FACULTY OF ARTS AND PHILOSOPHY

Authors at Play

Depictions of Batting Games in Hindī Literature

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Table of Contents

Nederlandse samenvatting

Spel behoort tot de kern van de menselijke natuur. Sport, als georganiseerde en gereguleerde vorm van spel, wordt gevormd door de maatschappij maar heeft op zijn beurt een eigen invloed op de maatschappij.

Het doel van deze paper is na te gaan hoe auteurs *gillī ḍaṇḍā* en cricket als motief gebruik om commentaar te geven op de maatschappij waarin ze beoefend worden. Om dit te onderzoeken, overdenk ik in eerste instantie het idee van Indische literatuur. Vervolgens breng ik het belang van *gillī ḍaṇḍā* en cricket in kaart om tenslotte over te gaan tot de analyse van enkele literaire teksten.

De verhalen die geanalyseerd zullen worden zijn *Gullī Ḍaṇḍā* en Cricket Match van Premchand, drie columns die Sharad Joshi schreef over Gavaskar en het verhaal Spel (*Khel*)van de onbekende auteur Abhishek Kashyap.

Indische literatuur

Twintigste-eeuwse Indische literatuur wordt sterk beïnvloed door de eigen voorgeschiedenis – die teruggaat tot de Veda's en epische literatuur enerzijds en de westerse traditie van moderne literatuur.

Bakhtin en Lukács maakten beiden een vergelijkende studie van (westerse) epische literatuur en de roman als vorm van moderne literatuur. In deze visies is het epos een gesloten tekst die niet in interactie staat met de omgeving waarin hij gelezen wordt en autoriteit verleent aan de afstand die de tekst tot de lezer heeft. De roman daarentegen, is in een constante dialoog met de omgeving waarin de auteur de tekst schrijft en lezer de tekst leest. Die omgeving zelf is veel minder eenduidig dan die waarin de epische teksten tot stand kwamen. Er is echter wel een duidelijk verschil met de Indische traditie die – met uitzondering van de Veda's – door een onafgebroken proces van vertaling en herinterpretatie in dialoog staat met de omgeving. Dit geldt in het bijzonder voor de literatuur die uit de periode van de *bakthi*-beweging stamt. De twintigste-eeuwse Indische literatuur gaat met andere woorden terug op een traditie die al moderne elementen bevatte.

Het Indische talige establishment van het beging van de twintigste eeuw had een duidelijke invloed op de literatuur die toen ontstond. Vormen van literatuur die overeenkwamen met de literaire *saṃskāra*'s van critici, auteurs, uitgevers en academici hadden een grotere kans om

tot het publiek door te dringen. De literaire *saṃskāra*'s waren immers nauw verbonden met de onafhankelijkheidsbeweging en legden de nadruk op een zuivere eenheidstaal, de literaire traditie en de juiste elementen uit de moderne westerse literatuur.

Lokhit, het verlangen om van de wereld een betere plaats te maken, speelde een belangrijke rol in de voorkeuren van het literaire establishment. Auteurs als Charles Dickens, Emile Zola en Tolstoi hadden dan ook een belangrijke invloedop de Indische literatuur van het begin van de twintigste eeuw. Bovendien legden de eenheidstaal en het teruggrijpen naar de oude literaire tradities de basis voor een nieuwe Indische identiteit. In de context van de onafhankelijkheidsbeweging ontstond bovendien de *Progressive Writers' Association*: een groep van schrijvers die een emancipatie van de lokale talen en oplossingen voor de sociale problemen van die tijd bepleitten. Premchand was de eerste voorzitter.

Hedendaagse schrijvers lijken – in tegenstelling tot hun voorgangers in een luxueuze cocon te verblijven en weinig voeling te hebben met problemen die zich niet in hun onmiddellijke omgeving voordoen.

Het kortverhaal is in de Indische literatuur een populair genre gebleven. Hoewel deze teksten veel korter zijn, is het genre op zich even rijk als de roman. Een boodschap overbrengen vraagt meer creativiteit en inventiviteit omwille van de lengte van de tekst. Anderzijds geeft het kortverhaal de auteur de mogelijkheid om vrij te putten uit andere genres zoals fabels, mythen, … om hun ideeën vorm te geven.

Sport en spel in India

Op het eerste zicht lijken sport en spel geen deel uit te maken van de Indische cultuur. Toch blijkt er in de loop van de geschiedenis toch sprake van sport en spel. In de vroegste tijden was sport voorbehouden voor de brahmanen en de kṣatriya's: e eerste waren leermeesters en de laatsten gebruikten de aangeleerde vaardigheden op het slagveld. Er was dan ook een sterke nadruk op paardrijden, worstelen en boogschieten.

De fysieke activiteit waarvan we tot op vandaag bewijs hebben, is meestal functioneel zoals onder meer de verhouding tussen kṣatriya's en hun leermeesters leert. Ten tijde van Babur en Akbar, was sport in de eerste plaats een vorm van uiterljk vertoon die erop gericht was de eigen status te bevestigen. In de bhakti-literatuur was spel één van de manieren om een persoonlijke relatie tot God te bewerkstelligen.

Gillī Ḍaṇḍā

Gullī ḍaṇḍā is één van de oude bat-en-bal spelen die nu nog gespeeld worden in India. De Indische overheid probeert deze traditionele spelen te promoten omdat ze de bevolking sterker met de eigen wortels verbinden. Er worden dan ook geregeld evenementen georganiseerd waarop men kan kennismaken met deze spellen

Cricket

Cricket is een van oorsprong Britse sport die op korte tijd enorm populair werd in India. De sport werd eerst overgenomen door de Pars-gemeenschap die zich op die manier van goede contacten met de kolonisator verzekerde. De sport werd snel overgenomen door andere (religieuze) groeperingen binnen de maatschappij en een jaarlijks toernooi tussen de religieuze gemeenschappen – de Bombay Pentangular – zorgde er mee voor dat de sprot populair werd bij de kleine opkomende middenklasse.

Na de onafhankelijkheid gaat de verdere opmars van cricket hand in hand de opkomst van televisie en reclame. Een speler als Sunil Gāvaskar daagde in de jaren 1980 het westerse cricket-establishment uit en gaf zo uiting aan de nationale trots en nieuwe middenklasse-identiteit die ontstond bij de consummerende middenklasse.

Bat-en-bal spelen in Hindī literatuur

Premchand

Premchand is een auteur wiens oevre goed de ideologische evolutie van de onafhankelijkheidsbeweging tussen 1900 en 1936 weergeeft. Hij evolueerde van en patriottisch schrijver naar een idealist ie zijn personages de mentaliteitsverandering liet doormaken die Gandhi bij de modale Indiër probeerde te bereiken. Gaandeweg raakte Premchand teleurgesteld in de onafhankelijkheidsbeweging en evolueert hij naar een schrijver die de problemen in de maatschappij duidt maar niet langer probeert oplossingen aan te reiken.

Gullī Ḍaṇḍā

In *Gullī Ḍaṇḍā* bezoekt een ingenieur het dorp waar hij opgroeide. Hij heeft herinneringen aan Gayā, de camār waarmee hij samen speelde. Als kind speelde hij vaak vals om zelf aan de battende kant te kunnen staan.
Wanneer hij als ingenieur werkt, bezoekt hij beroepshalve zijn dorp. Hij gaat op zoek naar

Gayā en vraagt hem om opnieuw een *Gullī Ḍaṇḍā* te spelen. Ook als volwassene blijft hij valsspelen, Gayā laat het gebeuren en doet niet eens zijn best.
Wanneer de ingenieur daags nadien Gayā ziet spelen, ziet ruziën met een valsspeler, ziet lachen, dan beseft hij dat het niet zijn status is die hem vrijheid bezorgt.

In dit verhaal komen en paar elementen samen: Premchand pleit ervoor de voorkeur te geven aan het Indische in plaats van geïmporteerde zaken, hij zet eerlijkheid en deugdzaamheid in de verf en doet zijn hoofdrolspeler een mentaliteitsverandering ondergaan die bij zijn ideeën uit die tijd past.

Cricket Match

In Cricket Match ontmoet Mr Jafar – een speler – een jonge vrouw – Helen Mukherjee – die een all-India team samenstelt met als enige doel de Britten op hun eigen terrein te kunnen verslaan. Beiden gaan op toer door India en brengen spelers samen. Premchand grijpt de gesprekken die ze voeren en de plaatsen die ze bezoeken aan om maatschappelijke problemen aan te kaarten. Op het einde van het verhaal gaat het team, nadat ze een wedstrijd tegen Nieuw-Zeeland wonnen, uit elkaar met het vooruitzicht het volgende jaar tegen de Britten te kunnen spelen.

Dit verhaal dat postuum gepubliceerd werd, is een goede illustratie van het latere werk van Premchand. Er worden niet langer oplossingen geboden, de problemen worden enkel gesignaleerd. Helen Mukherjee neemt een bijzondere plaats in omdat ze een sterke rouw is die als één van de weinige vrouwelijke personages uit zijn werk haar leven zelf in handen neemt en uit de traditionele rollenpatronen stamt.

Sharad Joshi

Sharad Joshi is een satire-schrijver die in de jaren 1980 drie stukken schreef met Gāvaskar als centrale theme. De stukken gaan over het record van Donald Bradman dat dor Gāvaskar werdverbroken (aantal centuries – 100 runs – test-wedstrijden), de niet-selectie van Gāvaskar bij een tournee van testwedstrijden en het eredoctoraat dat de speler ontving van Andhra University.

In twee van de drie stukken grijpt Sharad Joshi het gebeurde aan om zijnbezorgdheidte uiten over de algemeen heersende mentaliteit en het gebrek aan kracht en energie in India. Enkel bij het stukje over de niet-selectie van Gāvaskar beperkt hij zich tot een commentaar op het cricket.

Abhishek Kashyap

In Spel, vertelt Abhishek Kashyap het verhaal van een arbeiderszoon die door een samenloop van omstandigheden tussen managers van een koolmijn woont. Dankzij zijn mentaliteit en zijn talent als cricketspeler raakt hij bevriend met de zonen van de managers. Een verkiezing van een vice-kapitein – waarbij hij zijn vriend Mickey, op wiens zus hij verliefd is voortrekt – slaat de eerste barst in de vriendschappen.
Wanneer er in de mijn een staking uitbreekt en de arbeiderszoon ook op een verjaardagsfeest van één van zijn mede-spelers wordt uitgenodigd, raakt hij danig teleurgesteld. Hij gaat naar huis en merkt daags nadien op het cricketveld dat hij er niet meer bij hoort. Uiteindelijk scheldt de arbeiderszoon de andere cricketspelers uit en komt er een eind aan de vriendschap.

In dit verhaal laat Abhishek Kashyap op subtiele manier zien hoeveel belang men hecht aan status en hoe moeilijk het is om op te klimmen op de sociale ladder.

Conclusies

In de besproken teksten geven de geselecteerde auteurs elk o hun eigen en eigentijdse manier kritiek op de maatschapij. Behalve in Premchand's Gullī Ḍaṇḍā is het spel echter maar een decor en neemt het geen centrale plaats in.

Authors at Play

Depictions of Batting Games in Hindī Literature

Thinking of Pāñcāla with a hostile bent of mind,
[Droṇa] went to the capital of the Kuru's, the town that's named after elephants. 1,122,11

But the princes though, had left the City of the Elephants together
and playing with a vīṭā, the young heroes wandered about in joy. 1,122,12

At some point, their vīṭā fell into a well
and they did not manage to grasp the vīṭā. 1,122,13

Just then, having business there, Droṇa saw the princes,
burst into laughter and graciously addressed the loitering heroes. 1,122,14

"Ho now, shame on you, young kṣatriya's, shame on your skill with arms,
you are born in the lineage of Bharata, yet you can't get hold of your vīṭā. 1,122,15

I have consecrated this handful of reeds with a sacred formula,
behold my valour, which is unknown to others. 1,122,16

I will pierce the vīṭā with a stalk of reed from my bow, that reed with another stalk,
which will be in my grasp, connected with the vīṭā." 1,122,17

(Vyāsa, 1999)

"One can deny earnestness. Not play," Johan Huizinga wrote in 1938 in *Homo Ludens*. Games are an essential part of the *condition humaine* (Huizinga & Mentzel, 2010, p. 15) thus it seems no wonder that, despite the philosophical nature of the *Mahābhārata*, the Kuru-princes are found losing their *vīṭā*, "a small piece of wood shaped like a barley-corn and about a span long" that "was struck with a stick or bat in a kind of game"[1] (Monier-Williams, 2014b), just as one could imagine Premchand[2] playing *gillī ḍaṇḍa* (P. C. Gupta, 1998, p. 9), or stroll the Oval Maidān in Mumbai and observe Indians playing cricket on a free day. The pattern of these games is as universal as play itself, which a paper written in 1948 illustrates. Erwin Mehl (1948, pp. 146-147) describes a range of striking- and batting-games, the latter defined as more elaborate forms of the striking games in which an object is struck – usually

[1] Monier-Williams compares the game to hockey, the Śyāmasundara Dāsa Hindī Śabdasāgara points out its similarity to *gillī ḍaṇḍa* (Śyāmsundaradāsa, 2010).
[2] The standard transliteration of Dhanpat Rāya's *nom de plume* is Premacaṃda, however Premchand is a de facto standard in English literature.
In this paper, names are written as they are found in English literature, the standard transliteration is added between brackets the first time a name is used.

with "some instrument" – into an area guarded by the opposing team that has to catch it. Archeologic findings prove striking games were already played by North African Berbers at least 2000 ago and are currently known throughout Europe by names such as *porshek* (Slavic), *zurka* (Rumania) and *Titschkerl, Gitschkerl* (Austria). Mehl suggests an "obviously Indo-European" nature for the Indian game of *gillī ḍaṇḍa*, comparing the *gillī* with the Austrian *Titschkerl*.

Play, according to Huizinga, precedes culture, a game is an activity that withstands analysis and logical interpretation, it is played for the sake of *fun*, it is universal and the fibre of all human activity (Huizinga & Mentzel, 2010, pp. 13, 15, 16), in which it contrasts with modern sports that often have a purpose. Sport – according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* – is an activity "providing diversion, entertainment, or fun" (2.a) or, in contemporary use, "involving physical exertion and skill, *esp.* […] one regulated by set rules or customs in which an individual or team competes against another or others" (4.a) (Oxford English *Sport*, 2008). Many sports developed in Great Britain within an Edwardian and Victorian context, with a strong emphasis on the amateurism of players and a clear apolitical nature, whereas in the US sports were, up to the 1980s, corporative and dominated by major leagues, their clubs and colleges; two examples political scientist Lincoln Allison (1998, pp. 712, 715) uses to illustrate the interaction between civil society – "the whole of non-governmental organisations that is a counterbalance to the state" – and sports. Yet, one should be careful not to oversimplify and see sport merely as a reflection of society as is the case in structural functionalism that studied how social organisation works and is maintained, or from the perspective of conflict-theory that argues sport not only reflects a social arrangement, but also perpetuates class and power differentials. In sport, people not only act according to the demands of a social or economic reality, but they have an influence on sport itself (Frey & Eitzen, 1991, pp. 504-506).

Given the relationship between games and sports and the society in which they are performed, this paper analyses how writers in Hindī literature employ batting games (*gillī ḍaṇḍā* and cricket) and the social context they create in their writings to comment on society.
I will start this analysis with an assessment of Hindī literature, first tracing the origin of modern (western) literature, based on the work of Bakhtin and Lukács and then examining how this tradition merged with Indian traditions.
Next, I will briefly trace the history of playing and sports competition in India, with a main focus in *gillī ḍaṇḍ;ā* and cricket.

Finally, as an illustration, I will give an overview of studies that were made about Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India before I make an analysis of texts by three authors: Premchand wrote *Gullī Ḍaṇḍā* and Cricket Match, Sharad Joshi (Śarada Jośī) wrote a number of columns about cricket, I chose to make an analysis of three texts involving Sunil Gavaskar. Finally, I make an analysis of the story *Khel* by the little known author Abhishek Kashyap (Abhiṣeka Kaśyapa). For each author, I will make an overview of his historical context and essential information on cricket when the texts were written, followed by an outline of the text in which I point to the relevant passages and a conclusion for each story.

The Art of Reading Modern Hindī Literature

The novel as the essence of modern literature

Mikhail Bakhtin describes an epic as a text that is absolute and complete. Absolute because it transfers the world it describes to an absolute, ideal world in which a sacred tradition is rooted. Complete because the text relates a distant past, is unambiguous and remains unchanged, thus assuring the superior position in a hierarchical relationship between the text itself and the audience (Bakhtin, 2008, pp. 15-16)[3]. Nevertheless, despite its absoluteness and completeness, an epic tale originates in an ancient world that was once real and therefore "encompasses hues of historicity wrapped under its-supposedly mythical character" (Trikha, 2006, p. 54).

Georg Lukács makes an analysis of the epic – which he puts on par with the tragedy as to importance for classical western literature –and the novel and describes the latter as "the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, yet which still thinks in terms of totality," stating that it "seeks […] to uncover and construct the concealed totality of life" (Lukács, 1971, pp. 56,60) The hero however no longer has a divine status but that of the fallen god: his power is still real, even though it does no longer penetrate the universe, his world still has meaning yet it remains concealed for the problematic hero (Lukács, 1971, pp. 86, 88). This is in line with Bakhtin's view that the novel emerges in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance when the old hierarchy began to fall apart and "the object of artistic representation was being degraded to the level of a contemporary reality that was inconclusive and fluid". The core of the literary text is no longer the representation of an idealized world but an individual experience, expressed by means of a free creative imagination. The modern literary text no longer narrates a prophecy that is fulfilled within the frame of the absolute past of the epic but rather a prediction about the chaotic and limited reality of the hero; it might even be an attempt to influence the future of the author or his readers (Bakhtin, 2008, pp. 18, 30). The novel is a problematic hero's journey to self-recognition - however the conflict between reality and the ideal remains – and his highest achievement is a mere glimpse of meaning; the acceptance of this fact is the only justification for his struggle (Lukács, 1971, pp. 80-81). Furthermore, the novel unfolds itself in an infinite universe, yet the text only touches upon these aspects that are relevant for the path of the hero even though his individual

[3] The essay was written by Bakhtin in 1941, the translation used here was published in 2008.

experience is typical for the whole of ideas and ideals that regulate both “the inner and outer world of the novel”. Lukács (1971, pp. 81, 83) points out that

> just because the novel can only comprise the individual in this way, he becomes a mere instrument, and his central position in the work means only that he is particularly well suited to reveal a certain problematic of life .

The dominant and thus influential position the novel has acquired is one of the contributing factors in the process of novelisation of other literary genres, yet the decay of the traditional social organisation prompted not only the emergence of the open-ended, ambiguous and highly personal novel that deals with the here and now, it introduced these characteristics in other genres too (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 19) by which

> They become more free and flexible, their language renews itself by incorporating extraliterary heteroglossia and the "novelistic" layers of literary language, they become dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, humor [sic], elements of self-parody and finally – this is the most important thing – the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished , still evolving contemporary reality (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 7; Kumar & Garg, 2013, p. 175).

The Novelisation of Hindī literature

Epics – as Bakhtin and Lukács envisioned them – and novels are western literary categories that do not necessarily match the Indian . The historical and literary context in which the novel emerged and that in which India adopted later on the new form was different.

The *Hindī saṃskāra*

The moto of the *Sāhitya Akademi* - “Indian literature is one, though written in many languages” - reflects at the same time diversity and unity of Indian literature which is characterised by a number of interrelated subsystems that can be identified by their respective themes, genres, forms and structures that are historiographically observable (Dev, 2003, pp. 24, 29). Early twentieth century *Hindī* literature was characterised by a variety that existed on two levels. First, there was a variety in literary traditions and forms of transmission (Orsini, 2009, p. 31), illustrated by Amiya Dev by means of the bhakti-movement that was spread throughout India and drew upon a wide range of textual traditions in several languages (Dev, 2003, p. 29). Second, there was the variety of printed texts, ranging from ballads of the folk traditions, over historical romances, to the literature of Premchand with its critical take on the hierarchical society. Against the backdrop of an intensifying process of urban concentration and under the influence of a fast growing printing industry and the activities of *Hindī*

associations, poetry evolved from an almost exclusively oral tradition to a part of a printed literary culture. Styles realigned – providing short stories, essays and *Khaḍī Bolī* poetry with a greater importance, rendering traditional genres like seasonal songs obsolete and turning the hitherto still popular *Braj Bhāṣa* poetry into the object of academic study at the same time (Orsini, 2009, pp. 32, 39, 42, 50-51).

Literary taste in early modern *Hindī* literature was as much determined by the audience as it was by critics. The era was characterised by a debate on what modern *Hindī* literature should be like. Scholars who determined the new outlook of literature selected the literary curriculum for schools while at the same time they decided which texts came to the fore. Among the critic's criteria to judge texts were their literary *saṃskāras*[4], their cultural *saṃskāras*[4] and the inclination to *lokhit*[5] and nation-building of the literary establishment. Aside from professional critics, prominent authors often worked as critics too, lending them a certain influence on the otherwise slow evolution of professional and popular taste (Orsini, 2009, pp. 51, 172-173) .

Among the *saṃskāras* that influenced authors through education or print literature were both English and Beṃgālī authors such as Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (Baṃkimcandra Caṭṭopadhyaya) (Orsini, 2009, p. 45) who wrote that "those who study the impact of literature know that prose is superior to poetry and more effective for the betterment of civilization." Furthermore in a review of Indranath Bandopadhyay's Kalpatoru, he points towards a number of elements typical to the genre of the novel: the book embodies the poetic entity of life and shows the inner world of the characters – at this point Chattopadhyay refers to the romantics Sir Walter Scott and Victor Hugo – yet it cannot "unfold the poetic totality of life". With a reference to *Alaler Ghaler Dhulal*[6] by Pyarichand Mitra, considered to be the first Bangla novel, he concludes with pointing out that the here – Bengal –, the now and the local language are the favoured material of the author and that the author has no need to "go begging" from the Saṃskṛt or English tradition (Bandopadhyay, 2002, pp. 27-28).

[4] A *saṃskāra* in the context of Hindī literature refers to a taste, an inclination and its source, indicating whether it is part of family or local or traditions – a cultural *saṃskāra* – or rather acquired through education or contact with the outer world or trends in literature. The term suggests that according to one's path of life and experience, a certain taste pattern is superimposed on the pattern that is associated with one's social and cultural background (Orsini, 2009, pp. 43-44).
[5] *Lokhit*, according to Orsini (2009, p. 170) is a word for the welfare of the people.
[6] The Spoilt Child

Premchand, who wrote as a critic too, lamented the fact that a novel was considered "light reading" because of its entertainment value. For him, the novel aimed to entertain but this was not without giving a message and a novel had to be judged by its "subject, plot and 'spice' (*masālā*)". A plot, for him, had to be simple, original and interesting; the *masālā* was the whole of personal experience and attitudes that helped created an appealing style. Authors were – in the eyes of Premchand - "the creators of their age," with a strong aspiration to free their country and society from suffering (Orsini, 2009, p. 173).

Social reform

The role of literature in social reform, which was self-evident to Premchand, is presented as incidental in the analysis by Bakhtin (2008, p. 30) and even a notorious social reformer like Charles Dickens did not see himself as a reformer in the first place: the scenes with debt-collectors in *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-1837) and of the cheap Yorkshire schools where unwanted and illegitimate children were abused and neglected in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1837-1838) were not written with social reform in mind but were part of his formal innovations to represent the modern city. His shift of attitude towards the necessity and possibility of social reform through literature came during a tour in the United States in 1842; it was only in the preface to a new edition in that he remarked the number of cheap schools had drastically declined after *Nicholas Nickleby* was published. (Claybaugh, 2007, pp. 52-54, 59-60). Thanks to socially engaged writers, the novel played its role in social reforms in Europe and Premchand pre-emptively countered any criticism on his work by stating that the literary establishment

> [had] to admit that the seeds of whatever reforms have taken place in western countries in the last few centuries have been sown by novels (Orsini, 2009, p. 155)

With the prominence of social reformers among European authors and the focus on *lokhit*, the Indian novel might seem like a European genre that was adopted by South-Asian authors through mere imitation, yet this point of view overlooks the complex determinants in which a literary genre emerges and evolves (Mukherjee, 1985, p. 53).

Literary culture in Colonial India – as Orsini also points out –consisted of a wide range of texts, varying in language, theme and form. Against the backdrop of religious texts like the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *purāṇas*, there were philosophical texts, legends and stories known throughout the subcontinent, regional religious texts and their associated stories and legends (Kumar & Garg, 2013, p. 170). Even though the novel was eventually adopted as

genre in Indian literature, in the Subcontinent it was preceded by a literary culture that looked entirely different from the western tradition. It looked back on an epic tradition that was multiple and polygenous, owing to the interaction between oral and written traditions and a continuous process of back and forth translation that took place and times of social change. This openness of the text contrasts with Bakhtin's ideas of the epic as a text that is authoritative due to its closedness and remoteness (Bandlamudi & Ramakrishnan, 2018, p. 5), as well as it contrasts with Lukács' idea of totality of the epic text. Kumar and Garg (2013, pp. 170-174) state that even in medieval times, the *bhakti*- and *sufi*-movements had already paved the way for western influences. The mystical nature of these movements was essentially anti-novelistic in nature, yet their high degree of social awareness initiated an integration between the orthogenetic and heterogenetic elements of the Great and the Little traditions. Poets and *sants* translated the epics and *purāṇic* literature to the local languages, thus assuring a wide access to the ancient foundations of their tradition. Medieval India – especially under Akbar – had many characteristics of the western early modern age: agrarian settlement expanded, the number of religious institutions rose, commercial activity intensified and new political systems and networks emerged and the empire was evolving towards a nation. These first steps towards a nation coincided with the first steps towards the secularization of imagination and literature. With this in mind, the Indian novel is the result of an encounter: a place where two cultures collaborate and the novel is as much Indianized as the Indian stories are westernized (Kumar & Garg, 2013, pp. 170-174).

Tolstoy was an important inspiration for Indian realist authors and it is in his analysis of his work that Lukács presents the idea of a *poetic mirror*: the literary text as a means to produce a purposely erroneous mirror-image of reality that is all the more realistic thanks to a meaningful artistic distortion, the use of unrealistic elements that make the representation of a world beyond the physical possible. Early Indian novels made use of unrealistic plot elements that were inherited from earlier genres and as such captured the precariousness of the era in a hybrid realist mode (Anjaria, 2012, pp. 8-11), a process described by Premchand when he addressed the Progressive Writers' Association.

The Progressive Writers' Association

In December 1932, The Progressive Writers' Association's (PWA) direct predecessor Angarey (*Aṅgāre*, Burning Coal), a collection of short stories by Ahmad Ali, Sajjad Zaheer (Sajjād Zahīr), Rasheed Jehan (Raśīd Jahāṃ) and Mahmud-uz Zafar (Mahmūduz Zafar) was published and instantly banned 'under Section 295 A of the Indian Penal Code for "hurting

the religious susceptibilities of a section of the community"' (Ali, 1977, pp. 91, 93; Coppola, 1986, p. 21; Mahmud, 1996, pp. 447, 449; Weir, 1992, p. 138). The stories' authors adopted new styles, inspired by modern writers like James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf and Marxist writers, aiming at a direct impact on their environment. The texts were written without a specific goal in mind and the result of a creative urge, the authors found their direction as a result of social conditions. After all social engagement was not new in Urdū literature and in fiction the short story had already gained a strong foothold with Premchand as a pioneer (Mahmud, 1996, pp. 447, 451-452). Angarey was followed by a "manifesto" called *In defense of Angarey* on , published on 5th April 1934 in The Header (Allahabad), (Ali, 1977, p. 93; Mahmud, 1996, p. 450) in which and Mahmud-uz Zafar and Ahmad Ali called for a League of Progressive Writers (Coppola, 1986, pp. 21-22).

The manifesto adopted at the first meeting of the All-India Progressive Writers' Association denounced the anaemia of the bulk of Indian writers: the radical changes in society were not picked up by literators because they retorted to a baseless spiritualism and ideality after the breakdown of the classical *Saṃskṛt* tradition. The Association considered it "the duty of Indian writers to give expression to the changes taking place in Indian life and to assist the spirit of progress in the country by introducing scientific rationalism in literature. They should undertake to develop an attitude of literary criticism which will discourage the general reactionary and revivalist tendencies" (Ali, 1977, p. 94; Mahmud, 1996, p. 454). A new literature for India had to make the basic problems of life – hunger, poverty, backwardness and slavery – its subject. In the Indian situation this was a thinly veiled call for opposition to colonialism, feudalism and the establishment of an egalitarian society (Panikkar, 2011, p. 19). The movement was not completely detached from traditions but rejected those aspects of literature that lured people into passivity (Ali, 1977, p. 94; Mahmud, 1996, p. 454) and although Ahmad Ali totally rejected the art of the past, which to him was mythological, decaying and obscurantist, a new culture, Sajjad Zaheer wrote, could be reached through criticism of the past (Panikkar, 2011, p. 17). The movement dreamed of nothing less than changing the social order and "of winning for *Urdū* and the regional languages the same respect and for the Indian people the same dignity which other civilized languages enjoyed" (Ahmad Ali quoted by Mahmud, 1996, p. 448).

Ali claimed the aim of the movement was inevitably directed at the middle class and denounces Nūn Mīm Rāśid's claim the stories were written on behalf of and for the proletariat (Ali, 1977, p. 95) yet Sajjad Zaheer had a thorough grounding in Marxism when studying at

Oxford, recalls that the group of Indians around him in England had similar ideas. Deeply concerned with the events in Germany, he felt action was needed and "Writing 'was probably the only avenue left open," for they knew no craft and did not want to cooperate with the imperialist government (Sajjad Zaheer quoted by Mahmud, 1996, p. 455); affected by the 'crisis of consciousness' in the interwar period, some Indians were attracted by traditional values and symbols, yet for the progressives, the Soviet model had the greater appeal and authors embraced the literary tradition that would be set forth as socialist realism in 1934 (Weir, 1992, p. 138) which was founded in classical realism for "there can be no socialist realism of any lasting value if it does not assimilate within itself the best virtues of classical realism" (Lukács quoted by Ahmad, 2011, p. 28). It must however be kept in mind that the PWA was "a collection of readers and writers groping together, in spite of our different individualities, towards the realisation of certain facts," without ties to the Communist Party of India (CPI) (Mulkrāj Ānand quoted by Gopal, 2012, p. 17) and although not a social movement, its roots and membership were broader than a linkage with the CPI suggests. Founding members were anxious to maintain the PWA's heterogeneity (Ānand) and even the more programmatically inclined members recognized the vague and undefined consciousness of the need for change led to the formation of the PWA (Zaheer) and Ali stressed that progressive did not mean revolutionary (Gopal, 2012, pp. 18, 26) but rather "the consciousness of what we are, what we were, what we should or can be. It is dynamic in essence (Ali quoted by Gopal, 2012, p. 26).

The publication of Angarey, the announcement of a League of Progressive Authors in *In Defense of Angarey* the same year and the founding of the Progressive Writers Association were significant events for Indian literature. The Movement's appeal was wider than the original circles of Urdū writers: it reached artists in all art forms, languages and cultures on the subcontinent and gained the support from Premchand, Tagore and Nehru. According to Aijaz Ahmad (2011, pp. 28-29) the movement represented a condensation of values that were present in the culture at large. Socialist imagination, progressive arts as they evolved in the west, the anti-colonial movement, reform movements and the inheritance of the humanisms and medieval theisms of the *bhakti*-movement and the *Sufi-sant* tradition all met at the right moment.

Language, literature and identity

The novel lies at the heart of Indian anti-colonial nationalism. Early Indian reformers looked towards the colonial authorities to bring about a change in the traditional institutions but

gradually, the urge to change society came to coincide with a growing resistance to colonial intervention in what could be seen as a national culture. Traditionally, nationalism is seen as a political movement, yet according to Chatterjee, nationalist thought can precede politics. That is to say: India knew nationalism before the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. The national culture that is guarded against foreign influences, the "inner domain", however, is not left unchanged: it is under the constant influence of the colonial state and though it lacks political sovereignty, it harnesses an important power and creativity as it is in this spiritual domain that the community is "imagined" (Chatterjee, 2007, pp. 4-6).

Language is one of these areas in which a national identity emerged. Anderson pinpoints print-capitalism as essential for the development of the national language: printing enterprises depended on large editions, which could only be distributed thanks to the fixing of print languages. Once these existed, print runs could increase and the status of languages changed. Once established, they became formal models, ready to be exploited for political means (Anderson, 2006, pp. 37,45). In the Indian context, the first *Beṃgālī* books were printed at the initiative of the East India Company at the end of the eighteenth century; English had replaced Persian as the administrative language in the beginning of the nineteenth century, thus becoming a major cultural influence (Chatterjee, 2007, p. 9) in North India, as these *Beṃgālīs* settled in the administrative centres throughout the region. Their urban, anglicized appearance, notable in their clothing, a language that was infused with English and a familiarity with modern knowledge, made them a model to imitate (Orsini, 2009, p. 4). It is this administrative elite that, although in close contact with the British created the infrastructure – consisting of printing presses, publishing houses, newspapers, magazines and literary societies – needed for the spread of a literature in their national language outside the colonial purview. The elite moved the *Beṃgālī* language and its literature to the inner domain of national culture (Chatterjee, 2007, p. 9) and at the same time devised new codes and institutions that expressed the need for 'unity', 'progress' and a 'common cultural heritage' (Orsini, 2009, p. 1). Even in the novel, described by Anderson (2006, pp. 24-26) as a nationalist imagination in which a community lives in a homogenous, empty time – that is: an environment in which simultaneity is marked strictly by temporal coincidence and of which only the reader has a complete overview of all actors who are largely unaware of each other – the forms outlined by Anderson are not self-evident. While the influence of the *Saṃskṛt*, English (Chatterjee, 2007, p. 8) and early-modern (Kumar & Garg, 2013, p. 171) traditions are obvious, authors of the most popular novels in *Beṃgālī* stepped outside these boundaries

set by the traditional forms and switched to colloquial dialogues (Chatterjee, 2007, p. 8). In their aim for unity and reform, a nineteenth-century writer like Hariśchandra Bhartendu (Hariścaṃdra Bhāratendu) used all the registers the language and literature of his time had to offer: especially the use of colloquial language and concrete metaphors comes to mind as it allowed the author to portray characters of every *jāti*, region and profession in their own language. One generation later, Mahāvīr Prasād Dvivedī saw one standardized language fit for discussing public matters, creating literature and representing the *jāti*: a sober *Hindī*, purged of all foreign – even *Urdū* – influences that favoured *Saṃskṛt* words. Editors like Dvivedī and Rāmchandra Śukla (Rāmacandra Śukla) held a substantial authority in the *Hindī* literary institutions – schools and their curricula, newspapers, publishers, magazines – that rose in importance in the early twentieth century and directed the distribution of contemporary literature. In a growing literary sphere, the leading figure's discourse shaped modern *Hindī* – the language of unity – and at the same time filtered visions of the past and literary tradition and formed the literary canon. Attitudes in the discussion ranged from Śukla's new method of evaluating literature, which was based on social relevance but yet firmly rooted in the theory of *rasa* and *alaṃkāra*, to Premchand's sceptical take on the hierarchical order in Hindu society. The *Hindī*-nationalist discourse shaped a *Hindī* literary *saṃskāra* that to date seems relatively stable (Orsini, 2009, pp. 6, 32, 380) and sprouted a form of the novel that has both elements of the western novel and traditional Indian genres.

Indian literature after Independece

Though clearly influenced by European modern literature, Indian fiction did not let go of its earlier concerns an preoccupations: the experience of love, concern with the historical, the legendary and mythical themes remain important motives. Many Indian modern writers have been concerned with the pressing socioeconomic problems of their time. After Independence, greed, selfishness and hypocrisy were commonplace, disenchantment with the social system grew and expectations were unfulfilled. It lead to a literature showing the suffering and humiliation of the downtrodden, making the contemporary state of society a persistent theme. Many authors draw their inspiration from the consequences of urbanization which range from poverty and deprivation to loneliness and alienation. R.K. Gupta writes that in general, South-Asian literature lacks in variety, both in them and in tone. According to him, there is a lack of depth: writers tend to lay the blame with politicians, industrialists etc. but don't consider collaborative, universal apathy of the silent majority that allow incompetents to these levels. In addition, writers seem to live in a comfortable cocoon of luxury, unaware of the society

outside that cocoon. On the other hand, he praises Indian literature quality in form, the sensitive and imaginative projection of the universal and the contemporary and topical elements and its graphic presentation of social reality (R. K. Gupta, 1994, pp. 299, 301-302, 306).

The PWA still exists today but over time, especially postmodern writers became disenchanted with the PWA and what it stood for. For them, commitment means a broader concern for the whole species and even nature. The battle against the discrimination of race, gender and caste, ecological devastation, violence and war. It should be noted that the authors of the PWA did address these issues – this is for instance evident from Manto's writings about the violence in the wake of the Partition and Rasheed Jehan's work on the position of women in Indian society. Their humanism lies not in probing into what lies beyond the immediate social reality, it reduces human life to this reality and tries to create an understanding of hew this reality is inflicted by the material, the discursive, the psychic and the social. But the most characteristic feature of the PWA in its heyday is its role as a literature of reconstruction in the wake of colonialism and nation formation, proffering ethical insights without being reducible to ahistorical morality tales (Gopal, 2012, pp. 148-149).

From Novel to Short Story

At the time the novel obtained a firm footing in the subcontinent, authors adopted the modern characteristics present in the English short story. Although short stories disappeared from the picture in western literatures, *Hindī* literature still has a vivid tradition of short stories with Premchand who wrote over 300 stories (Rubin, 2004, p. 10) as a notable example.

The evolution and nature of the short story recieve little attention. Novel and story are two distinct forms of literature; they share the same medium: prose, but apply different artistic methods. This was already acknowledged by the end of the nineteenth century. When H.G. Wells recalled the heyday of the short story in the 1890s, he pointed out that they were heavily discussed by the audience and stated they were "all that mattered". Despite being two different forms, the (long) novel and the (short) story evolved hand in hand and critical assessment of the story by writers in the late nineteenth century was part of a wider debate on how to fragment and represent the emerging modern society (Shaw, 2014, pp. 3-4).

Even early twentieth century critics[7] realized the difference between novel and short story went beyond the difference in length. Brander pointed out that the author has no access to all the tools available when creating a novel. Therefore a high degree of unity within the short story is inevitable. The goal of the novelist was to create a cross-section of real life, the story-writer could appeal to ingenuity, originality and ideally a touch of fantasy.
Edelweis Serra focused on the closedness of the story: he refers to Lukács (1971, p. 81) and his concept of the "unlimited discontinuity" of the novel and opposes this to the short story being "an artistic construction […] of a limited sequence of events, experiences or situations, according to a closed correlative order that creates its own perception as a totality" (Pratt, 1981, pp. 178-179). It should however be pointed out that Lukács' concept of openness of the novel refers to the text's contact with the infinite extra-textual reality. Even the novel portrays a limited sequence of characters and their experiences, be it in a more complex narrative. Pratt (1981, pp. 183-185) herself contradicts Serra's idea of the infinite novel versus limited shorter texts. She proposes a "moment of truth" as the distinguishing characteristic of the story, yet she points to Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway as an example of a novel-long account of one day in the life of the main character; a day that even ends with such "moment of truth". In addition, lyrical poetry – though typically short – is never considered incomplete.

When discussing the genre, Edgar Allen Poe – himself a notable author of short stories – wrote that the genre gave him possibilities which eluded the novelist and allowed him to reach the "high excitements" of his lyrical poems. If he achieved these heights, the author has "not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect" (Poe, 2012, p. 526; Shaw, 2014, p. 9).

The short story does have in common with other literary genres that its realization varies according to the period – and to supplement Shaw: region – it was written, yet it is characterized by its ability to preserve and recall its forerunners and their diversity (Pratt, 1981, p. 190; Shaw, 2014, p. 20). The length of the short story is a determining factor, as Poe indicated, because the compactness of the text neither allows for any word that's out of place, nor for a word that can be taken out (Poe, 2012, p. 526; Shaw, 2014, p. 21) [Abhishek Ref Poe Abhishek]. The story-writer needs a personal voice just as much as the novelist; without he

[7] Brander Matthews (1901) and Edelweis Serra (1977) are quoted by Pratt, Matthews' original publication could not be retrieved, Serra's is in Spanish.

will not be able to fulfil the reader's longing to see significance in experience (Shaw, 2014, p. 24).

Most *Hindī* literature – serialized novels and short stories – throughout the 1920s and 1930s was published in journals (Orsini, 2009, p. 52), a situation that bore at least some resemblance to the context in which English short stories were published: commissioners set a limit to the length of pieces (Shaw, 2014, p. 7).

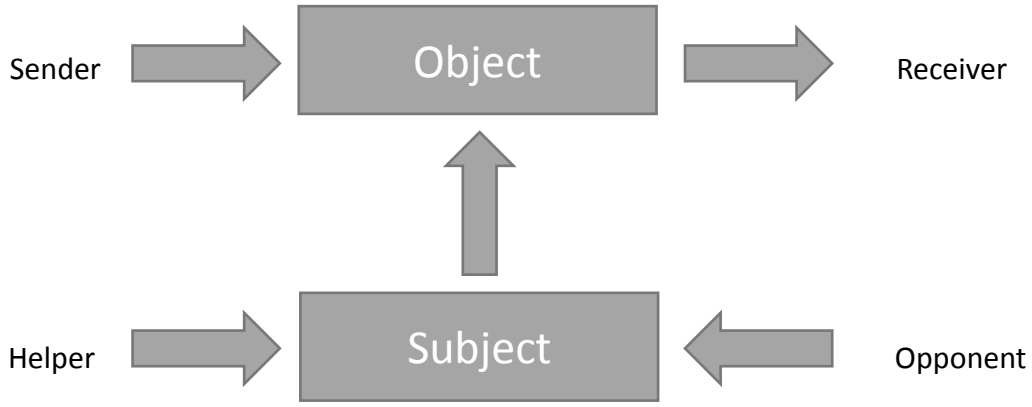
Regardless of the differences between modernity's pre-eminent novel and the short story, the latter clearly is a modern literary text too. Indeed, stories potentially sport certain of the characteristics that set the novel apart from older, more traditional types of text. The unlimitedness that connects the novel to the contemporary reality and the openness that make its ending uncertain, as described in the work of Bakhtin and Lukács, are not necessary present in a short story, however they are not always absent either. The degree to which a story can be a "splinter of life", in the same way the novel can be described as a "slice of life", depends on the type of text. As mentioned above, short stories draw from a large repository of narrative traditions, some of which lend themselves to an infinite and open-ended text with greater ease than others. Fairy tales and parables are narrative traditions that pass moral values to their audience are clearly unambiguous but can often be linked to an extra-textual reality, which adds to their appeal. Animal fables such as the Dutch *Van den vos Reynaerde* (in English: Of Reynaert the Fox) thrive on intelligent, creative choices that link the animal universe to the world outside the text while openness and ambiguity depend on time and place of origin and the intention of the author.

Premchand, who is arguably the most influential author of short stories in *Hindī*, wrote for the betterment of society and even though literary theorists often discuss the subject of literary activism briefly, he had illustrious examples like Dickens, Zola, Tolstoy etc. His desire to see change in his country and social environment led him to realism: this is evident from his opinion on the constituents of the ideal novel and the role of the novel in social change elsewhere.

Realist *Hindī* stories do differ from novels but still they have the main properties of modern literary text and as a consequence can be read as such.

Reading literary texts

For my analysis of the literary texts, I perform a close reading, selecting all relevant passages. To help unclose the narrative structure of a story, I make use of Greimas' actantial model: a relatively simple tool which allows to describe a narrative in six actantial roles.



In this model, a subject – the protagonist – is called upon by the sender on whose behalf he will bring the object to a receiver. The subject is hereby helped by his helpers and meets adversities – or opponents – on his way. Actantial roles are not necessarily taken up by characters, they can be linked to abstract concepts like ideologies, as well (Prince, 2003, p. 2). I don't use the actantial model for the texts by Sharad Joshi because they are reflections on society rather than stories.

Playing in India

Even though India's representative on the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Aśvīṇī Kumār, in his speech at a reception the day before the Test match between England and India in 1984-1985, commented that

> Sport in [his] country is khel-kood (just a bit of fun). […] If a child in our country returns from the playground he is not asked by his parents how he fared, but slapped for missing his studies and wasting his time in khel-kood (Bose, 2006, pp. 60-61),

Indian historiography is scattered with traces *khel-kūd* as well as occurrences of competitive sports.

Thinking of play as an essential part of life (Huizinga & Mentzel, 2010, p. 15) and bearing in mind the "hues of historicity" which were even contained in mythological epic texts (Trikha, 2006, p. 54), one could assume the ancient Indians played games too. Historical sources give little references to games as amusement, or – as Huizinga (Huizinga & Mentzel, 2010, p. 36) would put it – an activity that serves no concrete purpose, interrupts the predilection for gratifying one's daily needs and that is performed only for the satisfaction that lies in the performance itself. Games in India were possibly plenty but often – as an inventory made by Renou Louis suggest – no clear distinction was made between games with a competitive element and activities that were performed as mere amusement (R. Sen, 2015, p. 19) .

According to Jirásek and Kohe (2015, p. 263) theatrification of sports – the process in which "the body in its sporting form functions as a site on which various spectators can project their meanings and interpretations" – has always been enmeshed with physical practice and instead of the religious symbolism of the Ancient Greek sporting festivals they might just as well have referred to Indian epics or the Kṛṣṇa- tradition.
At the basis lies the idea of sportification: perceptions of cultural forms stand in for, reflect and reproduce a variety of nuanced social meanings and interpretations. The cultural forms are mediated, imbued with symbolism that refers to aspects contemporary society and the adoption of these cultural forms is aligned with the desire for social gratification.
Theatrification of sports in a modern context, manifests itself in commercial advertising, both of sporting goods and of commercial non-sporting goods: the sporting arena and the way events are televised link these images –visible signs – to the invisible meaning that lies in the intrinsic value of these symbols outside of the sporting-arena (Jirásek & Kohe, 2015, pp.

260,263). Reflection on shifts in visual (or literary) culture and spectatorship and considering these in relation to their contemporary society can

> Allow[…] us to continue to evaluate sport not merely as a physical and social phenomenon, but also, as a metaphysical spectacle in which questions of ethics, morals and values inherent to being and the human experience are placed at the fore and remind us of our connections to 'the essence', *eidos* or a collective human spirit (Jirásek & Kohe, 2015, p. 268).

Epic heroes: playing in earnestness

Though ancient texts rarely mention play as an activity that is merely fun or strictly competitive, the *Mahābhārata* refers to sports and competition in a martial context (R. Sen, 2015, p. 12) such as the Tournament between de Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas at the end of their training (R. Sen, 2015, p. 14; R. Singh & Ladsaria, 2016, p. 47). Sport and play in India's ancient past are usually associated with *dharma* and texts ranging from the Vedic literature, over the epics and the *purāṇas*, down to works by Kālidāsa and Pāṇini. Buddhist and Jain traditions would focus on rules as they were taught in the *ācārya-kula* system whereas traditions occupied with the development of the spirit through the body – such as the Yoga-Sūtra – would focus on the game's ethics. Sports in ancient India however, mostly were a means to ensure the kingdom received its most valiant warriors and kings (R. Singh & Ladsaria, 2016, pp. 47-48). Physical education was the exclusive domain of the priestly and scholarly *brāhmaṇa* and the royal and military *kṣatriya varṇas*: the *brāhmaṇas* as teachers passed the *Śāstras* on to their ancestors and, as sports were related to warfare, the *kṣatriya's* turned to them to acquire the skills associated with their rank in society (R. Sen, 2015, p. 15; R. Singh & Ladsaria, 2016, pp. 49-50).

The Tournament attracted vast crowds from towns, villages, settlements and even *āśramas*, that would watch the games in an "enormous amphitheatre" (R. Singh & Ladsaria, 2016, p. 51), much like present-day cricket matches. Within each context, both the participation in and spectatorship of sports and games mirror specific aspects of the social organisation, values or self-image. Middle-class and aspiring middle-class Indian spectators, seeing their position as winners in a constantly changing globalised world when watching an *Indian Premier League*-game (IPL) (A. Gupta, 2011, pp. 12-13) have a completely different experience than the new middle-class consisting of migrant white-collar workers that emerged in Mumbai and watched the games between religious communities against the background of India's struggle for independence and Gandhi's critique on the event's role in the onset of communalism (Guha, 1998, p. 178; Majumdar, 2002, pp. 161-164, 170).

Pre-colonial India: functional stories of functional games

The works of Kālidāsa and Gupta-age literature do mention ball-games (Deshpande, 1992, p. 6), games like *pacīsī* and predecessors of chess but outdoor games are considered uncommon (R. Sen, 2015, p. 19), or at least, sources about games played outside by commoners are scarce.

The *Mahābhārata* among other textual sources and the popularity of gambling suggest the competitive sportive meetings existed. Charles William Hackensmith mentioned yoga, polo, wrestling and ball games as common pastimes in his *History of Physical Education* (Hackensmith, 1966, p. 16; R. Sen, 2015, p. 19) and Arthur Llewellyn Basham wrote in his *The Wonder That Was India* that chariot-racing is mentioned in the *Ṛg Veda* and in late medieval times, bullock races and a form of polo were popular events. As illustrated by the Tournament, archery and wrestling were instrumental in displaying the *kṣatriya*'s braveness and skill. Wrestling is depicted in engravings in the 4th century BCE. Most often wrestlers were low-caste entertainers but at times they enjoyed patronage of kings. A notable example was the Brahmin caste of the *Jyeṣṭhimallas* who, according to legend learnt wrestling from Kṛṣṇa, who also instructed them in physical exercise and the organization of contests. Their knowledge was compiled in the *Mallapurāṇa* in which explained that wrestling was not a caste transgression because it was to be thought of as "fighting with hand" while "fighting with weapons" which was the *dharma* of the *kṣatriya*. Contests were infused with religious ceremonies and preceded by prayers to the gods – with special attention to Govinda – on competition days (R. Sen, 2015, pp. 20-22, 24).

Mentions of play in the Indian middle ages are scarce too though numerous scenes of a playful young Kṛṣṇa – still popular to this day – hint at every-day life in the *purāṇic* age. Lord Kṛṣṇa is well-known in the west for his discussion with Arjuna on the Kurukṣetra battle field about the ways to attain *mokṣa*, the importance of dharma and the statesmanship that is the dharma of a *kṣatriya* but in India, the greater part of his popularity is due to the stories of his childhood and youth (Bryant, 2007, p. 111). The concept of *llīlā*[8] is central in these texts. It refers to the *līlā avatāras* of Viṣṇu who come to re-establish *dharma*. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* explicitly presents their activities as playful, the reader – or listener – delights in stories of the butter-stealing child (R. M. Gupta & Valpey, 2016, p. 14) who feeds his loot to the monkeys and runs from his foster-mother who chases him with a stick or his romantic engagement with

[8] *Līlā*: play, sport, diversion, amusement, pastime; wanton sport, amorous pastime etc (Monier-Williams, 2014a)

the married *gopīs* at a later age (Bryant, 2007, p. 115). Participation in Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* grants the *bhakta* access to the god's heavenly abode where the *līlā* takes place perpetually. The development of a personal relation with the *Bhagavān* is crucial, regardless of the nature of the relationship which may vary from servitude, over friendship to a romantic friendship modelled on Kṛṣṇa's relationship with the *gopī*s. (R. M. Gupta & Valpey, 2016, pp. 14-16). In the first part of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, where Kṛṣṇa is young, his play is free of any sense of mission or purpose and to engage in this play for play's sake grants the inhabitants of Braj the most ecstatic love (Bryant, 2007, p. 115).

The *Marāṭhī* sant Eknāth , a Brahmin pandit with an outspoken sympathy for the downtrodden, composed *abhangas* that expressed the ideas of the advaita Vedanta as well as *abhanga* prayers that give insight the religious experience of the grassroots people, invoking names of numerous popular deities. In his most notable verses he is ''recalling and reminiscing'' playing games with Kṛṣṇa. They contain descriptions of *Marāṭhī* games *hututū* and *hamama (*forms of *kabaḍḍī)*, ball games and hide-and-seek (Aklujkar, 2007, p. 206).

The use of play and games in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* serves one purpose: descriptions of the playfully mischievous Kṛṣṇa or the young god playing games with his friends illustrate the concept of *līlā* and as such reflect the shift from the Vedic and epic religion to the new ideas of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*.

Babur's diary the *Bāburnāmā* and Akbars biographer Abu Fazl are important sources about the Mughal era. In 1528 Bābur described a celebration with wrestlers, camel and elephant fights and acrobats; and although Akbar maintained a large number of wrestlers and boxers at his court, and frequently went on large-scale hunts, polo was his favourite sport (R. Sen, 2015, pp. 26-29).

Before the arrival of the British, who kept doing sports as a way to uphold their social structure and values in a strange environment and as such to maintain a sense of normalcy, India hardly had a sports-culture. Those competitions that were held, usually took place as part of festivals, mostly religious in nature and with a focus on dance and theatre. Most contests came into being spontaneously and required little organization: there were fights with animals, running contests, battles with kites and wrestling- and boxing-matches on which spectators placed their bets (Cashman, 1998, p. 120). Even though throughout the ages the notion of sports as entertainment for the elites gradually emerged and classes of professional sportsmen came into existence, the Mughals stood out because the notion of pure play or fun

was totally absent among the elites; only commoners could let themselves free and escape all boundaries and norms (R. Sen, 2015, pp. 19-29). This freedom existed in games that are considered predecessors of *gillī ḍaṇḍa* and *kabaḍḍī*. Richard Cashman claims that for the nobility, sports were merely an extravagant pastime and the exact opposite of British sports in nearly every aspect (Cashman, 1998, pp. 119-120) yet, given the power-structure of the *purāṇic* and Mughal societies, the almost total absence of detachment suggest the extravagance was a functional element in establishing and maintaining a political status quo.

Batting games

At a time Indian audiences were attending spectacles meant to display power and status and revelled in descriptions of a playful god who embodied changing religious views, the British introduced a new game to the subcontinent: cricket would leave no place in India untouched (Nair, 2011, p. 569). Bearing in mind that the first cricket-match between an Indian (Parsi) team and the British in the subcontinent was played in 1877 (Guha, 1998, p. 160; 2014, p. 24; R. Sen, 2015, p. 54) and that the Bombay Pentangular[9] attracted full stadiums – up to 25000 spectators a day – less than a century later in 1944 (Majumdar, 2002, p. 177), the sport obtained an immense popularity in a relatively short time.

With an identity that is fractured by a diversity in languages, religions and ethnicities, cricket is one out of three unifying factors – the others being Pākistān as a common enemy and Bollywood – in Indian identity. Among the many Indias in India, such unifying factors are highly relevant. According to Nair, a pan-Indian identity was most pronounced under British rule and virtually absent after independence[10] and cricket has been a basis for national consensus. Even to such an extent that Mohammed Azharuddins score of 182 runs in a test series against England in 1993 helped restore the stability after the demolition of the *Babri Masjid* on December 6 1992 (Nair, 2011, pp. 573-575), Shiv Sena founder proclaimed Azharuddin a "Muslim nationalist" and during the campaign for the 1998 General Elections, former Ayodhya-campaign leader Lal Krishna Advani said that Muslim youths should follow the example of Azharuddin and AṚ. Rahman, thereby implicitly creating a distinction

[9] The tournament existed under several names: it started with the annual Presidency Match between Parsis and the British in 1877. In 1907 Hindus joined and the tournament was called the Bombay Triangular. When, in 1912 a Muslim team joined, the name was changed to the Bombay Quadrangular. In 1937, a fifth team, consisting of members of all other communities – the "Rest" was added and the was altered again: it became the Bombay Pentangular up to its last edition in 1947 (Guha, 1998, p. 160; Majumdar, 2002, p. 157). For the purpose of this paper, it is not necessary to make a distinction between these periods. Hence the tournament is here referred to as the (Bombay) Pentangular.

[10] Nair's article predates the electoral victory of the Bharatīya Janatā Pārṭ.ī in 2014 and the subsequent victories in regional elections.

between the cricketer and the composer one hand and the rest of the Muslim population on the other (Guha, 2014, pp. 238-239).

Gillī Ḍaṇḍā : "Vedic" Sports?

The immense popularity of Indian cricket might conceal the presence of another popular batting game in India: *gillī ḍaṇḍā*. It is a game played with simple means: a stick about two feet long (the *ḍaṇḍā*) and a piece of wood, which is conical at the two ends (the *gillī*) (Brewster, 1955, p. 90; Joshi, 2014, p. 4). There are no strict rules and the manner in which the game is played varies from province to province (Joshi, 2014, p. 4) which can be illustrated by two different sources: Joshi, a physics- professor in an international school presents a basic version of the game to explain basic concepts of kinematics. Brewster on the other hand presents a more elaborate set of rules.

The game is played by two teams: one player of the batting team makes the *gullī* – a small hole in the ground – and the *gi_llī* is balanced over the hole. According to Joshi the batting player strikes one end of the *gillī,* making it fly up, and then hits it as far as he can whereas Brewster writes that the batting player puts his *ḍaṇḍā* under the *gullī* and tosses it as far as he can. When a fielder catches the *gillī,* the batting player is out; if the *gillī* isn't caught, the batting player holds the *ḍaṇḍā* over the hole when the fielder throws the *gillī* to the *gullī* and if he manages to hit the *ḍaṇḍā*, the batting player is still out. In Joshi's version, the distance between the *gullī* and the *gillī* is measured in lengths of the *ḍaṇḍā,* the number of lengths is added to the score of the team; according to Brewster, this is the moment the batting player has the opportunity to score. In any case, the batting player hits the *gillī* on one of ends to make sending it in the air and hitting it again, scoring the number of lengths of the *ḍaṇḍā* in the simpler version of the game or the number of *lāl* – one *lāl* is three lengths of a *ḍaṇḍā* – in the version described by Brewster (Brewster, 1955, pp. 90-91; Joshi, 2014, p. 4).

The Wikipedia-article for *gillī ḍaṇḍā* lists names for similar games in most major Indian languages, as well as in Turkish, Persian and languages spoken in Indonesia, Southeast Asia and the Philippines ("Gilli Danda," 2018), suggesting a wide spread of the game throughout Asia. But as they appear to have fallen out of grace, several institutions try to revive rural games. On 27th May 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on the Fit India Campaign to include rural games and sports in their program and stressed their importance as India's inherent unity in diversity is evident in these games, they impart values and teach us how to achieve goals. The Prime Minister urged schools, localities and youth organizations to

promote traditional sports for the benefit of personal development ("PM Modi stresses on reviving traditional rural games," 2018). Several events are organized for the promotion of rural games like *gillī ḍaṇḍā*. These initiatives include a *Khel Mahākumbh* in Ahmedabad which expected 30 lakh (3 million) participants in 2017 (Patadiya, 2017), and event to acquaint school principals with forgotten games ("200 govt school principals sweat it out to revive forgotten games," 2018) and an Ancient Games Weekend at Mumbai university (Shirsekar, 2018).

The organization behind The Ancient Games Weekend sees the almost-forgotten games as a part of their roots and stresses that these games can be played with simple means: materials that can be found everywhere and are cheap. A game board can even be drawn on a piece of paper, Hence such a game can be started with little preparation. A participant relates he likes the way old games bring the generations that used to play them as a child and a new generation of young adults together (Shirsekar, 2018). V.P. Patel, A Secretary for Sports, Youth and Cultural activities present at the *Khel Mahākumbh* points out that indigenous games have been overshadowed by elite games like cricket, tennis and golf and applauds the government's efforts to promote the games that are part of India's roots.

The most outspoken idea about the most ancient games, I expressed in a press release by The Swarnim Gujarat Sports University in the run-up to an interstate *gillī ḍaṇḍā* competition between Gujarat and Chhattisgarh: "History testifies that since the Vedic period of ancient India several games were played not only by skilled sportspersons, but also by amatures [sic]. Women equally participated in several such games that have been passed on from one generation to the next. These traditional games hardly involve expensive equipment or professional training and masses were drawn towards such games. Traditional games of India are reflections of the country's rich cultural heritage." ("To promote Vedic era sports, Gujarat govt to hold gilli-danda event," 2017).

Although claims of a lineage that goes back to Vedic times are impossible to verify, indigenous games had ancestors in the Vedic era, as is evident from the instance where the Kuru princes lose their *vīṭā*. Textual evidence of games that were played by commoners is scarce and the materials used for these games were rarely durable, which reduces the archaeologists' chances to find material evidence, especially in India's climate. While we can safely assume the working classes played their own games, it is hard to tell to which extent they resemble the traditional games of today.

Present-day attitudes and opinions towards *gillī ḍaṇḍā* and other ancient games generally place them at the roots of Indian culture. Claims of a Vedic origin give these games more authority, especially in comparison to elitist, imported games that took their place in popular culture.

Cricket: The Most Complicated Game in the World

Cricket is a game played by two teams of eleven players according to the Laws of Cricket that take up 89 pages. At one time, two batsmen of the batting team and all the players of the fielding team are on the field. The central zone of the field – the pitch – has a fixed length of twenty-two yards and a wicket – two blocks of wood, the bails, resting on three slender wooden poles – the stumps – and a crease at each side of the pitch. The crease is a zone demarcated by two lines: the popping crease which indicates the position of the batsmen and the bowling crease is the line from behind which the bowler should have delivered – that is: thrown overarm with a stretched arm towards the opposing batsman – his ball. When the bowler hits the wicket or the ball is caught before it touches the ground[11], the batsman is out, if not the batsmen run to the wicket on the other side of the pitch , which is repeated until the wicket is struck with the ball[11]. Each time the two batsman reach the popping crease, the batting team scores a run; if the batsman hits the ball beyond the field-boundaries, the team scores six runs if the ball doesn't touch the ground, four if it touches the ground before passing the boundary (Club, 2017, pp. 6,13-14, 28, 33, 52-53, 57).

A match is divided in innings and overs. An over is a series of six correctly delivered balls. At each correctly delivered ball, the bowler switches sides. When the over is finished, another bowler takes his place. An innings is the division of a match during which one of the teams is batting, it lasts until ten batsmen are out or until an appointed number of overs has been finished (Club, 2017, pp. 23, 27-28).

Traditional games have four innings, an unlimited number of overs and are played to the end. They can last up to three or even five days. If the time allotted for the game has passed, the match ends in a draw (Club, 2017, p. 23). More recently, shorter formats were introduced: in 1971 the first official One Day International (ODI) match was played: teams were allowed fifty overs in two innings with games typically lasting seven to eight hours (Rumford, 2007,

[11] For this purpose, the fielding team has a wicket-keeper who stands behind the batsman to catch balls that are missed by the batsman, to stump the batsman (striking down the wicket with a ball that has been caught by a fielder) or to catch a ball that the batsman has hit behind him.

pp. 120-121) and in 2003 Twenty20 games were introduced in which two innings with a maximum of twenty overs are played (Mitra, 2013, p. 22).

The origins of cricket have been traced back to in the counties of Kent, Surrey and Sussex in South East England in the seventeenth century (Terry, 2000, p. 33). At that time, the game was a pastime for farmers and craftsmen in the countryside (Appadurai, 1998, p. 25; Kaufman & Patterson, 2005, p. 91) but the social background of the players evolved steadily: local gentry and even the curate picked up ball and bat (Terry, 2000, pp. 38-39) and the game became the subject of bets – the first historical source dates from 1646 (Kaufman & Patterson, 2005; Terry, 2000) – which made the game popular among noblemen that had migrated to South England. They spread the game throughout the Kingdom (Terry, 2000, p. 39). At the time, there were no formal rules but "articles of agreement" were commonplace for stake-money contests. They were issued for the duration of one game and mostly regulated pay and umpiring and reflected the power-relations outside the playing-field. (Vamplew, 2007, pp. 5, 8-9). In 1744, the first set of rules was published by cricketers who used the Artillery Ground in London; this text was reviewed in 1774 and 1784 and contained regulations for bets as well as laws that were universally applicable (Club, 2017, pp. 2-3; Vamplew, 2007, p. 9). The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) – the governing body for cricket, responsible for the Laws of cricket and its amendments – adopted the first Code of Laws on 30th May 1788. It has been revised numerous times but at the core, the Laws remained largely unchanged for the last 270 years which is often attributed to the players' will to play the game according to the "Spirit of cricket" which was recognized in the Preamble on 3rd May 2000 (Club, 2017, p. 2).

In the days of betting on games the local gentry employed talented cricketers on their estates and built their teams around them (Kaufman & Patterson, 2005, p. 91). In the second half of the nineteenth century, cricket-teams consisted of elite amateur players and the professionals they employed (Appadurai, 1998, p. 26; Kaufman & Patterson, 2005, p. 91; Stoddart, 1988, p. 653): the amateurs could uphold their ideal of sportsmanship and decided on the rules while their professional players in fact won the games for them (Appadurai, 1998, p. 26; Stoddart, 1988, p. 653). Talent, dedication and respect for the Laws assured the professional players of a limited degree of social mobility while the strict appointment of tasks on the field duplicated and maintained the social stratification (Appadurai, 1998, p. 26). Stacking – the practice in which bowlers and wicketkeepers were mostly professional players and the batsmen and captains – assured that a cricket-team was the mirror image of the class relations in society (Kaufman & Patterson, 2005, p. 95).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, cricket – which Ashis Nandy (2010, p. 1) described as "an Indian game accidentally discovered by the English" set foot in the subcontinent and was quickly accepted throughout the country. The first cricketers in India were British soldiers and seamen who played for their own leisure in Calcutta (Guha, 1998, p. 158). For a long time, cricket remained their exclusive privilege because the game and its associated values were too closely tied to the British identity. Indians were not deemed capable of the stoic self-control that cricket required. Indians playing cricket would compromise the unstated racial divide in society (S. Sen, 2012, p. 72). Nevertheless, a young British teacher in Bombay introduced Parsi boys to the game (Appadurai, 1998, p. 26; Guha, 1998, p. 158; Kaufman & Patterson, 2005, pp. 101-102; Majumdar, 2002, p. 164). The isolated community of higher middle-class traders began to play cricket and founded the Oriental Cricket Club in 1848 (Appadurai, 1998, p. 26; Guha, 1998, p. 158; Majumdar, 2002, pp. 162-164; Palsetia, 2001, p. 154). This displayed the Parsi's willingness to cooperate with the British and assured them access to the colonial elite (Kaufman & Patterson, 2005, p. 202; Palsetia, 2001, p. 154; Stoddart, 1988, p. 662). The Parsis functioned as cultural brokers (Appadurai, 1998, p. 26; Kaufman & Patterson, 2005, p. 102) and rivalry prompted the Hindus to take up cricket and in 1866, the first Hindu-clubs based on caste or region were founded (Guha, 1998, p. 159; Majumdar, 2002, p. 165). In 1880, Muslims were the last religious community to establish a club (Majumdar, 2002, p. 165).

Nandy proposes two possible explanations for the game's success: either millions of Indians have become totally captive to a colonial consciousness that revolves around the search for roots, or cricket is a cultural import which has met a vital need of the Indian subcontinent trying to come to terms with contemporary society. From this point of view, cricket can be seen as a new and unique means of cultural self-expression (Nandy, 2010, p. 2).

In the nineteenth century, post-utilitarian theories were gradually applied to the colonies to hierarchize societies (Inden, 1992, p. 180; Nandy, 2010, p. 5). The Mutiny in 1857 marked a shift from the utilitarian 'negative' liberalism in which interests of individuals were represented in the legislative branch of the government while the executive branch remained in the background to interfere only when things went wrong, towards a 'positive' liberalism in which the state consisted of interdependent, hierarchically ordered parts (Inden, 1992, pp. 180-181). At this point, cricket came in handy: British society was analysed by exactly the same Victorian ideals whereas the colonies were judged by their actual ways of life (Nandy, 2010, p. 5).

The ‘cricketifying’ of Indian society began when the Fourth Lord Harris, himself a former cricket-player (Nandy, 2010, p. 5; Prior, 2006), who was Governor of Bombay between 1890 and 1895 proposed cricket as “a healthy, active pastime”, which would give Indians “a counter-attraction to *paise* and politics” (Nandy, 2010, p. 5). Harris was a conservative who deemed it unfit to grant the Indians democratic rights as it was the British’ task to protect the rural masses against the self-interested clamour of educated Indians (Prior, 2006). While in Britain, cricket was mostly a pastime for the elite, in India the sport’s appeal was wider: British middle classes were convinced cricket nurtured British virtues; in India, the spread of cricket would support the colonial civilization mission (Mills, 2001, pp. 209-210; Nandy, 2010, p. 5).

Traditional cricket can be seen as a cultural mediation, constructed by parts of society as a response dislocation, a sense of loss and alienation that came with the industrialization of society; the same feeling was present in India, but here it was triggered by a combination of colonization and industrialization (Nandy, 2010, p. 6). One of the mechanisms the colonized had to mitigate the pressures of colonial society was to appropriate the customs of the colonizer in a process of colonial mimicry: “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite ” in which there is a balance between the appropriate and the inappropriate; between a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline and de different and recalcitrant. Colonial appropriation can only be successful when inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure are sufficiently proliferated, so that mimicry is “at once resemblance and menace” (Bhabha, 1984, p. 126).

Such mitigating strategies are evident from the success of the Bombay Pentangular: and annual tournament between the British, Parsis, Hindus, Muslims of Bombay, and a team consisting of all others (Guha, 1998, p. 160; Majumdar, 2002, p. 157; Mills, 2001, p. 211). In the beginning of the twentieth century, Bombay faced a large-scale immigration from the surrounding areas. Migrants were employed in new businesses and housed in mixed-community buildings. Social and religious life became organized in multi-caste gatherings and festivals. Everything combined, “It was [a] novel experience of living in rented rooms in the unfamiliar landscape of the city, together with the unaccustomed rigours of office work and notions of loss of caste and family ties, that fostered the growth of communal organization of sport” (Majumdar, 2002, p. 162). Although Bombay appeared to take a heart to the British cricket and at times even beat the British (Guha, 1998, pp. 170-173), the game’s communal organization contrasted with the regional structure of the British competition

(Appadurai, 1998, p. 32), although it was essential for the spread of cricket outside the Indian elite (Kaufman & Patterson, 2005, p. 102).

The main attraction of cricket for the elites lay in the ideal of amateur sportsmanship in which the Brahmin found an expression of moral superiority and self-control and the *kṣatriya* a defiance of fate, emphasis on style and a sense of honour. They appreciated the gentleman's defiance of the material motives. Through their amateur sportsmanship Indians assessed the western values reflected in the "Spirit of cricket", only to notice the British did not live up to them. This discord was just as evident in amateur cricketers as it was in politics: gentlemen treated their inferiors as dogs, the latter did the dirty work and would meet disapproval for their dirtiness (Nandy, 2010, p. 7). Access to the centre of power and the opportunity to keep up their extravagant display of status were the Indian princes' motivation to patronage their own cricket teams. Most of them rarely entered the field and themselves as they hired British coaches and local players, a class of players that was completely detached from Victorian values emerged (Appadurai, 1998, p. 29).

Ashis Nandy puts the uncertainty of the outcome of a (traditional) cricket match forward as instrumental for India's acceptance of the game. The slowness of traditional cricket allows character to show itself: long-term strategy, morale and span of concentration play an important role. Still, the odds between two teams are not evened because the entire fielding team and only two players of the batting team are on the field at the same time and circumstances are never the same for the two teams. As a result, players are out on the field to beat their odds, rather than the opponent. With all the variables that can determine the outcome of a match – the weather, the time of day, the size of the audience, the umpire etc. – cricket is a game with "too many options": there is not one understanding the game, nor is there an authoritative centre that has the better understanding or the greatest claim to the truth. With many concepts and sub-traditions, cricket is no less a stream than Hinduism, an idea compatible with the values and aspirations of higher castes in its timelessness, emphasis on purity, its attempts to contain aggressive competition through ritualization (Nandy, 2010, pp. 20-22, 26). Morover its non-violent nature that did not involve bodily contact or blood-letting, which matched ideas about the body and its purity and pollution (Mills, 2001, p. 211). Yet despite a match with traditional Indian values and culture, the fairly recent introduction of a faster, more aggressive and commercialized style of cricket resulted in an unseen breakthrough for cricket in India.

Until the late 1960s, hockey and football were the most popular sports in postcolonial India, yet the national teams did not do well: India lost the hockey-finals to Pakistan at the Asian Games of 1982 and the confrontation with top-class players in the World Cup Football that same year turned out disastrous and the attention for these sports dwindled at the time cricket was ready to fill the gap (Mehta, 2009, p. 586; Ugra, 2005, p. 82). That cricket had not disappeared from India despite a lack of significant results, was partly the outcome of Nehru's choice in April 1949 – against the will of the people and his own cabinet – to remain a member of the British Commonwealth and accept the British king as a symbol of free association of its member nations. Membership of the ICC was both restricted and guaranteed to members of the Commonwealth until 1965 (Bose, 2006, pp. 89-92; Kaufman & Patterson, 2005, p. 85) and assured the national team could play a number of world-class events without the qualifications football and hockey teams had to pass. It kept Indian test-cricket alive until a new phase of global cricket was about to begin (R. Sen, 2015; Satadru Sen, 2002, p. 252). In addition, both sports gradually became local: international results in the first were poor and the competition came to focus on inter-city games whereas the latter was mostly limited to Punjab, present-day Jharkhand, Orissa and Karnataka and crickets participants and audience had shifted from the high-class amateurs and low-class professionals to a growing middle class (R. Sen, 2015, pp. 252-254).

What followed was symptomatic for the upcoming dominance in cricket of Asian countries. It started with the *World Series Cricket:* a highly mediatized spectacle that existed between 1977 and 1979, organized by Australian television-tycoon Kerry Packer. His approach was revolutionary, but most remarkable was his choice for ODI-matches. It proved successful, most of all in India. With live broadcasts and a new, simpler scoring system, following the games was possible for a wide range of people and – most importantly – at the end of the day, the result of the game was known (Appadurai, 1998, p. 41; Kitchin, 2008, p. 71; Rasul & Proffitt, 2011, p. 377).

There is an irony in the quick rise of ODI-cricket: Prior to 1983 – when India won the World Cup for the first time, (Mehta, 2009, p. 586; Ray, 2008, p. 1647; Ugra, 2005, p. 83), cricket's easy acceptance and popularity were attributed to the openendedness, the protracted nature and the complexity of the game. Indians supposedly had a greater tolerance for the tedium of traditional matches because it mirrored the rhythm of everyday life and they were supposedly better accustomed to the idea of a draw because life in joint families required constant compromise and cooperation instead of competition and individualism (Ugra, 2005, p. 83). Ideas like these, are more than a faint echo of the orientalist idea of Hinduism as "the spirit of India", in which "the Indian" was an irrational being, incapable of forming voluntary associations,

determined by a Brahmanic philosophical system that was based on natural units (like the joint family) into which the individual was completely absorbed or from which he was excluded and – according to James Mill – whose pre-eminent duty seemed to lie in absurd, senseless and endless ceremonies, which were "more tedious, minute and burdensome" than any other ritual (Inden, 1992, pp. 92,128). Though the attractiveness of Victorian cricket in colonial times might seem contradictory to the massive popularity cricket has acquired since India's first world title, it is not. A brief analysis of the attitudes and perceptions regarding the Commonwealth Games gives an indication. Called into life as an instrument to propagate the norms and values of the Empire, the games have become a predominantly competitive event in which in which "a variety of postcolonial pathologies (and dreams) are played out on the landscape of a common colonial heritage," an instrument to mobilize nationalist feelings in the service of large-scale international spectacles and commodification of the sport (Appadurai, 1998, p. 42).

The rise of international cricket ran parallel with the spread of television (Mehta, 2009, p. 586) and television commercials played an important role in their synergy. Although allowed since 1976 (Mehta, 2009, p. 588; Sinha, 1997, p. 379), the revenue from commercials only made up one percent of the *Doordarshan*'s total budget (Sinha, 1997, pp. 367, 369). Advertising was made easier in 1980, the public broadcaster gradually evolved away from its educational and informational missions and dedicated more of its means to entertainment. An overt middle-class agenda helped realize the goals the government had set out, *Doordarshan* benefited from the ever-increasing revenue and by showing consumer goods on a hitherto unseen scale, and the commercials created a new identity: that of the middle-class (Mehta, 2009, p. 588). This new cultural standard was quintessential in the economic reforms Rajiv Gandhi was carrying out in the second half of the decennium: loosening up the import regulations on consumer goods like cars and washing machines opened up new markets and assured a sharp rise in the production of these goods in India (Fernandes, 2000, pp. 313-614). Commercials helped create this new market and often featured cricketers (Mehta, 2009, p. 588). Sports stars evolved into meta-products, themselves for sale to increase the desire for other products. This commodification mirrors a worldwide process of globalization and re-colonization; in the Indian context it especially shows the aggressive attitude of Indian investors in exploiting the commercial potential of cricket (Appadurai, 1998, pp. 40-41).

Appadurai (1998, p. 42) summarizes the changed in attitude towards cricket as follows:

> The rule structure of the game and the codes of behaviour [sic] on the field are still nominally regulated by the classic Victorian values of restraint, sportsmanship, and amateurism. At the same time, national loyalty is a powerful counterpoint to these ideals, and victory at any cost is the demand of crowds and

> television audiences. From the point of view of players and promoters, both the Victorian code and nationalist concerns are subordinated to the transnational flow of talent, celebrity, and money.

This new attitude has given India the sense of "having hijacked the game from its English habitus into the colonies at the level of language, body, and agency as well as competition, finance, and spectacle" (Appadurai, 1998, p. 46).

Cricket in the colonial era, with its drawn out games, the high rituality and its uncertainty matched the traditional cultural values as they were still prominent at the time. Cricket of the ODI-era, with its fast and aggressive style of playing, shorter games that leave spectators behind without uncertainty, and an ever further-reaching commercialization has its appeal to a dominant group within Indian society: in 2010 half of the Indian population was less than twenty-five years old, many of them belong to the urban middle-class who see themselves as winners in a new phase of the globalization-process and cricket as a symbol of their new-found aspirations (A. Gupta, 2011). As such, cricket is shaped by its most determining factor: society.

Batting games in *Hindī* Fiction

Once Upon a Time in Bollywood: Lagaan

In 2001, Aśutoṣa Gowarikar's *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India*, produced by and featuring Aamir Khan (Āmir Khān) arrived in the cinema theatres. The film was the winner at Locarno's film festival in 2001 (Chakraborty, 2003, p. 1879; Majumdar, 2001, p. 3399; Mannathukkaren, 2001, p. 4580) and shortlisted in the *Best Foreign Film* category at the Academy awards of 2001 (Chakraborty, 2003, p. 1879). It tells a story that unfolds itself in the village of Champaner in 1893. After a drought, Bhuvan, a young man from the village, visits the cantonment to ask the commander for a tax cut. Captain Andrew Russell states he will let the village off their *lagān* – a yearly tax – for three years if villagers can beat the British in a game of cricket, if they lose, the *lagān* will be tripled for the entire province. Bhuvan accepts the bet, which hails him a lot of criticism from the village elders. Training the villagers to become cricketers proves difficult, though at some point Bhuvan, who has taken the lead, points out that "*Hamārī gillī daṇḍā hai, na – vaise hī kuch dikhe hai*" (That's our *gullī daṇḍā*, isn't it? It looks like that.). Russell's sister Elizabeth takes to the villagers and while the captain is scolded by his superiors for his rash behaviour and faces sanctions should the British lose. While Elizabeth helps out the villagers with a ball and some basic coaching in the rules, she falls in love with Bhuvan. He is encouraged by Gaurī's attempts to convince the village council, which strengthen their mutual feelings. To cut a 224 minute story short Bhuvan manages to put the villagers' professional skills to good use on the cricket field and even though the British try to get one of the villagers on their side, the inhabitants of Champaner win the game in an unorthodox deśī style (Gowariker, 2012).

The fictional village of Champaner is situated in Avadha, a region that came under direct rule in 1856. The new situation was not only advantageous for the colonizer, it was also to the benefit of the nearly 280 *tāluqdārs* in the region. The annexation of Avadha and loyalty of the *tāluqdārs* were a next step in the creation of a permanent class of Indian collaborators: a "rule of property" among the rural rich was the most effective way to expropriate the surplus while maintaining order. This situation became clearer after the Mutiny because the colonial state realized it depended on the landlords for its own continuance. Not only the *tāluqdārs* had advantages: they depended on a small village owners and coparcenary communities. Throughout the hierarchy, everybody demanded more than the official taxes, moneylenders , estate managers, village accountants and village headmen aggravated the situation and

property gradually came in the hands of the *tāluqdārs*. The accumulation of debt and penury in the United Provinces that were in fact governed by landlords led to a massive insurgency in 1921 (Mannathukkaren, 2001, pp. 4581-4582).

The key elements of the film are cricket and the backdrop of a traditional rural village, two elements that over time prove to be powerful images in *Hindī* cinema (Majumdar, 2001, p. 3399), but at the time of production Gowariker was breaking three basic rules in Bollywood: "Thou shalt not make period films! Thou shalt not make rural films! Thou shalt not make films with a sport climax! Thou shalt not dress a hero in a *dhoti* and *bundi*!" (Stadtler, 2005, p. 520). The movie has the narrative structure of a fairy-tale, which the subtitle "Once Upon a Time in India" also suggests, accentuated by a voice-over by Amitabh Bachchan (Amitābh Baccana) that defines place and time of the story and the predicament of the villagers in a year when no rain has fallen. The movie ends with a fade-out of the group of heroes celebrating in the rain while Bachchan resolves all uncertainty: Russell is transferred to Africa, Elizabeth returns to England and becomes Bhuvan's (unmarried) Rādhā and relates us that "even after this historic victory, Bhuvan's name has disappeared somewhere [between] the pages of history (*is aitihāsik jīt ke bād bhī, Bhūvan kā nām itihās ke pannoṃ meṃ kahīṃ kho gayā*)", thereby transferring Lagaan from the realm of the uncertain, ambiguous modern to that of the absolute epic (Gowariker, 2012; Lichtner & Bandyopadhyay, 2008, p. 445).

Applying Greimas' actantial model to Lagaan, assigning the roles of the hero and villain to Bhuvan and Russell, is self-evident. Bhuvan is a single-minded, yet unlikely hero: young, of low birth and over-confident. The anti-hero of the story is the sadistic Russell, metonymic for the *phirangī*, whose arrogance is emphasised by the disrespectful attitude of his subordinates and the players in his cricket team (Lichtner & Bandyopadhyay, 2008; Stadtler, 2005).

The manner in which the British cantonment officer was depicted, provoked a claim of anti-Britishness in the English conservative Sunday Telegraph but Gowariker did not portray the British as a whole as sadistic, arrogant or blindly ambitious brutes. In the actantial model, classifying Bhuvan's teammates and the steadily growing group of villagers as helpers is an obvious choice but the hero also receives help from the British side: Elizabeth burdens the relationship with her brother by confronting hem with the arrogance and cruelty of the bet and eventually goes behind his back. Russell's superiors to a certain extent are on the villagers' side as well: seeing that Russel's attitude might compromise the "smooth running of the province" by "making the government into a bookie," see to the strict adherence to the rules

and invited a neutral umpire from Kanpur. The choice of "helpers" disproves any claims of anti-Britishness (Stadtler, 2005, p. 520).

Not all characters are easily assigned to one of the roles: Rājā Pūran Sinṃh is depicted as a man whose main predicament is his dependence on the British for protection against his peers. As a man of noble descent, he is burdened by his position under British rule: thanks to his rightful share of the taxes, he can live lavishly but claims that he feels in no way comfortable with Russell's arrogance, nor with the ever-rising taxes extorted from his villagers. As a high-caste Indian, he's a strict vegetarian, a trait Gowariker plays out against a British hunting party (Lichtner & Bandyopadhyay, 2008, p. 446). The *Rājā* does not play an active role in the story: he's brushing the villagers' pleas aside, claiming his helplessness, yet his presence and attitude in the film does conceal the role of the historic *tāluqārs*.

In his critique of Lagaan and of Boria Majumdar's analysis of the film, Mannathukkaren (2001, pp. 4580-4581) writes that it brings an imagined nation into being that "reaffirms a hegemonic nationalist project in which the subaltern has no place", even though the subaltern is the main protagonist of the film. The film does this by appropriating a mispresented history to a hegemonic elite nationalism, Majumdar contributes to this appropriation by presenting Lagaan as "the pulse of the nation" (Mannathukkaren, 2001, pp. 4580-4581).

In the analysis by Majumdar (2001, p. 3399), indigenous strength is opposed to colonial power; this opposition is embodied in the contrast between the rural goodness and the colonial craftiness. This opposition can be seen as a Gandhian critique, especially bearing in mind Gandhi's advice to the farmers of Avadha after the insurgency of 1921: "You should bear a little if the zamindar torments you. We do not want to fight with the zamindars. Zamindars are also slaves and we do not want to trouble them" (Mannathukkaren, 2001, p. 4581). Lichtner and Bandyopadhyay (2008, pp. 446-448) state that Lagaan locates Gandhi's method of non-violence in a historical period decades before Gandhi made it popular as an instrument of popular protest in India. Religion, or rather religiosity, is a redeeming factor in Lagaan: Rājā Puran Siṃh's questionable attitude is evened out by his devoutness; his compliance, his own tax collection and his life in luxury are not questioned: as a Rājā, he is the upholder of Hindu values. Lagaan does not criticize the hierarchical village society: fairness should come from a conception of unity, justice and morality, not from inner reform. This reluctance to question authority, a hierarchical society and the role of local rājā's in the predicament of rural commoners represent a clearly conservative motives in the film.

The villagers of Champener appropriate cricket as a means of resistance. Historically, early Indian cricketers had no such agenda: they adopted cricket hoping to tighten the ties with the colonial power and to obtain the social mobility they deemed fit to their capital and level of education. 1893 was the year of a Parsi victory against the British team. Lagaan contains some parallels to the historic match: a contested bowler – the Parsi H. Modī,Golī in Lagaan - keep playing throughout the entire match and Bhuvan's persistence to get Kachra the dalit on the team could be modelled on Nagendraprasad Sarbadhikary (Majumdar, 2001, pp. 3400, 3401) or Bhagwan Ram's denouncement of untouchability (Neumann, 2006, p. 478). Although Lagaan does not fundamentally question the hierarchical society, underlining the value of Kachra within the team, the film does contest untouchability, letting a touch of progressiveness shine through its otherwise conservative acceptance of authority (Lichtner & Bandyopadhyay, 2008, pp. 448-449).

The Parsi victory initiated the growth of nationalist feelings; in Lagaan, the moment the village's doctor and Gaurī's father Iśvar hits the ball behind him is a turning point in the match and in the audience's feelings. Majumdar urges to rethink this nationalism: the dominant discourse is that nationalism originated within the educated urban middle class (Majumdar, 2001, p. 3400), Mannathukkaren (2001, p. 4583) points out that an Indian cricket-identity only came into being after 1930. Before that cricket throve on communalism and the patronage from princely states. Similarly, the first insurgencies revolved around "territoriality, that is: co-residential solidarity and primordial royalty"[12], the cornerstones of communities. The same goes for the reality of Lagaan: Bhuvan and his team battle for the survival of their community, not the nation (Mannathukkaren, 2001, p. 4581). Nevertheless, be it nationalism or communalism, Majumdar (2001, p. 3400) correctly points out that cricket and football never had the leisure of indigenous games. The earnestness of cricket among the subaltern, is evident from the growing antagonism that distinguishes the Pentangular tournament in its later days (Guha, 1998, pp. 187-188; Majumdar, 2002, p. 180), but the existence of a tournament between communities had already been contested by Shapoorji Sorabjee Beṃgālī in 1897and the criticism on the tournament had gradually accumulated during the 1920s. The arguments were mostly economical: other regions envied the Bombay Gymkhana's success and the princes felt threatened by the financial independence of their best players. Furthermore, urged by Gandhi's growing popularity, the princes shifted their alliance to the anti-Pentangular

[12] Ranjit Guha's article "*Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*" (1983), quoted by Mannathukkaren (2001).

movement in an attempt to align themselves with the Indian National Congress (Majumdar, 2002, pp. 166-168, 183). As a result, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) organized the first Ranji Trophy in 1934: a national tournament between provinces, princely and governmental teams (Guha, 1998, p. 176; Majumdar, 2002, p. 176), the first step in building a true national cricket-identity.

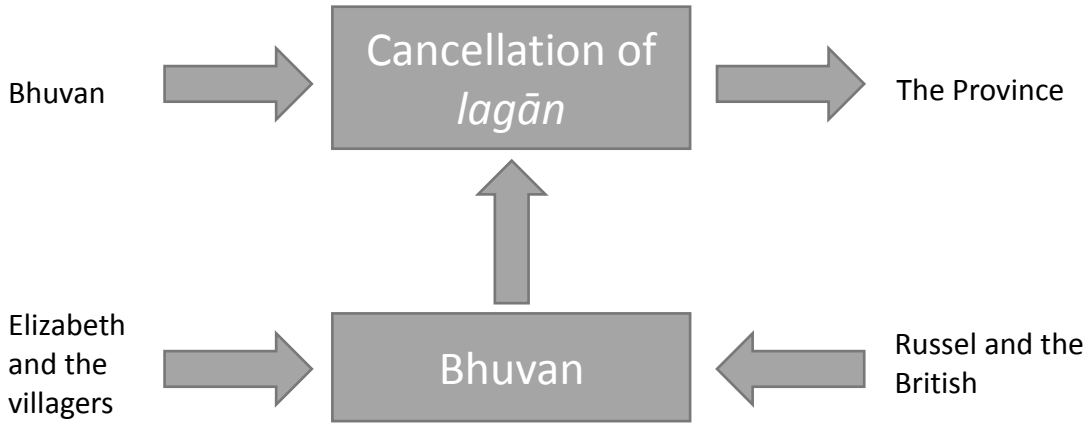
The process of indigenisation – the acceptance by a wide range of people – for cricket came in the first half of the twentieth century. Majumdar (2001, p. 3402) and Stadtler (2005, p. 521) describe this process as a metaphor for a strategy of resistance in an environment where physical outings of discord were impossible, especially after the Mutiny. A turn to European sports showed strength of character. Rural cricket was an opportunity to reverse the roles in an emulation of real life encounters. As such, Majumdar writes "As 'Lagaan' justifiably demonstrates, Indian cricket was always imbued with meaning whose roots went beyond the sporting arena" (Majumdar, 2001, pp. 3402-3403), Mannathukkaren (2001, p. 4582) underlines the influence of protests and insurgencies against the *tāluqdār*-system must not be underestimated. Such influence does not negate the hidden meaning of colonial cricket but Mannathukkaren is right when he writes that the match of Lagaan could never have taken place in reality. Urban India is indeed not a mirror of rural India and Gowariker attributes properties to rural cricket that belong at another place (cricket-related nationalism mostly had its place in the inter-community tournaments), time (the events of Lagaan predate Gandhism with its call for unity) and community (nationalism was initially the terrain of the educated middle-class) (Mannathukkaren, 2001, p. 5484).

In Lagaan, Gowariker lets Bhuvan assemble an unthinkable cricket team in his past, to present the contemporary discourse of "unity in diversity" through the decolonisation of cricket. The Champaner team consists of players of a low birth, a choice that depriviliges the existing elites – both colonial and Indian – that associated themselves with cricket. Furthermore, the team members have different religious backgrounds: Hindus, Muslims, a Sikh and a dalit and as such looks forward from the closed epic past into the novelistic now, where India's national cricket team is called "Team India" and usually contains players from all regions, religions and social backgrounds (Lichtner & Bandyopadhyay, 2008, p. 445; Neumann, 2006, p. 447). In doing so, the film uses a fictional past to construct the image of a cohesive Indian society that is not only to be applied to the historical period the film represents but also to contemporary India. The appeal of such a society is created by the depiction of an idealized, innocent past. With Lagaan, Gowariker created an obvious presentist allegory in which the

village of Champaner refers to India of 2001 as a whole (Lichtner & Bandyopadhyay, 2008, p. 445).

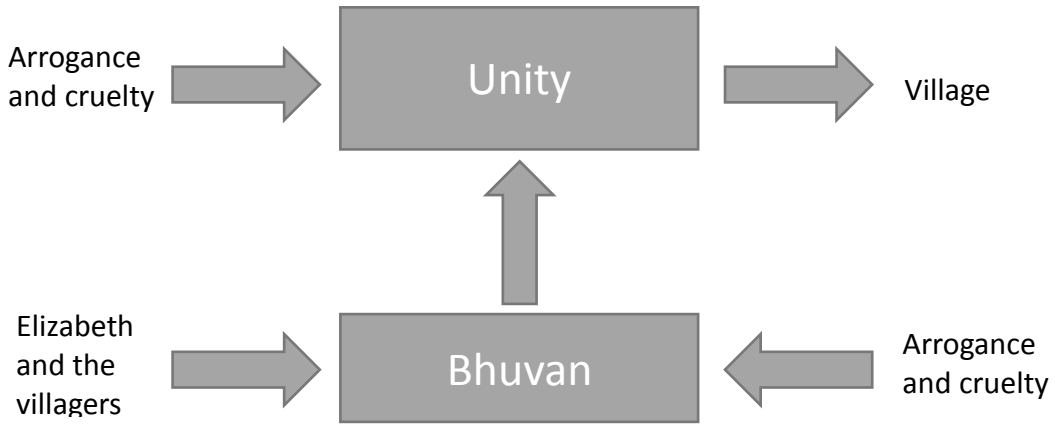
Cinema's role in imagining the nation is crucial but cinema does not function in the same way print capitalism does (Mannathukkaren, 2001, p. 4585). The concept of imagined communities is built on Anderson's observations of European and Russian society and attributes a crucial role to print capitalism (Anderson, 2006, p. 37) but other than the printed media, film voices the deculturation and depersonalisation experienced by those Indians who don't match the middle-class ideal more effectively. In Lagaan, the characters learn to see themselves as Indian, in the movie theatre the audience learns the same: the film "proves to be a powerful force in shaping the viewers' images of India's past, thereby contributing to the formation of national identity" (Neumann, 2006, pp. 479-480).

Back to Greimas' actantial model, while the roles of hero (subject), the antagonist (oppositionist) and the helpers are obvious, the question remains as to what the hero is trying to achieve (object), on whose behalf he undertakes his actions (sender) and who's the beneficiary (receiver) of his actions. To identify the object, several layers of the story can be assessed. On the surface, Bhuvan strives to free the entire province if its *lagān* for three years and to escape the tripling of the village's tax. He does this with the help of his cricket team, his village, Elizabeth and Russell's superiors as an act of resistance against the British. The entire province is the beneficiary of his actions, yet they are not the sender: it is Bhuvan who decides to confront the British, despite objections from his surroundings and it is Bhuvan who takes up the bet.

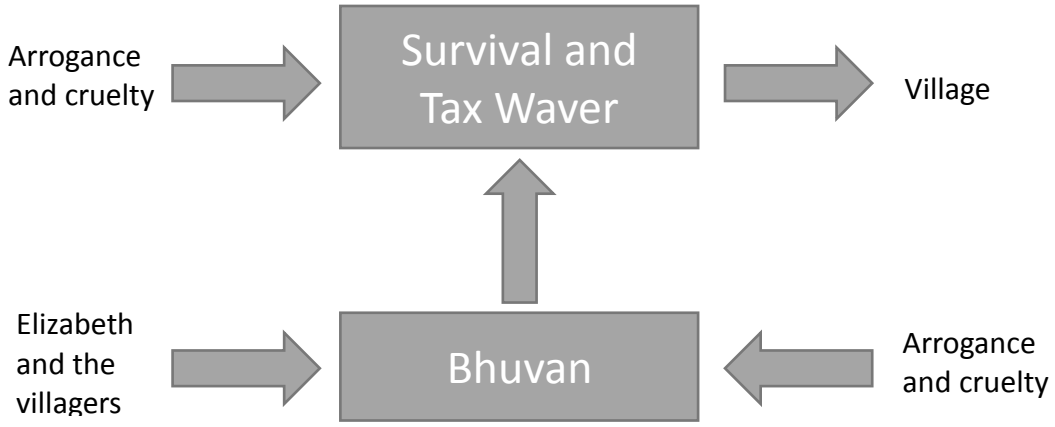


The story of Lagaan has a deeper, symbolic layer too. This can be interpreted from two vangtage points. According to Majumdar's model, what happens in Lagaan is the emergence of the nationalist idea of unity in diversity. Within this interpretation, Bhuvan (subject) brings

unity (object) to the people of his village (receiver) after he is prompted to take up the cricket bat and ball against the cantonment officer due to their arrogance and cruelty (both sender and oppositionist) with the help of his team, his village, Elizabeth and the higher officers (helpers).



Mannathukkaren contests this analysis, based on the argument that Majumdar is projecting properties of the late nineteenth century urban population on the rural population. For him, the bringing together of anachronistic elements and misplaced ideas is far more problematic. In reality nationalism and calls for unity existed far from rural India, reducing the cause of Bhuvan's struggle to the more mundane struggle for survival that was the fate of most of his contemporaries. In the division of actant roles, only the role of the subject is different: Bhuvan (subject) assures the survival of the villages of the entire province winning a tax waiver in a cricket match (object) by uniting his village (receiver) after a display of arrogance and cruelty by the cantonment officer (both sender and oppositionist) with the help of his team, his village, Elizabeth and the higher officers (helpers).



Keeping Bakhtin's idea that the novel at times even attempts to alter the future of the author or the audience in mind (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 30) and thinking of a film as a modern form of communication, Lagaan creates an image of an idealized past and projects the ideas that exist only in the fictional world and makes a presentist projection, suggesting the audience to adopt the proposed way of thinking. The voiced-over introduction and fadeout close the film's universe and grant it an epic authority: the example of Bhuvan is an ideal for all to emulate.

Premchand

Premchand wrote two stories with batting games as a motive: Gullī Ḍaṇḍā[13] (published in May 1925 in Sarasvatī), and Cricket Match (posthumously published in July 1937 in Zamānā). Premchand himself liked playing *gullī ḍaṇḍā* and given his reputation as a socially engaged, politically active realist author, it seems only natural he wrote these stories which each place the batting games in a different social or political context.

The Life of Premchand

Dhanpat Rāy was born on 13st July 1880 in Lāmhī, a village north of Banāras in a *Kāyastha* family. His mother died when Dhanpat was seven, his father remarried but he did not get on with his stepmother. Dhanpat married young with a girl who prove plain and quarrelsome and they divorced quickly. At his father's death in 1897, he turned to teaching. The salary was low but after a training as a teacher, he earned more. Dhanpat became a sub-deputy inspector of schools: it gave him some influence and a side-income in the form of bribes from headmasters and text-book publishers.

Premchand started writing articles for journals and published some *Urdū* stories in *Zamāna* (Orsini, 2004, pp. viii-ix). In 1906 Her remarried with Shivarānī Devī, the daughter of a landlord near Fatehpur. In accordance to his ideal, he had chosen a child widow as his bride (P. C. Gupta, 1998, p. 17). When in 1915 a first collection of short stories – *Soz-e vatan* (Sufferings of the Motherland) – was published, it prompted a harsh reaction from the British and Dhanpat decided to write under the *nom de plume* Munshi Premchand (Chandra, 1982, p. 603; Orsini, 2004, p. x). In 1918, he decided to publish in *Hindī*: it would give him a greater audience. Two years later, he was the most popular writer in *Hindī*.

1921 was a pivotal year in Premchand's life: in answer to Gandhi's call for non-cooperation, he decided to leave his job and live of his writing. He got involved in publishing ventures: the

[13] Premchand used to write *gullī ḍaṇḍā* instead of *gillī ḍaṇḍa*. This spelling will also be used in this section.

Sarasvatī press and the monthly magazine Haṃs. As with most *Hindī* authors who took the same step, a lack of business skills resulted in debt and Premchand took short assignments in teaching, editing (Orsini, 2004, p. x) and in 1934 even worked on the movie *Mazdūr* in Bombay (P. C. Gupta, 1998, p. 34). As his star rose, he was also engaged as an intellectual in the nationalist movement and toured South India, favoured a gradual, inclusive and mutual process for the adoption of *Hindī* as a national language but eventually chose to support *Hindustānī*.

In 1936, Premchand presided over the newly founded Progressive Writers's Association. In his inaugural speech he set forth his ideas on *Sāhitya ka uddeśya*: The Aim of Literature. He died on 8th October 1936 in Banāras (Coppola, 1986, p. 21; Orsini, 2004, pp. x-xi).

Premchand's Ideologies

In accordance with Maxim Gorki's ideas of a writer as a product of his times, Premchand wrote in *Haṃs* in 1932 that "it is impossible for a litterateur to be unmoved" by the uproar in Indian society. (K. P. Singh, 1980, p. 48). As Indian society was characterized by poverty and exploitation on one hand and an amalgam of social and political movements struggling for independence on the other, it seems only natural Premchand struggled with the duality of class differences and nationalism, of nationalism as an ideal or nationalism as a veil for class differences (Chandra, 1982, p. 602). His literary career of roughly thirty-five years reflects the evolution of the emerging Indian nation.

As a young man, Dhanpat was influenced by ***Ārya Samāj***, a movement that revolted against an apparent dictatorship of orthodox Brahmins, religious superstition, polytheism and against legal and social inequality (Rai, 1979, p. 34). Stories from this period – like these in *Soz-e vatan* – have a strong patriotic undertone (Swan, 1986, p. 124).

In 1919, a new influence appears in Premchand's work: **Bolshevism**. Prompted by the Montague-Chelmsford reforms, he wrote in *Zamāna* that the worker knows he is the real maker of the wealth and power of the nation. The reforms, he believed, would bring advantages to the educated but "Having bled the people in their capacities as lawyers, they will now cut their throats as administrators" (Rai, 1979, pp. 34-35).

By 1920, **Gandhi** had taken the lead in the independence movement. (Rai, 1979, p. 36) His ideas were an application of ethical and moral values of olden times to practical life, he was a pioneer in mobilizing the masses (Rai, 1979, p. 36; K. P. Singh, 1980, p. 47) and had his

interest in the betterment of the untouchables and rural poor, passion for independence (Orr, 1977, p. 33; Rai, 1979, p. 36; K. P. Singh, 1980, p. 47) and his familiarity with the work of Tolstoy (Rai, 1979, p. 36) in common with Premchand. The premise of his ideas was a dichotomy between the materialistic western consciousness and the virtues of spirituality and belief in the goodness of human nature, the tension between both is resolved by a change of heart (Orr, 1977, p. 33; Rai, 1979, p. 37). As a writer, Premchand turned to "idealistic realism": a problematic situation is depicted in a realistic manner and in the end, the wrongdoer experiences a change of mind, inspired by a moral example. Plot twists are often artificial but in the case of Premchand descriptions of rural life remain valuable documents (Orr, 1977, p. 35; Swan, 1986, p. 125).

Even though Gandhi had left a great impression on Premchand, by 1930 **reality** had proven that his spiritual methods did not work. Moreover, Premchand remained devoted to evaluating reality from the perspective of workers and peasants (Rai, 1979, p. 39). Gandhi and Premchand were on the same line when independence was concerned but the writer had a completely different conception of God, religion, class collaboration etc.. Premchand wrote "Mahatma Gandhi blames the Congress workers for the failure of Satyagraha, the Congress workers blame him ….. Gandhiji should have made sure thirteen years ago [– when Premchand quit his job –] if the people in whose hands he was placing the weapon of Satyagraha were capable of wielding it or not," Congress workers prove not te be Gods, Gandhi's choice of partisans was erroneous and therefore his inner voice was not dependable (Rai, 1979, p. 39). The solution for communalism – also a concern of Gandhi – would not come from him, *pandits* or *mullahs*. Premchand blamed the bourgeois character of congress (K. P. Singh, 1980, p. 51). For him svarāj did "not mean the replacement of John by Govind" (Premchand in Āhutī, quoted by Chandra, 1982, p. 607). The stories written after 1930 are often set in rural villages – the reality Premchand knew as a child – but he was no longer convinced his fiction could lead people to a moral reform, he believed it would at best be a fringe benefit of his work (Swan, 1986, p. 128).

Women play an important role in Premchands work. He was convinced the problems of women were mostly due to social inequality. Problems like the dowry-system, child marriages, the inability to inherit property were a concern he shared with Gandhi although as an attentive author, Premchand was often ahead of politicians in pointing out the causes for these problems through elaborate depictions of the social relations in society. Describing the predicament of women, he contests against blind orthodoxy but usually they don't break out

of a strict moral framework and as such, Nirmala Jain wrote "he wants to restore to them their traditional respectability" (Jain, 1986, pp. 40-43).

While short stories are inevitably limited, the length of novels allows – or even: asks – for more depth. While idealistic realism works perfectly in a short text, the portrayal over a longer period of time was coloured by the ever-present thought that nationalism might just as well be a façade. There is no clue regarding the sharp contrast between the nationalist story and the realist novel. Chandra (1982, pp. 618-619) suggests that, until independence was achieved, Premchand was unwilling to see a conflict of interest among different layers of society.

When asked to which party belonged in 1923, Premchand replied: "I belong to that party of the future which would adopt as its mode of action the political education of the common people" (Chandra, 1982, p. 614), a purpose he would relentlessly pursue throughout his career.

The aim of literature

Reading Premchand's writings and comments from the 1920s and especially the early 1930s, shows that this inaugural speech for the PWA is in many ways a summary of his aesthetics (Coppola, 1986, p. 29). He was not a product of the movement, but readily associated himself because he perceived the movements take on realism and the representation of the popular classes as an extension of his own work (Ahmad, 2011, p. 29). Two notable antecedents of his speech have been described by (Rai, 1979, p. 33): in the foreword to *Soz-e vatan* (1915), Premchand wrote: "Such books are badly needed by the country in order to impress the stamp of patriotism on the coming generations." Shortly before the founding of the PWA, the author toured South-India. During a lecture in Madras in 1934, he emphasised the importance of both idealism and realism

> Idealism has to be there, even though it should not militate against realism and naturalness. Similarly, it would be good for the realist not to forget idealism. We have to portray noble, idealistic aspirations. Otherwise, what would be the use of literature?

In short, Premchand considered literature to be the "criticism of life" and distanced himself from the authors of the recent past: for them, a link between life and literature was beyond imagination. They are, he said, not to blame because their literature is the mirror of a time in which people either made love or were engrossed in spiritual matters and asceticism, trapped in inertia and decadence with no strength of purpose left.

In earlier days, religion kept the people in check. In the early 20th century, literature had taken this task upon itself, with the love of beauty as its tool: contemplating nature and sharpening perceptions, the writer's sense of beauty becomes so acute that ugliness – the lack of humanness – becomes unbearable and he will oppose to it with words and feelings. Opposition lies in the stories the author writes, but he should keep reality in mind, for the audience no longer tolerates anything that goes beyond the limits of direct experience. The readers need the impression that anything he read is based on real experiences of the writer.

Premchand questioned the name of the Progressive Writers' Association: for him an artist was progressive by nature. Artists feel that the world is not in accordance with the happy and carefree state he would like to see it in and want to put an end to the unpleasant mental and social conditions under which he chafes. Progress for Premchand was the condition that produces the resolve and energy to act, the understanding of the unhappy state we're in, the causes that brought us there and that which makes us strife to remove them.

Art can be weighed on the same scales as usefulness, it is the key to spiritual happiness but for Premchand, happiness could not be achieved through a taste (*rasa*) that has no useful aspect. The artist works through a sense of beauty, but he should realize this is not neutral and objective. The golden dream for idealists has been fraternity, equality, civility and love. To achieve this, the standard of beauty has to be changed: the writer should no longer revel in palaces and bungalows but he should turn to the mud huts and ruins that used to be the aim of his laughter for their inhabitants too are human beings with hearts and aspirations. It is only "when we are no longer able to accept a system in which thousands of people are slaves to a few oppressors, then, not content with creating something on paper, we will create a system that will not be the enemy of beauty, taste, self-respect and humanity."

For Premchand, there was no doubt one was born a writer, but increasing this gift with education and curiosity leads to better literature. The standard of literature has to be raised so that it can be more useful so that it discusses and assesses every aspect of life. The aim of the Association, according to Premchand was to create an atmosphere in which this kind of literature can grow and prosper (Premchand, 2004).

Indian cricket during the life of Premchand

When Premchand was born, Bombay already had its Parsi and Hindi clubs and the same year, the first Muslim club in the city was founded. Cricket at the time was almost exclusively the

domain of a higher middle-class trying to affiliate themselves with the colonial powers (Appadurai, 1998, p. 26; Guha, 1998, p. 158; Majumdar, 2002, pp. 164-165).

When Premchand started publishing his first novel *Asrar e Ma'abid* (The Mystery of God's Abode, Published in *Urdū* in the Benares-based weekly *Awaz-e-Khalk* between 1903 and 1905) (P. C. Gupta, 1998, p. 13), the Bombay Pentangular, with two competing teams: the Parsis and the British, went by the name of Presidency Match. At the same time the game had drawn the attention of local princes and the most notable among them – Kumār Śrī Ranjitsinhjī – who studied at Trinity College, Cambridge – had entered the university team (but dropped out of university), played for the MCC and was the captain of Sussex (Nandy, 2010, pp. 55, 61-56, 67; Wilde, 2004). By the time the last episode of *Asrar e Ma'abid* was published, Ranjitsinhjī had returned to India, on the brink of bankruptcy, to claim his throne. He took great pride in his title and his subjects held him in high regard (Nandy, 2010, p. 67; Wilde, 2004) nevertheless, when in England, he called himself an English cricketer. Ranjitsinhjī was a nationalist with his own interpretation of the word: he looked at India through western eyes and tried to use that perspective for the betterment of India (Nandy, 2010, p. 69).

In 1925, when Gullī Ḍaṇḍā was written, the Pentangular consisted of four teams (and was thus called the Quadrangular), had gained great popularity and was copied in Karachi and the Central Provinces. In the meanwhile the *camār* Palwankar Baloo (Palavaṃkar Bālū) had been a bowler for the Hindu Gymkhana from 1907 to 1920, and despite his lowbirth became its vice-captain for the 1920 match against the Parsis. In response to popular protest, captain MḌ. Pai left the field early in the game, making Baloo the *de facto* leader of the team. Baloo's brother Vithal Palwankar became captain for the Hindu Gymkhana in 1923. One year before that, when Vithal and Shivram (Śivarām) were not selected and the Hindus lost to the Parsis, the *Marāṭhī* playwright Bhargavaram Vittal Varerkar (Bhārgavarāma Viṭhṭhala Varerakara) wrote *Turuṃgācyā Dārāt* (At the Gate of Prison) about caste-politics and the politics of cricket (Guha, 2006, pp. 8, 17-18, 19, 20). At the same time, the idea of an Indian nation was emerging and the first doubts about the influence of a communal tournament on society as a whole were voiced although the matches of the Quadrangular were still played in a brotherly atmosphere (Majumdar, 2002, pp. 159, 166-167).

A decade later , the Pentangular was already heavily contested: the motivations were economical rather than ideological, although political arguments were used by the princes

who sought a connection with the Indian National Congress who they believed would come to power when the British would leave. It was not until 1940 that Gandhi spoke against communal cricket (Guha, 1998, p. 178; Majumdar, 2002, p. 170).

Gullī Ḍaṇḍā

Gullī ḍaṇḍā was probably played all over colonial India and as such it was the perfect motive to appeal to the audience and convey a message. This story was published in 1925, at which time Premchand's work is generally regarded as realistic idealism and the ideas he incorporated heavily influenced by Gandhi.

The story is told in the first person: a man recalls his childhood and his friend, the *camār* Gayā, with whom he used to play *gullī ḍaṇḍā*. Years later he comes back and overcome with nostalgia, searches his friend to play a game of "*gullī*" and settle an old score. Before Gayā is introduced, the author expresses his fondness of the game: "Gullī ḍaṇḍā is the king of all games" and immediately plays it off against the British games: "No need for a lawn, nor for a court, a net or a bat," you only need a tree branch, a piece of wood and some friends (Premchand, 1950, p. 161). Compared to cricket, *gullī ḍaṇḍā* is cheap, a characteristic shared by other traditional games (Cashman, 1998, p. 120): "If you don't make expenses worth at least one hundred, you don't count among players" and "at school, every single boy requires a three-four rupee fees for sports alone" (Premchand, 1950, p. 161), large amounts when compared to an average daily wage of 1.497 Rs a day for semi-skilled artisans (potters, blacksmiths, …) in 1925 (Roy, 2007, p. 84). Cricket was a sport associated with the higher and middle classes: many patrons were princes and in the larger cities, watching inter-communal games was primarily a pastime for the middle class. The costs would be prohibitive of taking up cricket for most Indians. In contrast with the elitist nature of cricket, Premchand stresses the egalitarian character of *gullī ḍaṇḍā* because among players "there was no discrimination between pure and untouchable, rich and poor, no place for stately artfulness, pretence or arrogance" (Premchand, 1950, p. 161). Or was there?

What follows consists of two sub-narratives: the recollection of games during the narrator's childhood and the visit of the grown-up engineer to his former village. The first narrative introduces Gayā as the best player of the village, the kids "didn't know his parents, nor where he lived or what he ate," they "saw him coming from far, running, welcomed him and became his fellow" (Premchand, 1950, p. 162), yet even in the narrator's recollection, class- or caste-differences do shine shine through. When Gayā demands his turn in batting, he is turned

down. He'll get his turn if he returns the guava he received the day before. He has eaten it, he can't return it, he won't get his turn. The narrator understood even at the time, his own trap became a lesson for him: Gayā's father would not even have the money to pay 5 rupees for the guava but still Gayā doesn't yield (Premchand, 1950, p. 162). It comes to a fight and Gayā hits his friend with the *ḍaṇḍā*, the narrator recalls going home, he remembers the ambiguity of his emotions: "I, the son of the police superintendent, was beaten by the hands of a low-caste servant-boy; even at that time, I was aware it was insulting but at home, I complained to no-one" (Premchand, 1950, p. 163).

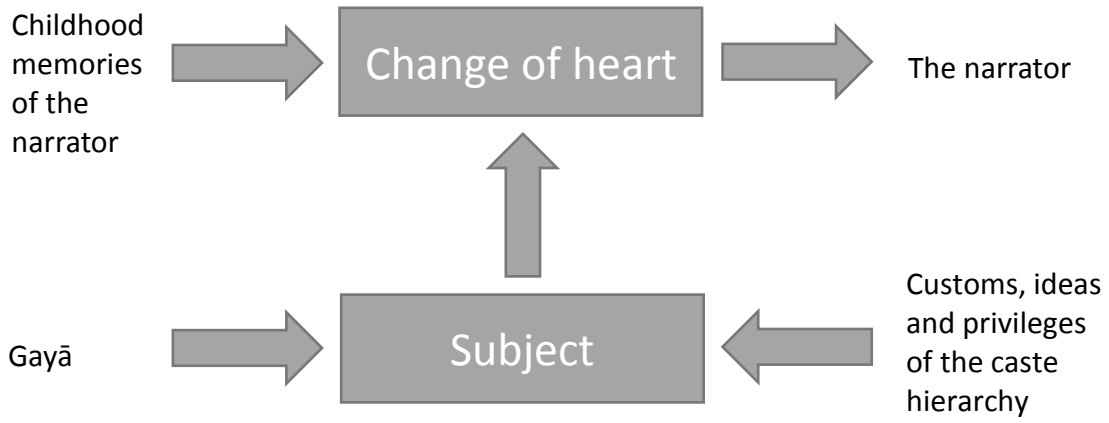
Twenty years later, the narrator has become the district engineer and on his tour he visits the village where he grew up. It is at this point that the narrator explicitly mentions for the first time Gayā is a *camār*, he bends, salutes and uses honorary terms like *mālik*, *sarkār* and *huzūr*: both have become aware of their rank in society (Premchand, 1950, pp. 163-166). When asked about *gullī ḍaṇḍā*, Gayā replies he doesn't have the time for that, hinting at the middle-class privilege of leisure. Still, Gayā agrees to play with his childhood friend when he insists Gayā should take the turn in batting he missed that time he hit him with the *ḍaṇḍā*. Both decide to play somewhere outside the village. In the car, the narrator brings up the occasion when Gayā hit him with the *ḍaṇḍā*. Gayā is ashamed, but the narrator confides that this "is the most delightful memory of my childhood-days. That *ḍaṇḍā* of yours had a charm that, in fact, I find neither in reverence nor in wealth these days," as if he too feels more comfortable outside the straitjacket of the hierarchical society (Premchand, 1950, p. 165). As the game begins, it appears as if the lack of time and practice have taken their toll: Gayā misses the *gullī* and appears to have forgotten the rules when the narrator replaces the *gullī* . When Gayā hits the *ḍaṇḍā* with the *gullī* twice, he is still denied his turn to bat. The district engineer is cheating, even lying about what he saw, thinking: "What do I lose? If he accepts, very well, if not, then I will have to field two, four rounds. I'll make an excuse that it's dark and get out quickly" (Premchand, 1950, p. 167). To his surprise Gayā gives in easily and when the *gullī* hits the *ḍaṇḍā* for the third time, Gayā gets his turn, but he wants to stop, claiming it is becoming dark. Still he plays and loses his turn instantly. When offered a second turn, he refuses again and he is brought to the village. In the car he says: "Tomorrow there will be *gullī ḍaṇḍā*, All the old players will come. Will you come too? If you have free time, I could call them" (Premchand, 1950, p. 166).

When the reader is told about the young boy cheating, he might tempted to justify the boy's behaviour. After all, he's a child and – as no ages of the characters are specified – he could

just as well be younger than Gayā. Twenty years later, the cheating goes on, the narrator shows to have a wide range of thought patterns that help him justifying his foul play, suggesting an innate property of the higher classes: an attitude that facilitates bribery and . As a child, seemingly unhindered by his low stature, Gayā can oppose to such behaviour but as an adult, taking care of the deputy officer's horses and probably confronted with his place in the hierarchy on a daily basis, he has become a compliant citizen.

When watching the game the next day, the narrator sees Gayā playing: "At his turn, the *gullī* touched the sky. There was none of yesterday's hesitation, faltering or heartlessness. Today, he had found as an adult what he had as a boy," and when one of the fielders picks up the *gullī* illicitly, "there was a brawl between the two. The young man gave way." The narrator realizes Gayā had done him a favour, pondering "I'm an officer now. The position has created a wall between me and him. In our boyhood, I was his equal. Now that I received this post, I am only worthy of his mercy. He does not understand his power over me. He has become great, I have become small" (Premchand, 1950, p. 166).

Put in the terminology of Greimas' actantial model, the Indian nation (subject) is striving for a change of heart (object), for the narrator of the story (receiver). It is Gayā (helper) who initiates this change as he undergoes the harmful effects of the customs, ideas and privileges of the caste hierarchy (adversary) and the narrator's memory of an event in his youth, when caste-differences did not seem matter and he was really free, that makes it possible (sender), to achieve this change of heart for the betterment of the Indian people (receiver).



In the introduction, Premchand laments that Indians are "so obsessed with English goods that we have developed a dislike for our own goods" (Premchand, 1950, p. 161) and apart from the low cost and the childhood memories that are associated with *gullī ḍaṇḍā*, the game is also part of the Indian traditions that he and Gandhi both revered (Orr, 1977, p. 33). As a popular

tradition, *gullī ḍaṇḍā* is the perfect vehicle to set an example to a wide readership: adherence to rules and "spirit" of the game, honesty and honourability are the aspects of moral behaviour this story brings to the foreground. The desired change of heart is only possible because the 'receiver' possesses an innate goodness which is evident from the narrator's attitude to being hit with a ḍaṇḍā by a "low-caste servant-boy" after cheating: the ambiguity of his feelings at the instant of the incident and the sweetness he ascribes to the memory.

Cricket Match

When Premchand died in 1936, communal cricket was in its heyday, although it was already contested. He left behind a story that has communal cricket as a motive? It is a critique on the cricket-practice in cities like Bombay in his era. He shared a deep concern about communalism with Gandhi (K. P. Singh, 1980, p. 51), be it that in this story he came up with a solution.

Cricket Match is a story presented as a collection of diary entries by a Mr Jafar, a cricketer who has lost a match on New Year's Day 1935. He's sitting in the station, overthinking a lost game, voicing Premchand's concern with the firm hold princely patrons had on the game: "Only because around here, competence is not a condition to become a leader. We believe you need wealth and riches to become a leader. His highness was chosen to be the captain, everybody had to accept the cricket board's decision" and wondering "where's the ardour, where's the determination, where's the zeal to shed the last drop of blood?" (Premchand, 1962, p. 257). Mr Jafar's musings, when taken out of the context of cricket, could just as well be a critique on the disproportionate influence and a lack or ardour, determination and zeal in the independence movement.

Just as he considers to buy a third-class ticket, a beautiful young woman addresses him and, as Jafar recalls he "fell into a fit," yet "it wasn't the charm we are devoted to, nor was it the delicacy poets pledge themselves to. Instead, it was the loveliness of wisdom, it was profundity, dignity, elation and an overt longing for a manifestation of the self" (Premchand, 1962, p. 257). Jafar's statement forebodes the critique on the poetry of the previous age Premchand would deliver at the first assembly of the PWA where he opposed the notion that "human life is not just confined to love between man and woman," they are "only a part of human life". The unability of poets to address ordinary life – the result of poets' dependence on the elites – essentially reflected the feelings and thoughts of the educated and was symptomatic for the "inertia and decadence" and the reluctance to get engaged in any kind of

struggle (Premchand, 2004, p. 3). The woman introduces herself as Helen Mukerjee, daughter of the late dr. Mukerjee who decided to establish an all-India cricket team. She too criticizes the choice of a captain for the lost match. She elaborates her statements and expands them to society in general, making Jafar's criticism more explicit: "It's like this political lack of spirit that crushes all virtue. Those who have the means, have a right to everything," and calls these privileges "the blessing of our servile disposition (Premchand, 1962, p. 258)."

Infatuated, Jafar overthinks his position and the nature of his feelings. He thinks of Helen as his beloved, not his wife. He has far too much respect for her while Indian men "don't show respect to our wives, indeed, making them show regard has become our nature" (Premchand, 1962, p. 260), reflecting his advocacy for creating a respectable place for women (Jain, 1986, p. 43).

One evening in Lucknow, when Jafar and Helen discuss the second Italo-Abyssinian war. While Jafar praises England and France for their intervention, Helen challenges his ideas, stressing the economical motivation for *all colonization*:

> If it is your opinion that England and France are involved only because of a feeling of humanity and to help the weak, you are wrong. Their imperialism and greed cannot bear that someone else in the world flourishes. What Mussolini does there, how many times has England done that – it is even doing it today. All this play-acting is only to make business opportunities available in Abyssinia. England needs markets for its business, pieces of land for its increased population, high positions for its educated, so why would Italy not need this? Whatever Italy is doing, it's doing it openly, with honesty. They never beat the drum of brotherhood with all the people of the world, they never harped upon the song of peace.

With her focus on the economic, she bares an important aspect of colonial India's social relations and the role of the economical in colonization in general. Because Jafar realized he could "not beat her in matters of knowledge", he chose to talk about politics. But even then, Helen ís teaching him, assuming the role of the political educator Premchand envisioned for modern authors. She continues by pointing out one of the methods to maintain the colonization:

> England has always operated with deceit. To turn them into their followers, they have always separated the various factors in a nation or made their nearest opponent the supporter of their politics.

One theatre where this method of deceit and creating discord was played out was communal cricket. Even though the Pentangular was a contested event at the time of writing, the British tended to support the tournament as the discord it encouraged was to their advantage (Guha,

1998, pp. 179-180), although they still upheld Lord Harris' discourse of cricket as a safety valve for the communal tensions and a means to show Indian factions how to co-exist and cooperate (Appadurai, 1998, p. 32).

When the team visits New Delhi, they see "an inviting place, open roads, beautiful plots of land, pleasant alleys" a stark contrast with the "old, dark, shabby house in a narrow alley, the old style, the old plan" in which Jafar lives (Premchand, 1962, pp. 263-266). The pleasant atmosphere of New Delhi, is the result of the Regents' spending drift: "Regents need outward show. They need to make the money flow like water", money isn't spent on the welfare of ordinary people, in fact, the whole new infrastructure amazes the downtrodden to such extent that they don't seem to need their welfare. It's an example of the British cunning in psychology; "Without this, how would they have acquired their prerogative over their subjects?" is Jafar's rethorical question (Premchand, 1962, p. 267).

On 1st March, the all-India team plays a match against an Australian team before a crowd of 50 000 spectators: a number of spectators of the same order as the Pentangular's (Premchand, 1962, p. 169). After the match, Helen calls the team to her hotel room and has some last things to say. Refering to Ratan Lāl who played in England on a cricket tour, she expresses her hope to beat the English teams during a cricket tour the coming season and calls on her men to dedicate themselves to their task

> To complete a goal, is a life's work. We will have success when we take on the job with our full resolve, when this goal is our dream, our love, the centre of our lives.

Despite the success of her team, she does realize cricket is merely a pastime for her players and stresses her role in showing her team the way to success.

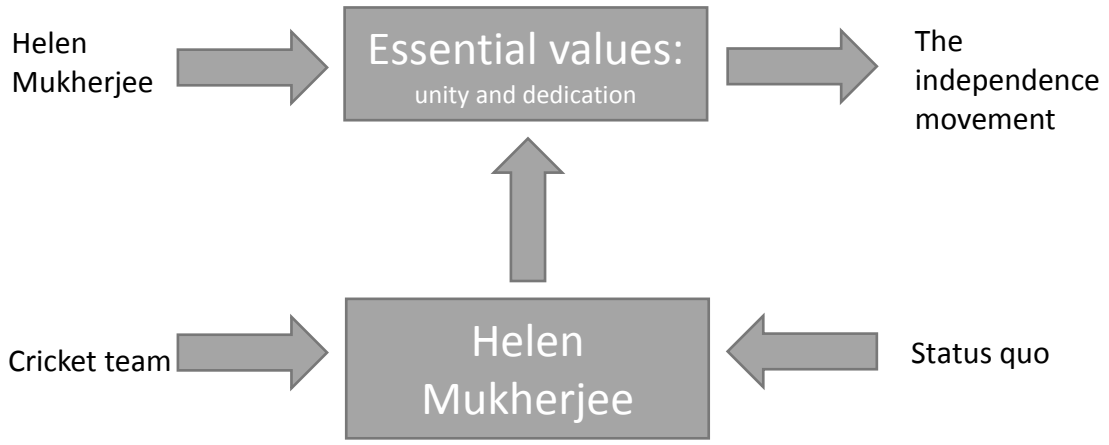
> In the country there are thousands of young men who, if they are taught to live and die to accomplish a goal, would realize astounding miracles. Go and achieve excellence. My appearance and the nights are not to make a plaything out of passion. I understand that, to live to please the eyes of young men and to stir up joy in their hearts is shameful. The purpose of life is higher than that. True life is not where we live for ourselves, it is where we live for everybody (Premchand, 1962, p. 171).

In none of the stories that have been collected in *The Oxford India Premchand* the women step out of the straitjacket of traditional family values . Helen Mukerjī is an exception: she is beautiful and self-conscious, wealthy and educated but most of all she is flirtatious and at ease in a typically male environment. The greater part of Cricket Match is taken up by Mr Jafar's ruminations about his feelings for Helen, his jealousy and his insecurities about Helens

feelings and intentions. Nevertheless the story builds up towards a climax: the victory against Australia and – more importantly – Helens call for dedication and excellence. The behaviour that would have been seen as a transgression in early twentieth century India, is in fact a sacrifice: the freedom and self-confidence she displays might have come with her education in medicine in England, she used them for the betterment of India: with her unorthodox behaviour, she binds the men in her cricket-team to her and pushes them to a greatness that would have been unthinkable to them; she shows the country which miracles it could achieve.

Helen leaves the men and for them "the great distress is that she left behind such an ideal in our life that it was out of reach. Together with Helen, all our passion and ambition had ended" (Premchand, 1962, p. 272).

Mr Jafar's diary can be read on two levels: the most obvious is the story of a wealthy young woman who recruits a cricket team with players from different backgrounds in order to defeat the British at their own terrain and show the people what can be achieved through unity and dedication. On the second level, the story can be seen as a metaphor for the independence movement of the time. Assigning the roles of Greimas' actantial model makes this clear: Helen, as a charismatic leading figure, (sender and subject) initiates a quest for essential values – especially unity and dedication – (object) that can better the independence movement (receiver). She can't achieve this without her cricket team – patriots – (helpers) but has to battle hard-born traditions and groups that would benefit from a status quo, some of which are criticized in the ponderings and discussions Mr Jafar has written down (adversaries).



In this story, Premchand does not write about the game itself but focusses on the social context in which he lived and uses the travelling cricket-team as a pretext to point out several wrongs in society and the independence movement. His focus on extra-sportive matters means

that we don't know which players play which roles on the field and the story self-evidently doesn't contain a critique on the way stacking duplicates the social roles within society.

Cricket Match is not a story that does build up to a change of heart. Typical for Premchand's later stories, it tries to nudge the reader into rethinking his position in society through touching upon a series of societal wrongs: the power of the former aristocracy, the lack of respect for women, the decadent mentality both in society and the arts that represent them, the frivolous spending on prestigious buildings and the British cunning in maintaining communal tensions in their own interest. In the end, Helen presents her players with an ideal of perseverance that lies beyond the grasp of even the most skilled fielder because her players "didn't learn to live for your aspirations." Without the immediate support from Helen this ideal appears to be completely out of reach. Given the communalism and ideological differences within the independence movement, the story must have stirred up a certain uneasiness in more than a few readers.

Sharad Joshi

Born on 21 May 1931 in Ujjain, Sharad Joshi spent a part of his career in journalism, radiobroadcasting and government service and then began writing. He started writing for *Naī Duniyā* and in 1990 became an editor for the Hindī Express and wrote satires for *Navbhārat* Times from 1951 until 1956. He received the *Padma Śrī* for his contribution to literature in 1989. Sharad Joshi passed away in Mumbai on 5 September 1991 (Jośī, 2011b, p. Book cover).

Sharad Joshi was popular because of his critical view of Indian society which he expressed in his daily column *Pratidin* but he was also working for television and theatre. His concern for the country is expressed in *I am in expectation 2* (*Maim pratīkṣā meṃ hūṃ*) in which he reflects on the position of Hindī language in Indian society, of the mid-eighties. The piece begins with a description of India's geography and the outlook of writers: "The poets of one hundred years ago, declared the love of their country up to the geographical boundaries they knew or imagined [but] after Kālidāsa, their efforts to amass the entire country's splendour or scattered beauty are absent," yet he laments that politics have left him a country which is smaller than the limits of his imagination. To cut him off from the lands and history that lay beyond the country's official borders, is to cut him off from a thousands of years old literary legacy (Jośī, 2011a, pp. 261-262).

Further on, Sharad Joshi points out that much is written about the country but "at times, it seems to [him] that, when talking vigorously of our country, we aren't second to our whimsy politicians," which makes it hard to know what is true and what not and stresses the need to be free from any preconceptions against regions, *jātīs* or classes because they blur one's vision. Writing about the country is – so he writes – like describing the reflection of the sky in a poll of water: the pool is never clear, it doesn't show the entire sky, the image will always be troubled and likewise to depict the country in the depiction of a village is to describe the entire sky (Jośī, 2011a, pp. 264-266). The Hindī writer has a large responsibility: in another region, an author can limit himself to his immediate reality. That is not the case if you write in Hindī, according to Sharad Joshi, you are expected to portray the entire country. Nevertheless, at the time of writing, English was the most relished language among the educated in India – "to gain knowledge of all Indian realities, we need to know English" – and Sharad Joshi states that "the progress of the hundreds of thousands of poor in this country has been curbed because of English" and stresses the alien nature of the language: "English may be a rich and full language, in this country it's grounded in oppression" (Jośī, 2011a, pp. 266-267).

Literature in the eyes of Sharad Joshi lacked in vision and involvement with society. Authors were in discord – illustrated by numerous movements with conflicting ideas about writing – and started to form a society outside society: "Literature that has always been about the common man, of the common man and for the common man, has suddenly become aware of the common man and debate is going on as to who the common man is." In *Maiṃ pratīkṣā meṃ hūṃ 2*, Sharad Joshi expresses the desire to take the reader by the hand and tell him: "I will expect from you that, if you've lost your country in your individuality, I could show you our country in your personality and, writing your words, write the words of the country" (Jośī, 2011a, pp. 270-271).

Indian Cricket at the time of writing

The three chosen pieces – *G_vaskar ne rekarḍ toḍā* (Gavaskar Broke the Record[14]), *Bina Gāvaskar* (Without Gavaskar, 5th September 1986) and *Gāvaskar ko Dokṭoreṭ, 22nd November 1986)* – are about Sunil Gavaskar (Sunīl Gāvaskara), written in an era where the shorter and faster format of ODI cricket and commercialization had its definitive breakthrough – partly due to the emergence of television and commercials.

[14] This piece is not dated in the available sources. Gavaskar broke Donald Bradman's record number of centuries (100 runs) in Test cricket in December 1983 (Bose, 2006, p. 244), this piece probably dates from shortly after that.

Gavaskar first stepped on the international pitch in 1971 on March 10, the end of the general elections that year, with a victory in a Test match in the West-Indies (R. Sen, 2015, p. 249). His rise to fame was not only the result of his talent as a batsman but also of a unseen militancy, illustrated by an incident in 1981, where he almost forfeited a Test match due to unfair umpiring. This attitude on the field had been rare and discouraged for a long time as – according to Nandy (2010, pp. 40-41) – it challenged the traditional balance between successful participation and sportsmanship. In 1981 however, it aligned with a general change in mentality that took place in India: although draws and honourable defeats were inherent to cricket, these results no longer satisfied the audience: a match not won became the equivalent to the mere existence of a nation while "cricket victories were openly conflated with other aspects of the nationalist fantasy of 'great power' status" (Satadru Sen, 2002, pp. 31-32). According to old-fashioned sportsmanship, a batsman who wasn't given out, knowing he was out, would leave the field. Since the commercialization of cricket, a player would exploit the rules rather than adhere to the Spirit of cricket. Gavaskar justified this attitude by referring to past instances when he was erroneously given out and claiming that

In the early 1970s, India was stooped under a fast-growing population, the inability to realize post-independence aspirations and lagged behind in every field of human activity, ranging from the intellectual to the cultural. India needed a star and Gavaskar was there to take up that role: he inspired his fellows to self-esteem and to overcome their reluctance to play fast-bowled balls (Ray, 2008, pp. 1644-1645), his attitude was characterized by an "individual assertiveness merged with athletic prowess to feed a nationalist demand for self-assertion." Test tours in the West Indies and England in 1971 were won by India and Gavaskar became a sports personality, not just a fine batsman but a player with renown outside India too (Satadru Sen, 2002, p. 31) and a champion of the coming middle-class (Ray, 2008, p. 1644).

Gavaskar broke the record

Sunil Gavaskar started playing cricket as a student at St-Xavier's College, his statistics were above average and although he did not stand out, the school's sports master had already pointed out the boy's talent when a journalist – Sharad Koṭaṇīs – pointed out his "Bradmanesque streak". It was this boy who would later break Donald Bradman's record of twenty-nine centuries in Test cricket that had stood for thirty-five years. Gavaskar had equalled the record in Delhi, was outed quickly in both Test matches in Calcutta, to great dismay of the audience, but eventually broke the record that had stood for twenty-five years (Bose, 2006, pp. 242-244).

In the piece Sharad Joshi uses the occasion to reminiscence on his youth and tries to find an answer why no other cricketers – or Sharad himself for that matter – did not accomplish this feat. Could it be society? The author draws from a long literary tradition, both English – "To be or not to be. Shall I bat, or shan't I bat?" – and Indian – "I start asking myself questions like Arjuna - "Sharad, where are you? What are you doing? Who are your friends among those people opposite you, and who are your enemies?'" – when he describes his cricketing qualities. He also has another trait: he likes to watch a beautifully hit ball, if it is his, he forgets to run.

With a reflection on the nature of the game, Sharad Joshi demonstrates his ability to depict the country through the description of a small detail – his idea of a reflection of the sky in a pool of water. Cricket is, so he writes,

> the game of uncertainty, that every suburb knows. When we got up in the morning to play cricket, nobody knew whose window-pane would break, whose shoulder the ball would hit. For good cricket, the road in front of the house was not as wide as it should be. It also had an advantage. In the distance Gāvaskar has to clear to make a run, we made four runs. The distance between the wickets was small too. In the end, some space for the wicketkeeper to stand had to be deducted. Should he stand behind the gutter?

Of course playing cricket among friends involves the necessary tensions: who will open, who made a century but in the end, the results are quickly forgotten and before returning to Gavaskar, the author concludes: "In our neighbourhood, there was a ball that we made shiny, continuously rubbing it on our pants. Our pants became shiny, the ball however didn't shine."

But despite being from a simple Indian background, Gavaskar had managed to break a record that had stood for a long time. Although Sharad Joshi describes the attitude of boys performing sports for fun , he also contrasts Gavaskar's remarkable feat with the sloth of many Indians: "It's true we are made of such pulp that only compilations of poetry can be printed on it, that leaders' speeches can be printed on it," but there is hope as he writes that "If we" – Gavaskar's record is claimed for the nation – "we can break this record, then we can solve any problem of Indian democracy too" (Jośī, 2015, pp. 138-139).

In this text, Sharad Joshi's interest for India's people, his critique on Indian immobility, the love for his culture are brought together. Most explicit however is his call to action: the idea that, if one Indian can perform at the top of the international level in his sport, then the whole of India must surely be able to overcome its own adversities.

Without Gavaskar

“Our country is losing in cricket. When we're going to play, we're going to lose as well. But even this defeat is coming with good news : Gavaskar scored runs well;” after a long period in which India had not been able to win Test matches for a while, Sunil Gāvaskar was at not selected for a game. It prompted Sharad Joshi to write a piece about the selection-policies. It is a short piece in which the author sings the praise of Gavaskar and questions the policies of BCCI-officials.

One has to bear Gavaskar’s specific position in mind: he was the player who had managed to break the record of the foreign Donald Bradman, he was the champion of the middle class, he embodied the ambition of this newly emerging middle-class. At the height of his career, Gavaskar was immensely popular: not unlike Bollywood stars, he attracted crowds when shopping, had fans ask for his autograph and people came to seek his *darśana*. On the other hand, some of his colleagues questioned his way to challenge authorities – presumably to his own benefit – and his way with money. Gavaskar managed to exploit his position and the controversy around his person and make the most of it. He was called “money-mad” by some: materialism was accepted but Indian society was not ready for a star who was flaunting his materialism (Bose, 2006, pp. 230-232). All this explains why Sharad Joshi describes how the team-members “ would even whisk their moustaches haughtily – ‘Hey, we can win without the help of Gavaskar!’” whereas for the audience, in a situation where “it was all the mercy of Lord Rām, Gavaskar remained a cornerstone and granted [them], watching cricket on TV, salvation. We have the most excellent batsman of all.”

Sharad Joshi further states that he has “come to understand the usefulness of Gavaskar. Cricket is not just a game. Besides that too, there's a lot more to cricket.” Indeed: stars like Gavaskar set out the beacons, as the player’s pioneering position in the world of cricket illustrates. For the concluding remarks, the author returns to the omission of Gavaskar from the selection with a biting remark: “There's even a selector-for-a-day in cricket,” but eventually resigns to the changes in the team : “this time when we lose we can say: ‘What should we do? Gavaskar wasn't there …’” (Jośī, 2010a, pp. 353-354)

In this piece, Sharad Joshi’s lament bears witness to Gavaskar’s status in Indian cricket and society: the contrast between the reactions of the audience and that of the players on Gavaskar’s omission are representative to the perception of India’s leading cricket-star at the time.

A Doctorate for Gavaskar

In 1986, Sunil Gavaskar received an honorary doctorate from Andhra university, an honour that also prompted Sharad Joshi to shed his light on the value of Indian doctorates. India has come a long way as even after Independence: "For the degrees of PhD, D. Lit, D. Phil,at one time Indians had rely on the prestige of Oxford and Cambridge." As Indian institutes received the capacity to award doctorates and at the time of writing, "society [was] such that there are no people for the available doctorates," a result of the attractiveness of banks and companies." Sharad Joshi states that a solution has been found; what's more: without the need for scientists, doctorates "should be made available to growing numbers of the public. [the] goal should be that, when the twenty-first century comes, every third person in the country, even if he's not educated, should get a doctorate from some university at all cost." Most of the piece is made up of people who should receive an honorary doctorate, most notable is probably Kapil Dev – captain of the ODI world title winning team in 1983 – who was constantly at odds with Gavaskar (Bose, 2006, p. 253).

The piece ends with a thinly veiled critique on reforms in the Indian educational system as Sharad Joshi writes : "I wish Gavaskar well. Even more so to the university that gave him the doctorate" (Jośī, 2010b, pp. 399-400), a line the entire text has built up to.

Abhishek Kashyap: Play

Abhishek Kashyap is a little know author, born on 3 October 1977 in Kamalākānt Kararіyā Gāṃv in the Gopālgaṃj region of Bihār. He obtained a bachelor in commerce at Vinobābhāve University in Hajārībāg, Jarkhand. His story "Khel" (Play) was published in Haṃs in 2000 and re-published as part of a collection of stories in 2007.

The story is about boy of common descent who lives close to higher-class youths. He gets into contact with them through cricket, feels at home with them but yet, he has a hard time dealing with their attitude towards his social equals.

Abhishek Kashyap's story begins with Abhishek[15] describing how he differed from the other boys: "I rarely went to school and when I went, I sat at the bench in the back of the class and regarded the other boys and the teachers that came wandering into the class with a lot of contempt," he lives in a bungalow that the government built on a piece of land that his grandfather – a former officer for the local mining company – had bought. When the

[15] The story has a first-person narrator but to improve readability, I chose to use the author's first name – Abhishek – in my analysis.

grandfather passed away, the bungalow was inherited by his father, who became an ordinary servant and living near the government officers and their sons Abhishek was "looking at them with great desire and deep regret when I thought of my uncivilized schoolmates and teachers, yet with a dislike for the piercing awareness of inferiority, my heart became irritated" (Kaśyapa, 2007, pp. 114-115).

Abhishek was accepted by the officers' sons for two reasons: they were weak and unhappy and Abhishek owned a real wicket. And yet, despite his cricketing qualities, Abhishek was not automatically made the team's captain and when the team would lose, he would still be lectured. Eventually, Abhishek started to act indifferent, bearing with the lecturing with a smile, sometimes challenging the other players. It was the beginning of political games within the team: two groups gradually formed, one around Mickey, son of the senior engineer and the other around Sonū, son of the general manager. Even between the two of them, status plays a role, but all the boys treat Abhishek in the same way: "Sometimes, regardless of the circumstances, I used to tell them anecdotes but none of them had the spirit to get involved with me." It was only when Sonū claimed vice-captainship that Abhishek divulged he likes Mickey a lot (Kaśyapa, 2007, pp. 116, 118-121).

When Abhishek visited Mickey's house, it "seemed to [him] he had opened the door of another unknown world" and when he meets Mickey's sister Guḍi_ya, he was equally impressed by the house and the girl, thinking: "The Bungalow and the bat!" and longing to be more like Mickey and Sonū, although on the verandah, Mickey's mother confided that her son often sang Abhishek's praise. Mickey's mother also spoke out her opinion on cricket as, according to her, nothing much is to be gained from education: "Today cricket can make very glamourous career. Money, name, fame, … today, it's all in cricket. […] It has gotten star value" and encourages him to practice (Kaśyapa, 2007, pp. 123, 125-127).

When Sonū came to Abhishek's bungalow to claim the vice-captaincy, Abhishek's sympathy for Mickey took over and although, based on cricketing qualities, Mickey had little arguments to choose Mickey, Abhishek devised an election. At Mickey's home, Mickey's mother hinted the relationship between the two families: "Like father, like son … there's a very jealous feeling towards us in their hearts" (Kaśyapa, 2007, p. 131).

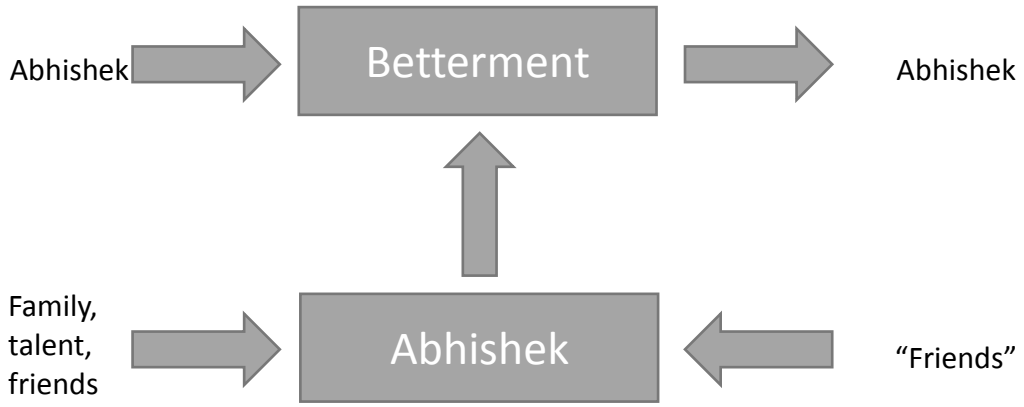
Despite the seemingly warm relation Abhishek had with Mickey and his family, after Mickey's vice-captainship was saved, things started to change: a worker had visited his son in hospital during the lunch break and returned too late. Incidently there was a breakdown at the

same time, the worker was fired and the whole situation lead to a strike. Abhishek was no longer on Mickey's side, nor was he on Sonu's; "all the boys of the team sided with the Officers' Association and [Abhishek] … with the workers' union". In addition, Abhishek was invited to Sonū's birthday party (Kaśyapa, 2007, pp. 134-137).

In the evening, Abhishek's father came home tired and dirty and vented his frustration, exposing the small sides of his managers and Mickey's mother who had an affair with the General Manager. Yet "there was no contempt, no resentment in his voice. There was helplessness, there was entreaty. There was a deep feeling of fear and defencelessness." After dressing up, Abhishek picked up a present – ""Write it down, I'll give you the money on payment-day." – and set off to Sonū's bungalow, "bigger then Mickey's and its splendour […] overpowering with its dazzling radiance" which contrasts with Abhishek's own precarious financial situation. Despite a lack of income during the strike, Abhishek's parents still ask whether he needs money for a present for the manager'sson. Waiting for his friends, Abhishek overheard a conversation about the strike: "It won't last long," according to the assistant manager; "I see, but for the managment, such things remain bothersome," was the reply by Mickey's father. It made Abhishek's blood boil by the time the boys and girls came out "wearing jeans, T-shirts, woollen jackets and Adidas shoes appeared on the veranda and quickly descended the stairs on to the lawn". Angry, Abhishek left the party (Kaśyapa, 2007, pp. 138-140, 142-143, 145).

Like every day, Abhishek went to the Officers' Stadium and found the other boys playing, the line-up was complete without him – the captain – there were three new wickets on the field. He didn't bat, he was forced to hand over the ball to Aniś, things came to a brawl. Abhishek Cursed and swore, he was rebuked and offended: "He's the product of labour … how can a mentality change?" In the end Abhishek went home, knowing he had lost everything, hurled down his gear and "kept on weeping for a long, long time" (Kaśyapa, 2007, pp. 146-149).

In this story, Abhishek (Subject, Sender and Receiver) tries to connect with higher classes (Object) for the betterment of his life. He has his family and – up to a certain point – his friends on his side (Helper), yet the friendship proves conditional and his friends eventually turn against him (Opponent).



In this story, Abhishek Kashyap illustrates the desire to escape from one's social situation. He does this by means of the main character's infatuation with his friend Mickey's sister and the lavish lifestyle the officers of the coalmine have. This desire is contrasted with the difficulty the main character experiences when trying to break loose from his social bonds, the anger at the managers' remarks on the strikes suggest one has to break ties with his own pears to take a step up the ladder. The doubts and emotional reaction when the main character finally show the great importance of aspirations and a social environment in one's life.

Conclusions

Despite the popularity of cricket and *gullī ḍaṇḍā* in India, very little fiction is written that uses sports or other forms of popular culture as a motive. This fact in itself could be a subject for research. In the stories that I could find, the games mostly serve as decorum.

As far as Premchand concerns, both stories fit within the typical pattern he used at the time he wrote them: in *Gillī Ḍaṇḍā* the game leads to a Gandhian change of heart that was typical for his early stories. In Cricket Match, this change of heart is totally absent, the author doesn't even attempt to set such process in motion within the reader: he points out problematic situations in the world around him.

In Sharad Joshi's texts, criticism on society is more direct but this obviously is the goal of the columns he wrote for several newspapers. Sharad Joshi's criticism is not just limited to the cricket-world. Here too, a reflection on cricket seems to be a mere excuse to have his say about greater problems (*Gāvaskar ne rekārḍ toḍā* and *Gāvaskar ko ḍākṭareṭ*).

Criticism in Abhishek Kashyap's Play is more indirect and subtle: the theme of a society in which social mobility is hard-fought and elusive is old but the story operates on a more

personal, psychological level – as more recent literature does in both Indian and western literature.

Premchand wrote in his address to the PWA that every writer is a product of his times. This is apparent from the way three authors from different eras construct their texts around the leading motive of batting games.

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Appendixes

Note to the translations

When making translating, my aim is to create a translation that is pleasant to read, conveys the atmosphere of the original text and while doing so, to stick as close to the original text as possible. In that regard, translating from Hindī to English poses an extra challenge because of the differences in grammar. Hindī sentences typically have a subject-object-verb structure whereas in English a subject-verb-object structure is most common. Other notable differences are the frequent use of the gerundive to express a sequence of actions, the use of auxiliary verbs to give a different nuance to a verb, the combination of a present or perfect participle in combination with a form of *honā* (to be) for many tenses and the existence of a conjunctive mood. A literal translation of many of these grammatical traits is virtually impossible or would lead to an unreadable sentence. Therefore, instead of trying cling to artificial constructions – such as "after having eaten" for the gerundive form of to eat – I often wonder: "I get what he means, but how would I write it in English?"

Apart from the differences in grammar, there are also idioms, phrases and – if cultures differ from each other widely – objects or concepts that are unknown in English or European culture. In those cases, the approach may vary. Phrases are sometimes replaced by a different phrase if that has the same meaning, for objects an English word that is used in India may be used. To maintain a certain *couleur locale*, I sometimes choose to retain the Hindī word. In those cases, I slightly alter the translation in order to include an explanation rather than to retort to footnotes. I reserve footnotes for those words that need some clarification – *dharma* or *karma* for instance – or when I want to justify a change I made.

Premchand

Gullī-Ḍaṇḍā

Whether our English friends agree or not, I will say this: "Gullī ḍaṇḍā is the king of all games." Even now, whenever I see boys playing gullī ḍaṇḍā, my heart gets so restless that I could join them and start playing. No need for a lawn, nor for a court, a net or a bat. When you have cut a twig from a tree in good fun, made a *gullī* and two persons have shown up, the game has begun.

The greatest weakness of foreign games is that the equipment is expensive. If you don't make expenses worth at least one hundred, you don't count among players. Here, *gullī daṇḍā* gives that result without any expenses, as if you would get a good yellow colour without using alum and amla[16], but we remain so obsessed with English goods that we have developed a dislike for our own goods. At school, every single boy requires a three-four rupee fees for sports alone. It occurs to no-one to play Indian games that can be played without a penny. The English games are for those who have money. Why blame the poor boys for this vice? Indeed, the fear remains that an eye will be injured by the *gullī* but isn't there still the fear that the head will get injured, the spleen will be torn or a leg will be broken when playing cricket. While, until today, we have the scars the *gullī* made on our forehead, we even have friends who have exchanged their bat for a crutch. Such is their fancy. Of all games, I like *gullī* the most and of all sweet childhood memories, *gullī* is the sweetest.

Leaving the house early in the morning, climbing in a tree and cutting a twig, making a *gullī* and a *daṇḍā*, the enthusiasm, the gathering with players, the batting and the fielding[17], the fights and quarrels, it was simple: there was no discrimination between pure and untouchable, rich and poor, no place for stately artfulness, pretence or arrogance, all that was forgotten when … when … The people at home were growing angry: sitting in the courtyard, father was impulsively venting his anger on the *roṭī*'s, mother only ran to the door but in her mind: their dark future was already ruined like a rocking boat and I, I was indifferent to the harassment,

16 In the text, Premchand writes that gullī ḍaṇḍā "binā harra-phiṭkar_ ke cokhā raṃg detā hai". Literally, this means that the game "gives a good yellow colour withhout [the use of] alum (*harra*) and *amala* (*phiṭakarī*)". It is an expression that means somebody gets something without any expenses or effort. To keep the *couleur locale* of the proverb and still convey its meaning, both are used in the translation. *Phiṭakarī* is usually translated as "myrobalan"or "cherry plum" but myrbalan can also refer to the amla-fruit which is traditionally used as a fixing agent when colouring textile.

17 Throughout the text, the verbs *padanā* and *padānā,* translated as "to fly" and "to make fly". the cricket-terms batting and fielding are generally used for the roles in gullī ḍaṇḍā

not remembering to bathe, nor to eat. The *gullī* is very small but it contains the pleasure of all the sweets in the entire world and filled with the joy of the spectacles.

Among my companions, there was a boy named Gayā. He was two or three years older than me. Lean, with long, thin, monkey-like fingers, a monkey-like restlessness and very ill-tempered. However the *gullī* flew, he leaped at it like a house-lizard on a bug. I didn't know his parents, nor where he lived or what he ate but he was the champion of our *gullī*-club. Wherever he went, victory was assured. We all saw him coming from far, running, welcomed him and became his fellow.

One day, me and Gayā were both playing. He was batting; I was being fielding but it's a strange thing that while we could have fun all day batting, one minute of fielding irritated us. To save my neck, all tricks went; at such an occasion, they were unorthodox yet they could be justified. But Gayā did not leave me in peace without taking his turn.

I ran off, homewards – relentless pleading had no effect.

Gayā ran towards me, and when he caught up, raised the *ḍaṇḍā* and said: “Go when I've taken my turn. When you were batting, you were very bold, so why would you run away when it's your turn to be fielding?”

– If you would bat the entire day, would I be fielding all day then?

– Yes, you will have to field all day.

– Can't I go to eat? Can't I go to drink?

– Yes! You can't go anywhere without giving me my turn.

– Is it your turn?

– Yes, it's my turn!

– I'm going home, let's see what you can do!

– How will you go home? That's a good one! You've had your turn, I'll have mine

– Good, yesterday I have given you a guava. Give it back to me.

– But … that went into my tummy …

– Take it out of your stomach. Why did you eat my guava?

– You gave me the guava, then I ate it. You didn't ask me.

– As long as you don't give my guava, I will not give a turn.

I understood it was a fitful illustration towards me. In the end I would have brought him a guava out of a certain self-interest. Who shows selfless courtesy to somebody? One even gives alms for one's own purpose. When Gayā ate this guava, then would he have the right to take my turn again? When people have taken a bribe, it consumes the mind; would my guava digest him the same way? Guavas were about five rupees, a fortune Gayā's father wouldn't even have. It was a total outrage.

Pulling me towards him, Gayā said: “Give me my turn and go. I don't know about guavas and the like.”

For me, it was a demonstration of power. He was firm in his injustice. I wanted to free my hand and run away. He didn't allow me! I taunted to him, to which he taunted me and when there were no abuses, he hit me. I bit him. He struck me in the stomach with the ḍaṇḍā. I began to cry! Gayā could not defy this weapon of mine. I immediately wiped my tears, forgot about the bruises from the stick and arrived home laughing! I, the son of the police superintendent, was beaten by the hands of a low-caste servant-boy; even at that time, I was aware it was insulting but at home, I complained to no-one.

2

In those days, father was transferred from the village. I was so elated at the joy of seeing my new world, that I felt no grief at all at being parted from my mates. Father was sad. It was a place for important people. Mother was sad too, all things were cheap and she had become besieged by the women of the neighbourhood but I couldn't contain myself for all the joy. I was bragging to my friends: in the village, there are few houses like there. There are houses so high, they talk to the sky. If, in the English schools there, a teacher would hit a boy, he would go to jail. The wide-opened eyes and astonished expression of my friends, indicated that I had risen in their estimation, as if they were saying: “You are God, brother, go. We have to live in this desolate village, en have to die here too.”

Twenty years went by. I became an engineer and when doing a tour in this region, I arrived in the small town. I resided in the staff residence. As soon as I saw the place, so many sweet childhood-memories woke up in my heart that I picked up my walking-cane and set out for a stroll around the town. With hungry[18] eyes like a tourist I was anxious to see those playgrounds from my childhood, but except for the familiar names, nothing was familiar. Where the ruin used to be, there were new buildings. Where the old banyan-tree used to be, there was now a beautiful garden. The appearance of the town was transformed. If I hadn't known the name and place, I wouldn't have been able to recognize it. Opening my arms for the collected and immortal childhood-memories , I was impatient to embrace these old friends of mine, but the world had changed. I felt rooted to the spot. I could cry and said: "You have forgotten me. Even now, I want to see your face right here ..."

Suddenly, I saw two or three boys playing gullī ḍaṇḍā in an empty spot. For a moment, I forgot myself completely. I forgot I was a high-ranking officer, in great pomp, with robes and authority,

I went to them and asked one boy: "Hey son, does a man called Gayā live here?"

One boy amassed gullī and ḍaṇḍā and anxiously said: "Who, Gayā? Gayā the Camār?"

So I said: "Yes, yes, precisely. There is a man named Gayā here then? Maybe it's him."

– Yes, there is.

– Can you please call him?

The boy ran away and in an instant showed up, approaching with a dark respectable man, 5 forearms tall. I recognized him at a distance. I wanted to rush out to him so that I could embrace him, but some thought held me back. I said: "Gayā, do you recognize me?"

Gayā bent and saluted: "Yes, *mālik*[19]," then kindly: "why would I not recognize you? Are you fine?"

– Very well! Tell me about yourself.

– I'm the deputy-officer's groom.

18*Pyāsī* means thirsty. The Saṃskṛt pā, aside from it's primary meaning "to drink" can also mean "to imbibe , draw in , appropriate , enjoy , feast upon (with the eyes , ears &c)". Thirsty eyes express an eagerness to look at things. In English hungry is used instead.
19*Mālik*: master.

– Mataī, Mohan, Durgā, where are all of them? Any news?

– Mataī has died, Durgā and Mohan both have become postman. And you?

– I'm the dsitrict engineer.

– *Sarkār*[20] used to be very smart.

– Do you play gullī ḍaṇḍā sometimes nowadays?

Gayā looked at me with questioning eyes: “How would I play *gullī ḍaṇḍā* now, *sarkār*. I don't get leave from my job.

Come, today you and me will play. You bat and I will field. I've had one more turn then you; take it today.

Gayā barely agreed. He remained a poor labourer, I was a high-ranking officer. What was the connection between us? The poor man remained embarrassed but I too was quite a little ashamed, not because I was playing with Gayā but rather because the people would consider this game wonderful, make a *tamāśā*[21] out of it that would draw a large crowd. Where would the joy be in this crowd? But I couldn't go without playing. Eventually we decided the two of us would play away from the village and savour the sweetness of our childhood-memories on our own. I took Gayā to the staff residence and we seated in the automobile, we both drove to the field. We took a hatchet with us. I assumed a serious attitude but nonetheless, Gayā still considered it funny. Then again, there was no sign of suspense or joy on his face. Maybe he was lost in thought of what had come between us.

I asked: “Did you ever think of me? Tell me the truth.”

Gayā spoke blushing: “If I would recall you, *huzūr*[22], what would be the use? It was in my fate to play together with you a few days, otherwise, what do I count for?”

I became a little sad and said: “But I did think of you regularly. That ḍaṇḍā of yours that you had risen and hit me with, you do remember, don't you?”

Regretful, Gayā said: “That was our boyhood, *sarkār*, don't remind me.”

20*Sarkār*: a respectful way addressing a man.
21*Tamāśā*: a spectacle.
22*Huzūr*: a respectful way of addressing a man.

"Goodness! That is the most delightful memory of my childhood-days. That *ḍaṇḍā* of yours had a charm that, in fact, I find neither in reverence nor in wealth these days."

Somewhat later, we had driven about thirty miles out of the town. All around us, it was dead silent. In the west, lake Bhīmtāl, where we used to pick lotus-flowers from which we made ornaments we wore behind our ears, spread out for miles. The late afternoon in the month of *Jeṭh*[23] was immersed in a saffron hue. I leapt and climbed into a tree and cut a twig. I quickly made a *gullī* and a *ḍaṇḍā.* The game began. I placed the *gullī* in a pit and threw it up. The *gullī* went out, past Gayā. He stretched out his hand, as if grabbing a fish. The *gullī* fell behind him. It was this Gayā in whose hands the *gullī* sat firm, as if it had come by itself. Left or right, wherever he was, the *gullī* would end up in the palm of his hand. As if he put a spell on the *gullī*'s. A new *gullī*, and old *gullī*, a small *gullī*, a large *gullī*, a pointed *gullī*, a smooth *gullī*, he got them all as if he had some kind of magnet in his hands that attracted the *gullī*'s. But today the *gullī*'s didn't have that love for him anymore. I began to harass again. I was cheating in different ways. I was compensating my lack of practice with dishonesty. Even when it on the ground, I played the *ḍaṇḍā*, although according to the rules, Gayā's time had come. If I hit the *gullī* and it fell just a little further, I went quickly, picked it up myself and put it in it's place a second time. Gayā saw all these violations but said nothing, as if he had forgotten all the rules and regulations. How faultless his aim used to be! A *gullī* that was delivered by his hand, seemed to emerge from the *ḍaṇḍā* with a crack. When it left his hands, the only purpose was to collide with the *ḍaṇḍā* but today the *gullī* didn't hit the *ḍaṇḍā*. Sometimes it went right, sometimes it went left, sometimes it went forward, sometimes it went backward.

After half an hour of batting, the *gullī* fell on the *ḍaṇḍā*. I cheated: "The *gullī* didn't hit the *ḍaṇḍā*. It came very near, but it didn't hit."

Gayā showed no kind of discontent.

– I must have missed

– If it would have hit the *ḍaṇḍā*, would cheat?

– No brother, you wouldn't indeed.

23*Jeṭh*: the third lunar month of the Hindu year, corresponding with May-June.

If I would have had the courage to commit such a fraud in our childhood, I would not have saved my life. At the time, Gayā would have gone for my throat but how easily could I deceive him today – he's a fool, he has forgotten everything.

Suddenly the *gullī* hit the *ḍaṇḍā* again, and it hit so loud it was as if it was released from a rifle. Against such evidence, I couldn't have the boldness to cheat in any way at this time too, but why not try to label it all al lie? - What do I lose? If he accepts, very well, if not, then I will have to field two, four rounds. I'll make an excuse that it's dark and get out quickly. Again, who gets this turn?

In the joy of this victory, Gayā said: “I hit it, I hit it! It made a cracking sound!”

I attempted to act ignorant, saying: “Did you see it touch? I didn't see it.”

– It cracked, *sarkār*!

– And if hit hit a brick?

I was surprised myself, by how these words came out of my mouth this time. To cast doubt upon the facts was like calling the day night. We had both seen the *gullī* hit the *ḍaṇḍā* with force but Gayā believed my story.

– Yes, it must have hit a brick. If it would have hit the *ḍaṇḍā*, it would not have made such a noise.

I began to bat again but after doing such a manifest trick, I began to feel sorry for Gayā's naivety, therefore I very generously decided to give him a go when the *gullī* hit *ḍaṇḍā* the for the third time.

Gayā said: “It has become dark, brother, keep it for tomorrow.”

I thought: “Tomorrow there will be a lot of time, who knows how long he will bat? That's why it would be nice to settle the matter right away.”

– No, no, today it's very bright. Take your own turn.

– The *gullī* won't be visible.

– That's no problem.

Gayā began to bat but he was completely out of practice these days. He made an attempt to lift the *gullī* twice but it fell on the pitch[24] twice. In less then a minute he had lost his turn. I demonstrated the greatness of my soul.

– Play another round. You already hit the pitch in your turn.

– No, brother, it has become dark.

– You've lost your skill. Do you play sometimes?

– Where would I find the time to play, brother?

We both went in the automobile with burning headlamps and arrived at a camping place. Gayā talked ceaselessly: "Tomorrow there will be *gullī ḍaṇḍā*, All the old players will come. Will you come too? If you have free time, I could call them."

I granted him the evening and the next day I went to see the match. There was a circle of about twenty men. Some were my age! Most were young men, who I could not know. The game began. I watched the spectacle seated on the car. Seeing Gayā's play, his skill today, I was astonished. At his turn, the *gullī* touched the sky. There was none of yesterday's hesitation, faltering or heartlessness. Today, he had found as an adult what he had as a boy. If he had batted for me this way yesterday, I definitely would have cried. When the *gullī* was hit by the *ḍaṇḍā*, it brought back news from two hundred yards away.

When fielding, a young man played foul. He had grabbed the *gullī* by his own judgement. What Gayā said, was this: "The *gullī* sprang up after it hit the ground." Consequently there was a brawl between the two. The young man gave way. When he saw the blazing face of Gayā, he became scared. If he hadn't yielded, he surely would have been hit.

I wasn't involved in the game but in the game of the others, I felt the delight of my boyhood, when we forgot everything and enjoyed ourselves. Now I knew that Gayā didn't play with me yesterday, he only pretended to play. He thought I deserved mercy. I did tricks, I was dishonest but he didn't become angry at all. That is why he wasn't playing, I was playing, he did me a favour. Batting for me, he did not want to make mincemeat of me. I'm an officer now. The position has created a wall between me and him. I can have his regard, I can have politeness but I cannot have his friendship. In our boyhood, I was his equal. Now that I

24The batting player stands in a demarcated area surrounding the gullī. The gullī has to return to this area. Its role in the game is to a certain degree comparable to that of the pitch in cricket. As the cricket-terms for batting and fielding are used, pitch as a translation for *huca* is a logical choice.

received this post, I am only worthy of his mercy. He does not understand his power over me. He has become great, I have become small.

Cricket Match

1 January 1935 – During today's cricket match, I was so desperate, I could not express my dejection. Our team was perhaps a lot stronger then our opponents, but we were defeated and they picked up the trophy, exulting triumphantly in their victory. Why? Only because around here, competence is not a condition to become a leader. We believe you need wealth and riches to become a leader. His highness was chosen to be the captain, everybody had to accept the cricket board's decision. But how many hearts have caught fire, how many people, considering commands as their governor, have approved of these decisions, where's the ardour, where's the determination, where's the zeal to shed the last drop of blood? We played and played, clearly devoted. But it wasn't an army devoted to the truth. Nobody's heart was in the game.

I was in the station, thinking of getting my third-class ticket when a young woman descended from the wagon, passed me by, shook my hand and said: “Are you travelling with this train too, mister Jafar?”

I was surprised – “Who is this girl? And by what means did she get to know my name?” For an instant, I fell into a fit, as if all words of courtesy and proper conduct had disappeared from my mind. In beauty lies such majesty that it makes the heads of the great bow. I have never felt so base. I have shaken the hands of the *Nizām* of Hyderabad, His Excellency the Viceroy, the *Mahārāj* of Mysore, I've sat at the table with them, but never has this weakness weighed upon me. All my heart desired was to caress her feet my eyelashes. But it wasn't the charm we are devoted to, nor was it the delicacy poets pledge themselves to. Instead, it was the loveliness of wisdom, it was profundity, dignity, elation and an overt longing for a manifestation of the self. In an inquiring manner, I said: “Yes?”

How should I ask where I have met her? Her informal behaviour was saying she knew me. How should I act as a stranger? In this chain of thought, I fulfilled my duty as a man: “Any favour I can do?”

Smiling, she said: “Yes, I will give you a lot of work. Please come and sit in the waiting-room. You must be going to Lucknow, I'm going there too.”

We came in the waiting-room and she offered me a comfortable chair, she herself sat on an ordinary chair and, holding out a cigarette-case to me, she spoke: “Your bowling today was really terrifying, without it, we would have lost by an entire inning.”

My admiration grew even more. How this beautiful woman loved cricket too! Sitting in front of her on the comfortable chair, I was shy. I had never been that discourteous. My attention was intent

upon her, I felt like I was suffocating. It wasn't the blush and the soft intoxication of the senses that should have settled over me on such an occasion. I asked: “Were you there yourself?”

While lighting her cigarette, she said: “Yes, from the start, until the end. I only investigated your play. The people were somewhat heartened and I understand their rage. In our country, we don't have the ability to put the right people on the right place. It's like this political lack of spirit that crushes all virtue. Those who have the means, have a right to everything. One with any kind of knowledge, literary or social, can be a chairman, whether he has merit in it or not. They have a hand in the inauguration of new buildings, they have a hand in the placement of foundations, the leadership of cultural movements is given to them, they will read speeches at convocations, they will give out awards to boys, all this is the blessing of our servile disposition. It is no surprise that we have fallen so low. I suppose that wherever there are orders and authority, there's powerlessness; we have to kiss the feet of people but when we can make use of our independent thought and unrestrained character, shouldn't we also cannot shake our habit of flattery off our necks? You should have been the captain of this team, if that would have been the case, then how could the opponent take the game? The *Mahārāja* has just as much competence to become the captain of the team, as you have to become chairman of an assembly or I to be acting in a movie.

These were exactly the sentiments I felt in my heart, but how effective and eye-opening they were, when uttered by her voice.

– You shouldn't have participated in this team.

– I was forced.

This beautiful woman's name was Helen Mukerjee. Now, she's coming from England. She had debarked in Bombay to watch the cricket match. She received her medical education in England and serving the people was her purpose in life. She had seen my picture in a newspaper and had read my report. Ever since, she kept me in high regard. She saw me playing here and was even more impressed. She intended to train a new Hindustānī team and for this she would take people who are worthy to represent the nation. Her proposal was that I would become the captain of the team. Because of this intention, she wanted to make a tour in the whole of Hindustān. Her father, the late dr. N. Mukerjee bequeathed her abundant wealth and she is his only heiress. Hearing of her plan, my head began to spin. Who had thought that my gold-coloured dream could unexpectedly take

shape. I don't believe in supernatural powers but today a feeling of gratefulness and religious devotion gave me goose-flesh[25]. I thanked Miss Mukerjee with befitting, humble words.

The train was about to leave. Miss Mukerjee ordered two first-class tickets. I could not object. She had my luggage picked up, picked up my hat herself and confidently entered a compartment, sat down and called me inside. Her servant sat in third class. It was as if my energy to function had disappeared. God knows why I let her take the lead in all these matters which, being a man, are my prerogative. Maybe her appearance, her intellectual prestige, her generosity inspired such awe in me that she turned me into a sheep, like a sorceress of the celestial region of Kāmarupa and my own backbone had vanished. In this much time, my being was lost at her wish. My self-esteem required that she hadn't ordered a first-class ticket for herself and that she sat at ease in third class and, if we sat in first class, it would be with so much generosity that we both fetched our first-class tickets. But now my backbone had vanished.

2 January – I am distressed by why I feel so much sympathy for Helen, and this is not only the sympathy of a friendship. It bore the truthfulness of love. In compassion, there's usually not that much reverence and if it wouldn't go beyond an acknowledgement of my qualities, then I wouldn't be so devoid of good sense that I would have fallen for this false impression. Acknowledgement of qualities could at most be smoking a cigarette and drinking a cup of tea. This is the hospitality I receive when I am called to play some match. Even then, wherever the acknowledgement would not be sincere, only the traditional hospitality was exchanged. As if for my convenience and rest, she kept to herself. Maybe I could not behave this cordially with anyone but my beloved. Bear in mind that I have said “beloved” and not “spouse”. We don't show respect to our wives, indeed, making them show regard has become our nature and maybe that is as good as the truth. But nowadays I don't know the ecstasy of even one of both these delights of those days. I participated in her breakfast, diner and lunch, in every station (it was a postal service and stopped at specific stations), she ordered dried and fresh fruits and insistently invited me to eat. She herself knew which things were famous at these places. She bought all sorts of presents for my friends and inmates but it is surprising that I never once dissuaded her. How could I forbid her, she didn't ask me before she brought them. If she brought something with love and presented it to me, how could I refuse? God knows why I, as a man, became shy and silent like a woman in front of her, as if I had lost my tongue. I remained restless the entire night, instead of tired of the day, I had a slight headache but I

25The text says: “*śarīr kā roāṃ-roāṃ […] se bhare hue the*”, literally : “the hair of my body was filled with [...]”. McGregor and Śyāmsundaradāsa translate and explain a similar expression (*royāṃ khaḍā honā*) as “to feel a thrill” or “to have gooseflesh”.

exaggerated the pain. When alone, maybe I might not applaud this insignificant pain but at this time, when she was present, I took delight in showing this pain. She began to massage my head with oil and I turned weak, willy-nilly. Her uneasiness grew with my unrest. She asked me time and again how my pain was and I absent-mindedly said I was fine. At the delicate touch of her palms, my breath was tingling. When her attractive face was bent towards my head, her warm breath caressed my forehead and I was, so to speak, enjoying paradise. The desire to conquer her shakes my heart. I wish she bore with my whims. From my side, there was no need for an initiative by which she understood that I am smitten with her. How did this sudden change in my state of mind take place in twenty-four hours? – I have turned from a suitor of love to a vessel of love. As normal, she placed her hands on my head with that very immersion. Then I have mercy on her and I too am not free of this same feeling, but today, the charm in which this pleasure came, was full of love. To feel love is slavery, to feel loved a kingdom.

Showing compassion, I said: "You have a great grief because of me."

She sat up and spoke: "What grief do I have? You were restless with pain and I was sitting down. If only this pain could become mine!"

I went to the seventh heaven.

5 January – Yesterday evening, we arrived at Lucknow. On the road, there was wonderful talk of cultural, political and literary matters. By the grace of God, I am a graduate too and ever since, at leisure time, I am looking in books, I have sat in meetings with scholars but confronting the extent of their knowledge, I realise, step by step, my own lack of knowledge. They have their own opinion on every single topic and it appears that after close scrutiny, they have made this opinion desirable. Compared to these people, I am the opposite, fleeing with the wind, whose momentary impulses contradict. I tried to impress them with my wisdom but their perspectives made me speechless. When I saw that I would not beat her in matters of knowledge, I touched the matter of the war between Abyssinia and Italy, about which I thought I had read a lot – England and France have put pressure on Italy; I spent the power of my words on praising this. With a smile she said: "If it is your opinion that England and France are involved only because of a feeling of humanity and to help the weak, you are wrong. Their imperialism and greed cannot bear that someone else in the world flourishes. What Mussolini does there, how many times has England done that – it is even doing it today. All this play-acting is only to make business opportunities available in Abyssinia. England needs markets for its business, pieces of land for its increased population, high positions for its educated, so why would Italy not need this? Whatever Italy is doing, it's doing it openly, with

honesty. They never beat the drum of brotherhood with all the people of the world, they never harped upon the song of peace. They clearly say that rivalry is life's earmark. Mankind advances precisely by virtue of war. Man's good virtues are disclosed in the field of war. This idea of equality remains madness. Besides, their own estimation puts them among the great nations whose right it is to rule over a coloured population. That's why we can understand their methods. England has always operated with deceit. To turn them into their followers, they have always separated the various factors in a nation or made their nearest opponent the supporter of their politics. I do wish Italy, Japan and Germany would make great progress in the world and that they will break the supremacy of England. Only then will real democracy and peace be born in the world. Until the current civilisation is abolished, peace will not rule in the world. Weak nations have no right to survive, just like weak trees. Not merely because their existence itself is the reason their suffering, but rather because they are responsible for the conflicts and bloodshed in the world."

Well, I began to agree with these words. Yet I answered and I refuted her ideas with equally powerful words. But I saw that in this matter, she did not want to make use of balanced knowledge, or she couldn't.

As soon as we got out at the station, I embarked on the thought how I could make Helen my guest. If I would reside at a hotel, then god knows what my heart would say. If she would take me to her home, then modesty is assumed. Which comfortable goods are there for a high-spirited young lady who is so beautiful and rich? It is thanks to the circumstances that I began to play cricket well and apart from studying, stuck to it and obtained a master at school. But the condition of my house is as usual: the old, dark, shabby house in a narrow alley, the old style, the old plan. Maybe mother would not let Helen set a foot in the house. And if the occasion came, then Helen would run from the door herself. If only it were my house, arranged and adorned, I would be worthy to be hospitable to Helen, of course she could be a lot happier then this but poverty is wicked.

I was thinking that Helen had the porter pick up the luggage and when I arrived outside, called a taxi. Except for sitting down in the taxi, what other option did there remain for me? I'm convinced that, if I had taken her to my own house, she would have been happy despite the poverty. She is beautiful but she is not flirtatious. She remains ready for any trial and experience. Maybe Helen called trials and unpleasant experiences upon herself. But I didn't have the fancy or the courage.

If she had just looked at my face with close attention, she would have realised how much embarrassment and how much helplessness it reflected. But it was necessary to maintain courtesy; I objected: "I wanted to make you my guest but on the contrary, you are taking a hotel for me."

She mischievously said: “Because you shouldn't get out of my grip.” Could there any happier words for me then “I would enjoy your hospitality but love is envious, you know that. Your close friends will take a large part of your time, you will not have the time to talk to me and men usually tend to forget quickly how many inconsiderate sides they have, I have experienced that. I cannot leave you behind for one moment. When you see me in front of you, you might want to forget me but you won't be able.”

I wasn't even surprised about her happiness, moreover it began to seem as if I was dreaming. At one look at this beautiful woman, I would sacrifice myself so that she would prove her love to me. All my heart desired at her remark, was to press her feet against my chest and wet them with tears.

We arrived at the hotel. I had a separate room. We dined together and a while later, we walked up and down the green grass. How will the players be chosen, that is the question. My heart only wanted to walk with her all night but she said: “You rest now, there's a lot to do in the morning.” I went to my room but lying down, I did not sleep all night. Helen's heart was hidden from my eyes until now, at all times, she remained a mystery to me.

12 January – Today I stayed in a gathering of cricketers in Lucknow all day. Helen was a flame and sparks were flying around her. From here, in addition to me, she like the play of two people: Bṛjendra and Sādik. Helen wanted to place them in the All India Team. She doesn't doubt both of them are skilled in the art but she has made a start in such manner that it is evident that, playing cricket, she has not gambled on her destiny. Helen is a woman of such temperament that it is hard to understand. Bṛjendra is more handsome then me; I even accept this, he is a total gentleman in conduct. But definitely a rogue, a loafer. I do not want Helen to have a connection of some sorts with him. He is untouched by good manners. Rude to the extreme, preposterous obscene jokes, not inclined to conversation and he does not understand time or occasion. Sometimes he winks at Helen so meaningful that I lower my head out of shame but maybe Helen does not feel his vulgarity, his pettiness. No, maybe she enjoys his obscene winks. I never see a frown on his forehead. I cannot say that his cheerfulness is a bad thing, nor am I opposed to frolic but with a woman, one should show respect for good manners and custom.

Sādik is the light of a prominent lineage, of the most virtuous conduct to such extent one can speak of a cold nature, very proud and irritable at sight but now even he has become a martyr. Yesterday, he was reciting his poetry to Helen and she was happy. Yet for me there was no joy in these poems. Before this, I never saw this Excellency perform poetry, so where did this passion so suddenly come

from? It appeared like the power of magic, and what can I say? Even so, it did not appear like, if he had to recite *śers*[26], he had memorized two, four *śers* from the work Jigar, Joś. Helen sat down when all these poems were read. “Why do you need to recite poems – ” but if I could tell him anything, it is that he will fail, that he will understand that I am jealous. Why have I become jealous? Am I only one of those who adore Helen? Yes sure, it is necessary that she can get acquainted with good and bad, I do not like the familiarity of all these men but for her they are all equal. She, in turn, becomes more detached and loves them all. It is hard to decide to whom she is inclined to the most. She wasn't even a bit impressed by Sādiks wealth and riches. Yesterday evening, we went to see a movie. Sādik showed an unusual generosity when he took out rupees and went to fetch tickets for everybody. Sādik who's a miserly man despite his wealth, I'd tell him softly that Helen had noticed his generosity. But Helen stopped him, went outside and got tickets for all. And so she spends money just as indifferently as Miyāṃ Sādik hits sixes. When his hands got into his pockets, Helen's rupees arrived at the counter. However, I noticed Helen's character and wisdom. So it appears she is looking forward to our formation and she takes a special delight in completing it. Meeting Sādik *Sāhab* together, she gave him a collection of replicas of rare pictures of Europe that she collected herself visiting all galleries in Europe. How much beauty and love there is in her eyes. When Bṛjendra came in the evening, wearing the new suit that he had gotten sewed today, Helen smiled and said: “Look, where would eyes not be drawn to you? Today you have become a new Yusūf.” Bṛjendra became overjoyed. When I recited my own *gazal*, accompanied by singing, she sprang up at every single verse. She's surprisingly poetic. I have never been so happy about my own poetical creations but if it is praised by everybody, then what's its value? Miyāṃ Sādik never claimed his beauty. As much as you're brimming with beauty on the inside, you're poor in beauty on the outside. But today, when the wine was passed around, when her look turned happy she said, in an infatuated voice: “Brother, your eye went beyond Jigar.” And at this moment Sādik S*āhab* came to a dead stop at her feet. The shame caused distress. Maybe he never got such a compliment for his eyes. I never had the desire to be praised for my appearance or demeanour. Whatever I am, I know it. I never had the misconception that I was handsome. I also know that virtuous behaviour is of no meaning to Helen. But I also began to be restless: “Look, what kindness I receive. It doesn't matter,” but I remained restless. When I was coming from the university grounds after practice in the evening, my straggling hair became even more untidy. Looking with devoted eyes, she immediately said: “My heart wants to devote itself to your dishevelled locks.” I was content, I can't say what storm raged in my heart!

26*Śer*: A verse from a *gazal*. A *gazal* is an *Urdū* love poem. In these poems pure love can often be interpreted as a form of devotion

But god knows why none of us three could praise her manner or appearance. It seems to us we didn't have the right words. Whatever we could say, would by no means impress her. We didn't have the spirit to say anything.

1 February – We went to Delhi. In between, we did a tour to Moradabad, Nainital, Deheradun and other places but we didn't find players anywhere. We hope to meet some good players from Aligarh and Delhi, for that we will stay there a couple of days. As soon as we completed the eleven, we will go to Bombay and there we will practice for a month. In March, the Australian team will set out from there. When they have played all the earlier appointed matches in Hindustan, we will play the last match with them and if God wills, we will avenge every Hindustani defeat. Sādik and Bṛjendra were travelling with us too. Yet, I didn't want them to come but maybe Helen was elated by the gathering of admirers. All of us were in one hotel and we were all Helens guests. Upon arriving at the station, hundreds of men were present to welcome us. There were some women too but Helen did not know why the women objected. She runs from their company, she especially stays far from even the shadow of beautiful women although she has no reason to be jealous of any beautiful woman. It is taken for granted that beauty couldn't get exhausted on her, she contained such essence of charm that even a fairy couldn't hold ground in comparison to her. Yet all this isn't all-encompassing, the beauty of desire, the beauty of conversation and the beauty of flirtatious manner have a part too. God knows if there's love in her heart or not but in showing love, she has no equal. We who are so generous in the art of seeking attention and flattery, ought to be ashamed. In the evening we made a tour of New Delhi. It is an inviting place, open roads, beautiful plots of land, pleasant alleys. In the construction, the government fearlessly spent rupees. And without need. This amount could be spent on the welfare of the whole community but what would that do for them if the man in the street is so well disposed towards this construction, that they have no use for their welfare. You could open five or ten more madrasas or spend money on restoration of the roads or on the examination of the fields but today the public loves outward show, wealth and might just as much as they don't love constructive work. Regents have a fantasy persisting in their every fibre that won't be obliterated for centuries. Regents need outward show. They need to make the money flow like water. Thrifty or miserly lords would want every single rupee spent on the well-being of the ordinary people to be less popular. The British are the masters of psychology. Why would precisely the British be the master of psychology over every single regent who acquired his position through force and wisdom? Without this, how would they have acquired their prerogative over their subjects? Well, I said that I'm having this concern that maybe our team is dreaming. Recently there began a dispute between us. Bṛjendra has become my opponent step by step. In general, I would say

that he is helplessly speaking up and that he is in love with Helen. Whichever sweetness of life began to show, Bṛjendra, ungrateful, selfish Bṛjendra destroys my life. We can't both be the object of Helen's love, that's matter is settled, one will have to leave the field.

7 February – Thankfully, in Delhi our efforts were fruitful. There are three new players in our team, being Jāfar, Mehrā and Arjun Siṃh. Seeing their excellence today, the reputation of the Australian cricketers fell from my heart. All three are bowlers. Jāfar bowls faultlessly, Mehrā tests the patience and Arjun is very cunning. All three are men of firm resolution, the truth of their appearance is undescribable. If someone would ask my honest opinion, then I would say that Arjun plays better then me. He went to England twice. He knows the British way of life and was most empathic, the embodiment of virtuous behaviour and cultivated manners. Bṛjendra's colour fell dull. Arjun has a special grace, it won't be easy for me to gain a victory over him. But I'm afraid that he might some day block my way.

25 February – Our team is completed. We met two players in Aligargh, three in Lahore and one Ajmer and yesterday we went to Bombay. In Ajmer, Lahore and Delhi we played a match against the local team and we gloriously got a victory over them. Today we have a confrontation with Bombay's Hindu team and I believe that we will keep the playing field under control. Arjun is our team's best player and Helen treats him with so much reverence but I am not jealous, this much reverence can only be paid to a guest. What fear is there from a guest? It's a funny thing that every person thinks of himself that he is the object of Helen's love and therefore bears with her whims. If anybody has a headache, then it is Helen's duty to informs about his wellness, and to rub oil of sandalwood on his head. But together with this, her presence casts such a shadow on the hearts of all that nobody can have the courage to criticize anything she does. Each and everyone is the slave of her desire. While she bears with everyone's whims, she also directs us. In a large tent, there was a dense crowd of women, one more beautiful then the other but Helen's prisoners didn't have the power to look anywhere and smile. The hearts of everyone were overcome with such fear as if it was present everywhere. Arjun casually cast a glance over a miss, Helen looked at him with such scornful eyes that *Sardār Sāhab*[27] went pale. Each and every one understands that she is the master over our fate and that, if she becomes angry at us maybe we won't stay alive. What can I say of the others? It was as if I had sold myself to her. Now it seems to me that inside me something has died that before has kindled my heart with a fire-like envy. When Helen speaks to somebody or speaks

27*Sardār (Sāhab)*: address to a Sikh man.

loving words to somebody these days, I don't become angry. Certainly my heart is wounded but it's my heart's desire to express it only by shedding tears in solitude; I can't say where my self-confidence has disappeared to. Now, the unpleasantness shattered to pieces the heart in which a surreptitious glance or smile produced a tingle. I don't know which power was in her that is residing over the hearts of ambitious young men. I would call her brave. I would call her cunning and prompt, we are all like puppets in her hands. There's no personality in us, no life. With her beauty, with her intelligence, with her wealth but most of all with her power to be able gather us all, she has grabbed sovereignty over our hearts.

1 March – Yesterday we finished our match with the Australian team. There was a crowd of no less then fifty-thousand spectators. We won by an entire innings and were worshipped like gods. Each and everyone of us was intimately loved and adorned with flowers like a *Yakṣa*[28]. As soon as the match ended, the people of the city threw a party. Maybe such a party would not even be given in the honour of the viceroy. I was crushed under the load of praise and congratulations, I had dismissed five players in forty-four runs. I'm still astonished at my awe-inspiring delivery of balls myself. Certainly, some unworldly power was on our side. In this crowd, the beauty of Bombay and all it's grandeur and colourfulness were glistening and I claim that, with beauty in mind, this city is so fortunate that maybe there is no second city like this in the world. But in this crowd, Helen too had become the centre of focus of all looks. This unrelenting mistress is not only beautiful, she also speaks sweetly and her flirtatious manners are sweet too. All young men are circling around her like moths, one more handsome then the other, fearless and Helen was dallying with their emotions, in such manner as if she was playing with their emotions. Until today, I never saw such a handsome young man as the prince, with great dignity due to his appearance. Who knows how much grief the love of him has given to beautiful women. He dispersed some kind of magic of manly attractiveness. Helen met him with exactly the same carefree frankness as she met thousands of other young men. Her beauty, her wealth didn't have the slightest effect on her. One cannot know where so much pride, so much self-confidence came from. She never wavered, never became impressed, never bowed in any direction. There's the same sense of humour, the same display of love, without any distinction, attention for everyone but with an air of indifference.

We made a tour and arrived at the hotel around ten at night and at the time we were all having new dreams about life. The hearts of all were pounding – let's see what will happen when. Hope and fear had awakened some kind of storm in all our hearts as though today was a memorable event in all

28*Yakṣa*: a kind of demigod

our lives. If there was a plan, nobody knew about it. Everybody was dreaming about life. The hearts of everyone were intoxicated with a frenzy, everyone was convinced that Helen's looks were directed at them but in everyone's heart, there was also the uncertainty that God would not act like this, perhaps Helen was engaged in a life of infidelity. hence to bring misfortune to one's family was dire.

At this moment, Helen sent for me to come to her room. I went and saw all players gathered. Helen, this time in her sārī embroidered with yellow and orange flowers, was dazzling. I suddenly became angry with her. What was the need to call me to this public meeting and make me walk in step? I was entitled to a special treatment. I was forgetting that maybe all of them might believe they were entitled to a special treatment.

Sitting on a chair, Helen said: “Friends, I cannot tell you how grateful I am you guys and that you've fulfilled the great desire of my life. Does any of you remember mister Ratan Lāl?”

Ratan Lāl! Can anyone forget him! He, who for the first time gave the Hindustānī cricket team an opportunity to show it's worth on English soil, who supervised his undertaking of hundreds of thousands of rupees and eventually became desperate because of the subsequent defeats and committed suicide in England. Even now, we are still seeing that image of him before our eyes.

Everybody said: “Very well, how long has this been?”

Today, I congratulate you on this magnificent success. If God wills, we will tour England next year. Please prepare for this confrontation. It would be nice if we wouldn't lose a single match there, if we would equally keep the field under control. Friends, this indeed is my goal in life. To complete a goal, is a life's work. We will have success when we take on the job with our full resolve, when this goal is our dream, our love, the centre of our lives. No desire, no hope should stand between us and this goal like a wall. Please forgive me but you didn't learn to live for your aspirations. For you, cricket is only a pastime. You don't love it. Exactly the way we have hundreds of friends whose heart is somewhere else, whose thoughts are somewhere else, whose mind is somewhere else and that remains the failure of all lives. For you I was only an interesting thing, cricket only the way to please me. Nevertheless, you were successful. In the country there are thousands of young men who, if they are taught to live and die to accomplish a goal, would realize astounding miracles. Go and achieve excellence. My appearance and the nights are not to make a plaything out of passion. I understand that, to live to please the eyes of young men and to stir up joy in their hearts is shameful. The purpose of life is higher than that. True life is not where we live for ourselves, it is where we live for everybody.

We were all listening with stooped heads and were becoming enraged. Helen left us and sat down in the car. Helen had already organized her departure. Before we would have come to our senses and we would have understood the situation, she was gone.

Until the end of the week, we all roamed about Bombay's alleys, hotels and bungalows, Helen was nowhere and the great distress is that she left behind such an ideal in our life that it was out of reach. Together with Helen, all our passion and ambition had ended.

Sharad Joshi

Maiṃ pratīkṣā meṃ hūṃ : 2 – I am in Expectation

Who in this country doesn't claim to understand the country thoroughly? The country's leaders do so, economists do so and what to say of literators, be it poets or writers? Many are those who believe they have our country in their pockets. In this manner, when reading poems on the nation, the country seems hang in the room of the poet, the way the image of the beloved seems to be in the wallet of the poet at all time when reading romantic poems. So that he can use it whenever and wherever he wants. The poets of one hundred years ago, declared the love of their country up to the geographical boundaries they knew or imagined. That means somebody described an alley in Gokul or Mathurā, somebody wrote about Jaipur or Lukhnaū or that Gālib wrote about Calcutta. After Kālidāsa, their efforts to amass the entire country's splendour or scattered beauty are absent. But in these last hundred years, we surely must have gotten heaps of poems in which the country, from the Himālaya to the ocean felt united.

From north to south, this geography is correct. What can you do? On top, you have the mountains, beneath, there's the ocean. But from east to west, the spread of our knowledge is very big, it's scattered. In this case, our borders are not those that politics have given us. In the old days, it was said: "Jāke mana meṃ Aṭaka hai so hī aṭaka rahā: those who have doubt in their mind, will keep lingering"[29] We all know where Kaṭaka is because it is at the ocean. But where is Aṭaka? In Indian history, we agree with Kaniṣka, whose capital was in Puruṣapura or Peśāvar. And for years, we are calling Burma Brahmadeśa. Śarat[30] Bābū's novelistic characters come and go between Calcutta and Burma, as if they are wandering about their own country. Passing on from history and ancient poetry, if one would make an image of India in his mind, it would be made from Peśāvar up to Ḍhākā. It would be made up to Raṃgūn. Politics has made this transgression against poetry that it has given our country smaller boundaries. In my childhood I got a vivid image of Mother India in which Kaśmīr was Mother India's crown and Laṃkā rose out of the water like a lily in Mother India's feet. Then, it never appeared to me that Laṃkā is alien from us. Rāvaṇa was alien, not Laṃkā. Later, the Rāma-bhakta's did not strengthen the servicable bridge Rāma and Rāma's followers built with great difficulty. Rāma did not come to Laṃkā and hand it over to Vibhīṣaṇa telling him: "Brother, your country is separate, my country is separate."

29 The word play makes this phrase hard to translate: Aṭaka is the name of a small city in Punjab, the verbal stem of *aṭakanā* (to be stopped, stuck, attached) and the substantive *aṭaka* (doubt, hesitation, hindrance). Because Śarad Jośī refers to the name of the city after this phrase, I chose to leave it untranslated within the text and add a translation to clarify the meaning of the Hindī phrase.

30 Śarat Caṃdra Caṭṭopādhyāya

Please, don't misunderstand my word as an empty national pride; it is the pain of a writer who saw the country in his childhood and who, when he came of age, didn't find the county in that shape. As far as the country is concerned, the poems in my head are shattered and have continually fallen to pieces. You can accuse me of living in the past but when it comes to allegations and controversy, I could accuse you that in measuring out the expanse of the country, you won't know the depth of the culture. We're citizens of a country bigger than the one we received. I will never forgive our primeval leaders and, if it is written well, history too won't forgive them that they tore a country – a very old country – apart in their haste to obtain some broken chairs. As a child, I read in books that geography has it's influence on history. Growing up, I saw that history has it's influence on geography. Ka_racī, Lāhaur and Ḍhākā are foreign, there is misgiving in Haiderabād and Śrīnagar. Now, our sphere is just the rectangle of Dillī, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. The frontier has moved, the perfume-selling Gāṃdhī's have moved. Today, we only have frontier markets. Those who believe that the entire world is one family, have come to the conclusion that our family is up to here, from there, it's not our country. In the heart of a citizen, such uproar was stirred up that it was no less than bloodshed. Had our leaders not accepted the idea of Pākistān and postponed the independence by two years and continued their struggle, the idea of creating a Khalistān would not have been born in this country. In the heat of his emotions and his use of beautiful words, Nehrū was a visionary. But it is a peculiar tragedy that a politician who is called a visionary has accepted the country as a shattered vision. It is this country's misfortune that ever since then, our reaction has been to break apart and remain broken apart. Today, Bhajan Lāl and Barnālā Caṃd are quarrelling over villages and Dillī is taking these quarrels very seriously. With the attempts to make them befriend and negotiate, it's as if the two of them are Reagan and Gorbachev. You probably won't get to grips with the ridiculous circumstances in which we keep living.

This is why I keep telling and bringing to mind how much difficulties authors and Hindī authors have when connecting to your country ánd understanding it. Blessed are those people who only think about the municipality. Blessed are the enlightened thinkers that remain bogged down in their academic disputes. Blessed are the lowly leaders whose concern is their constituency and ultimately their district. They are most happy. Those who are not imbued by the way of the world … they are the best of all! For them, “country” is a slogan. It's a program of choirs of praise. The district is where you don't have to take your passport to go. The country is where we can expand our business. Where we can apply for a job. The country is where our branches are. The country is where our customers are spread. The country reaches as far as you can make a trunk call. The nation goes as far as the national T.V.-network goes. The country is where voters vote.

Explaining these things, one can amuse a student. You can run a commercial business. You can open a branch of the national bank. One can book a tour full of lectures by a central leader. But if you expect from an author that his thought and circle of sympathizers is composed like that, you are cutting me off from a resplendent heritage. If you ask me, it worked differently throughout the past. The Mohanjodāḍo from where I start my history, is in Pākistān. So what should I do? Don't take up history! In fact, note that Sikaṃder[31] came to Pākistān and returned. What do the Selyuks mean to us? Mahārājā Raṇjit Sinṃh's capital was Lāhaur. What should I do? The Sikh respected Pākistān. I wouldn't mention Ḍhākā's muslin. How many cuttings and trimmings would we make along this style of thinking? An Indian writer's mind should wander, tracing Goraknāth's traces with him. From Nīlaṃcāl to Siṃhaldvīpa[32], from Vindhy_yacala[33] to the Himālaya, from the remote Kāmarūpa Kāmākhyā[34] to Brahmadeśa. As far as the name of God is called, we should think. Our country is up to there. In the dreams of Aniruddha[35], Uṣā was so far that we have to believe the distance was nearness. Our country is where Rāma did *pūja*, where Kṛṣṇa's name is uttered, where Shinv-liṃga's are worshipped, that's where our country is. We should not be narrowed down to less than that extent. Our political shrewdness is contained by the Ganges to the Kovari but our literary mind should cross the Brahmaputra and the Sindhu.

I am saying all this because by virtue of being an author, I am the citizen of a vast culture that is hard to understand and to know. We, who exhaust ourselves capturing the country on the tip of a pen, how helpless are we! How wretched! At times, it seems to me that, when talking vigorously of our country, we aren't second to our whimsy politicians. We don't know how much of our speech and writing are in fact lies, who'll investigate us? Who is there, who fully understands the country and can investigate us well? We who have sight don't know our neighbours as well as the blind Surdās knew Kṛṣṇa. However, we exhaust ourselves in the study of country and society and make claims in all confidence. This way one would suddenly become a writer when his imagination and bookish wisdom in the study of the country fell from the sky, as if somebody who is sitting in the airport, incessantly watching the earth and the sky and suddenly descends to the ground and would become a politician and the prime minister. We captivate you, charm you with our sweet language. And you, who are looking for the country's bright future in the eyes of leaders, thrusting, gullible, innocent people agree with our writings. But this type of suavity is neither the premise of the writing, nor of the family of teachers and writers.

31 *Sikaṃder*: Alexander The Great
32 *Siṃhaldvīpa*: Śrī Laṃkā
33 *Vindhy_yacala*: A city on the river Ganges, in Uttar Pradeś
34 *Kāmarūpa Kāmākhyā*: a temple decicated to the Mother Godess in Assam (Kāmar_rpa)
35 *Aniruddha*: Grandson of Kṛṣṇa, married to Uṣā

Here, we've arrived upon the impediment. If you or me want to understand this country or society from a correct point of view, then how could we understand it? The last hundred years, our mind and heart was filled with so many preconception that it shattering the illusion and investigating the problems is difficult. Just like a farmer is hard-working, a labourer is exploited, tradesmen are miserly, Saradārs[36] are very brave, Beṃgālī's are very sympathetic and full of excitement, Madrāsī are very ambitious and calculated, a Kāyasthais very intelligent, the people of Bhiṇḍ Murainā are bandits, Ādivāsī are always dancing. The women of Kāmarūpa perform magic, in Bastara there's great pleasure in sex, in Rājasthān there's singing and dancing going on, in Banāras there are scholars, Lakhnaū is delicate, the girls in Kaśmīr are beautiful, in Ilāhābād there's an understanding of literature, Brāhmaṇas are poor, don't thrust Musalmāns, Marāṭhas are proud, fisherwomen are healthy, Pūna is populated by intelligent people, Pārsī's don't cheat, Gujarātī are devotees of Kṛṣṇa, … If you would start to think about the matters of the country this way, you'd have to divide your attention to a thousand of such prejudices. You won't save yourself by evading them. When discussing the country, a writer should be disconnected from and indifferent to any class or *jātī*[37] of his country, so that he does not fall under the influence of any preconceptions. To achieve this purity in writing, to withdraw your thought from so much pressure of prejudice, where man is fully man, and move from *jātī* and region to the problems of the state, the Indians and humanity … this is very hard. Now, please consider that if we can't understand the country's real boundaries by its entire cultural depth, if we can't understand man by eluding prejudice, then how much country is there in us, writers? And how much confusion?

How do we know and understand our country? What's its manner? What its achievements? When do we see the country with our eyes open? Maybe, the little we see peering through a train-window is all we have seen from the country. Or the field and the huts that come into our sight we take off at the airport are the country. When did we see what makes us proud of the country? Where did we see it? On T.V. in documentaries? In an exhibition where everything Indian was labelled? In a movie? We did not scale any of this country's mountains, we did not wander in the jungle, we are unaware of the local birds and flowers, we are passing by the villages, we don't swim in the local rivers then how do we feel the country burning in the depth of ourselves? Is al the pride we take in our country in our lives a reference book? Are we full of national pride, thinking of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Gītā? Or does the memory of Śivajī's vigour make our breast swell? Or do a victory of the Indian army or cricket-team or an address delivered at the Red Fort? If it is so, it means we have – by means of an emotional impression – formed an image of the country in our heads. As if it's not the country and it

36 *Saradār*: respectful way to address or refer to a Sikh
37 *Jātī*: generally translated as caste

could be a good idea to divert the mind. But you won't want our Ravīndranāth[38] and Premchand's image of the country to be solely emotional. Or merely intellectual. Again, the problem is how India will shine in an Indian style of writing. Relying only on brilliance, we can neither go in depth nor far.

Every morning, the common man gets a picture of the country in a local newspaper. But do you expect that from your country's literators? What soul and form has Indian literature acquired from journalistic information? Where will we find the literature that will make us feel the hot season between the Rāmāyaṇa to Godān?

You will think by yourself what kind of personal questions I am asking. Why don't I think the answers to these questions through? Why don't I talk about this? Well, before this, I want to direct my attention to the interesting fact that after so many years of writing, the peculiar question as to what extent he is a writer of the country arises in a writer's mind. Is the country really present in his writing?

It's a thesis. Authors believe it. Or affirm the remarks and set to work. This thesis is like the idea of the sky in a pool. It is in fact what you see in a pool of water. It is the reflection of the sky that is lying in the water. But you can't see the sky entirely. You will see, but you can't testify. Therefore, to make a completely truthful description of the pool, a writer must include the entire sky. We should record the story of a village or city's buildings in such a way that the entire country is reflected, just like the sky is reflected in the pool. For writers, this thesis is plain and simple. When describing the pool, the misunderstanding arises that the sky is reflected in our pens. From this assessment, a standard arises too: “Brother, how much sky is there in your pool?”

When this thesis has seen the light and grown, the pool remained somewhat dirty but the sky was very clear and invariable. Today, my opinion is, friends, that this country's sky is not stable. It has become dark. It's not stable. The entire sky does not reflect in the pool now. The pool is very dirty too. The sky is dirtier. I could depict the pool but the sky that appears in it wouldn't be quite right. For the sky, I have to look at the sky. I have come to a conclusion regarding the sky. I feel helpless by myself here. The country is not in a writer's writings about the country.

You will probably understand my outline. If I would have been writing in Kerala's Malayālam, the question would not have risen in my mind. The long strip of land that runs from Trivandrum, Maṭṭancerī, Kocīn to the Northern Kerala, that is my sky, my ground. That's the language, that's the pain, that's the joy and the sorrow. A little knowledge of the economy of your region, a limited knowledge of the history of the geography and the literary tradition is sufficient. That means: if I

38 *Ravīndranāth*: Rabindranath Tagore

had written a little and would be an excellent Takaṣī Śivśaṃkar Pillai, I would be happy that I had evoked society in a fine manner in my writings. If I would be an Assamese writer, then too my responsibility would not be like that and I would certainly not believe the whole of India should be expressed in my writings.

I am a Hindī writer. And of Hindī, you know, there are nine flavours, fifty influences and I don't know how many traditions; it is a gathering of streams of meanings. The daughter of Saṃskṛt, the mother of dialects, English' attendant. It is the language of life, it is the language of *dharma*[39], the language of mocking people in politics, the language of translations, the original language. It is a vernacular. In one respect, we are the vernacular authors of the Commonwealth culture. To gain knowledge of all Indian realities, we need to know English. The most excellent books about the Himālaya, Gaṃgā and the Tāj Mahal were written in English. We have acquired all knowledge concerning the South in English. Our country's philosophers and economists express themselves in English. To obtain insignificant knowledge about foreign affairs, we remain united by English. It's an entire class, an authority, a plan, it's an economic power that is behind English. The people who nursed English are the people who sent their children to convents. They decided that in the future too, English will remain as before. With the votes of the poor and the illiterate, the petty-minded leaders cannot oppose to the clan of influential English-devotees. Me and you are infatuated with English as if it wasn't English but Marilyn Monroe's long, white leg. If somebody speaks a melodious English, it seems to us he is playing the Bāṃsurī. When our prime minister delivers an impromptu speech on the international stage is enthusiastically talking a sweet English to the students who are attending a gala, we don't know what he is saying but it seems to us it is the highest moment of a man's life when you speak English with such eminence. We must have have heard Dinkar, Mahādevī and many of the people present here must have heard Mākhananāl Caturvedī delivering a speech. Hearing them, it doesn't come to our mind that we could speak Hindī like that. But when someone lets out a stream of English syllables, a gentle shiver goes through our spines. It is the very gentle shiver that occurred in Javāharlāl Nehrū's back when he heard the English of Sarojinī Nāyaḍū. At the time Javāharlāl went to his own Ināhābād, he didn't manage to meet with Nirāla but going to London, he remained eager to meet Bernard Shaw. Hindī is passed over with great disrespect. Bhavān_ Bhāī[40] once said: “Hindī is great, maybe that is why it resounds in everybody's feet.” Hindī would not be so unlucky if it ruled over English. The story of it's misfortune began when Hindī speakers came from the fields to the centre of power and in the houses of their kingdom the chicken dāl remained unchanged. This way, non-Hindī-speakers were

39 *Dharma*: Traditionally translated as “religion”. In Indian culture, it refers to the whole of duties and attitudes that exceeds the religious as in western society. I consider the word untranslatable and prefer to leave it untranslated.
40 Bhavānī Prasād Miśra, an Hindī poet.

met with due honours by those in power to please the non-Hindī areas, like Hindī-speakers maybe might receive if people of the South came to power. They don't disregard Hindī. Nor do they favour their own language. This is their *dharma,* they have to act like this. Today, Hindī has somewhat expanded, the contribution of the government in this is negligible and whatever they have done has stirred up unpleasantness and opposition in the southern minds. With their policies in favour of English, leaders give rise to a feeling of inferiority in the minds of Hindī-speakers. With their Hindī policies, they stir up opposition in the south. Fostering the pains from everywhere in their hearts, Hindī writers remain cut off from allied languages. For us, the study of Gālib is indispensable but for an Urdū-speaker it's not necessary read Tulsī or Nirāla. We have all the responsibility for the spiritual unity. This narrow-mindedness is endoresed because this way we are attached to our roots. They desire us to be attached to our roots, but not deeply. Only one-, two-hundred years. Who is attached deeper than that is called a reactionary. Connecting to antiquity is thought of as connecting with Brāhmaṇism and connecting to Brāhmaṇism is believed to be reactionary. You should make Hindī intelligible. But what is the intelligibility of a language? We cannot answer this. They will answer this.

I am not a Hindī propagandist. I'm a Hindī writer. I don't even speak the clean, śuddha Hindī. But to understand he power of our own language, I want to arrive upon the sociological facts. Hindī is an extremely generous language. When we say that our culture is spread from the Khyber Pass to Ḍhākā and Burma , it is this reality language so generous. Appropriating words is the unique quality of Hindī. Hindī is this country's original language. It's always the foreigners that name a language. Our language was called Hindī at a later time but we spoke it before that. That Hindī was not like today's Hindī but it was definitely Hindī. It was a form of Prākṛt that stayed, rather than came. That language too was generous. It appropriated the Āryan language. With their grammar and words, the Āryans shaped Saṃskṛt. Even then it was our original language. When it's circumstances changed, Saṃskṛt words were dropped and they started to adopt Perso-Arabic words. The situation changed again and our endlessly corrupted and corrected language dropped the Fārsī and Arabic words and commenced to appropriate English words.

I don't want to lecture on linguistics. I want to tell so much that my country's authorities would like Urdū to become obsolete, they fear it, understand that. They even dream that when we reach the twenty-first century, in the name of technological development, a circle of Anglophile children would amass. But because I'm a Hindī writer, I can connect to a thousands of years old world of meanings. I am not going to assess my language by whichever foreign criteria. I have a strong confidence in a grammar that has been passed on from man to man over thousands of years and added liveliness and meaning to the words. That is why, writing in Hindī is an act of resistance. It

even was when Saṃskṛt was revered at the royal courts. It even was to when Fārsī and Urdū were pre-eminent in the royal gatherings. Writing in Hindī was an act of resistance in the British Rāj too. And today it is too, now the country is devoted to English. I am not against the Saṃskṛt, Urdū and English languages but I oppose the government that, in order to rule society, cut off from society's vernacular, patronages such language so the highest classes would be sheltered and the poor, despite being talented and committed, could never become shareholders in the government. English may be a rich and full language, in this country it's grounded in oppression. The progress of the hundreds of thousands of poor in this country has been curbed because of English. If regions were given the opportunity to advance in their own language and Hindī were a connected string, then there could be such a social revolution in this country that hypothetically keep our leaders who cling to English would be trembling.

One language for us, this one language for our country, which has appropriated the Āryan words from the era of origin of the Āryans. When Saṃskṛt was revered in the courts, Saṃskṛt words were appropriated. When the Perso-Arabic era came in the courts, they gathered their words in their language. When the British Rāj was there, they took their own words. Today the very same language policy that has given us the numerous difficulties of Hindī, the hardness to understand it, is cursed to adopt words that were moulded like a copy, made by translation. I don't know when Hindī will be able to be Hindī. It can be anything, but not Hindī.

We are living with the misconception that our language can take a well-developed shape. It could be we are living in a prehistoric age. But if we are living in a prehistoric age, then how can we know it is a prehistoric age? It seems very well-developed and sound to us. Society appeared very sound and well-developed to Premchand. Did he know the language he was writing in would become old? How can I say it? The language in which I am now writing and speaking will not become useless after fifty years.

When writing, the Malayālam, Tāmil of Bāṃglā authors don't experience this distress. It exists in the minds of Hindī writers. Whether their sentences will stand through the changing times or not.

That is why, friends, a Hindī writer experiences great difficulty when relating to his country, his society and the people. How much fear does he have the time he faces challenges? The path of life hasn't changed it's shape. The radiance of man we have come to see in literature is overlooked in society nowadays. Where have did they go, those characters of Premchand? Those characters from the stories of Gulerī Jī[41]? They've all gone lost somewhere in the crowd. I've been observing it for

41 Candradhara Śarmā

thirty years. How many movements have Indians started to explain the *dharma* and *karma*[42] of writers? Nayī-, Sahaja-, A- or Sacetana Kahānī[43]. The stories of villages, towns or cities. Children's stories but also articles and poetry. It looks like a bird that has flown away and is out of hand. Man slips from our hands time after time, like a bar of soap. Literature that has always been about the common man, of the common man and for the common man, has suddenly become aware of the common man and debate is going on as to who the common man is. As if a writer is a particular, unusual creature and he has to understand the common man. Like we are an urbane village and the common man an animal from the jungle. An example of the dwindling concern of those who call their native tongue Hindī is that common people have begun to inform about another's language. Seems as if in this country some people who live with a fancy for English have adopted Hindī as a stunt in living their lives.

I'm a writer and it is said about a writer that he doesn't belong to a language in particular. We do, however, create music and our instrument could be any language. It's our *dharma,* our faith. Our caste is the caste of writers and this caste has many languages. This is right in itself but the language is our tool, our instrument. Without giving attention to our instrument, we can't create music. The language is our medium. Writing in Hindī is like an ongoing program in which the instruments are in discord, music isn't created and the audience has disappeared. It's organized, there's also a remuneration and in is venerated too. But sitting on the stage, we are thinking. What? What for? On argument is that if we create music, the audience will return. The second vanity is that if an audience would come, we would commence.

In our dignity as artists, we deny the weakness of our instruments. We remain infatuated with ouf language. But man's language was never quit mature and as such a writer's language is weak too. We should give our attention to the music, not to the instrument.

There was a time when I thought that my universe was very big. It was the world of Ravīndra, Śarat, Premchand, Maṇṭo, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Balzac and several of such names. Writing and writing, now my world is becoming small. Today, I concern myself with the country. The borders and language disputes draw my attention. I do not like it that my country's and my strange situation remains in decline. I will expect from you that, if you've lost your country in your individuality, I could show you our country in your personality and, writing your words, write the words of the country. If you feel an entire world, a universe then the Hindī writer can express it with his pen. You would be free from this complete entanglement which the economic and political interests of

42 I believe there is no accurate rendition of the terms *dharma* and *karma* in English, in this context the could refer to the duties and work of a writer.
43 Movements in Hindī literature, *kahānī* means story.

this country have instigated around you and give authors the permission to come near you. To be attached to the country is to be attached to the people and being attached to the people is being attached to the country. But if he doesn't see his country in the people, how then can a writer connect with it? Please, join the emancipation of the language from these disastrous circumstances. Become our country so that our writings can become the country's writings. And Hindī can be our country's language. Today, you are a rendition of the British and Hindī too is a rendition. If you'll return to the root then the original nature will dawn. I live in the pretence that I am such an original writer, I appeal to you to consider the nature of denying such claims.

Gāvaskara ne rekārḍ toḍā – Gāvaskar Broke the Record

When Gāvaskar broke Bradman's record, some players in the country asked themselves the question: “Why didn't I settle the hash? Why didn't I break Bradman's record” I too was one of those asking themselves this question: “Why Śarada, didn't you do what Gāvaskar did?”

The question is very personal. Can I say this cruel society which didn't allow me to become Gāvaskar is guilty? It's true that I took a bat in the hand on the pitch and after one or two runs, I became Hamlet – the ball comes from upfront. I think by myself: “To be or not to be. Shall I bat, or shan't I bat?” When I've made on or two runs, I start asking myself questions like Arjuna - “Śarada, where are you? What are you doing? Who are your friends among those people opposite you, and who are your enemies?”

Standing in the cricket-field, having taken up a bat, I'm not sure whether the person who's taken a bat opposite me, standing tautening is on my side. And whether the one who stands right behind me, with his back hunched in humble posture is my deadly enemy. Please consider the one who is in front is a friend. The one who is behind your back is an enemy. This, friends, this is sufficient to be run out.

Fielders are standing all around. To me it seems my admirers are standing there. They look at me with great expectation that I will hit the ball. I would even do so in excitement and they would catch the ball. Due to the incitement of karma, there has been confusion, friends! Those that I considered my own, turn out strangers. I have another human trait. After I've hit the ball, I didn't run. Looking at my batted ball going far seemed fine to me. I didn't like such beautiful and pleasant view to get lost running between the wickets. People would be yelling from four directions: “Run, fool! Run!” But how joyful is it to see a beautiful ball going far, that even a person like me who, besides being a batsman, is a good spectator too, can understand.

And what a day it was too. It was furious non-stop cricket. Cricket is the game of uncertainty, that every suburb knows. When we got up in the morning to play cricket, nobody knew whose window-pane would break, whose shoulder the ball would hit. For good cricket, the road in front of the house was not as wide as it should be. It also had an advantage. In the distance Gāvaskar has to clear to make a run, we made four runs. The distance between the wickets was small too. In the end, some space for the wicketkeeper to stand had to be deducted. Should he stand behind the gutter?

There was no question whether I would break Bradman's record. In our team, the score we made on Wednesday would be forgotten by Thursday. If I would say I made a century on such-and-such day, they would say: “You have never made a century.” It were the days of the first squabbles. But for me they were the very last.

My relationship with the umpire was never good. With the exact same haste as my son, he would rise his finger when I would be out. He would never say to a bowler: “Don't play tight balls.” - “Brother, if you wouldn't give me a run, then why did you call?” I had to know the whole situation was against me. When I had taken the bat in my hand, I felt very alone and helpless in front of this system.

By my own judgement, I was a good opener. But in our team, by their own esteem, everybody considered himself a good opener. At times, the game didn't start until late because we wondered who would open. My distinctive feature was that I couldn't score a run if I wanted, once I became the opener, it became difficult to close for me. In cricket-language they say: “To stay put on one end.”[44] I stayed put on both ends. Only when the player opposite me would score a single, I would abandon this end. I would go and stand at the other …

There's a big difference between me and Gāvaskar. He's going on and getting out on the new ball, I'm getting old[45]. At some time, however, he too won't be new. Despite being the opener, I didn't see the new ball. In our neighbourhood, there was a ball that we made shiny, continuously rubbing it on our pants. Our pants became shiny, the ball however didn't shine.

Today, every player is wondering why he didn't break Bradman's record. Bradman was a foreigner. Breaking his record was difficult. But Gāvaskar is from this country. Point that out. It's true we are made of such pulp that only compilations of poetry can be printed on it, that leaders' speeches can be printed on it. An application can be written: if we can break this record, then we can solve any problem of Indian democracy too.

44 He would stand paralized at his own crease after he hit the ball.

45 In the Hindī text, there is an untranslatable word play: *vaha nayī bāl para āuṭ ho jāta hai, maiṃ purānī para hī ho jātā hūṃ*. McGregor lists an expression *nayā-purānā honā* which means to continue as before.. Literally the scentence means 'He gets out at the new ball, I get ([out] at the) old'. I attempted to create a translation that reflects this double meaning.

Binā Gāvaskara – Without Gāvaskar

Our country is losing in cricket. When we're going to play, we're going to lose too. But even this defeat is coming with good news: Gāvaskar scored runs well. The whole team gave way but one single servant was resisting, scoring a considerable number of runs, in his head saving the honour. In case of defeat, he maintains a discomforted mood. The day after the defeat, we mostly sang the praise of Gāvaskar. It is probably an important idea to divert the mind a little. In this case, the effectiveness of Gāvaskar is ascertained. At some times it was even so that the team won and Gāvaskar could not make any runs. The players of the team would even whisk their moustaches haughtily - “Hey, we can win without the help of Gāvaskar!” Yet, these occasions are rare. For one thing, the opportunity for victory is rare while the opportunity for a victory without Gāvaskar is very rare. It's called Historic if it happens. For the record, let's say that generally, Gāvaskar holds a share in such a historic victory. The last few days, Gāvaskar has been doing the work we expect from Veṃgsarkar. Which means that, when he's reached one end, he's reached enough. He kept playing and playing defensively and steadily his number of runs increased. In a team where, regarding runs, we could put our trust in Saṃdīp Pāṭil, Azhar and the likes and it was all the mercy of Lord Rām, Gāvaskar remained a cornerstone and granted us, watching cricket on TV, salvation. We have the most excellent batsman of all. Now all that remains is to make the team the most excellent of all but, inshallah, this work too will slowly be completed.

I've come to understand the usefulness of Gāvaskar. Cricket is not just a game. Besides that too, there's a lot more to cricket. There's plenty more to cricket besides Gāvaskar's contribution. These days, some people are talking about cricket with authority, despite their lack of knowledge of cricket; it's because of Gāvaskar. It's the usefulness of a star. Would you talk about film without Dilīp Kumār and Amitābh Baccana or about film music without Latā, Raphī and Kiśor Kumār? The single use of stars is they can set out the beacons. Their glitter is a normal thing, but it hurts them to perish.

As of late, Gāvaskar has been stating that he was a little run down. It seems to him that he's currently not brimming with cricket, but that it's like the water of a deep well that he's laboriously scooping out. Caṃdū Borḍe must have thought that, instead of a deep well, we'll have to make do with rather shallow yet full ponds and he stroke Gāvaskar's name from the team. His comment was that we'll be keeping him safe. But what's the use of a well if you're not exercising your scooping? That's why it seems rash. So, somebody scores less runs, then why is Gāvaskar, who can score more, put aside next? Then again, there's even a selector-for-a-day in cricket.

Right now, the publishers of special issues can't decide whose picture they should print on the front page instead of Gāvaskar. Oh yes, putting aside Gāvaskar has one advantage: this time when we lose we can say: “What should we do? Gāvaskar wasn't there ...”

Gāvaskara ko ḍākṭareṭ - A Doctorate for Gāvaskar

After the Independence, the country has become independent as to the appointment of doctorates. Moreover, we're in the position that we even can be sceptic towards doctorates from third-world countries if we want to. For the degrees of PhD, D. Lit, D. Phil, at one time Indians had rely on the prestige of Oxford and Cambridge. This problem remained until after the Independence. Just as universities in districts, *tahasīls*[46] and communities began to close down, the capacity to award doctorates in the country was extended. Today, in every area you will meet two or three PhDs in literature, history of whatever subject who have met the requirements associated with their field or area. Gradually, the country's universities began to establish their own systems to distribute doctorates. Now, this task has very simply and conveniently come to an end. Society is such that there are no people for the available doctorates. The people we could hand a doctorate out to are working in banks or were recruited in the army. Universities don't even know who they want to award a doctorate. Among the receivers, there is little enthusiasm. It is to be regretted that, even with such a bulk of doctorates available in the country, the number of doctors is not increasing sufficiently.

Granting cricket player Gavaskar a doctorate in this field, a new possibility has been introduced. Today, the country's universities don't have to see the faces of scientists, educated or literate people. In the end, how long will the degree of doctor be limited to scholars? They should be made available to growing numbers of the public. Our goal should be that, when the twenty-first century comes, every third person in the country, even if he's not educated, should get a doctorate from some university at all cost. In addition to Gavaskar, I consider Kapil Dev, Madan Lal, Roger Binny etc. to be some of the players worthy of a doctorate. Furthermore, old players like Vishwanath, Chandrasekhar, Bedi etc. should be given a doctorate as well. It would be a matter of great pleasure if, in addition to cricket, the title of doctor was given in other sports too. Ramesh Kṛṣṇan, Prakash Padukone, Michael Jones, Amṛtraja etc. should immediately gather. It's surprising why Kerala's university hasn't given thought to giving PṬ. Uṣā a doctorate in running. I'll demand that some doctorates will be awarded in the fields of chess, carrom, swimming, kabbaḍḍī etc.. If they're distributed in such quantities, wrestlers and boxers will come to the university to pick them up themselves. This will open the way for local granddaddies to receive the title of doctor.

If other universities think in the direction that was started some years ago, when the popular Actor Rāj Kumār was given a doctorate in Banglore, then today, how many doctorates in film would there

46 An administrative unit in India.

be from Mithun Chakraborty to Ravi Baswani. Bombay university should take the names of Rekha and Hema Malini into account.

If Gavaskar received a doctorate, then the university of Haryana should definitely give one to Kapil Dev too. That's for sure. I understand that in the new education-policy it should be emphasised that as many doctorates as possible should be handed out. I wish Gavaskar well. Even more so to the university that gave him the doctorate.

Abhishek Kashyap

Khel – Play

At the time, I was the only student in the seventh class of the public school. I rarely went to school and when I went, I sat at the bench in the back of the class and regarded the other boys and the teachers that came wandering into the class with a lot of contempt. In old, dirty and ragged worn down pants and shirts, the boys looked like idiots who spent all their time scratching their cotton-like hairs and sniffing up the snot that run to their lips to stop it from going in their mouth. When the school's teachers, who were wrapped in a greasy *dhotī* and *kurtī* and old-fashioned bell bottoms, pants and shirts and whose teeth were worn and rotting and had turned black due to an eternal addiction to *pān-khainī* and *bīdīs*, were getting bored sitting in the courtyard they would join their classes yawning. The staleness that settled on their faces, the eye-boogers that stuck to the scaly surface of their eyes (eyelids) and seeing their disorderly sprung up beards and moustaches, it looked as if they got up from bed and came to school without combing … seeing this I felt a strong disgust.

I lived with my parents in a rather old bungalow in the village. When this bungalow was built for grandfather, the mining industry had not yet been nationalized and the village's coal mines were owned by a private company. Grandfather was an important officer at this company. The company had the bungalow built but grandfather had bought the land from the native *Ādivāsīs* so when the nationalized company to which the coal mines belonged laid it's claim on the bungalow, it lost the case and we were very proud. We felt confident.

In the proximity of our bungalow were the bungalows of the mining officers. Although, after grandfather's unexpected passing, father could become an ordinary servant in the mine, it was partially grandfather's great merit and partially the receiving of his inheritance, that made father feel we would fare well in the village. Father's office in mining paid well and I also acquainted the sons of officers from the neighbourhood, although my and their backgrounds were a world of difference. They were students in English convent-schools. Every morning they went to the road, in a gleaming school dress, school-bags water bottles suspended on their backs to stand there. The blue and white bus came to take them to school. When they missed their buses or when it didn't come, the governmental jeeps of the mines, that were part of their fathers' estates, brought them to school out of compassion. Looking at them with great desire and deep regret when I thought of my uncivilized schoolmates and teachers, yet with a dislike for the piercing awareness of inferiority, my heart became irritated. Moreover, father grew very angry that he couldn't become an officer, while his father was an officer …

Grandfather became more and more revered and affectionate because of the bungalow in which we lived and that was his gift; there was one thing in which I matched the world of these boys, that was filled with prosperity and all sorts of awe, and it wasn't mine. It was such a world that upon entering it, made your head spin, that made your heart sigh and sting but I wasn't ready to return from there. Often, I felt proud of myself that, despite not being like them, I had my own nice, special home among them.

On of the sons of the officers had a cricket team – eleven stars among which, besides the boys of the officers, the entry of other boys from the village was banned. By way of exception, I was admitted to the team and how much prestige it produced that within six months after entering the team, I was made captain.

My prestige was not established just like this. It had some reasons. The first reason was the weakness of the officers' sons. It was of a very malicious type. They wore fine clothes, studied in good schools and had great meals. But spending between on more goods, life was happy[47]. They all had their very own bat and ball but with this bat and ball they played cricket on the lawn of their bungalow with their little brothers and sisters.

When the officers joined the team of eleven stars in the stadium, I had to take out my bat and wicket that I stubbornly made father buy. On one side, my wicket was planted, on the other side crooked sticks from wild bushes … whenever the ball left the stadium, it went into the bushes or the clay-pits and went missing. To buy a ball, cost me more then half a *paisa*. Apart from that, I was an allrounder: the opening batsman and the opening bowler of the team.

During matches, my being out began to be accompanied by chanting "*Āyārām, gayārām*! Come Rām, go Rām!" When I was out at zero even in the first over, the entire team lost between fifteen and twenty runs. If I put up and made fifty runs, the team's courage would rise and the score would run to more than a hundred. My bowling was up to the same standard too. Beaten by ten or twelve runs in my first over, our team would lose until the fourth or fifth over. Instead, taking a couple of wickets giving one or two runs, the following bowlers began to take down wickets incessantly … but with this "parasitism" of my own team I had to suffer a great loss. To uphold the team leadership over the team, I continuously had to fight a battle.

Slowly the fight to preserve this supremacy was not fought within the team.

Weeks after a match with a strong team had been arranged, I could not sleep for weeks. Because of this fear that somewhere I would be out at zero or that my balls would lack determination, like a

47 *Unkī nānī maratī*: their grandmother died, Śyāmsundaradāsa lists this as an expression which has several meanings. To feel sad is one meaning.

ball of cotton. The situation was so delicate that, when the "Eleven Stars" lost a match, all the boys began to try to lecture me: "You shouldn't cross-bat… you shouldn't bowl short-pitch or over-pitch…"

I burst out: "… Has the match been snatched away, just because of confidence in me? Are you getting in my hair[48] ? The greatest batsmen in the world don't celebrate centuries in all their matches. There isn't a batsman that wouldn't be out at zero … Jeff Thomson and Dennis Lillee's balls are played, yet I am the idiot on the field?"

I incessantly quarrelled but the effect was counterproductive. I was beset from all sides and everybody began to oppose me … and I struggled alone. I began to feel great distress. I thought about a plan to escape from this adverse situation but no plan seemed good … though God is merciful and in the world he made, and sooner or later a solution for every problem emerges so by chance there would be a solution for my problem too.

One day, at noon, I was sitting in the lukewarm pleasant sunlight of the courtyard, listlessly eating roasted potatoes with rice and *dāl*. Nearby, sitting on a stool, mother was talking to a woman from the neighbourhood. They were cursing and reproaching a quarrelsome woman from the village. Incidentally, mother told a story about a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. A story that went like this:

The mother-in-law was most quarrelsome, the daughter-in-law an educated woman. All the time, the mother-in-law ridiculed the daughter-in-law … one day there was a resentful discussion in the house. The mother-in-law kept talking … and talking … the daughter-in-law was silently listening, listening … in the end, she was bellowing when she died.

Seeing that before dying the mother-in-law's eyes were overcast with a profound fear, the daughter-in-law was smiling.

Great! I found the way!

I took my bat and wicket and set out to the "Officer Stadium".

The next week the "Eleven Stars" lost badly from the "Genius Club". After the match had ended, my siege began. Inwardly, I ground my teeth but I bowed my head and kept listening to the advice … the educated daughter-in-law had enlightened my soul … that day, I felt a deep grief too, in sharp contrast to the name "Genius Club", it was a weak team. I was out at the first ball of the first over. The short-pitched ball went up to the bat like a *rasagullā* – it made my mouth water. But the

48 *Kaccū chilanā*: to peel colocasia (a root vegetable), also an expression that means to get in someone's hair.

timing was off. The bat was kept too far from the body, the ball hit the edge of the bat and went into the hands of the slip. I sighed: “Aah!”

The years-old “Genius Club” was such a worthless team and my spineless batting which, after my being out, would normally make us fall back by twenty runs, now allowed for fifty runs. It was bad fortune that I could not out their opener too and the later batsmen settled the entire bill in the seventh over. I covered my face with both my hands and for a long time I was thinking about this and that. With a jerk, I stood up again. Everybody was speechless. I picked up my bat and wicket and left the stadium.

The next day, in the morning I took a bag and went out to buy potatoes and sugar. Yet I went to the bazaar in the evening, but “the mother-in-law's eyes” looked at me.

At the left side of the road they tossed up balls and were cheering: “Catch! Catch!” With quick glances, I looked at those who crossed the street from the right side. Suddenly the cheering fell quiet. They all came running and surrounded me: “Sorry! Sorry! … Really sorry!”

– “We are really sorry.”

– “You'll come to practice today, no?”

“I'll see.” I went further.

I heaved a long and heavy sigh, as if I was freed from a load that had depressed me for years.

In their eyes, I felt that very anger. A mischievous grin came over my face.

To maintain my importance, I did a lot more. For instance to speak very little with the boys of the team. Very little attention was given to any of my words so before the match started, I would say: “I'm coming” … and I withdrew the bat from the ball on purpose. Afterwards, I went home instead of returning to the pavilion … when the ball was lost and a dispute began while gathering money, I opened my eyes wide and grimaced: “Don't you guys have money at home? … Somewhere, in secret … Selfish!” Again, I picked up my bat and wicket and left the pavilion.

Soon, my trembling anger had established upon the entire team. Deep inside, I began to be aware of my inner strength as if not a single thing could destroy it. At night, I dreamt of frightened antelopes giving out heart-rendering cries, of a tiger – the king of the jungle – chasing herds of elephants, of the captain of the Indian team and winning the world cup and of powerful warriors from comics, rendering their opponents lifeless with blows of theirs fists and kicks. Slowly, the “Eleven Stars” entirely became the playing ground of politics. The team was divided in two camps. The leader of

the first camp was the team's vice-captain Mickey. His father was superintendent-engineer (S.I.) in the mining-firm. Sonū's dad was assistent general manager (A.G.M.).

Because he was the son of the A.G.M., Sonū held his head up high, yet Mickey too thought nothing less of himself because in the mines, the S.I. is especially important. Between both their fathers, there were thirty-six relations and parallel with this, from school to playing-field, both were each other's competitors. Both were the same age and they were in the same class in the district's well-know St-Columbus Convent. So, with all might, both tried to disgrace each other all the time.

Mickey was an ace student. In the exams of this year's second term, he scored ninety percent and Sonū's score was eighty percent. On the playing-field, Mickey bragged about his ninety percent marks and in an attempt to compensate for this shortfall, Sonū mentioned his fours and sixes and the degree of his father in the coalmine. God knows what he would do at school, at the playing-field hearing one word or another, there came a wasp between them.

One day, Mickey told me that in the last term Sonū and he both scored seventy-five percent. If Sonū would get eighty percent this term, his dad would be very happy. In his happiness, he didn't even ask about his marks but where his father went wrong … If Sonū's father would find out that Mickey's marks were ten percent higher then his son's, he would burst out in a fury. At that occasion, he would run home and give Sonū a beating himself.

The other boys were the sons of assistent-managers, engineers and second class managers who were half and half on Mickey and Sonū's sides.

It's evident, to tell the truth, the rivalry was because of their likeness – for none was smaller or greater then the other. Yet, I was above them or … I was below them but I was never smaller then them … if it were Mickey or Sonū or the other boys of the team; sometimes, regardless of the circumstances, I used to tell them anecdotes but none of them had the spirit to get involved with me.

Thinking all this, my chest was heaving with excitement. In the middle of the bazaar was the shoe-shop of Rafi_k Miyāṃ. In the shop, one cassette of gazals sounded continuously. The last line of a couplet of one gazal had stuck in my head: “He who has the heart, can set his eyes on us.”

Whenever I hummed this line, my blood began to pulse with an unfathomable passion and excitement. My nerves became tense. Later someone told me that the gazal from which this line came, was written by the famous poet Ahmad Faraz and was about the Mehdi Hassan, the emperor of the gazal.

As a result of the lobbying to be on Mickey or Sonū's side or the opposition, an interesting game in which hate, envy, mistrust, excitement and all sorts of tricks were present began to unfold, … I was

taking great delight in this game. Meanwhile, I was even happy to be a cunning director and strategist.

One morning, Sonū burst upon my bungalow together with the supporters from his camp. Formerly, once or twice, he gave me a hint that he wanted to become vice-captain. In the last three, four matches, his performance was fine. A week ago, against a strong regional club – the “Super Stars” – he had made twenty-five runs, more then all the others when I had made nineteen runs and in my keenness to hit a six, I leaped forward on the leg-wicket boundary.

Really at loss, I presented Sonū and his yes-men a matted seat in the drying-room. Despite the fact the chairs were pricey, they were not charming because every single one had been bought in grandfathers time and after that they had hardly ever been polished. For seven-eight years, no distemper had been applied to the walls of the bungalow too and they had badly faded. Flakes had fallen of the light yellow walls here and there and behind these, a light blue distemper was visible. My heart was turning into a log out of shame. Emboldening my heart with difficulty I hummed the words of my self-confidence-sutra to myself: “He who has the heart, can set his eyes on us.”

“After this match, I have the right to become the vice-captain.” Sonū clearly presented his case without introduction. His yes-men agreed eagerly. I was trapped in a moral crisis. It wasn't a moral crisis, you could call it a crisis of affection. In fact, I liked Mickey a lot but to behave maturely, I could not divulge this to the remaining boys of the team. It's not that Mickey distinguished himself. The matter was different here.

Mickey knew well that his vice-captainship could slip from his hands any time because his batting wasn't good. But he was the team's ingenious fast bowler and during matches he bowled in second place after me. The speed of his bowling and his line and length were satisfactory. For the most part he took two-three and sometimes three-four wickets in a match but Sonū weighed heavy. In addition to being a great batsman, he did a good leg-spin. During matches he bowled in fourth place and uprooted one or two wickets. Therefore, Mickey always wanted to keep me happy. In his attempts, he took me to his bungalow one day.

It was a cold noon. Mickey met me in a stationary shop in the bazaar. He came to buy bread and butter for tomorrow's breakfast. He saw me and approached me smilingly, grabbed my hand and nearly dragged me with him. I didn't refuse. I said nothing. The intoxication of the lukewarm sunlight in the cold had taken hold of me and like this, there was no desire to say nor to hear anything.

When Mickey removed the door chain of his bungalow's main-gate, it seemed to me he had opened the door of another unknown world for me. Cemented pathways were made all around the lawn, in which, for a beautiful, dreamlike life, a collection of red, yellow and white roses, dhalia's and seasonal marigolds were blossoming. Beyond the border-line of the lawn, the veranda was covered by the creepers of bougainvillea and money-plants.

While entering the main-gate, my eyes fell upon new matted chairs in the veranda, on one of these chairs sat a thirteen or fourteen year old girl. She wore a lovely white half sleeve t-shirt and a bright blue skirt. Her cold innocence and enchanting absorption in a book put a spell on me in an instant.

Her concentration was broken by the sound of our footsteps advancing towards the veranda and she got up. This seemed very bad to me. Thinking that she would go inside, I was struck with grief. It seemed if this was the case, then this interesting lukewarm sunlight would change into the noon heat of the summer months of Vaiśākha or Jeṭh. Instead of the sweet breeze, slowly emerging from the throat of the vines like a song, a wind would began to blow. The roses, the marigolds, the dahlias would fade but they say God is a friendly yet a loutish strongman. So God was friendly to me. She didn't go inside. On her face was an expression as if she wanted to ask Mickey something.

Me and Mickey went up the stairs and came near her.

– "Please, sit," Mickey addressed me. Unembarrassed, I sat down on a chair. They both sat down after me.

– "This is my team's captain," Mickey looked at her, and then at me – "This is Guḍiyā … my little sister."

– "And my…" I thought by myself.

"Not just her name, She's like a doll too," I couldn't refrain myself from casting a desire-laden glance at her

When this girl that was indeed a doll or a fairy, met my eyes, I was startled … she immediately took notice of the dove that flew, restlessly fluttering, towards her eyes from the latticed window of my eyes … her eyes opened wide with surprise. For a little while, hesitation lingered and in the end, an intense affinity and a pinch of mistrust disbelief spread. From these eyes flew doves with a white body and sapphire crystal bullets for eyes. Exactly like they had become tired from and entire day of flight and stampede and at dusk returned to theirs nests like some birds. Softly and slowly fluttering, the doves fit in the lattice of my eyes – "Mickey told only wonderful things about you … so much!" Her two hands – arms – spread in the air – a row of white teeth began to gleam. Lovely dimples appeared in her cheeks.

Mickey laughed at her uncommon unrest but I … I, struck by a spell, I was watching her as if enchanted by a magic spell. With a deep desire! Then she turned her eyes towards Mickey. If only he didn't see the restless doves!

“Take some breakfast!” Mickey looked at her, then at me – “Please have some toast”

“Errr … I don't eat loaf-bread.” There was some confusion, I should not have said loaf-bread, I should have said toast-bread. But what had been said, had been said … but on the inside, I laughed because I had tea and loaf-bread with great appetite but at this time, there remained no desire to eat anything. My heart and soul were overcast by such a devastation that I could pass my entire life in it's intoxication.

But as it is said … however much I wanted that as long as I stayed there, this doll would not go far out of sight, what does one get from longing? The doll stood up and went inside.

I was drowning in the fresh softness of a deep affection and it was Mickey who was saying something … I did not have any desire to say or hear something but like an utter fool, he could not remain quiet. He didn't mean bad, therefore his “yes” was met with my “yes”. It is obvious that my mind lingered somewhere else. I was feeling the charm of this smile that I held with my heart in every inch of the room.

Somewhat later, a tray of fibre was ready. On this tray were two bone-china cups and two saucers. Guḍiyā put the tray on the table and then picked up a cup and held it out in my direction. At that moment, she was really near to me. For one moment – oh – the cup stopped and her breath and the unknown and untouched warmth of her body aroused a primitive thirst in me. A rather crazy whish was that I would get up from the chair, my head held high … that I would take her perfect face, softer then a wad of cotton, in my hands … that I would kiss her forehead … but the moment passed by without any of those wonders.

She sat down on her own chair.

“Please, take,” she gestured towards the tray, on which two plates were placed: filled with chocolate creamy biscuits and salty snacks.

“No, I'm fine,” I brought the cup to my mouth, “Hey!” I had begun to drink, thinking the substance in the cup was tea when it was coffee. “Goodness!” This is what they call good fortune. Could any of the other village-boys ever have such luck?

Internally, I folded my hands and saluted this bungalow and batsman. The bungalow and the bat! Everything is by virtue of these two. If not, what are 'we' then? We will probably not know how

badly we desire to see Mickey and Sonū from up close … and as for achieving such greatness, we could not even think of it in our dreams.

I finished the coffee and looked at the cup that stood on the table, from a room inside a middle-aged woman with wide brows, furnished with grey hairs, a straightened-out yellow sari and a tiny bindi emerged into the veranda. Her steady, slender appearance and utterly lovely features resembled Guḍiyā. So I easily guessed she was Mickey and Guḍiyā's mother and also that this could be the very grace of Guḍiyā.

With totally honest veneration, I took both her hands. I wanted to bow down and touch her feet, like those of the aunts of relatives or – who knows – going somewhere or after a number of days returning from somewhere, I would touch my mother. But a rustic shyness stopped me.

"Sit down. Sit down," she smiled.

When she proceed to the chair near Guḍiyā and sat down, I took my own chair, exactly like all the boys stand up when some master enters a classroom and they sit down on their own chairs after he ascened his throne.

"Are you studying, son?" Her voice was sweet as candy. I liked her charm very much.

I nodded my head in confirmation.

– "In which class?"

– "Yes, this year I'll go to ninth," I became worried, would she ask about my school?

But this day, all things were in my favour.

– "He often sings your praise," she cast a loving glance at Mickey.

Ik kept smiling in my answers. I wanted to say very little. I was afraid that some improper words would escape my mouth. I was afraid that I would ruin the game.

"Son, these days there's nothing much to be gained in education. Today cricket can make very glamourous career. Money, name, fame, … today, it's all in cricket. From the high classes to the low classes, cricket has become the ultimate craze. It has gotten star value."

Her personality is so dignified that I lost my wit. I remembered my own mother, who was engaged in stove and grinding stone, in dish and pot and on whose face the sorrows and worries of a lifetime had left behind innumerable wrinkles and an utter gloom and my heart was filled with a deep grief – "If your blessing remained, then anything can be made from a fibre." Getting up from the chair, I

took both hands and bowd my head. My throat became constricted but you will appreciate my spirit: I stopped my tears.

“Practice, son … If God wills, you will make a name. She gratified me laying her hand on my forehead.

If left this world with a lot of grief and despair. Guḍiyā came to the main gate to see me out.

“Come again.”

She tried to find her dove in my eyes … I couldn't say anything, I only nodded my head in approval.

“Your mother is very good. Wide hearted,” I told Mickey when crossing the officers' colony. I wanted to mention Guḍiyā too but I was not that foolish.

Mickey went back when he had seen me of to the road.

‘One day … one day, I will become the captain of India's team and marry Guḍiyā. That dignified woman will become my mother-in-law … A mother-in-law is a mother too. And a world-cup winning Indian captain is an important son-in-law of the family … After that I …’

I stood in front of the wreched, old-looking bungalow. Even now, the taste of the coffee was fixed on my tongue and in my mind.

As I thrust in our own bungalow, the deepest affection for Mickey overflowed me. He was the team’s only boy who addressed me with respect – “brother-in-law, *sāllā*[49] !!”

“What were you thinking?” Sonū profondly looked me in the face. He had become agitated because of my long silence.

“Nothing,” returning from another world, I became wary. Instead of Sonū, I addressed his puppets: “In fact, Mickey is the first bowler. Making runs, me and Sonū are similar, but I really need a fast bowler with me. In the last six matches, Mickey took six, no, thirteen wickets and why just our team; look at the Indian team … a first bowler is the vice-captain.”

I became a bit more serious – “Although he makes a lot of mistakes, the most beautiful of his balls is that they mostly go to yorker-length.”

“Yet I too deliver yorkers,” said Aniś; he was the son of second class manager B. Gupta, i.e. Benu Gupta. His bungalow was barely a hundred yards from my bungalow but he had never come to my bungalow before. When we met some time outside the playing field, on the road or in the market,

49 *Sāllā*: this word can mean borther-in-law but it can also be used as a pejorative word. In this story it is used in both ways.

his tone was formal, almost indifferent. Maybe it was because of his pride in being the son of an officer and becauseSonū was the son of a more important officer then his father that he ran after Sonū like a tame dog.

Seeing this behaviour in Aniś, I was intent on handling correctly. In this endeavour, I called him to bowl last of all in the previous match. He immediately gave a firm reaction to this. His eyes filled with an all-consuming hatred and he looked at me with devouring eyes. Then – with all his might – he smashed the ball ton the ground: "I am not bowling!"

We lost the match. The atmosphere was so nerve-racking that I couldn't even rebuke him in the middle of the match. Before this, his balls were taken in two or three matches. I didn't let pass the opportunity to assuage his dislike and to bring down his mind with my own hands.

"Huh, delivers yorkers," I frowned in a peculiar manner, "therefore lets beat fours in all overs, doesn't know the difference between a yorker and a full toss so shut up!"

He silently withdrew in his game, like a tortoise. Suddenly, I became alert. By the manner in which I was talking, it must have seemed clear to Sonū and his followers that I was choosing Mickey's side."

"Just like your batting is unmatched. Your technique of moving to the back foot and hitting a short is exclusive. Exactly like a python." At this praise, Sonū's chest became a tad wider. I saw the opportunity to set up a trap: "but I don't have the power to appoint or cast aside a vice-captain … why not vote for it?"

When he had heard my words, the radiance of Sonū's face diminished. He remained confused for a while and then let out a deep sigh and stood up.

His yes-men also got up.

"It's OK, there will be a vote of confidence."

"Tomorrow?" I had also left my chair.

"Done!" He showed his thumb and fiercely stepped away from the bungalow, under its terraces. Behind him all his followers.

My victory was faintly making me smile. Jerks, a vote of confidence! I made a calculation: five votes of Mickey and his followers and one vote from me. How will you become vice-captain?"

It was a good opportunity. I was determined to get access to this illusionary world filled with a warm beauty … come on, son, you have won your lottery.

But faith was somewhat spoiled that day. When I entered from the main gate, I saw that, Mickey was occupied with some book he had taken to the veranda instead of Guḍiyā. When he saw me, he got up smiling: “Come!”

Arriving on the veranda, I occupied a chair with full authority, yet accompanied by the desire that during our chat, Guḍiyā would come out of an inner chamber onto the porch and take the chair opposite me, I told Mickey everything in all excitement and with a loud voice. With every sentence of my story, Mickey became more serious. To save myself from these looks, I peered inside, towards the drying room. But there was nobody in the drying room.

“What will happen now?” Mickey had indeed become very alarmed. Making a sharp point of it, I elaborately explained my strategy. In the end I said: “All your followers will vote for you, isn’t it? There are no cheats, no?”

“No, don’t raise the matter. I will meet all of them tonight,” restlessly, he got up, “but yet you will support me, isn’t it?”

“Yes, yes, rest assured. You will surely stay the vice-captain as long as the “Eleven Stars” team exists.” Guḍiyā did not come to the drying room or the veranda, so I too got up raging with anger.

“One minute,” Mickey thought of something and went inside. When he came back five minutes later, he had in his hand the tray that Guḍiyā fetched for me at one time. On the plate were plates filled with cream biscuits and dālbījī.

“The coffee is coming;” he put the tray on the table and sat down on his chair.

“Maybe Guḍiyā will bring the coffee!” Strengthened by this hope, I took a biscuit.

A yellow sunlight was scattered on the dahlia’s and roses on the lawn,, making the atmosphere agreeable but without Guḍiyā, all this looked lifeless.

Guḍiyā’s mother came to bring a cup of coffee. I stood up with a bow and took both hands.

“How are you, son?” Smiling, she handed the cup of coffee over to me.

“I’m fine,” today she was wearing light pink chiffon sari. From her moist hairs, it seemed she had come just after bathing. I considered her age was about my mother’s age but she was looking very brisk and sound as if she had married at most a year ago … Guḍiyā had taken exactly after her mother: that figure, that dignity … I felt pity for my mother again. I was stirred by some galling feeling.

“Mickey was saying that Sonū came to your place for becoming vice-captain … ”

“Yes! He’s very proud. He’s not enduring Mickey’s being the vice-captain.”

“Like father, like son … there's a very jealous feeling towards us in their hearts,” on her face, a certain embarrassment shone through.

“Yes, he didn’t want to see Mickey at all. However, we have decided. Mickey will remain vice-captain. He’ll have to swallow his words. I’ll take care of everything.” I was filled with pride and a deep familiarity with her.

“Yes, I understood that, you are, so what’s there to be afraid of …”

Guḍiyā will not come today! … my agitation grew worse.

“Right, I’m going now,” I stood up from my chair.

Both of them also got up from their chairs. Then a jeep of the mining-company stopped at the main gate and Guḍiyā got out, dangling a school bag. She really looked like a child in her white and navy-blue school dress.

My heart filled with annoyance – “You’ve come too, when the game has ended. So if fortune is not on one’s side, then what could he say, what could he do?”

– “Guḍiyā is having exams,” she informed me.

– “How was your paper?”

Guḍiyā entered the veranda – “Hi, when did you come?” – There was an adventurous openness in her voice. My question went in the air …

– “Only a short while ago. How did your paper go,” I repeated my question.

– “Very well. Are you leaving?”

– “I am, it has become very late.”

– “Then you said you have just arrived, now you are saying it is getting late,” she smiled mischievously.

– “No, I have some work to do. I’ll come back,” her familiarity and unexpected openness made me turn soft inside.

– “Sure, you’ll come.”

"Hi … when did you come … you are going … sure, you'll come …" that day I roamed about the roads, the bazar, the statiom and the officers' colony, chewing pan, till late at night. A strange passion crossed over my heart and mind, making me exhilarated.

Ye duā hai merī rab se	My wish from God is
tujhe āśikoṃ meṃ sabse	that, from all loves, my love
merī āśikī pasand āye	would please you most,
merī ā-śi-kī pasand āye	… my love would please you most …

Ye duā hai merī rab se	My whish from God is
tujhe śāyaroṃ meṃ sabse	that, from all verses, my verse
merī śāyarī pasand āye	would please you most,
merī śā-ya-rī pasand āye	my verse would please you most …

Returning home at midnight, I was feeling very light. My wings spread and flying like a butterfly, the chick of a bird or a kite, I could go anywhere … I began to feel some kind of aversion for cricket, the Officers Stadium, the boys of the team … I began to feel an aversion for all the deception that took place in order to create renown for the "Super Eleven."

That night I came very near to God and Death. I really wished to embrace God, of whom no-one knows where he was but who was certainly somewhere … If Guḍiyā would die tomorrow morning, then what other road would there be ahead of me, besides embracing death? And if I were to die, would she keep on living? It would be good if we would die together … white sheets, two children immersed in a cold and endless sleep! I was entangled in an invisible net. I had woven this net for myself with great dedication. Yet how could I get out of it so quickly?

The next day, taking a jar that had been punctured at the top with a nail and at sight resembled a money box, I arrived at the stadium. All the boys from the team were present there.

Tearing a blank paper, eleven slips were made. Together with all the other boys of the team, I wrote one name on a slip and all slips were put in the jar. Then, in front of everybody, I opened the lid of the jar and took out the slips.

While the slips were disclosed one by one, the tension on Mickey's and Sonū's face grew deeper. The remaining boys of the team were taking pleasure in the thrilling game. Five slips with the names of Sonū and Mickey each had come out.

"And this is the last;" I waved the last slip in the air.

For one moment, everybody held his breath. Sonū watched me with helpless eyes.

Opening the slip, I read: "Mickey!"

"Hurray! Hurray!" Mickey and his followers were triumphant.

Sonū's face turned red, as if he had come eight-ten kos[50] by foot in the heat of Vaiśākha or Jeṭh.

When the game was over and all the boys had returned to their homes, Mickey fell upon my neck.

That day even in my dreams, I could not think that my destiny would become so radiant so soon. Even today, I'm deeply astonished. In the end, how did it happen? And even so soon? My tactical cunning was still up to the trick … who can deny their existence? *Hoiheṃ sāī jo Rāma raci rākhā,* let there be, oh Lord, what Rāma has carved out! … and maybe Rām has carved this out in my destiny.

Within a few hours, my empire was snatched away from me. The world that I lost, where the Officers Stadium, the Eleven Stars and Mickey and Sonū were, the bungalow where Guḍiyā was, where the dignified woman was and the excitement of power, stature and self-confidence.

The fault was all mine. My strength and authority shattered to pieces, I could not judge the situation properly. Throughout history, this error by all rulers and despots was the cause of their decline. If not, who had the nerve to look me in the face? It could also be that falling in love made me foolish and weak …

After his vice-captainship was saved by my grace, he approached Sonū. Where usually the coldness between them should grow even deeper, it wasn't like that. For me, this was the hour of peril but I was becoming negligent.

One day, father wearily returned home, tired and covered in black dust, and sank down on a rattan chair in the living room. He put his head on the back of the chair and closed his eyes … when mother brought refreshments, he said: "There is a strike in the coalmine."

Well, it was a big deal. The coalmine's north area car-electrician Rāmprasād's son was admitted to hospital. From the site of the north region where he repairs millions worth of giant machines to the

50 8-10 *kos:* sixteen-twenty miles

hospital, it was a distance of three kilometres. At one o'clock, when it was lunch break, he went to the hospital to see his son. It was almost three a clock when he returned to the worksite where another spectacle stirred up. Raging with anger, executive engineer S.K. Sarkār was swearing at him in the English swearwords that were in vogue. He found out that since an entire hour, there was a wholepack breakdown. He grasped his error and even while he silently began to do his work, he was aware of his humanity but Sarkar sāhab's anger hadn't cooled off. To the present bābūs, he gave the advice to suspend Rāmprasād today.

Rāmprasād too was burning with anger.

"You have come to the site an entire hour earlier and are growing angry like a pregnant cow. For eight hours, we work in dust, hardship and heat, yet do you know how hot is is for us? Do they pay twelve-fifteen thousand in wages for walking on the site for hours to you, sarkār? On top a bungalow and a car … you say 'idiot' and 'nonsense' to us … you're the master of digging idiots … if you curb those who are present, you'll curb yourself."

"You bastard," his hands went to Rāmprasād's collar.

And that was just where the problems began.

With one blow of a fist, he collapsed on the ground, his face on his hands. The cleanly washed white shirt littered with blotches of blood and black dust.

His teeth had cut his lips and blood was incessantly leaking out. Then, with the help of some workers, he made it to the hospital.

At night, the chief of the police station seized Rāmprasād who had gone out to fetch vegetables at the market and, took him to the police station and delivering eight-ten blows with a stick took him in detention. The case arose in the district officers' association and Rāmprasād was dismissed from work. Along with Rāmprasād, most miners were member of the trade union that was connected with the largest political party in the country and was in the hands of the authorities in Delhi. The miners' union leaders went to the city and explained the entire incident to their supreme leaders. The high leaders got the assurance of the prickling of an opium pipe in the throat from the helplessness of the managers and instructed them to organize a demonstration, to enforce concessions through a blockade of the coalmine and, if they wouldn't even respond to this, to call off a strike.

After this, the towns decrepit roads and alleys were drenched in pride, buzzing with crowds of energetic, feisty miners from dusk till dawn. Thanks to slogans like "Management down," "Officers' rule doesn't work, doesn't work, doesn't work," "Backhandler, commission-handler!

Officer wake up," and "Viva workers," the atmosphere in the entire village became heated. In houses, on markets, in alleys and lanes – one could say everywhere in the air of the entire village – Rāmprasād's dismissal and the strike were passed on …

In the alleys, children chanting "Management down, viva workers," began to play gulli danda and lālū-lālū.

For their own protection, the Officers' Association began to stalk the City Municipal Council as well as the Coal Ministry; there are thirty-six workers for each manager …

For our village this was a hitherto unseen event.

Just as all this had happened – or was happening – before me, I was so foolishly immersed in the "Officers Stadium", the "Eleven Stars", the love for this girl and the infatuation with this dignified woman that I wasn't noticing.

But even the "Officers Stadium" did not remain free from the effect of the incident. The discussions of the boys in the team involved the strike, the Officers' Association and the trade union. Between Mickey and Sonū, all these complaints were remote. Suddenly, all the boys of the team sided with the Officers' Association and I … with the workers' union. This position stirred up a terrifying agitation inside me.

I was constantly stuck in an effort to explain them that – outside their study and play, you should not give any attention to external troubles. All this is the struggle of grown-ups and it can be settled excellently by them … my words didn't have any special effect on those young gentlemen. I had conceived this but still they listened silently to my speech. There was no counter-voice but there had certainly come another kind of siding into being, in which I had become a side on my own again.

And the day came too that the foolhardy cunning was coming to my ears, like the sound of the footsteps of a reckless cat. For how long can we entice or cast doubt upon the truth? When I arrived at the stadium that day, Sonū said: "Today is my birthday. You must surely come."

"Err, you haven't told me before," I was startled.

"Sorry yār, I meant to tell you yesterday but I forgot … sorry!"

"Really, it's no problem. Happy birthday to you," I shook his hand, "I'll be coming"

I did say that I would come but internally, I burst with anger. The problem was to bring a birthday gift. The end of the month was approaching, there was the threat of the strike and at home, there was a serious lack of money.

I took Mickey aside and asked him: “Are you invited by Sonū?”

“I am.”

“Which present will you give?”

“I can’t say. Father will purchase it.”

“What should I give?” I asked openly.

“Give him an instrument-box,” he said carelessly.

“Will an instrument-box be fine?” My face was clouded with uncertainty.

“Yes, yes, it’s sufficient.”

Returning home, taking my bat and wicket I was thinking how I would provide an instrument-box. Racking my brain for a while, I left the road and happily entered our old bungalow.

Father had come back from the coalmine. The unrest, worry and dismay on his face had grown deeper then before. His entire face was covered in dust and sweat, mother was sitting near him.

Washing up, I listened – Rāmprasād’s dismissal had not been revoked and starting today, all workers were on strike … in the courtyard, drying my eyes, I heard those words that I can honestly say I never in my life wanted to hear. Every hair on my body stood on head quivering. My ears would have turned red.

“Those stupid, wretched officers … in their isolation, they have no difficulty and they think of the workers as stupid dogs … stupid pimps … for a car, a bungalow, a post they would rent out their wife, daughter and sister.

Mother wanted to stop him but he didn’t stop. “That deficient A.K Singh … slippery General Manager. R. Rāmprasād’s wife lived in the village for a month and Mrs. Singh went, seated in the company jeep, to prepare food. After that Singh became Assistent General Manager … Superintendant Engineer Rayvā … G.M. Gil … his wife had him caught red-handed together with Panjabiyā Mādaraco. A lowly woman. Forty years of age, her face shiny with paint and powder it's a filthy high-class whore …” And who knows what else he had said, there was no contempt, no resentment in his voice. There was helplessness, there was entreaty. There was a deep feeling of fear and defencelessness. The beating of my heart became strong, as if I had returned running the hundred meters. I took pity on father, I was angry too. Pity because he hadn’t been able to become an officer, anger because he wasn’t able to endure his fate as a labourer. I was even more angry

because he had branded this woman that had become an ideal for me, for whom amazing devotion and deep respect blossomed inside me, a whore. Watching her, or lost in thoughts about her, I think of a smiling, satisfied and wonderfully white Mother Mary that I had seen in a park in the cold evening twilight … at some time, the previous prime minister of the country – whose mother- and father-in-law ruled the country in the long time he remained prime minister – his foreign wife's face flashed through my mind. She who could not forget her unprecedented origin and on whose face a pair of eyes were stitched, filled with a strange vanity, dignity and an unknown coldness.

She was "my mother-in-law". "My wife" had come from her womb!

Caught red handed, together with Panjabiyā Mādaraco …

Oh … one moment I was so alienated from the entire world that I wanted to go to sleep in my room and cover my face with the sheets or wander the dark streets chewing pan. But this detached feeling did not last. Shaking my head, I approached a rather big wooden wardrobe in the middle room. In this wardrobe, all the clothes in the house were placed. I took out my white shirt and black long trousers to wear at special occasions.

Wearing my long trousers, I tucked in my shirt and, my hands put in my pockets, I walked very stylishly towards the mirror. On a rack there were talcum powder and a casket of perfume. On the top of the casket, written in English, was "Cobra" and beneath a black snake with a spread hood was standing upright.

Tidying my hair, I applied a tiny bit of powder to my face and on an impulse I pressed down the hood until all the venom was out.

"It's the night of carnage, tonight …" a malicious smile ran over my face.

The entire room wavered under the weight of the scent. Sitting down on the bed with great confidence, I put on my shoes upon which father and mother beset me.

– "What – do you prepare for?" Father asked.

– "It's Sonū's birthday," there was a little tension in my voice.

– "Are you invited?" Mother sat down on the bed with a brisk movement.

– "I am."

– "You're a fool … you should tell first … do you need money?" father was restless.

– "No … I have bought," the unrest in my voice grow.

– "Where? … How?"

– "I've borrowed, from a friend's shop …" there was irritation in my voice.

"Tell him there's payment the day after tomorrow … settle the account," father averted his eyes while he spoke. He was worried, distressed.

Both father and mother looked at me guiltily.

I stood up and got out with a burdened mind.

A few days before, at some point I had said: "The G.M. in the coalmine and me in the Officers Stadium run a parallel government." I had thought that he would become mad because of my words but he wasn't mad, his face was glowing with pride, as if there was no ambiguity in what I had said.

That day too, I wanted to repeat my words but I couldn't. My heart was filled with despair … when at home, I was besieged by mother and father, the both of them were very, very angry … and now … now, I was feeling like bursting out in tears before them and saying: "Why are you worried? It's me, no? You have given me lots of love, you have had a lot of grief because of me, but now I've grown up. I can deal with my own troubles and I will quickly do something. I'll take you to this other world whose doors have only opened for me now."

I went to the market where I had to win another battle now.

I had sometimes taken a loan at Nandu Stationary Shop. Necessary of unnecessary, I brought packs of incense-sticks, tea and milk from there. But Nandu too was an accomplished shrewd. When I would tell him that I had to take a loan for something or that I would give the money on payment-day, he used to refuse boldly, saying that he didn't have it. When, for instance, I would tell him that I needed a packet of tea-leaves, he would say: "I haven't got any tea-leaves."

Later, I tricked him. Arriving at his shop, I would ask with panache: "Got any incense-sticks?" Trying to see through my determination with his spiteful eyes, he said: "Yes, I have."

When I had the packet of incense-sticks in my hand, I struck my blow:

Today, I did this too. When the instrument box was packed in coloured paper and it was handed over to me, I made an allusion to payment and went on.

It was the first time I went to Sonū's bungalow. At the time I was at fifty steps from his bungalow, my courage began to sink. Dozens of Maruti 800's, Fiats and Gipsies were standing in the vicinity of the bungalow.

I clenched my fists, emboldened myself and accomplished, I was admitted inside the main gate. The bungalow was bigger then Mickey's and its splendour … it was overpowering with its dazzling

radiance … right of the main gate, there was a rather big lawn. In the lawn, there was a fountain decorated with lotus flowers and neon lights. On the lawn, hundreds of chairs were placed but except for a few women plastered with make-up and some children, most people were standing talking within their own clique. My eye fell on Aniś and some boys of the team. My eyes, however, were searching for Mickey, Sonū and Guḍiyā but they were nowhere to be seen.

Somewhat later, I was still standing there, uncertain what to do. My eyes moved to three tables that were place in the middle of the lawn. One was a long rectangular table on which food, concealed in baskets, was placed. An adjacent triangular table yielded under the large gift boxes. On a third, oval-shaped table a very big cake. Above the cake a round red balloon, even larger then the cake, was suspended.

"Deliver your gift and eat some food," I smiled in myself for comfort; I was again filled with a deep embarrassment and shame.

I handed over my gift when I saw Mickey leaving the veranda and coming to the lawn. The blue blazer suited his round face, in his hand a cut class filled with coke. He saw me and came my way – "Come!"

I felt a little relieved.

Together with Mickey, I went to a chair that was put at the edge of the lawn and went down. For a while, the two of us remained quiet. Then I couldn't endure the silence: "Where's Sonū?"

– "He's inside. He'll be coming any moment."

Maybe Mickey was feeling some distress with me.

– "Guḍiyā didn't come?" For he first time in my life I mustered up some courage.

– "She has come," time and again he his eyes were staring in the direction of the veranda – "She has come, one minute," he speedily crossed the lawn, arrived at the veranda and was concealed from my eyes.

I was by myself again. My mood started to become detached again.

– "Haven't I made a mistake coming here?"

Where I was sitting – I could easily take a drink at five-six steps away – Sonū and Mickey's father were standing with their officer friends, stirring up the matter of the strike.

– "It won't last long," assistent Manager A.K. Singh, Sonū's father, took a small gulp.

– "I see, but for the managment, such things remain bothersome," superintendant engineer Rāy sāhab, my father-in-law to be, took his right hand of of the pocket of his trousers and put his glasses in place.

"So much disregard," my blood began to boil. I was reminded of my father's face that was laden with fatigue, dust, fear and helplessness.

At the same time, my eye fell upon my future mother-in-law, standing in another corner.

"Future mother-in-law. Phuh," I laughed pallidly.

She was standing in her own circle, was shining in a cream-coloured chiffon sari. Today, she appeared to be beautifully adorned the way the rest of the women were. A pretty, fair, young woman was saying something and together with the other women, she was attentively listening to her words.

I kept gazing at her. A little later, our eyes crossed. I stood up from my chair, folding my hands in the usual manner.

She answered nodding her head. I wanted to move in her direction but with a sign of her hands, she told me to sit.

Just as I was sitting down on my chair, the deafening sound of a birthday song spread in the air, breaking a special kind of quiet.

You will live a thousand years.

My there be fifty-thousand days in a year!

At that instant, some boys wearing jeans, T-shirts, woollen jackets and Adidas shoes appeared on the veranda and quickly descended the stairs on to the lawn. From the speed of their steps and their antics, it seemed as if they came out winning a war. Among them, except for Mickey and Sonū, there were some boys that I did not know.

In his cotton trousers, Mickey was looking different from the all the others, he – what do they say – looked apart … something special … as if enchanted, I began to gaze at Mickey.

Behind him, a band of fairies descended from the veranda. Guḍiyā was among them too. She wore a salvār. In the pink loose cotton pants, she looked so lovely that I would set only two steps out, hold her face in my hands and kiss her lips but I don't know why seeing Guḍiyā today did not make me any happier.

My heart was stopped by a strange vexation. There was also a frightening restlessness. The women and children sitting on chairs got up standing. All people began to gather around the oval-shaped table.

I too got up. Somebody turned down the deafening music. The mood became exhilarated. Coloured wax candles that were stuck into the cake were lit.

With two-three gusts of air, Sonū blew out all the candles.

People clapped their hands.

– "Happy birthday to you, Sonū … happy birthday to you …"

– "Many, many happy returns of the day … many, many …" the fairies sang.

– "Oh son, King of the Gods, Indra … Oh son Sonūā … What is said of you … God has shaped your path with leisure."

Somebody put a needle in the balloon that hung above the cake. Sonū's head was covered in golden stars. A.G.M. A.K. Singh cut a small piece of the cake and placed it in his son's mouth. Then he kissed him on the forehead.

Father and son embraced each other.

I silently slipped away and removed my present from the gift-table.

All the while, I was becoming so angry at Mickey, Sonū and all the dogs from the team that – what shall I say? All the worth in this world had gone lost so that I didn't even have any recollection of it. After all, I was captain of the team. Were they ignoring me on purpose? They were making the situation clear … well, I would make the situation clear … tomorrow, I will put them to silence one by one … I will … there will be a riot tomorrow in the Officers' Stadium.

I had become very angry and maybe, I made a mistake with this. It is said that anger corrupts the mind so my judgement too had become "degenerate" of "base".

In anger, I decided that I would not have snacks. When, taking a plate, Mickey approached me, I only took cake from it.

"Take the plate …"

"No," my voice was very cold and harsh. Mickey insisted a few times but, in my stubbornness, I remained obstinate.

I wanted to make clear that I was really angry and that there would be trouble in the Officer's Stadium tomorrow.

Sonū and the other boys from the team began to gather around, I looked at them with great contempt – Yes, brothers, bastards, now I understand.

"Why … have you left home after you had your *sattū*[51]," Sonū laughed in a bizarre way that indicated he was sneering.

– "No, my health isn't looking well."

– "Why, what happened?" – that was Aniś.

– "My digestion must have become upset, your honour."

I guffawed loudly once more.

My entire body writhed with anger and hate. I remembered the scene when I returned from the Officers' Stadium, taking my bat and wicket … yes, this will be fine.

"I'm leaving. I got up form the chair and like an arrow that is shot from a bow, I left the lawn and advance to the main gate.

All were watching me silently, nobody tried to stop me.

I was ten in the evening. As soon as I arrived home, mom and dad besieged me.

– "Who all has come to the party?"

Father kept on chirping, as if I had conquered the Red Fort.

– "All have come."

– "Sharmā sāhab … Sarkār sāhab …"

– "Yes, yes, the G.M came too," I tried to act natural.

– "Fine … were they asking something about me?"

– "No … I'm going to sleep," I yawned forcedly I wanted to escape.

– "What's the matter … you appear completely detached." Mother profoundly looked me in the face.

51*Sattū*: a coarse flower made from grains like barley and pulses like gram or lentil.

– "No, it's nothing … I've become tired," I became worried.

– "Yes, yes … go to sleep! You must have become tired … you haven't eaten decently," father was stammering.

After putting out the lights, I lay down and covering my head with the sheets, I burst out in tears – What has happened … oh, God! Could it be avoided?" I emboldened myself and, grinding my teeth, came to a boil – "Tomorrow I will see them all … I'll put their beds upright – Would I want to stay in the team or not? And if I stay, then how would that be? Who would collide with me … whose mother made him drink so much milk … he who clashes with me, will be shattered."

I didn't know when I fell asleep.

In the morning, when I got up after sleeping, I felt light – "All will be fine, I only need to remain thoughtful." They say that speech is silver and silence is gold … well, it's no good to nullify speech. It is also said that a lot of problems will automatically get solved by remaining silent.

This way, I didn't even go to school but I decided to stroll around the market and streets until nine-ten o'clock. But that day I did not set foot outside the house. I awaited the evening in bed, weaving my tactical plans.

Like every day, I arrived at the Officers' Stadium around four o'clock where two blows at once were awaiting me. Both fell together.

When the line-up was not complete without me, the game did not begin because I brought the bat and wicket with me … but today, the line-up was complete. The game had begun too and on the pitch were three new wickets were put up … Mickey and Sonū took out their bats too.

The event made something clear to me. Then again …

I had entered the stadium. Sonū was on the batting-crease and Aniś was delivering him the ball.

"Who did the line-up without me?" – in a very subdued and cold voice.

"Why, if you would lay down, would we have to stop the game waiting for you?" Sonū picked up his bat and began to fix the soil that was disturbed by the falling ball.

Keeping quiet, I went to the off-side boundary and started to field. My thoughts broke into a panic.

– "Well son … captain … how are you?"

After the over had ended, Aniś picked up the ball. He was fielding next to me.

– "Give the ball here," I watched him with strong disregard and contempt.

– “It’s my turn …”

– “It makes no difference. I am the captain … and my decision is final,” I grinned recklessly – look how foolish this boy is.

– “No … I will do the bowling.”

– “Give here that ball!” I hissed, grating my teeth and, clenching my fists, I advanced in his direction.

– “I don’t give …” seeing me coming in his direction, he became a little scared but he pressed the ball firmly in his right hand. The boys of the team began to gather near us.

– “It’s Aniś’s turn, He’ll bowl!”

Sonū and Mickey, together with all the boys of the team, were talking by the side of Aniś or, better said, they were defying me.

I was surrounded.

What would I do? Was this the last moment?

– “Motherfucker … son of a bitch … what do you people think of yourself!” I couldn’t believe it was my voice.

Was it my voice?

– “Huh, those are filthy names you're calling us … you don't live here!” Sonūs face became tense with emotion.

– “Damn you loafer … what do you think of yourself?” blood must have risen in my eyes.

– “Get out of the field!” Arrrr, that was Mickey’s voice – “… so you too answer … ah, it doesn’t matter…

– “Hey, why Mickey … mother warms the G.M.’s bed, father is a filthy pimp and you, son, since when have you become a senior?”

– “Now he won’t play with us…”

– “Uhu … he’s not worthy of us…”

– “Sonū will be our captain.”

– “Yes, sure, Sonū is all right …”

– “He’s the product of labour … how can a mentality change?”

I was again surrounded by everybody. All were saying anything to oppose me – I too didn't want to remain quiet.

"Oh yes, idiots … I'm the son of a worker but my my father doesn't send my mother to colour the nights of his boss … do you scoundrels know who is your real father? As far as Mickey is concerned, I can confirm. He is the G.M.'s son, not his father's …"

– "Get out … Get out of the field …"

– "I won't go … let me see you fight if you have the courage … I will send you back to the hole you emerged from one by one."

Looking at me with deep hatred, Mickey spat on the ground – "You're a very base boy … I couldn't imagine…"

Maybe he wanted to spit me in the face.

"Don't come near me, 'your highness', I'll tell you who's virtuous and who's vile now … Come here, all of you! Come here … a Ganges of blood will flow!" I turned around, swaying both my arms about. The mugger stubbornly didn't grab the fishes … I stretched out my legs and feet Bruce Lee style and began to jump – "Come here … come here, each and everyone of you … come on! Come on"

"The game begins … Don't give any attention to this antisocial element," Sonū began to run towards the batting crease. All the boys followed behind him.

The game began again. I kept swearing for half an hour. I was meddling with all seven generations of women in their families, starting with their mothers and sisters, but non gave any attention to my words.

I'll repeat that it was my fault. I couldn't identify with them. They were one by one educated wives and I was the old quarrelsome mother-in-law.

I began to spit while speaking.

The imaginary face of a dying old mother-in-law came to mind. A face filled with fear.

Helpless, destitute, as if I had been slapped in the face, I left the Officers' Stadium.

Completely disgraced, I left the lane.

I turned around and, with great grief, looked once again at my unconquerable empire that wasn't mine … that had become someone else's.

I felt a pang, in my heart … and I could not ease the surge. I hurled down the bat and wicket right there on the ground and cast down, I began to weep … I kept on weeping for a long, long time!