

Comparative Literature in India in the Twenty-first Century

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Along with comparative literature (CL), ‘World Literature’ (WL) has been in discussion for at least three decades in India. In the mid-1990s, the concept attained new dimensions when the issue of the aesthetic and the political values and the limitations of a new emphasis on global processes over national traditions earned critical attention. The concept ‘World Literature’ (WL) is the circulation of literary works beyond the linguistic and geographical boundaries of its origin. Initially, the term world literature was used primarily for masterpieces of Western European literature. Translation, acting as the bridge between different languages in the post-World War II era in which many countries became free from the fetters of colonialism and wanted to assert themselves in the form of their literatures, facilitated creation of new categories such as Commonwealth Literature, Third-World Literature, American Literature, Canadian Literature, Australian Literature, African Literature, Black Literature, Indian Literature, Postcolonial Literature and the circulation of their works beyond their national territories. These categories entered Indian academic world and proliferated there.

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The dominance of the Western models of comparative literary study in the postcolonial period is a consequence of cognitive colonisation for which the colonised are themselves responsible. The Western concepts and models of CL are received uncritically and applied for the study of Indian subcontinental literary and cultural realities which are either entirely glossed over or reduced to Indian writing in English or to what is available in English through translation.

However, by the end of the twentieth century, intellectuals from various parts of the globe were revisiting WL as a category in relation to the concepts articulated in critical and literary terms, and actively considering about WL as a framework for their own national production. There is a need to look beyond the Eurocentric and binary oppositional concepts of CL and seek more positive and unitarian and less utilitarian in nature. Among writers from Indian subcontinent, Gurudev Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and many poets and authors such as Umashankar Joshi in Gujarati, Shamsheer Bahadur Singh in Hindi and Faiz Ahmed 'Faiz' in Urdu provide the models for such a study.

Tagore was among the first in India to have used the term *Vishwa Sahitya* (VS) in his Address in 1907, as against NL. He did not call it *Prithvi Sahitya* in the sense of the term 'world' or *Jagat Sahitya* also, for the term 'jagat' refers to the nature of the world ('jagat' or 'prithvi'). 'Jagat' is something that keeps changing, as 'gati' is the root of the term 'jagat'. Incidentally, in all Indian literature that I have access to in all of them the term *Vishwa Sahitya* is used, not *Jagat-Sahitya* or *Prithvi Sahitya*.

VS is based primarily on his concept of *Vishwamanava*. In this case, *vishva* is something that is spread all over; something is extended first, and then it spreads. It does not have geographical or regional territories and is not limited by the boundaries of countries and continents or even by the earth. Therefore, between the two, the VS as a concept appears broader, dynamic and more catholic and inclusive. The issue pertaining to the shift in the concept that David Damrosch has brought about demands revisiting the concept of WL after seeing Tagore's.

In Tagore's concept, the important factor is recognition of interrelatedness of all human beings, their faculties and their relations with all elements in the universe and everything that is there. The bond with truth in the world is of three kinds—of reason, of necessity and of joy. All faculties of inner human being exist to forge a relationship with all. The bond of joy is 'in knowing others as our own' (Tagore 139). Moreover,

he saw interrelatedness, as he began with the metaphor from the world of dance in which the bond of joy or beauty is expressed. The dance is related to *Natraj* as the highest point of reference. Gurudev refers to Krishna, Mathurapati or the king of Mathura, dancing with the milk-maids of Vrindavan. This bond of joy 'erases all distances' (Tagore 139) because there is no self-conceit, or concealment or calculation. Rather there is a surrender of ourselves to the small and weak.

Gurudev was an artist, a poet, painter, musician and dancer in one, spoke through metaphors and therefore left a lot of space for us to imagine. In his Address, he discussed the concept of world literature in terms of universal man. He envisaged *VS* as a *mandir* (temple) which is a construct but not an ordinary one. The temples have their master plan, but it has no visible master plan. It should, however, not be construed that it does have its master-builder. In this temple, each writer is an artisan and a worker contributing according to one's natural capacities to the whole. That which does not stand the test of time falls off on its own. The workers are no ordinary mortals, and they are not paid in terms of wages but become recipients of prestige accorded to an *ustad* (master). But Tagore is silent about one question: If there is a temple, can it be complete without an idol? Its *pranpratishtha* is to be done. If so, is there any idol in the temple of Tagore? One can indulge in speculative criticism and say that Tagore was a follower of Brahmo Samaj, so he might not have believed in the concept of idol worship. Elaborating his concept, he added, 'But great time lies in wait, and it sifts everything. Whatever is small and worn-out slips through the sieve to blend with the dust. Among different ages and people, only those things survive in which all human beings can discover themselves. The things that pass this test are permanent and universal human treasures' (Tagore 147). According to him, by passing through this process of making and unbreaking, a timeless ideal of human nature and expression finds its manifestation in literature. 'To judge literature by that ideal is to draw on the support of humankind's collective wisdom' (Idem).

To him, universal humanity expressed itself in literature. Let me quote Tagore, for his crucial words can neither be battered nor paraphrased:

No literary work has succeeded unless its author has become the mere means of composition. A work is admitted to the rank of literature. Only the author has realised the ideas of human race in his own thoughts and expressed humanity's pain in his writing. We regard literature as a temple

being built by the master mason, universal man; writers from various countries and periods are working under him as labourers. None of us has the *plan* of the entire building; but the defective parts are dismantled again and again, and every worker has to conform to that invisible *plan* by exercising his natural talent and blending his composition with the total design. This is what brings out his artistic prowess; this is why no one pays him a common labourer's wages but honours him as a master builder.

Comparative Literature is the English title you have given to the subject I have been asked to discuss. In Bengali, I shall call it world literature. (Tagore 148)

The *VS* as a temple is the most sacred place, though under construction, forever, that may remain so in the process of construction, as artists—from all regions, times and spaces—participate in it. Gurudev differs from others proponents of WL. The building of the temple in the making makes it an open-ended concept, not a closed one. Moreover, Gurudev uses another metaphor of *mahakal* (the Great Time). It is used for Lord Shiva, the presiding deity of arts. He is called *Natraj*, as the ultimate metaphor. Moreover, He is the God of dance and death. The metaphor celebrates dance and death simultaneously. In it, the processes of construction and destruction, creation and annihilation, making and unmaking go on simultaneously. Gurudev adds minuteness to the metaphor, as the Mahakal sits with a strainer, and artistic/literary works produced by writers are strained through it. Those that are not good, i.e. unable to stand the test of time, go into the dustbin of Time, and the worthy ones remain and become eligible for the category or the corpus called *VS*. Along with being idealistic, it is realistic as well because nothing is excluded from this model on the basis of region, religion, caste or creed. Nothing is excluded from this model. Difficult it may be to surmise whether Gurudev's *VS* is a world of literary democracy but the fact that anyone from any language or country can participate and contribute to it. The Mahakal will ultimately testify whatever would stand the test of change.

Tagore's concept of WL is entrenched in the non-differentiating concept of human ideals. To him, humankind is expanding itself through the creation of feelings and ideas. 'Literature', to him, 'is this second world around the material one' (150). Literature is a true expression of humanity. According to him "... whatever in human life is noble and timeless,

whatever transcends human need and work, yields-itself naturally to literature and automatically to literature and automatically fashions humanity's greater image" (147).

Two references need attention here. The first is the reference to *Mahatma*, the sobriquet that Valmiki used for Hanuman in the first Canto of the *Ramayana* (Valmiki *Ramayana*, Balakanda' Sect. 1: Shloka 78). It was later used in the twentieth century for Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Both of them were embodiments of sacrifice (renunciation) and service. These attributes are essential ideals of Indian culture, and they transcend difference and help in integrating entire humanity. '... in every land and age, one is considered great in proportion to the number of souls in which one has merged one's own in order to realise and express oneself. Such a person is indeed a *mahatma*, a great soul. My soul finds fulfilment in all humanity—one who has not realised this even a little, by some means or other, has been deprived of a fair share of human nature. To know the soul as confined to itself is to know it only in a depleted sense' (Tagore 140). According to him, the natural drift of human soul is to transcend worldly impediments and know itself among others. Literature that can claim to be a part of world literature will be a creation of *Mahatma* and will help its readers in becoming great souls.

The second instance appears in the discussion of the bond of necessity or of work which engenders 'a collaboration between human power and truth'. Here he denounced the colonisation without mentioning it, for it is based on the notion of self and others, and exploitation of others. Though this bond, enforced by necessity, brings truth closer to others, a distance between the coloniser and the colonised remains in it. He stated it explicitly thus:

Just as the English trader had once secured his aims by bowing to the Nawab and offering him gifts, but, his mission accomplished, eventually ascended the throne himself, so also we think we have gained the empery of the world when we have used truth to material advantage to achieve our purpose. We then boast that nature is our waiting woman: water, air, and fire, our unpaid servants." (Tagore 138)

In a way, Tagore used the occasion to indirectly deprecate exploitation of the colonial rule in India and its exploitative ways by bringing it in his framework of discussion of the relationship of bond that spells

out interconnectivity of entire humanity that is the subject of world literature. Thus, in no indirect terms, he brought out the shallowness of colonial arrogance in the period of colonial ascendance, and the way the colonisation is contrary to the ideals of humanity and world literature.

At this stage, I feel tempted to compare Gurudev's model with the Sri Aurobindo's model. Sri Aurobindo used the metaphor of an assembly of poets of the world. In Aurobindo's assembly of poets of the world, he chose eleven poets for the first class. Later he divided them into three rows. The first row included Valmiki, Vyasa, Homer and Shakespeare; the second row Dante, Kalidasa, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Virgil and Milton, their places indicating their merit, and solitary Goethe in the third row. It is assumed that the rest of the poets stood behind them in the assembly (Aurobindo 301–303). Sri Aurobindo's conclusions are based on critical standards that he used to prepare the list on the basis of four criteria: imaginative originality, expressive power, creative genius and the scope of subject matter. However, his is a hierarchical model based on class and levels. Also, despite the fact that it was constructed in the middle of the twentieth century, it ignored contemporary creativity, for Goethe is the latest poet included in it. Also, it is restricted to poetry, as fiction, particularly novel, is ignored altogether. Hence, it tends to be elitist and dated, thereby reduces WL to world classics.

This model of WL is akin to the concept of world classics, as it is taught in quite a few of Indian university departments. The basic problem in this criterion is that it is a static model and does not change and consider the literary works of future into consideration. Therefore, Aurobindo's hierarchy is absent from Tagore's. Tagore leaves the issue of inclusion or exclusion of a work of art. Two references need attention here. The first is the reference to *Mahatma*, the sobriquet that Valmiki used for Hanuman in the first Canto of the *Ramayana* (Valmiki *Ramayana*, Balakanda' Sect. 1: Shloka 78). It was later used in the twentieth century for Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Both of them were embodiments of sacrifice (renunciation) and service. These attributes are essential ideals of Indian culture, and they transcend difference and help in integrating entire humanity. '... in every land and age, one is considered great in proportion to the number of souls in which one has merged one's own in order to realise and express oneself. Such a person is indeed a *mahatma*, a great soul. My soul finds fulfilment in all humanity—one who has not realised this even a little, by some means or other, has been deprived of a fair share of human nature. To know the soul as

confined to itself is to know it only in a depleted sense' (Tagore, 140). According to him, the natural drift of human soul is to transcend worldly impediments and know itself among others. Literature that can claim to be a part of world literature will be a creation of *Mahatma* and will help its readers in becoming great souls. Tagore leaves the issue of inclusion or exclusion of a work of art for *Mahakal* to decide, and *Mahakal* constitutes all of us because ultimately we are the fragments of time in a way or other because it is made of *kshan* (moment) and *anantata* (eternity) both.

The *Vishwamanava* and VS have been a major concern in all Indian literature; the former is the creator the latter the consequence. All major poets in all Indian literature have engaged themselves with them. For an example of VS, we may take recourse to Kuvempu in Kannada who described it in his epic *Ramayana Adarsanam* in the 'kavi-kartru-dar-sana':

Homarage varjilage dante men miltanage/naranappanige men pampamge/
rish i vyasa bhasa bhavabhuti men kalidasadyarige

narahari tulasidasa men kri ttivasadi/nannayyafirdusi kamba-arvindarige.
(Kuvempu 10)

In Kuvempu's concept, European epic world is represented by Homer, Vergil, Dante and Milton. The only Persian epic poet mentioned is Firdausi. The Sanskrit *Ramayana* tradition is represented by Bhasa, Bhavabhuti and Kalidasa. The 'vernacular' *Ramayana* poets have been represented by Narahari (Kannada), Tulsidas (Hindi), Krittivasa (Bengali) and Kamban (Tamil). However, it is interesting to note that several *Mahabharata* poets have been mentioned by Kuvempu: Vyasa, Nannaya (Telugu) and Sri Aurobindo, the spiritual guru of Kuvempu. Further, Kuvempu brings in a universal dimension by praying for the grace from universal preceptors {*loka-guru kripeyirali*}, world poets {*loka-kavi kripe barali*} and the universal feelings and blessings {*loka-hridayada bayake asirvadabarali*}. The mediation between the region (sub-nationality) and the world clearly takes place in terms of guidance that Kuvempu aspires at the world level {*loka-guru*}, through the grace of the poets of the world {*loka-kavi*} and a compassionate universal experiencer {*loka-hridayada*}. Like Kannada, Hindi and Gujarati have been concerned with them. Incidentally, the concepts *Vishwamanav* and *Vishva*

Sabitya are put forward by poets or creative minds, not by critical minds. It should, however, not mean that poets do not have critical faculty, and critics lack in the poetic faculty.

In Hindi, Hazariprasad Dwivedi, Hindi essayist, novelist, critic and cultural thinker, contributed to integrated notion of humanity. He focussed on human values. He put forward the concept of *Viratatma* (cosmic soul) because ultimately everything is integrated and that is something that is not different. It was, to a good extent, influenced by Tagore's concept. He discussed it in many places, as here:

I can clearly see that man is getting shrunk into many castes and communities... The maker of history has clearly indicated that the '*manushyata*' in man that distinguishes man from animals is worth-worshipping. Is not the only purpose of literature, and politics the all-round development of humanity. (Dwivedi 38-39)

He stated it in unambiguous terms in many of his essays such as '*Sahityakaron ka Dayitvya*' ('The Responsibilities of Literary Writers') and '*Manushya hi Sabitya ka Lakshya Hai*' ('Man is the End of Literature'). He saw literature from the perspective of a man and added that he would hesitate in using the term literature for such a work as would not liberate man from helplessness, a sense of indignity, low esteem and being a parasite (148). Moreover, the interrelatedness of all beings on the earth and their predicament is to be understood in terms of simultaneity of existence at different levels.

Vijay Deo Narayana Sahi, a Hindi poet and critic, discussed the issue of '*maha-manava*' (universal man) indirectly in the precess of discussing '*Laghu-manava*' (little man) in his book '*Laghu Manava ke Bahane Nai Kavita par ek Bahasa*' ('Debate on New Poetry with little Man as an Alibi'). He posed the questions: Is the little man dead? Has the concept of little man helped in understanding the contemporary literary creativity? Is the little man a mere curiosity? It was natural for him to discuss '*mahamanava*' while discussing the concept of '*lahghumanava*'. He rejected the notion of '*sampoorna manushya*' ('complete man'). He posited that man is an admixture of '*upalabhdhi*' (achievement) and '*sambhavana*' (potentiality). Therefore, it is difficult to understand him in totality because we capture a little and a lot is left out. He saw the potentiality (*sambhavana*) in the forms of truth (*satya*) and creation (*srajan*). Man is, thus, a mere potentiality, and potentiality is not reality.

The reality, however, is a '*sahaj manushya*' (natural man). In view of the above, it may be inferred that all definitions of man are primarily the definitions of natural man. But what were these poet-critics like Sahi doing? They were redefining 'man' bringing the man in a state of evolution but without glossing over marginal people, suppressed people, the people without a voice in the discussion.

Indian subcontinental Urdu discourse offers us an equally interesting example and model for WL. Faiz Ahmed Faiz, the Urdu Indian/Pakistani poet, resolved the dilemma between the *Vishwa Sahitya* (VS) and *Vishwa Manav* (VM) in poetic terms. He was born in undivided India and left for Pakistan after the Partition in 1947, but wrote against the Partition of India in one of his poems. '*Ye dag dag ujala ye shabgujida subah*'. (The light is speckled, and the morning is replete with darkness.) He voiced his concerns against exploitation and suppression wherever they took place in the world in Palestine, Africa, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh or Turkey. He empathised with suffering humanity and brought suffering marginal humanity in the core of his concerns. In the process, he indirectly replaced the God with the poet, for the poet is a *Vishwamanava*. It is discernible in his poem '*Intisab*' (Dedication) which, in fact, is 'Dedication' of the collection of his poems entitled '*Sar-a~Vadi-e-Seena*':

Dedicated to today/And/To the pain of today...

To the sad generations of clerks/To the hearts and voices eaten by worms/To the postmen/To the tongawallas/To the train drivers/To the innocent factory workers/To the emperors, the omnipotent, to the god's representative on the earth, to the farmer/Whose cattle have been driven away by the oppressors/Whose daughter has been kidnapped by dacoits/Patawari has deprived him of a finger's length of his one yard long field/The rest has been devoured by the government in the name of *lagan*.

To those sad mothers/Whose children cry in the nightTo those beautiful ladies/The flowers of whose eyes/Have withered/Due to purposeless giggling behind the curtains and latticed windows

To those married women/whose bodies/Are fed up after frequently decorating the loveless vitiated beds/To those widows/To the cluster of houses, gullies and mohallas/By whose dirty garbage/The moon washes its hands and feet before offering *namaz*/And speaks under their shades

The henna of *anchal*/The clanking sound of bangles/The smell of tufts/The foul odour of burning of sweat in bosoms brimming with desires

To the students/Who with their spread hands/reached the doors/Of the
owners of drums and flags/With the hope of books and pens/But never
returned

The *masoom* (tender souls) who in their innocence/With the earnest desire
of fire in their little lamps/Reached where the shadows of unending stark
nights were being distributed

To those prisoners/In whose bosoms the shining diamonds of future/Had
become stars after brightening the solitary nights of jails

To prophets of coming days/Who like the smell of flowers/Have fallen in
love with themselves. (Faiz 53–57)

Faiz's 'Dedication' is an instance of his practice of WL in poetic terms. Diverse worlds of different classes, particularly those who have been denied space or voices and their concerns, converge in it. It is dedicated to *laghumanava*'s sad generations of clerks, postmen, *tongawallas*, train drivers, innocent factory workers, the God's representative on the earth, exploited farmers, sad mothers, women—beautiful and widows—students and prisoners. It is concerned with 'Today' because there is nothing like Yesterday and Tomorrow. Only the present moment exists. By the time we say 'present', it is gone, and if one keeps waiting for tomorrow, one wastes the present. He is concerned with the pain of Today of the world. The coming days are also a part of the poet's concerns, as he includes the future, particularly the prophets of coming days but deciphers their narcissistic character, as they, like the smell of flowers, 'have fallen in love with themselves'. It is not merely idealistic or romantic, as it is founded on the suffering. In the next part of the poem, the national affiliations evaporate, and the class and humanity become his concerns. It is in consonance with Gandhi's concept of internationalism expressed in poetic terms, in which nation and internationalism are not antithetical entities but they coexist, for happy nations are indispensable for happy internationalism. Prima facie, in the 'Dedication', the world of poet is excluded from the description of different worlds. The reason is that the world has given poetic licence to the poet, and to no one else. But the fact is that the poet has earned it by forsaking his own world.

The personal or individuality of the poet becomes impersonal and is made an integral part of *Vishwamanava* (Universal Man), as others become a part of his ever expanding consciousness. In Faiz, VS or WL is preceded by

Vishwamanava and *Vishwa-Kavi* (Universal Poet). Moreover, Faiz, brings the man into the centre in a different way, as he discusses a mystic poet like Amir Khusaro. He redefined his illustrious counterpart's quest and enterprise in the poem dedicated to him "*Mori Araz Suno*": "Listen to My Entreaties O Ever-Helping Pir!"

... "Why didn't Thou come to my Temple"

... Waiting for you/How many centuries have gone by

Ultimately, the secret is revealed now/The one whom you beseeched/
Who was to hold your hand/To whom your boat had reached/One to
whom you had sought the cure of your pain/One who did not come to
your temple/Was none but you/That you were! (Faiz 74-75)

The poet creates a miracle for his counterpart who must have been his ideal, by replacing the idol with his ideal. By the time the poem ends, it becomes the translation of the Upanishadic meta-statement '*TattvamasF*' (That Thou art!) which is a sequel to the statement: '*Aham Brahmasmi*'. (I am Infinite [Brahma]!) If I am Infinite, what about others? The Upanishad says that others are also Infinite. What is the way out for them? It is: '*Sangachchadhwam, samvadadkwam, sambomanansi jan-tam*'. (Let us tread on the path (of life) together; let us speak together; let us know together.) This togetherness is a consequence of the cognition of interrelatedness of all beings of the world and their predicament which is the foundation of WL, free from the politics and economics of areas studies.

Umashankar Joshi, the Gujarati poet and critic, reconciled his Gujarati and Indian identity by maintaining that he was an Indian poet writing in Gujarati. In his *Samagra Kavita* (The Complete Works of Umashankar Joshi), he wrote, '*Manavi mati ne hu banu chhun Vishva Manavi*'. (I become a *Vishvmanava* by erasing my smallness as a human being.) It means the identity of this small man is not to be either erased or eroded. It is not to be sacrificed either. In his concept, both individual and universal and individual and *Vishva* coexist. Individual spreads himself or herself because that spreading or extension is *Vishva*. Loosely translated, it would run thus:

Let the streams of compassion and love flow/from the hearts of all crea-
tures. Let all children of the earth come together/And play the inner
musical instrument/And awaken the flame of love in each heart

All people holding each others hands/Shoulder to shoulder/And roar at the gate of world:

“Humanity! The whole world is a family”/And the utterance would pierce the eternity/Where thousands of planets revolve/Where the dance of peace in innumerable clusters/Where the entire universe becomes a nest.

You are from the east, the other is from the west/Are Non-violence, Truth and Love sole property of someone. (Joshi 21)

While going through the poem, one feels that the problem in Tagore’s concern with the limited concept of nation is somehow diluted in Umashankar Joshi under the influence of Gandhi. Notwithstanding the difference, *Vishvamanava* is the foundational ideal in their vision for all of them.

Let me go to yet another poet, for concepts—literary and critical—are often better articulated by creative writers than critics. Poets are often more reliable than critics for their creative criticism. That is why poet-critics have contributed in no less measure to their critical traditions than critics. The Hindi poet Shamsheer Bahadur Singh merges various dimensions of CL and WL. His oeuvre includes a poem called ‘*Aman Raga*’ (the *raga* of peace). The poet could have titled the poem *Shantigeet* or *Shantiraga*. But he used the word *aman* from Urdu and wedded it to *raga*. The principle purpose of VS and *Vishwamanav* ultimately is peace and love. Peace is the precondition for human development. The ultimate test of literature along with time is with whom and what for does your literature stand. Does your literature stand with and by rich people or with and by suppressed, oppressed, exploited people? Does it stand with the people who are conniving with others to disturb the peace or with those who are willing to establish peace? The question is: What is the end of world literature? Is it a flux of adversarial relationships or world peace? The answer is ‘*Aman Raga*’, i.e. the *Raga* of Peace through art in general and literature in particular in the form of VS (Shamsheer 92–97).

At the beginning of the poem, the poet says that he is dancing very slowly, and all cultures are drenched in his song because he is a *raga* of true bliss and peace of human heart. The poet draws our attention to the new reality of our age in which Homer is beaconing and calling a Hindi poet, Sardar Jafari, and Ustad Faiyaz Khan is whispering something in the ears of Beethoven. He feels that an eternal creeper of music

trembled and sees Shakespeare with his broad forehead in the valleys of Ujjain. Moreover, his Kalidasa is seen strolling in foreign meadows, his Tagore, his Hafiz, his Tulsi and his Ghalib—each one of them is an efficient operator of the powerhouse of his heart. All of them desire an age of peace for all.

The poet knows no ideological barriers and states that he loves the Statue of Liberty of America as much as the Red Crescent of Moscow. In his heart, the divine palaces of Peking are no less sacred than Mecca and Medina. He hears the sound of conch of those Aryans in Kashi who came from Volga. Also in his Delhi, Prahalada with his penance is tearing Hrinakashyapa, a trope of war into pieces. He sees Gorki in the courtyard of Hori. Tolstoy begins to speak through his Upean lips. He is the ecstasy of the Urdu poet, Josh Malihabadi, clashing with the thoughts of Neruda-like wine in a goblet. His Neruda is an honest messenger of the post office of peace of the world. He is a true lover of the world of peace. The poet thinks of himself as the months of the rainy season of the poetry of Hindi romantic poet Sumitranandan Pant, and also as a tear drop of Rama of Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala', which, like the atomic rays, has penetrated impregnable iron curtains of the Third World War and stopped it there. The poet becomes the pious soul of peace.

The poet sees black and white flowers in the West and yellow, red in the East, multicoloured blue flowers in the North and the *champa* or jasmine coloured in the poet's region. There is no place on the earth that is not green. By this, he suggests that if there is peace on the earth, it would be followed by prosperity.

Today, the poet continues, the prophets of peace and their swans have created a little dim sweet light and sound in the skyscrapers of New York, and then they are moving towards Argentina. Paul Robson is broadcasting a sprawling symphony of a new America. Udai Shankar has delineated a new Ajanta on the stage of South Africa. This great dance and that great art and music are his (poet's) own, i.e. absolutely personal for every small being. After scissoring the maps of war, the Korean children have made chandeliers and scintillating flowers and leaves.

The poet is optimistic about the future. He sees the future of happiness present in the eyes of peace. Along with the poet, others are energising their eyes with the eyes of peace. These eyes are the light of our heart and flowers of worship. They are the soul of the parents and heart of our children. They are the *vani* (speech) of human history and true dream of human art. They are light and piety incarnate, and reality of human

dreams and immortal dream of reality. To see them is to see and understand our own self. The poet assumes that the leaders of the world are also seeing them.

The poet here is constructing his own model, nay temple, of *Vishwa Sahitya* which is a prerogative of every poet and individual in every civilisation. Tagore has not given us an ultimate master plan but an outline of VS. The poets such as Umashankar, Faiz, Kuvempu and Shamsheer are adding to its outlines and filling their different colours in it and thereby modify the tradition and conceit as well.

CL/WL is a body of literature in all languages and mother tongues including American English. It should not be handcuffed to any concept or framework or Companion or Encyclopaedia pedalled by publishing houses put forward for different reasons. The Companions condition the perception of accompanying persons, and then journeys change their course and perception.

The question here is: What kind of VS is this? This VS is different from Goethe's, Aurobindo's, Tagore's, Umashankar's and Damrosch. The reason is that it is free from geographical territories of nations, from confines of art forms or literary forms, in short, from time and space. Like the poet's imagination, it rolls in different terrains and brings different artists together without any violence. It did not take place in past, and might not happen in future, but each one of us would wish it to become a reality. In other words, CL and WL are not just about the study of world classics, circulation of texts and comparative study of different literature but also about the ideals that humanity cherishes through its creative minds which need not necessarily be only in English but also in other languages of the world.

To what extent is the concept of CL or WL dated and to what extent it is not is a different issue. The issue is: What is the end of WL or VS? Is it to please first and teach later or both simultaneously? Is the main purpose of literature is to make people conscious of their identities and earn their space in the corpus and category of world literature? If it is so, social sciences do it better. If WL as a category of literature subscribes to the methodology of social sciences, it would at best become a poor appendage of social sciences. Literature and social sciences deal with different kinds of knowledge and use different kinds of intellect. Literature uses non-differentiating intellect and sees all beings as integrated into one. The purpose of literature, more so of CL/WL, is to bring about peace by singing the *raga* (song) of peace (*shanti*), whereas the purpose

of social sciences is to see things in terms of binaries, through differentiating intellect. Be it social sciences or CL/WL of Goethe or Damrosch, if it does not help in bringing about peace and in sustaining humanity by establishing human values when they are about to be distorted or disintegrated, it is not worth it. Whatever primary or subordinate kind of knowledge WL would provide, if it does not stand by/with the oppressed people and provide some happiness to world and life-weary souls, however fleeting it might be, is it of any use?

Damrosch's WL is a retrogressive concept and mere tokenism. It brings in newer identities and discourses in focus in terms of their circulation. However, it tries to replace CL which is based on the existence of the others and does not exclude the possibility of other forms of interaction, hitherto excluded discourses and their circulation. If CL is so inclusive, is WL needed? The pre-Damrosch WL might also be accused of being a restricted and elitist concept, as the notion of classic limited it, but Damrosch's WL is a political and neo-imperialistic concept, and the criterion of circulation excludes much of non-English literature. Against it, CL is a liberating category in the evolution of categories of literature. Incidentally, Tagore considered VS as a translation of CL, and not of WL, for he considered them as equivalents. His is an evolutionary and progressive concept. Also, VS of Kuvempu, *Vishwa Manavi* of Joshi, *Aman Rag* of Shamsheer Bahadur are universal poetic ideals based on WL, for it is uncertain if they knew CL as a concept or methodology. Excepting Tagore, most of them do not find mention in Companions of WL.

CL as an inclusivist and accommodative category is still a valid and useful category for the study of literature and discourses. It is a methodology and an anti-insulationist category with an attitude of humility towards other literature. It does not mean that all is well with CL. It may be accused of being too inclusive, as national literature was charged with being too restrictive. Its uncritical acceptance of everything—from cultural studies, multiculturalism, oral and folk literature and film studies—has exposed it to its loss of identity. Its methodology remains subject to being rather familiar and outdated, though it systematises the ways of reading in different ways. In a world integrated by technology and market, CL is still trapped in the binary mode. It is like two tracks of a railway that do not meet, though they are connected vertical sleepers. It needs to come out of this binary mode in practice.

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE: APPREHENSIONS AND INTERVENTIONS IN INDIA

CL is in discussion in India, attended by its vigorous questioning. Earlier the term 'comparative' as an adjective in CL was under scrutiny; now, it is the turn of the noun 'literature'. After the advent of Post-Structuralist perceptions, every system of signs became a text without any hierarchy. Now literature means different things to different people like discourse and discipline. What happens to literature or disciplines in CL? The answer to this is that the history of CL informs us that it is the most accommodative of all disciplines to the extent that the CL is often accused of doing so many things such as interdisciplinary studies, multiculturalism, folk and oral studies, new humanities or film studies among others by others. Even comparatists complain against it because its disciplinary catholicity has led to the loss of its identity. Apart from the loss of identity, when one tries to do everything, one ends up doing nothing.

Moreover, the advocates of identities accuse CL of diluting them in the quest of universalism. The anxieties of identities that have secured space for themselves after an enormous amount of industry and struggle, for instance in the form of postcolonial discourse, need to be addressed. Left unaddressed the anxieties become fears. They are valid because the particulars may be lost sight of in the quest of general or the universalism of comparative literature that, it is feared, may subsume other identities or discourses. The anxieties and fears are not unfounded. But true comparative literature is not against their identities, and it never wants to subsume or erase other identities and discourses because it proposes that comparative study is meaningfully possible only when one is rooted in one's own literature. However, it does not restrict itself to one's literature but reaches out to other literature, not necessarily similar but different, more different better.

Apart from the above apprehensions, CL is facing a few questions in India. It often suffered at the hands of zealots of CL and at times at the hands of its 'false friends'. The zealots tried to put everything under the sky in the big bag of CL, which led to the loss of its identity. The false friends obliterated the difference between CL and comparative study, as they are erroneously used as synonyms. The fact is that both CL and comparative studies are based on binary opposites. CL accepts and respects the difference but goes a step beyond and moves towards seeing the elements of integration as well. CL strains to move beyond itself to

others and tries to see itself in relation to others. In the process, it sees points of similarities and the difference between the two works and their traditions and cultures. Here it is to be borne in mind that the binary of dissimilar is fuzzy. There is a lot of space between them that falls between them, e.g. less similar, less dissimilar, more dissimilar, similarly dissimilar, dissimilarly similar, suitable other, less or more suitable other, perilous—less or more—other. The space to an extent may be covered by the study of resemblance and analogies.

Though one cannot deny the fact that CL takes cognisance of the existence of the other and respects the specificity of the others by studying it, CL is still trapped in the binary mode of study. The West has been content with it and never seriously tried to transcend it. CL in India has to transcend the binary mode of thinking because the difference between comparative literature and comparative study is that the former is integrative, and true integration is not possible with the binary mode. The question often raised about CL is about similarities and dissimilarities that comparative literature tries to study. However, the space between the two is extremely fuzzy. The validity of the questions notwithstanding it is to be accepted that comparative literature at least takes note and studies, along with similarities and dissimilarities, resemblances and analogies as well, though they do not necessarily cover all the space. It is possible to see an alternative to the traditional comparative literary in the study of literature in Dionyz Durisin and his concept of polyfunctionality in the context of Slovak literature (Durisin 1984: 296) and inter-literariness, facilitated by contactuality and contiguity of languages, literature and cultures. Moreover, Tagore's concept of VS and, to an extent, Sri Aurobindo's concept of world poetry are endeavours in the direction of seeing literature of the world without subscribing to the binary mode.

In an age of unprecedented globalisation, the world is fast moving towards uniformity in terms of languages, literature and cultures. It is expected that by the end of the century, only 3500 languages will be left in the world. Multilingualism, in this situation, has become a slogan. Also, multiculturalism has been abandoned as a political project. It was critiqued by the left scholars like Slavoj Žižek who had seen it as 'the cultural logic of multinational capitalism' in 1997 (28–51). Comparative literature had abandoned it within ten years, a few years before the British Prime Minister David Cameron and the then French President Sarkozy. As discussed earlier, Charles Bernheimer's *Comparative Literature in an Age of Multiculturalism* that saw comparative literature in terms of

multiculturalism in the last decade of the twentieth century was followed by Haun Saussey's *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization* in the first decade of the twenty-first century. It meant that ACLA was realistic in its status report, but it suggested that comparative literature had abandoned multiculturalism in favour of globalisation. Comparative literature failed to intervene in the global discourse with globalisation as its process and globalism as its ideology, and market globalism, justice globalism and *jihad* globalism as its facets. It took note of terrorism but failed to consider literature or arts on their ability to articulate consciousness of crises of human existence in the period of globalisation in different parts of the world. It is a failure of literature and also of comparative literature that by comparison would have shown the chasm in response to these concerns between/among literature.

One feels tempted to ask a question here: Is the debate on comparative literature and world literature relevant to societies like India? One can very well state that they are not our concern. But can we afford to be indifferent to such important debates, if we wish to intervene and contribute to it from Indian perspective when many comparatists pin their hopes on Indian linguistic and literary density and experience that might bring new purpose and direction to CL?

As an Indian, I feel quite pleased to hear from a distinguished comparatist like Dorothy Figueira who often says, as she did in her lecture in School of Translation Studies & Training, Indira Gandhi National Open University, Delhi, on 5 October 2012, that the future of CL lies in India. But the happiness remains short-lived, as the identity studies proliferate. Since they are associated with appropriation and participation in power discourse, no one tends to give them integrative orientation even if they become extraneous. Thus, integrative studies become a mirage in the desert of power discourse.

But her enthusiasm warns us as well. 'With the world thus diluted, a Euro-Amereo-centric vision continues to articulate the meaning of humanities and define standards as well as validate the insights of Euro-American academe. As for the worldly collaborate in the world literature anthologies, I cannot help think of Ashish Nandy's metaphor of gladiators bowing and paying homage to Caesar (Nandy XIV), in this case, the Western-based critic/or editor. India has to decide whether it wants to participate in this performance, especially since it is in a position to do so much more with its command of languages, its ability to expand the canon with intra-Indian comparisons, and its rich indigenous theoretical tradition. How

ironic it would be, after postcolonial theory and all its talks of the margins, the centre, colonising discourses and harmonies, India were to fall prey the new hegemony of World Literature!' (Figueira 25–26). But we have to be aware of the politics of comparative literature as well. In the Indian comparative literature Congress in January 1987, Professor Namwar Singh, a noted Indian Hindi critic, had called upon scholars to fight the 'politics of comparative literature' and to learn from Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Tagore who laid the foundation of a national comparative literature, and not look for ideas to Western comparatists, as M. Waseem reported in *The Statesman*, New Delhi, edition on 14 January 1987.

But the insulationist view is no longer tenable today. Indian academicians need to engage seriously with these issues. Even to fight the politics, one needs to understand to resist it. Moreover, 'Western comparatists' are not a monolithic category now. It includes Indians located in the West, and there are quite a few Western comparatists who know Indian literary scenario and realities and accordingly study it without imposing their perceptions on it.

National literature is not an evil always, more so in Indian situation. Nation as an entity was an instrument in fighting against the colonial rule and in attaining its independence. Moreover, the character of Indian nation is different from the exclusive and exploitative notion of a nation of the West that Tagore had renounced after seeing the devastation caused by it in the form of World War I.

Against Tagore's denunciation of the Western notion of nation, Mahatma Gandhi advocated nationalism shorn of exclusivity. Without any adversarial exclusive consideration, Gandhi's happy nationalism was supposed to lead to happy internationalism because if all nations are happy, the world will be a happy place. 'It is impossible to be internationalist without being a nationalist, i.e. when peoples belonging to different countries have organised themselves and are able to act as one man' (Gandhi 246). He did not consider his nationalism an evil. The Western nationalism, according to him, marked by narrowness, selfishness and exclusiveness was evil because it prospers on the ruins of other. He added, 'Indian nationalism has, I hope struck a different path. It wants to organise itself or to find full expression for the benefit and service of humanity at large' (246). His nationalism was to be no peril to other nations, for it will be dependent on the principle of non-exploitation, a term that was proposed by non-cooperation and non-exploitation (247). Moreover, his nationalism was not to exploit or dominate the

other but to serve the whole world. He posited his idea of nationalism based on love, not hatred. 'My love, therefore, of nationalism or my idea of nationalism is my country may become foe, that if need be the whole of the country may die, so that the human race may live. There is no room for race hatred there. Let that be our nationalism' (248). Needless to mention it here that nationalism based on racial, communal, ethnic or linguistic considerations was not acceptable to his Catholic concept of nationalism. Coming to Tagore again, like a bird of the ship on ocean, it needs to be underscored in the discussion of Gandhi's concept of nation that despite his (Tagore's) narrow concept of nation, his concept of VS is not limited by the notion of region, race, religion, caste, creed, language, literature and culture. It (VS) asks no question about these ancillaries or no question about forms or categories. Moreover, it asks about 'circulation' of texts. The Eternal Time determines it. Thus, Tagore's is a dynamic concept and Aurobindo's static concept.

However, a few questions are often heard in hushed voices that Tagore's concept of world literature is limited by the centrality attached to only Hindu dharma, as all of his metaphors and references, such as Mathurapati, *gopis*, *mahatma*, Kuber, Balaram, *rasa*, *Mahakala*, the Panchvati, *Meghdootam*, Vidyapati and the mount Kailash, come from Hindu religion. For the sake of polemics, one might say that Tagore referred to the English trader Akbar and Elizabeth in his discourse. But the thing often forgotten is that Tagore was addressing an audience in front of him that was exposed more to these references and metaphors. It was easy to communicate to the gathering through them rather than any other. Hence, it would be wrong to accuse the person of being communal or narrow who was waging a peaceful battle against narrowness and chauvinism of nation and national literature through his art.

The above discussion of Gandhi's notion of nation was essential because of the negative portrayal of nation in national literature against which the concepts of world and comparative literature came into existence. Nation still is chauvinistic, anachronistic, conventional, constricted and hostile to other nations and cultures, and thus a knave in the development of universalistic and human considerations. Contrary to it in the case of India, national literature is the asset in the formation of comparative literature. The modern Indian nation came into existence in voluntary merger of different 'nations' into it. It would be one of the most unique instances of human history in which without any bloody revolution the feudal lords, kings and nawabs came forward to forsake their

kingdoms and states and merged them in the new Indian democratic republic. This phenomenon is often misunderstood by scholars, particularly alien scholars, and at times even by their over-informed Indian counterparts. John Oliver Perry, though he has a book on Indian critical discourse to his credit, but one has no misgivings about his misunderstanding of Indian realities, denounced ‘Indianness’ by considering it as a ‘political’ rather than a critical issue (Perry 91–97). Fed on alien notions, they do not know Indian cultural realities and its literary manifestations. Indian intricate diversities are beyond their framework of understanding. Ironically, Indian scholars too begin to subscribe to these pronouncements without checking cultural and literary realities around them. It does not mean that all foreign scholars suffer from this misconstruction. H. H. Remak, a prominent American comparatist, during his tenure as the visiting professor in Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, in 1987, understood these Indian realities and took note of its endeavours to find a meeting ground between their national contours and regional identities. He rightly found that it is striving to embrace ‘intercultural approaches in tune with *their* internal cultural situation rather than that of another culture’. He added: ‘With so many heritages *inside* the political structure of their nation, Indian comparative literature is strongly oriented toward Indian cultures and methodology appropriate to *their* situation, though far from exclusively’ (Remak 1990–1991). In a way, it becomes one of the models of Indian comparative literature which may be India’s contribution to CL. Swapan Majumdar seems to agree with Remak and takes the discussion further by seeing the coalescing of Regional Literature in India and Indian Literature. He has suggested seven broad spectrum interactions and study of Indian literature, ‘a body of contents and a set of relations’:

1. Regional Languages in India are primarily the constituents of its National Literature, that is, Indian Literature;
2. Regional Literatures are secondarily the inheritors and keepers of the Indian literary heritage;
3. Regional Literatures may and in fact do interact among themselves, which as a result modifies the National Literature;
4. Regional Literatures may act as the recipient of other National Literatures, when the residual of such receptions by and by percolates in its own National Literature;

5. Regional Literature apiece may also influence other National Literatures;
6. Indian Literature as a body may undergo an impact, literary or otherwise, that gradually manifests itself in different Regional Literature; and
7. Indian Literatures as a body may create an image, literary otherwise, in other National Literatures which is again attributed to all its component Literatures. (Majumdar 14)

These spectra help in practising comparative study of literature without either being handcuffed to any methodology or being unnecessarily hostile to the methodology for the sake of it. Such an Indian comparative literature will not be an artificial construct based on alien models and their methodology. Rather it would be celebrative of interlingualism, inter-literariness and interculturalism, and the principles of comparison and methodology will be inferred on the basis of practice.

Against the European concept of WL as a by-product of Goethe's rejection of alienating concept of National Literature, or redefinition of WL by Damrosch, it is possible to go beyond rejectionism of Goethe or Damrosch and define WL. In the light of insights available and lessons learnt in the process, to me, WL is a body of discursive practice—oral, written or performances or all in one with no hierarchy. It would be a *Deepshikha* (a pyramid-like lamp stands with many lamps arranged from top to bottom), of literature of the world. Whatever stands the test of time (Gurudev's *Mahakal*) and taste of people would be a part of WL. The problem then would be of the methodology of seeing and studying literariness, inter-literariness or co/n/tac(ex)tuality = (contextuality, co-textuality, contactuality) which may be resolved by CL. It is here that WL would come close to VS which Gurudev translated as CL. It would celebrate *Vishwamanava* (Universal Man) of *Vishwakavi* (Universal Poet). With this, CL and WL would come closer, and with the removal of slash, it would become CWL (Comparative World Literature) with the methodology of comparative literary studies and ever inclusive concepts of the world in different cultures and communities. It would be constituted by different national literature such as Indian world literature, Chinese or Ethiopian literature or other literary identities among others. Identities always perplex us, as they keep changing along with the people who form them, but they have to be recognised and understood even for their individual and integrative studies.

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