initially the behaviors of the sage and the disciple appear to be normal. When the sage appeals to the gathering to contribute money to the disciple as a compensation for disappointment in loving, Hatterr becomes aware of the logical fallacy in his behavior. He experiences more bitterness when he is made to contribute all his money to Punchum by force. Later he learns that the whole sastang is a trick played by Punchum and his own men to cheat the people. The same is played over and over again at different places for minting money. Hatterr realizes that there is no meaning in fighting it since he feels that cheating has been incorporated into life so much so that nothing can be done about it any more.

In total, All About H.Hatterr installs the sage-disciple relationship in all the seven chapters and subverts the same. The subversion is enacted by ridiculing the ethics and principles for which the tradition stands. First of all, all the sages are fake and wicked, which N.N.Banerji also acknowledges as: “The story thus rambles on with his experience of the above named sages and shows the hypocrisy of all these personages”.

The sages include an impostor, a forger, a homosexual, an impersonator and a charlatan. In addition, there are a number of instances of
misrepresentation, misnomination, mismanagement, misapplication and misuse of the Upanishadic tradition.

The text also mistrusts the ideals of the Upanishadic tradition such as austerity, self control, brahmacharya, renunciation, etc. and shows how they are not adequately honoured by either the sage or the disciple. It reveals that all the sages are hypocritical.

Just as it mistrusts the Upanishadic ideals, it also mistrusts the Upanishadic practices used by charlatans to cure people's illness. Desani is of the opinion that prescription of Yogic practices for curing diseases is a hoax. Thus the representation of the sages and their teaching can be summed up in the words of Molly as: "... pseudo teaching given by a phony guru".27

Besides these, Desani has ironically commented on the way one may embrace in the pursuit of the sainthood in India. One need not undergo any religious samskara. Instead, half nakedness and smearing the ash may be enough for one to be considered a sage: "In India, if you decide to go religious, be a semi-Benedictine, a sacred chicken, belong to the Cloth, no need to hulla ballo at all. You simply cast off clothing. You wear the minimum lion cloth, walk freely on the plains of the country of Hindustan, "That's the bush theologia-indica in a nut-shell for you."28

Regarding this aspect of spiritualism, to quote Chetan Kamani: "Desani has good dig at asceticism. In India, one can become a sanyasi if he just puts on a lion cloth".29

Gerhard Stilz epitomizes the entire experience of H.Hatterr with the sages as follows: "He decides to 'go Indian,' searches for wisdom and truth in seven 'life encounters,' and is disillusioned in all of these by finding out that all the saints and sages whom he has approached are selfish frauds and artful tricksters."30

There are many such sly comments on the nature of sainthood in the text, which indicates the text's mistrust in the system of sadhudom. Therefore All About H. Hatterr can be regarded as a subversion of the Sage-Disciple tradition, for it is, after all, "a satire on sainthood."31
The debate on the notion of truth is in the form of a dialogue between Banerrji, who is obsessed with the thoughts of the popular western authors, and Hatterr, who constantly disagree with the propositions of Banerrji. Banerrji goes on quoting from the Elizabethan authors like Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Francis Bacon, from theological texts like the Bible, the Buddhism, Kamasutra, etc and from the several English poets like Robert Burns, Tennyson and others.

But Hatterr does not agree with his friend and argues that the Judgement of truth should be based on the aphorisms of the ancient authors or the classical texts. He dismisses the old ideas about life as irrelevant to the present context. Hatterr's dismissal of the received notion of truth is made explicit as follows:

You only read that damme writer Shakespeare. The Bard this, the Bard that! I had rather be a dog, and bay the moon! To hell with kittens, I am not literary, I admit you that. But I tell you, man, I have seen more Life that feller Shakespeare! Things happen to me with accents on 'em! If I were to tell all, right from the au commencement to the la termination of my life-story, I should like to see some honest critic pronounce an inferior to Shakespeare! This is the Twentieth Century! Body man! Doctor the body, and everything'll be okey-doke! Be alive! Live! Virility! Vis vitalis! This Medical Man's Century. No sentiment, no dog-cat or Romeo-Juliet imaginative stuff, but realistic brutal true-to-life pictures! Essence, and no dross! What dam' use is there in reading what the Stratford-on-Avon feller wrote so long ago, and is himself dead and gone? Besides, hell, they say Bacon did it! I tell, the Bacon-Shakespeare pictures won't tally with Life to-day!
Hatterr’s response to his friend’s leaning on the receive^ notion of Truth given to All About H. Hatterr the colouring of metafiction. Hatterr’s objection to drawing a conclusion on the notion of truth on the basis of what the old writers have left behind is based on his innate pragmatism. He gains the wisdom not from any School of Thoughts but from the School of Life. His School life consists of three categories of people and he formulates his understanding of the meaning of life in his encounter with these people. The first category comprises five phony sages. This has already been discussed in the earlier part of our discourse. The second group consists of three women, and the third consists of a cheat.

His encounter with the washer woman appears first in the narrative. In his typical indigenous style he introduces her as “dhobin : viz my Indian washerwoman”. This happens when Hatterr is a bankrupt. He is not able to clear the charges due to the dhobin. The dhobin takes an undue advantage of his insolvency and fornicates him to kiss her instead of making payment of the dues. Hatterr is forced to yield to the passion of the dhobin who looks nearer sixty than fifty. Somehow he manages to gather the amount and visits her to clear the balance because he does not want to oblige her in respect of her unfair demand. On being disappointed, she defames and expels him from the Club. Hatterr is disillusioned in his encounter with the first woman.

Banerrji reiterates his belief in his borrowed notion of truth by asserting that Life is sacred. But Hatterr has something different in store to experience with the second woman - Rosie Smythe. She is the wife of Bill Smythe who is touring with his circus company. She misuses Hatterr’s passion for her for making him perform some risky roles in the circus. He plays as a dish plate in the lion show hoping to enjoy the postdated promises of kisses from Mrs. Smythe. On the contrary, she throws away without fulfilling her promises. Thus, Hatterr is exploited by the second woman also. Dr.Naik rightly observes in this regard. His misadventures make him an anti-hero: Hatterr’s fo hardy circus -act, into which he has been tricked by Rosie Smythe with false promises, becomes in Banerrji’s hero-worshipping eyes a gesture of amazing courage and self-sacrifice”. 
The third woman from whom he learns a lesson of life is his wife whom he describes variously as “Kiss-curl”, my perspiring, hiprolling and soundly sleeping wife and out size to the core. He is deserted by her. This occurs at the time of the convocation ceremony, arranged at their home while she is away. On returning home unexpectedly, his wife witnesses the assembly at her home. When no servant is available to take her luggage, her fury finds no bounds. Her immediate reaction against Hatterr is to storm into the gathering at Hatterr’s house where a music society is conferring a title on him she threatens “to sheet all present, forcing Hatterr to wander in the semi-nude in the garden in pelting rain, from where he watches through the French windows her and her guests enjoying a sumptuous dinner”.36

While staying in Mysore doing a job of dealing with wholesale sandalwood oil, Hatterr comes across the south Indian loan-shark. He manipulates Hatterr with drink and makes him borrow a small amount, which doubles within a few months. Incapable of paying the debt, Hatterr runs away from Mysore and turns into a sadhu by chance.

With the practical lessons from the school of life, Hatterr’s disapproval of the notion of the truth passed down to the present from the ancient authors is intensified. He is not ready to believe in the meaning of life, which was established many centuries ago. He considers that there should be one to one correspondence between the situation in the past and that in the present to accept the old view on life. Since the philosophy of life in ancient classics does not suit the present life, he refuses to rely on them for better understanding of life in the present, and prefers the daily news magazines to the voluminous works of old masters.

Regarding the attitude of the old texts towards the notion of truth, the All About H.Hatterr can be read as a subversion of monism. Monism refers to the belief that the truth exists in one form only. The text contains the antithesis to this concept in several places. Hatterr outbursts against the prevailing notion of truth as monism and proposes a contradictory statement that ‘Life is a bundle of contrast.’ To illustrate this concept he further provides a list of contrasts as
In his encounter with Anand Gri Gri, Hatterr's frustration with the dogma of monism of Anand Gri Gri is evident: "He may love a lady, a feller, or even a stone. It is all the manifestation of one source, one reality, one God, one Love, one absolute". This statement is a comment on the hypocrisy of Anand Gri Gri who poses for a universal lover in public and misuses his mystic stature to indulge in homosexuality and incest privately. By installing a character like Anand Gri Gri and by making such comments such as above, the text makes its intention to subvert the notion of monism of the Upanishad quite clear.

As he is thoroughly disillusioned with the traditional ways of realizing truth through his encounters with the phony sages and their false sermons, he seems to suggest that truth should be unearthed from day today practical life. It becomes evident in the act of Hatterr's frequent references in the novel to reports, news, editorials, in the newspapers, which are the easily accessible means of acquiring it. The subversion of the notion of truth of the Upanishad tradition is expressed explicitly in the following extract from the text:

A Truth-thing, or a Truth-idea, might be an a. By the time a feller has the notion of this a, a sensation of it, its nature changes. What a feller has is not an a, but an awareness of an a. Below the belt! He hasn't the true a, but a translation! Now, if a feller has to communicate his-own idea and awareness of this a - let's name it another a - to some feller, he has to use a word, a pointer, a shadowgraph, which might be a b. The message now is a (Truth), plus a (the notion of Truth), plus be (a word): baa. In other words, if a teller wants to tell another what Truth-a is like, he has to aa and baa! All communicated and communicable knowledge is subject to this bashing-up: this Thus far, and no farther, you baskets! ruling.

Hatterr's contention is that what is regarded as truth at the beginning does not remain intact. It undergoes several changes at different stages of realizations during which its original meaning gets lost. When it is ultimately
understood, it does not retain its original form. Thus the notion of truth which is identified as ‘a’ becomes ‘a’ and baa at the end. This echoes perfectly the post-modernist view, which also asserts that there is no stable and consistent ground for establishing the final Truth at all. The idea, which is conceived in the mind, begins to lose its original nature while it is being communicated because commissions and omissions are obvious in the process of its delivery. This philosophy of contrast is meant to negate monism, which is the belief of the Upanishadic tradition.

There is a gross misunderstanding in the interpretation of Hatterr’s message - ‘accept life.’ It is wrongly read as Hatterr’s advice to accept life with the hypocrisies of the age-old tradition. A close examination of his sayings proves that he prefers living the life with all its chaos to renouncing life like a sage. There is a strong suggestion that one need not withdraw one’s self or life from the social engagements as the sages of yore did, but must continue to live his natural conjugal life. The justification can be found in his frequent longing for family life endowed with a lot of children. There is a suggestion of the negation of the principle of yogic ‘Negation’ (renunciation) of all the ties with the world, which is the prerequisite for achieving ‘Atman’ which is the core of the Upanishadic teaching. Hence it is clear that Desani intends to subvert the notion of truth of the Upanishadic tradition through Hatterr’s opposition to it. There are sufficient indications of the post-modernist tendency, which asserts that the discovery of the ‘TRUTH’ is inaccessible.

Further, the text argues that as truth is subjective, it is prone to multiple transformations. Desani comes close to the philosophical view of Kierkegaard with regard to the problem of communicating the inexpressible. It may be noted that Kierkegaard is a precursor of post-modernism in philosophy. Desani’s attitude to subvert the notion of spiritualism, in general, is evident from the observation Ramanujan makes: “He found it “sickening” to watch people waste their time talking about God, Reality, the here after”.40

In the first part of the thematic analysis, All About H. Hatterr emerges as a text that regards the notion of Sage – Disciple relationship as a human conflict lacking consensus on its validity. The author succeeds in his endeavour to
expose the aforesaid construct in the old tradition by portraying seven sages as
the embodiments of unholy and blasphemous qualities. In the second part of
the thematic analysis, *All About H. Hatterr* is proved to be hostile to the notion of
truth. It tries to dismantle not only the notion of single truth but also demolishes
the presumed basis of the notion of truth. Like Nietzsche, G.V. Desani emerges
as a deconstructor of knowledge and truth because he rejects the prevailing
notion of truth. Therefore, *All About H. Hatterr* is a forerunner of post-modernist
novel in Indian fiction in English.

In addition, there are sufficient textual evidences to prove that the post-
modernism installed in *All About H. Hatterr* is going native at various levels.
Firstly, both the themes grapple with the native traditions. While the former
dislodges the notion of Upanishadic tradition, the latter dislodges the notion of
monism, which has a deep root in the Hindu spiritualism. Secondly, the text
depends upon the native sources of the Guru-Shishya tradition, which has a
long history of not less than three thousand years. Thirdly, unlike the western
post-modernist texts, *All About H. Hatterr* has a positive tendency towards the
human constructs. Though the novel unveils the hypocrisy built in the
Upanishadic tradition, Hatterr does not recommend at any stage the destruction
of the sages. He leaves it to the wisdom of the individuals to draw the
conclusion. He also suggests something else, i.e., family life in place of the
sagehood, which the text subverts. In the second theme also, he holds a positive
message by suggesting that one should live his or her life however unhappy it
may be. And he replaces the notion of truth, that life is sacred and harmonious
whole about which he is antagonistic, with the truth that "Life is a bundle of
Contrasts". His new proposition is not confined to a single implication as in the
case of a realist or traditionalist, but is open to multiple interpretations and
realizations, and thereby it remains faithful to the creed of post-modernism
which is multiplicity. Thus *All About H. Hatterr* is a trend setter of not only
post-modernism in general but also Indian post-modernism in particular.

III. Subversive Technique: *All About H. Hatterr* can also be read as a
subversion of the notion of the Form of the novel. Since it defies the notions of
structure, plot, characterization and diction.
i) **The structure**: Excluding the first chapter entitled Mutual Introduction, the novel is divided into seven parts, which are, in turn, divided into four sub parts. This does the job of providing an external shape to the narration of Hatterr. At the beginning of each chapter there is ‘Digest’ which forms the first of the four sub-parts. This sums up the transaction on the meaning of life. Then follows the ‘Instructions’ forming the second part. This comprises the depiction of the encounters between Hatterr and the sages. Hatterr is shown as a disciple. About this part Dieter Riemenschneider notes: “These episodes presented like parables rather than realistically”.41

‘Presumptions’ is the third sub part. In this part, the moral lessons, which Hatter draws from his encounter, are presented. And the last sub-part is called ‘Life-Encounter,’ in which the advice of each sage is put into practice and Hatterr observes its viability. There are mixed results of the tests. While the words of the advice of some sages are proved right, those of some others are proved wrong. Though the external structure of the novel is in this shape, the internal structure of the novel is not neat and linear like its external counterpart. It is stuffed with various genres, disciplines and texts in disorderly manner, which creates the impression of the art of collage.

*All About H.Hatterr* is a mixture of several forms; autobiography, epic, novel, etc. can yield to multiple reading frames. It can be read as an autobiographical novel but it does not follow all the norms of autobiography. The novel is entitled *All About H. Hatterr*, the narrative dwells upon the sages. Thus the title is a part of Desani’s word-play. It is so because there is a hint at the outset that the novel is written by G.V.Desani and Hatterr who are one and the same and different persons simultaneously. It also defies the nature of autobiography by its unreliability of fact due to the split personality of the narrator ‘Hatterr’ whose narrative is rather a word-play and a gesture than a factual record. Thus the novel raises objection to the notion of the autobiographical novel. At this juncture, Riemenschneider’s observation is worth while to note:

Looking at the book from a formal point of view it neither appears to conform to the demands of the novel nor to those of the
autobiography in the sense we usually understand these genres, and, perhaps, the subtitle given to the original edition of *All About H. Hatterr*, viz. "a gesture" designates its character much more aptly than the word novel used in the second edition of 1972, because the book does neither contain a plot, properly speaking, nor well delineated characters. The action is constituted of a number of unrelated events loosely strung together by the personality of the narrator.42

*All About H. Hatterr* defies the notion of the novel in two ways. Firstly, it consists of not a single story but a number of stories. There are parables, anecdotes, riddles, jokes and proverbs in *All About H. Hatterr*. Thus the novel exemplifies the post-modernist text by incorporating several stories, which are called little arts in the post-modernist idiom, in the narrative of *All About H. Hatterr*.

(1) Intertextuality: Desani may not be the first writer to use the device of intertextuality in creative writing but it may not be wrong to state that he is the first to use it most extensively and most innovatively. In addition, a variety of texts have been incorporated into the structural pattern of the novel.

An echo of several authors and the texts is present all through the novel. The device of intertextuality may roughly be classified as follows: 1. A mere echo of authors and texts. This includes the Bard o’ Avon (Henry the VIII), Ibrahim Ben Ezra, Victor Hugo, Kamasutra, Lord Tennyson, Miss Amy Finden’s Indian Love Lyrics, John Bunyan, Homer, William Blake, R. Kipling’s *Kim*, Bernard Shaw, Sherlock Holmes and others. The author has not quoted anything from the texts of these authors. Only the names of the authors and texts are mentioned in the narrative. This is one of the ways in which the device of intertextuality is made manifest.

2. The citing of some portions of others’ texts. Desani cites from the texts of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Robert Burns, Albert Einstein, Luther Martin, Longfellow, Ben Jonson and others. From Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus* the following line is cited: “She launches a thousand ships” 43. It is needless to say that this is the rhetoric exclamation of Faustus at the sight of the beautiful face of the Helen
of Troy who is invoked from her grave for Faustus. Shakespeare's texts abound in the narrative. His texts, from which several lines appear in the novel, include King John, Henry V, Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, Tempest, Henry VI, Othello, Julius Caesar and Hamlet. To illustrate the deployment Shakespeare's texts in the narrative structure, one instance from The Tempest may suffice: "Where the bee sucks, there suck I, in a cowslip's bell I lie". This is the song of Ariel in The Tempest after its release from captivity. From Burn's sonnet the following line appears: "My love like red, red, rose!". Martin Luther's text is: "Behold a matter on which there is no room for doubt, and that is what fevers and other diseases are the work of the Devil". This is taken from Luther's ecclesiastic discourse. From Einstein, "All motion is relative" which is the statement meant to confirm his 'Theory of Relativity'.

As a matter of fact, the novel also has used other's texts extensively. Keeping the scope of the discourse in mind, only a few examples have been illustrated from the novel. The most striking feature of Desani's use of intertextuality is that he has accommodated a variety of texts in the narrative pattern, which include not only literary texts but also religious, political, cultural, and scientific texts. This distinguishes Desani both from his predecessors and successors. All About H. Hatterr anticipates Rushdie's The Moor's Last Sigh, Ghosh's The Circle Reason and Roy's The God of Small Things with regard to the diverse devices of intertextuality.

Mixed Genre: The narrative also adopts the forms of drama and poetry. In the sections where Sheik and Baw Saw and Punchum and a disciple appear, the scenes are dramatic. On the bank of the Ganges, Hatterr's description of the flow of the Ganges is poetic. He also comments on art here and there. Hatterr criticizes Shaw for not being poetic. The tone in which Shakespeare's universalization is satirized by Hatterr is a bitter one. The text includes lines from poets and men of letters with comments which tend to become brilliant pieces of literary criticism. Thus All About H. Hatterr fits into the slot that Linda Hutcheon calls "post-modernist fiction" although "The borders between literary genres have become fluid". All About H.Hatterr bypasses the notion of
plot as understood in the conventional sense. The plot is not organic and well
knit but rather loose.

Further the four sections DIGEST, INTRODUCTION, PRESUMPTION
and LIFE ENCOUNTER in each chapter and several parables in these four
sections make it so desultory that it becomes very difficult to bring it under any
one category. However, All About H.Hatterr passes for post-modernist novel
since the notion of plot grows beyond any limitation, which as A.S.D.Pillai
notes, the hallmark of a post-modernist text: “In contrast to the tightly
constructed and formally elegant Modern novel, All About H. Hatterr exhibits
everous freedom with regard to questions of form and language. Its plot
construction is loose and episodic in movement (a reader, after having read the
introductory pages could, without aesthetic loss, read any of the seven
encounters at will).49

Apart from the stories of the sages, there are as many as twelve more
stories. Among them, Hatterr’s experience with the dobbin woman, Mrs. Smith
and the poor fellow in Mysore can be read as independent short stories. The rest
of them appear as parables in the Panchatantra stories. Like the Panchatantra,
All About H. Hatterr too includes riddles, jokes, animals. There is one in the
INTRODUCTION of the first chapter. It is the story of a Maharaja Emperor. In
the third chapter, the sage of Madras tells the story of his life before becoming a
sage. During that time he and his father were known as ‘Bear’ and ‘Bull’
respectively. The story describes the prospects of the sage in the Stock Exchange
and how conflicts between the father and the son were brought about and how
he went away from his family consequently. It also contains another story in
which the hypocrisy of the Sheik and Baw Saw -- the sage and the disciple -- is
exposed. In Chapter IV, there is a story of the mischievous princess of Bhoongal,
who invites grooms to marry her provided that they are prepared to receive a
thousand slaps by her every day in order to ward off all amorous advances,
who is finally fooled by a polygamist. And in Chapter V, the sage tells the story
of a dead rat.

The novel employs several devices to frame its plot so as to suit the
pluralistic and chaotic nature of Indian life. Stilz also notes this feature as

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follows: "The interpretation of mottos, instructions, quotations, commentaries, footnotes, finally counterweighted with a dedicated, painstakingly grotesque defense of the book by one of its fictional characters, is merely the outer framework for the picaresque masquerade embedded in it".

With the devices like metafiction, magic realism, self reflexivity, intextuality and mixed genres, the structure of novel has been disturbed from its linear progression. It is episodic in its nature but each episode is stuffed with stories, jokes, anecdotes and other owing to which there is no single and straightforward story in each episode. The structure is openended. This in turn eschews the notion of organic plot and proper structure. About the structure what Ramanujan states is very relevant: "The structure is not linear or sequential. The structure of All About H.Hatterr is made of seven parallel walls".

Magic Realism: Fantasy is magic realism in modern terminology. Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children is said to have adopted magic realism. It is found in All About H.Hatterr too. Magic realism is generally treated as a device to improve upon the realistic text. The text deploys the device of fantasy in depicting the sages as fake and fraud from the beginning to the end which posits this text as an antithesis to the texts of R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao which have deployed 'traditional realism' through depiction of their sages as earnest and committed at least towards the end though not from the beginning. In All About H. Hatterr, 'Magical realism' can be traced in the text's juxtaposition of alternative realities and alternative versions of Sadhudom. All About H.Hatterr, which aims at revealing the reality of Sadhudom, employs magic realism to expose what is concealed in the traditional modes. Thus the multiple identity and omnipresence of Hatterr throughout the novel gives to the narrative the touch of magic realism. Hatterr's presence in many forms and everywhere is possible only in the world of magic. Hence the hat of magic realism fits All About H. Hatterr's head perfectly.

The parables that deal with the Maharaja emperor and the princess show the characteristic features of magic realism. The character Ali Bee is described as a stratagem personified. When Maharaja attempts to seduce his chambermaid, a
strange voice is heard. The voice warns Maharaja against his wrongdoing. The device of magic realism is used in warning Maharaja who thinks the voice is divine oracle: “The emperor considered the voice as Sky-speech: Otherwise, nowise human, but as take issuing from the gods to earthly wrong doers”. Ali Bee makes use of this opportunity. He approaches the Emperor who has been restless for the last ten years without being able to discover the mystery of voice. Ali Bee makes the Emperor believe that the bird that warned him is none other than his own talking bird Ahmed (Patronymic, Abdullah). Thus the devices like Sky-Speech, talking bird are the manifestation of magic realism employed to unveil what is concealed in the traditional mode of narrative.

Metafiction: Metafiction may broadly be called the poetics of the novel. The novel as a metafiction is a post-modernist device. It defies the notion of reality and form in the novel. Margaret Heckard defines metafiction as: “The shifting gears, the widening of frames, the expanding of consciousness, this is what metafiction does to reader and writer alike”. Judged by this as a parameter, All About H.Hatter easily fits into metafiction. The narrative shifts from one mode to another and from that to yet another and so on. It does not remain stagnant. It has incorporated many forms of story telling, like short story, anecdote, parable etc. Though all the chapters are divided into four fixed sections—DIGEST, INTRODUCTION, PRESUMPTION and LIFE ENCOUNTER, the narrative is constantly geared to change from one to another and it does not streamline its movement, with the result that it become discursive and loose.

As already mentioned, the novel cannot be restricted to any single frame: While Molly Ramanujan considered it a philosophical novel, M.K.Naik looks at it as a postcolonial novel, N.N.Banerji as a mock epic, Shanker Mohan Arora, as a satire. It can be read as an autobiography and a fable too. What is to be noted here is that the novel defies the very form of the novel, and results into an anti-novel and a novel about the novel. W.H.Gass recognizes the anti-novel as metafiction and Robert Scholes endorses this by saying: “Many the so called anti-novels are really metafictions”.

The expansion of consciousness can be observed in the novel’s movement from one disciple to another. It moves from personal life to the
history of spiritualism, including Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and to philosophy, medicine, law etc. Stilz sums up this complex phenomenon very aptly as follows: “The book that includes his adventures contains widely divergent mixture of discourses taken from fictional autobiography, philosophical treaties, religious catechism, literary criticism, legal defense and various other narrative and instructive genres”.55

Self-Reflexivity: The device of self reflexivity has descended from the folklore's oral tradition. The author as narrator and vice-a-versa indicates his consciousness of the projected reader in the relation between speaker and listener, narrator and author. There are many occasions to substantiate this point in the novel, but for the present it may suffice to quote one such: “Shall we reverse the roles? Suppose, Instead of I, you were confessing?”56

Self-reflexivity is discernable in the special application of ironies. Hatterr discovers that all the sages that he has encountered are sham and phony while he is the same himself in his roles both as a sadhu and a disciple. He thinks that he is very clever in proposing absurd terms to the Mysore loan shark who however cheats him completely. This is also a feature of self reflexivity. In chapter VII, the Sage of All India gives the aphorism of all the aphorisms to his Shishya that he should abscond from the Charlatans but the shishya absconds immediately from his Guru only. This illustrates not only Desani’s sense of humour but also the device of self reflexivity. Anand Gri Gri’s advocacy of misogyny and his subsequent attempt to molest Hatterr is an example of self reflexivity. The Naga sadhu reminds Hatterr persistently to keep his purse safe from the thieves. Subsequently, it is not to a thief Hatterr loses his hidden purse but to the Naga sadhu himself. In all these instances, the words, which are meant to denote others, denote the speakers only, and thereby it is a device of self-reflexivity.

(ii) Characterization: All About H. Hatterr consists of three main characters. They are Hatterr, his friend Nath C. Banerrji and Banerrji’s teacher Beliram Rambelli. Banerrji is an alter ego of Hatterr himself. Banerrji’s appearance and disappearance are arranged according to the need of Hatterr. Beliram appears only occasionally. In other words, Hatterr is one and all with regard to
characterization in *All About H. Hatterr*. The character of H. Hatterr is an innovation of hybridity. He is a son of a European father and Malay mother. He describes his genetical identity as "Biologically I am fifty-fifty of the species". Culturally also he is a hybrid i.e., an amalgamation of the western and eastern cultures. In this regard he admits that he is a debtor both to the Greeks and several Indian sages, which has shaped his cultural mind set. His name ‘Hindustaniwalla Hatterr’ has a humorous christening background. This first half is derived from his relationship with India through his Malayan mother and the second is derived from his school head master ‘The Head’s too-large-for-him-hat’. Hatterr is endowed with multiple identities i.e. H.H, Bitter One, reporter, human plate (dish plate) Sangeetha Kala Sagara, Pundit Lolly, etc. He is a disciple on some occasions and guru on some other occasions. Like the phony gurus, Hatterr is also dubious. With multiple identities, the character of Hatterr defies the notion of well made character.

Desani’s skill of characterization can be seen in incorporating all the characters into one, i.e., Hatterr himself. Hatterr is manifold metamorphoses and is an amorphous whole of all at the same time. It is a sort of metamorphoses of magic realism that Hatterr undergoes metamorphosis. Raghavacharyulu notes this particular aspect: “Hatterr emerges as the *eiron*, the impresario, the reporter, the chorus, and the ‘awful example’-all roles combined into single, substantiated ego containing its own strategies of surcease and exuberance”.

His character defies the very notion of characterization as also that of a hero. It is so because, Hatterr possesses many idiosyncrasies like the Bitter one or Hatterr, the famous Brahmin Pundit Lolly etc. It undermines the notion of ‘hero’ as he is neither a charismatic person nor a nobleman of heroic stature. Hatterr is rather a synthesis of hero, heroine, villain and jester.

Like Hatterr, Banerjji is also a culmination of many impressions. He performs several roles owing to which, his identity becomes elusive. Dieter Riemenschneider’s interpretation of Banerjji is very revealing: “He might be called Hatterr’s counterpart his alter ego, embodying abstract, bookish learning, because to Banerjji the great writers of the past, most of them European, are the masters of life. His source of quotations from their works
seems exhaustible although he quotes them in a rather disjunctive manner. Banerji could also be interpreted as the instigator of Hatterr’s activities a sort of puppeteer because it is at his suggestion that Hatterr gets involved with a variety of persons”.

In portraying the sages, the device of parody is employed. There are several sages whose real identities are different from the present. They are dubious because they act from egotistical motives intent on cheating others and gaining materially from them. They are flat sketched rather than executed in the round, and are all presented from outside, never giving the reader a chance of understanding the motives out of which they act, their feelings and thoughts.

Desani does not abide by the traditional notion of well-made character. He consistently blurs the notion of round or flat characters and of a character possessing a single identity. His characters possess multiple identities and go on changing them from place to place. Thus All About H. Hatterr parts way with the traditional mode of characterization by adopting the post-modernist mode of collage.

(iii) Diction: The diction in All About H. Hatterr is a hard nut to crack. It is rather a funny mixture of dictions. Desani has deployed the maximum number of languages to suit his theme which has the appearance of chaos and absurdity, and broken the established rules of grammar. What Sarbani Chaudhuri observes in this regard is worthwhile to note: “Hatterr’s indefatigable jest for life is matched by his irrepressible language: ungrammatical, idiosyncratic, colloquial, replete with ingenious coinage, and literary archaisms”.

It can be called lingo collage. He has incorporated some borrowed phrases from poets but he cannot claim them to be real because Desani has not provided notes for authenticity, which leads to obscurity. This is one of the methods of post-modernism, for post-modernism is a votary of obscurity. He has used as many eight languages such as Dutch, Danish, French, German, Hindustani, Italian, Sanskrit, Spanish, and dialects and registers, like Anglo-Indian Slang, Babu English, Shakespearean English, medical jargons and others. It is beyond the capacity of an average reader to understand the game Desani plays. This particular feature has won him the fame as a pioneer of ‘word play’
in the Indian Novel in English. Pluralism in characterization and diction indicates the ubiquitous feature of Hatterr in the text. This device exposes the social chaos also.

This mixing of heterogeneous words is termed as ‘chutnification’ by Rushdie. The motto of subversion in adopting such a hybrid language as this is very clear. Ramanujan rightly points out this very intention: “The verbal peculiarities of the narrator are part of the subversive and counter subversive intent of the book”.

Chutnification: Though the term chutnification has won currency after the publication of Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children, its origin can be traced in All About H.Hatterr, which was published more than twenty five years earlier than Midnight’s Children. So it is worthwhile to consider what Radha Ramaswamy states about the evolution of Chutnification in Indian Novel English: “Before studying the methods of individual authors, it is necessary to go back to G.V. Desani’s Novel All About H.Hatterr published in 1948, it is acknowledged as the first novel in Indian English by an Indian author and Rushdie has claimed that in his use of Chutnified English in his novels he has been greatly influenced by Desani”.

The components of Desani’s Chutnification are listed as under:
1. **Foreign vocabulary**: terra incognita, *Sie vos non vobis*, *S’il vous plait*, *repondez sil vous plait*,
2. **New word formation**: sexploitation, sinfant, Assassintain, ventriloquism, vainglorious, misfeasance, dessertspoonful, boozlogue, U wait and several others.
3. **English with Indian accent**: milk’o!, missus, Enuff, Krist etc.
4. **Words of prayer**: Ally Luja, Hallelujah, in Christianity, Allahu Akbarlin Islam, and Om, om! Hari; om! Shanti! Shanty!shanty! in Hinduism.
5. **English and Hindustani combine**: funwallah, charlatanw
6. **allah, progresswallah okey-doke I did not maro etc.**
7. **Run on words**: what’sarname, oldlongsigh, cometomamma, whata bastard etc.
8. **Hindustani expressions:** maro, che khabar ast, chhota hazri, tamasha, salaams etc.

9. **Words as pronounced:** terminaison for termination, Arnot Smith (Pronounced it R - No! Smith) etc.

10. **Unusual compound words and names:** son-in-law-to-be, V.K. Nighanteesrimahalingam Anoopamsrimaharathanam Chety Chety etc.


12. **Speech mannerism:** The woman’s mannerisms! - especially her canting phrase “as it were”. “Darling,” she used to say, “the Mayor spoke so beautifully, as it were.” “Darling, it was a lovely sunset, as it were.” “Darling, shall we ask the Browns to stay, as it were?” “Darling, why don’t you tuck in your pyjama jacket, like everybody, as it were?” 63

13. **Synonyms:** they are the nearest approximation to the Greek psyche, the Hindu *atma*, the Christian *soul*, the Moslim *ruha*. 64

In fact, Rushdie has mixed only Hindi and Urdu words with English whereas Desani has mixed as many as eight languages with English. Besides he has used proverbs like ‘make hay while the sun shines’, ‘The elephant is never won in anger’, ‘sow in tears and reap in joy’ and aphorisms like ‘milk once milked cannot be returned to the udders’ and ‘faults are thick where love is thin’ and a typical Indian verb ‘the lights are offed’ as against ‘the lights are put off’, with abbreviation like M.P. as standing for Member of Parliament and also for major parasite. *All About H. Hatterr* has no parallel in this regard. The discussion on diction may be summed up with Karnani’s observation: “He (Desani) evolved a new idiom of his own. This is what makes *All About H. Hatterr* a fascinating novel”. 65

The form of *All About H. Hatterr* also does not fall in line with the traditional notion of ‘Form’. The author has used various devices like metafiction, magic realism, selfreflexivity, mixed genres and intertextuality to distort the notion of the structure of the narrative. This tends to defamiliarise
the notion of organic plot, the proper beginning, the middle, and the end, the unities, which have been prescribed for writing a novel. While the aforesaid devices are of the western post-modernism, the native influence on the structure of the novel is not negotiable. The oral tradition with an interlocuter, stories within a story, incorporation of animals in the narrative and openendedness are the ingredients borrowed from the native ancient texts like Panchatantra, Kadambari and Kath Sarit Sagara. Regarding the native influence on the structure of the narrative Raghavachryulu makes an apt observation: "The non-sequential logic of Oriental mystic experience is associated on the one hand to the cynical, concentric techniques of story-telling so characteristic of Katha-Sarit-Sagara, Panchtantra, Suka-Saptati and Kadambari". It evidently pleads for the process that makes post-modernism go native.

In characterization, the device of hybridity is a major tool to distort the notion of round and flat characters. In addition, some of the characters are taken from fables. In creating Hybrid characters the intention of the author is to nativize characterization too.

Desani's diction is described as Hatterreese, which is an amalgamation of verbal, nonverbal expressions, speech acts, irreverence towards the rules of grammar, and new word formation. It is the real mother of 'chutnification', and as such it anticipates a new cult in the days to come. Since chutnification is a unique form of Indian English, in diction also the tendency of redefining post-modernism in the Indian context is explicit. Banerji rightly identifies Desani as "the literary beatnik of this age".

IV. Conclusion: The analysis of All About H.Hatterr undertaken so far reveals that the text mistrusts the age old concepts, like the sage-disciple relationship, sainthood, ashramadharma, mysticism, spiritual ideologies, like austerity, renunciation, reincarnation, swayamvara, abhisheka, karma, kama, kismat, reality, truth, Atman. Hence All About H.Hatterr can be regarded as a subversion of the Upanishadic tradition. In the technique part also, the study has revealed that post-modernist devices have been employed in abundance, which is a prerequisite for the subversive themes. The devices defy the traditional notion of 'FORM' of the novel. All About H. Hatterr can be summed
up with the confirmation that it is a post-modernist novel in the words of Dr. Naik and Shyamala A. Narayan: "G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr*, an exciting amalgam of fantasy, the absurd, comedy, satire and linguistic pyrotechnics. These were the fictional values which dominated post-colonial and post-modern fiction also, especially after the rise of Magic Realism; hence most of the leading new novelists are Hatterr's children. If, as Hemingway said, "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*," it can be said that most of recent Indian English fiction has come out of the "too-large-for-him hat" of the headmaster of H. Hatterr's school". 

*All About H. Hatterr* can rightly be called the forerunner of post-modernism in the Indian Novel in English. That *All About H. Hatterr* is an experimental novel in the post-modernist fashion is proved beyond doubt. It was published six decades ago. When this novel appeared, the Indian English Fiction was still in the grip of Gandhian whirlwind and was preoccupied with the themes of National Movement. In this sense, *All About H. Hatterr* is far ahead of the sensibility of its era. It is prophetic of the new novel which emerged in the 1980's. Though a lot of critical reviews favourable to the novel are coming up in the recent days, this novel was not paid sufficient critical attention for a period of two decades and it had to suffer from seclusion without any immediate successor. After a lapse of a quarter century, there was a sign of Desanian heritage in Trishanku' *Onion Peel*. Like *All About H. Hatterr*, *Onion Peel* is a votary of not only new themes but also of subversive theme. Therefore, *Onion Peel* is explored in the following chapter.
NOTES

1. N.N. Banerji, "G.V. Desani-The First Literary Betink of This Age," *The Journal of Indian Writing in English* (Jan. 1973), 27.


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Stilz, Truth? "Hell, you will get contrast, and no mistake! Sanitizing the intercultural polylemma in G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr*" *Hybridity and Postcolonialism Twentieth-century Indian Literature* ed Monika Fludernik, 83.


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37 Desani, All about H.Hatterr, 159.
38 Desani, All about H.Hatterr, 173.
39 Desani, All about H.Hatterr, 283-84.
40 Ramanujam, G.V. Desani Writer and Worldview, 147.
43 Desani, All About H.Hatterr, 43.
44 Desani, All About H.Hatterr, 246.
45 Desani, All About H.Hatterr, 69.
46 Desani, All About H.Hatterr, 187.
47 Desani, All About H.Hatterr, 159.
49 Pillai, Post-modernism An Introduction to Postwar Literature in English, 73.
50 Stilz, “Truth? Hell, you will get contrast, and no mistake!’ Sanitizing the intercultural polylemma in G.V. Desani’s All About H.Hatterr”, Hybridity and Postcolonialism ed Monika Fludernik, 93.
51 Ramanujam, G.V. Desani Writer and Worldview, 23.
52 Desani, All About H.Hatterr, 40.
53 Margaret Heckard, “Robert Coover, Metafiction, and Freedom” Twentieth Century Literature vol. 22 no 2, (5-1976) 211.
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CHAPTER III: K.M. Trishanku’s *Onion Peel*