### LITERARY

# Eliot's Ideas of Tradition and Individual Talent

Fayza Sultana

HE Romantics of nine teenth century reacted against the neoclassical of literature. The Romantics came out from the disciplined tradition of the classical writers. They built up their own rule and subjectivity became important to them. The Romantics did not follow the rules and disciplines of Dryden, Pope or Jonson and these writers followed the tradition of the past, of Horace Virgil, and Ovid. The Romantics followed nature. and their own spontaneous feeling. Twentieth century writers reacted against the Romantics. Eliot came with the idea of following the tradition by which individual talent should become significant. He was the modern classicist in literature. In this essay "Tradition and Individual Talent". Eliot strongly argues in favour of tradition of past which makes the present more perfect and refined. Tradition is a dynamic force which does not stand still. The word tradition was

used in English in narrow sense, or in fact, in a negative sense, in the nineteenth century. Traditional poetry, or a poet who wrote in traditional way or traditional theme was criticized for the short comings and limitations. But Eliot did not take the word tradition in the limited sense. To follow tradition, does not mean to repeat the past. Eliot saw tradition from three different perspectives.

First, he said that to follow the tradition meant the aware ness of the past. That it involved the historical sense of past and presentness of the past. Second, that the present poets should realize that it is not 'the dead writers are remote from us because we know so much more than they did' instead the truth was, "they are that which we know". It means that poet should realize that root of knowledge goes to the past tradition. And the third viewpoint is that tradition is the most significant element of a new creation because new order develops with the awareness of the past.

Tinker, Tiller, Technical Change, edited by Matthew S Gamser, Helen Appleton and Nicola Carter. Intermediate Technology, 103-105 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4HH. ISBN 1 85339 061 5. Published in August 1990

(£9.95).

The awareness of the past

This book calls on development agencies to take more account of the extent of local knowledge and skills when introducing technological changes. It attempts to raise awareness of people's innovation at every

The authors consider 17 cases of locally developed technologies from 14 countries around the developing world.

It considers who are the innovators, what motivates them. and what constrains their productivity are just some of the issues examined.

HAKA'S video owners

sells like a hotcake.

think the name 'Amitabh'

Despite release of one new

Hindi movie - Qurbani Rang

Layegi, the video business

Joomma Chumma in London is

now on top of the chart and is

in great demand in the mar-

ket. One can really enjoy this

cassette with Amitabh the cen-

tre of the attraction, well sup-

ported by Amir Khan, Sri Devi,

Neelam, Salman Khan, and

Anupam Kher. The crowd, sets

and lightings at the famous

Wembley Stadium will dazzle

Mrinal Sen's Maha Prithibi

The children can grab the

There is a news for drama

(Bengali) starring Victor

Banerjee, Aparna Sen will ap-

two new cartoons Mickey

Mouse, and Tom & Jerry - 30.

lovers. A new Pakistani four-

peal the enlightened class.

your eyes.

Amitabh's stage programme:

remains quite satisfactory.

and the historical sense means that a poet should be aware of the history of poetical development from Homer till the present age. This awareness is not to be limited to the country's history; instead, the historical sense compels a man to write with his own generation and with all the generations of all time, of all countries. So. the poet must be aware of the timeless past as well as of the temporal present and timeless and temporal together. This awareness of timeless and temporal is what that makes a poet traditional. Eliot believed that "The historical sense which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most accurately conscious of his place in time". the poets strong consciousness, his power of creativity, depends on his ability to connect the past with the present and to make the best use in order to readjust some thing. Without the awareness. of the past the knowledge of present is incomplete.

This awareness of the past will make the present writers realize that "they are that which we know". This realization of the importance of tradition is necessary because the present age owes to the past its power of criticism of evaluation and of making contrast. The literature of any age cannot be valued alone. On the contrary, it is compared with the literature of the past age; it is contrasted and judged with the past and only then the evaluation is complete; when it proved that the present writers have used the knowledge about the predecessors to create the individual works. Thus the best individual works assert the immortality of the dead poets. The present is always directed by the past as past is altered and reviewed by the creative power of the present. Therefore, tradition and individual talent are related to each other by the poets or writer's sense of awareness. and by his realization of the importance of dead poets in the contemporary age.

Tradition cannot or must not be separated from individual talent for another reason. This is that art never improves, rather the material changes and develops. Change is important than improvement. There is always a conformity between the old and the new. Any existing work is complete before the new work arrives. When new idea arrives, the past is only altered and the present is directed by the past

New world modifies the ex-

isted erudition. As the present is judged by the past so will be the coming future judged by the present. This cycle of modification and alteration will continue age after age. So. there is no improvement of art but the change of materials and of thoughts. Eliot prefers the mind of individual nation to individual poet. Mind of a nation, of Europe keeps expanding without throwing away any tradition. The past was ignorant of the development which the present has. But as the present is aware of both past and present so the development becomes more promi nent and creative. Individual talent should be used to con form the old and the new and the artist should have "a continual extinction of personality". The poet should become the representative of all other people of his nation. The poet should be a medium to combine the remote past; with recent present as a results of which a better future will arrive. And so past does not remain remote any more. So the poet is like a catalyst in this task of conforming past and present, in his function of changing the present mind of Europe with the help of Homer. Virgil or Shakespeare.

Eliot also warns the impersonal poets that they should not be partial to any particular period of past literature. The poet should be impersonal, so he cannot show his interest in anything but to make a new present with the awareness of the past. Eliot also warns against erudition or pedantic attitude. Present creation should not be over balanced having a ridiculous amount of erudition of the past.

Professor Martin Parry, of Birmingham University, is Chairman of the UK Climate Change Impacts Review Group and was lead author in the assessment by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

This book provides an authoritative assessment of the likely impacts in different agricultural regions around the world.

(IPCC) on the potential impacts

of the change on agriculture.

He considers the ways agriculture could adapt to reduce a potential disaster.

He points out that if greenhouse emissions continue at or near the current level, global warming is expected to occur. This would result not only in higher mean temperatures but also in more unpredictable and severe weather.

Moru Tirtha Hinglaj (Social Drama): Uttam, Sabitri, Bikash

Banhi Shikha (Uttam, Supriya, R. Mallick, Olivia)

**Top 10 English Movies** 

Fist of Glory (Action) Dale **Apollo Cook** Ball Buster (Action) Bonnie

Paine A killing in small town (thriller-true story) Barbara

Hershey Gun Point (Action) Frank Kanio Chameleons (Comedy)

The Field (Drama) Richard Harris, Dhon Hart Bronx War (thriller) W Disney's Darby Ogill and

the little people (Fantasy) Seaw Connery W Disney's White Fang (Comedy) Ethaw Hawke Waiting for the light

(Drama) Sources: Filmfair, Dhan-

Sicily Video, Mohammed-



#### MY WORLD

From preceding page

Swan Lake, which on my own, could neither afford nor organise?

Secondly, I had frequent meetings with Ashfaq Ahmed (not his real name), a Pakistani communist who had fled the country during the crackdown on leftists and had ended up in Moscow to join the ranks of Asian exiles, with a job at the Soviet Institute on Asian Affairs. From our very first meeting when he lent me additional warm clothings - I had misjudged the severity of the Moscow winter - he treated me like a long lost brother. We went sight-seeing together in and around. Moscow, ate at his modest apartment and in little known restaurants run by ethnic minorities and spent hours with Asian exiles, including one Indian from Calcutta who, then in his eighties, had known Lenin personally.

Lastly, my several sessions with young Soviet writers and poets, one of whom had given me that charming message this piece started with.

To all these people, I had only one introduction, "A friend of Faiz."

UST two days before l eaving Karachi for Moscow, I ran into Faiz Sahib at 'a bookshop on the ground floor of Hotel Metropole. We had not met for a year or two. We exchanged pleasantries and our news "You are just the friend I have been looking for," said my former editor on hearing that I was on my way to Moscow.

In fact, Faiz Sahib himself had just returned from a trip to the Soviet Union where Russian translation of some of his best poems had come out in a book form, turning the Pakistani poet, already wellknown there, into a celebrity.

From the bookshop, we went to a handicraft store nearby, where the poet bought about a dozen gifts which were then wrapped in small packets. Our next stop was his apartment where, after a lunch, he wrote out the names on the gifts, the telephone numbers of his friends on a separate piece of paper and scribbled notes for Iqbal Athar and Ashfaq. Faiz Sahib did all this with meticulous care but in a quiet relaxed mood, sipping a cup of coffee and puffing a cigarette.

While watching the poet go through these motions, I recalled what a friend had once said about being in the company of Faiz Ahmed Faiz.

First, while, as a poet and a writer, he was himself an intense person, he had a way of putting the other person at ease. He spoke little, seldom asked anyone a direct personal question and offered his own views, on any subject under discussion, in carefully measured terms. I do not know if people ever got into arguments with him - it is unthinkable that no one ever did - but to me, it seemed that while he could provoke disagreements and deal with them in his usual quiet philosophical way, he would treat an argument with a shrug and a smile.

Secondly, Faiz cared for people, especially for journalists, writers and painters, often through simple gestures. Like he scribbled notes of introduction for me to friends in Moscow, he would jot down a latter to help an artist sell his painting to one of his many rich and understanding friends.

"One of my jobs," he once said to me, "is to put friends in touch with friends and see what they can do for one another."

On another occasion, he told an artist friend of mine, who had considerably benefited from the help extended by Faiz, "I love art, but I love artists more."

While Faiz finished writing his notes, I could not help wondering how he had once adjusted to journalism and, in time, become one of the outstanding newspaper editors of South Asia.

THILE politically it was less influential than Dawn, the Pakistan Times was undoubtedly the best English-language news-

#### **Buddhist Heritage**

From preceding page

13th century is mainly attributed to emergence of religious and social conservatism during the subsequent Sena Rule. The Senas supporting the Brahmical doctrine came from outside Bengal and ruled this country after the decline of Buddhist dynasties.

The writer is a teacher by profession with academic background in the study of Indian philosophy.



undergoing a fast cosmetic change over the past one and a half decade, as evident from a bird's eye view of its commercial district around Motijheel. Star Photo.

paper of the country, certainly until October 1958 when the turned-a leftist politician of paper and its allied publications were taken over by the martial law government of General Ayub Khan. The Lahore daily thus became the first newspaper to be placed under what was deviously called the Press Trust of Pakistan. More than three decades later, successive governments in Pakistan and Bangladesh just do not know what to do with their "Trust" publications which limp on along their rocky roads without much of a sense of direction. What a legacy Ayub has left behind for the media in Pakistan - and, oddly enough, in Bangladesh. During the best years of its existence, from its birth in 1948 until late 1958, the Pakistan Times was shaped and developed by a team of some excellent journalists, under the leadership of two men. Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Mazhar Ali Khan. They belonged to the cream of Punjabi intelligentsia and, what's more, they were part of a leftist movement that, right at the birth of Pakistan, was under a

Faiz and Mazhar needed all their courage, imagination and professional competence to produce a good newspaper which also maintained its progressive position on all national and international issues

severe attack from the ultra-

conservative pro-feudal admin-

In doing so, they had the support and guidance from a quarter that rarely supports imaginative editors - the

Indeed, as the majority share holder of the Progressive Paper's Limited (PPL) which owned the Pakistan Times and its allied publications, Mian

Iftikharuddin, a landlord-Pakistan, played a positive role in the evolution of the Lahore daily into a great newspaper of South Asia.

With full moral support from Mian Sahib - as Iftikharuddin was called by all - Faiz and Mazhar worked out a set of guidelines for the paper, which were understood and accepted by all. Had they been put into a codified form, this writer would have certainly kept a copy.

The guidelines incorporated all the rules of good journalism. There would be no slant in news presentation and editorial comments would be fair and balanced. Staff members would be encouraged to write bylined pieces for the editorial page, but they would not represent the views of the paper. Special attention will be paid to the coverage of art and literature and so on and so

An interesting guideline related to the coverage of the activities of Mian Sahib who, besides being a prominent politician, was also an active independent Member of the Parliament. It was understood by all that

the coverage of the owner's activities would be judged strictly on their news value. In fact, the tendency in the newsroom was to play them down so much so that Mian Iftikharuddin seldom hit the front page. We rarely saw his picture in the Pakistan Times.

As the Staff Correspondent of the paper, based in what was then East Pakistan, I had some experience as to how strictly this guideline was followed. It was in 1957, politically a hectic year, which had

brought Mian Sahib to Dhaka for consultation with Moulana Bhasani and other progressive leaders. One day he addressed a public rally at the Paltan Maidan, which I covered in a 800-word cable.

All that came out of the piece in the newspaper was a 200-word report, used on the bottom of an inside page. In a short note later. Faiz Sahib advised me that there was no need to cover Mian Iftikharuddin's activities extensively.

Here, one must give full credit to all three personalities Iftikharuddin, Faiz and Mazhar — that more than three decades ago they put into effect certain professional rules and guidelines which journal ists here and elsewhere in South Asia are still trying to establish, against all odds.

"It is really Faiz who made all the difference," a friend in Lahore once said when we were discussing how the Pakistan Times could be so far ahead of its time. While Faiz provided the Pakistan Times with its creative spirit, Mazhar placed it at a high professional level, another friend once said about the growth of this unique

This explains why the pa per, edited by one of the greatest poets of South Asia, showed such a strong bias for good writing. This meant that people who produced good signed columns, human interest profiles, discussions on art and book reviews turned out to be closest working associates of Faiz Sahib, a bit to the dismay of our colleagues at the

It was also very much under the guidance of Faiz that the Pakistan Times launched "Lailo Nahar", an Urdu weekly

devoted to art and literature, the first journal of its kind to be published in Pakistan.

If working with Faiz Sahib was stimulating and pleasant, it was also challenging, involving a lot of hard work.

Some time in 1957, the poet came to Dhaka for the shooting of 'Jago Hua Savera', the first feature film to be produced by an international team, for which Faiz had done the script. Ajay Kardar directed the movie, while the two leading roles went to Khan Ata and Tripti.

Faiz invited me to accompany him to a village on the Meghna where the shooting had been going on. My initial reaction was one of slight resistance. Much had been going on in the political circles of Dhaka, which a reporter could not miss.

"You will cover politics for the rest of your life," I remember Faiz telling me, "but you won't get a chance of seeing the shooting of a movie, like Jago Hua Savera.

The hint that I might do a colour piece on the shooting for the paper came much later, almost like an instruction which I carried out.

No two outstanding editors are the same. They are different from one another in more ways than one. But they all have one thing in common, a commitment to the profession. Faiz Ahmed Faiz added something of his own to this commitment, a sensitivity that rises above purely journalistic considerations and brings people together in love and understanding.

So, after all these decades, we remember the massage that I was asked to bring all the way from Moscow to Karachi: "Please tell Faiz that of all the poets in the world, I love him most."

## WRITE TO MITA



I am faced with a peculiar problem. I am a retired old man in my early sixties. Yet my wife who is in her early fifties suspects me of having an affair with a woman half my age. The woman in question is a neighbour with whom, beyond casual acquaintance, I have no connection whatsoever. Yet the suspicion has become almost an obsession with my wife. Her relatives were informed but they were of little help. So far as I can guess, this may due to some past incidents relating to her sister's husband who abandoned her family a few years ago and lived with another woman for a few months. This perhaps caused a scar on her psychology which seems to be the cause of distrust of any man. This has clouded her commonsense to the point where she fails to realise that at my present age any

such suspicion is absurd. I have always led a pure life. Could you please suggest a way out of this unhappy. situation?

Ahmed Reza, Jigatola, Dhaka.

Dear Mr. Reza,

You may be right that a previous incident in the family is perhaps the reason for her behaviour. The only way is to have a frank talk with her, not in an angry or excited way but calmly and firmly. Explain to her the damage her suspicion is causing to the family; ask her to give you facts on which she has based her suspicion and together analyse those facts. Try to look at this from her perspective. Ask yourself frankly if you have ever given her a chance to accuse you of unfaithfulness. Hopefully this is just a phase and well soon pass. If things become impossible, what about moving to another neighbourhood?

Dear Mita,

I read with shock and dismay the news of an 18-year-old woman murdered by her husband because she did not bring enough dowry. Often women are treated cruelly by their inlaws and driven to suicide for the same reasons. What do you think is the solution to this problem? A few years ago a neighbour tried to kill herself and it was rumoured that she was regularly beaten for dowry. Do we have any laws to protect women from such cruelty?

. . .

Rita, Dhaka

Dear Rita,

The law we have should protect everyone trrespective of gender - from murder, attempted murder and assault. Woman can go and lodge a complaint at the Nari Nirjatan Cell set up at the Ministry for Women's Affairs. But these steps will not protect women unless the attitude of our society changes. This happens because women are still considered to be second class citizens, less than men, a burden on the parents and husband. Only the economic emancipation of women

along with the recognition of the important role women play can change this social evil. This awareness will come with education aimed at changing society's attitude towards women, in every sphere.

. . .

Dear Mita,

You once wrote to a woman who suspected her husband of unfaithfulness. It seemed from your answer that you did not really believe her. But Mita, this is a reality which we women who have passed our prime are always facing. We are always afraid that our husbands will one day reject us for somebody younger, then where will we go? Women do not enjoy accusing their husbands, they are forced to. What do you have to say to this?

Shaila, Chittagong,

Dear Shalla,

I did not disbelieve the women who accused her husband of unfaithfulness. I merely asked her to be sure of the facts, as this is a serious allegation. The possibility of being rejected for a younger woman does exist in many marriages but the way to fight it is not by living in constant fear or suspicion but rather by building a relationship with your partner based on trust, openness and mutual respect. Keeping the channel of communication open is your best bet. Developing yourselfimage is also a step in the right direction. First you will have to think highly of yourself before someone else does.

#### WRITE TO MITA



Run by a trained and experienced Family and Marriage eounsellor, assisted by a professional team of doctor, psychologist and lawyer, this column will answer questions relating to family, marriage, health, family laws, Please address letters to Mita, The Daily Star. GPO Box

and social and interpersonal relationships. 3257 or to 28/1. Toynbee Circular Road, Motifheel, Dhaka-1000.

part drama Baa Adab Baa Muleia Hoshiyar has just arrived in the market.

**Top 10 Hindi Movies** 

Joomma Chumma in Lon-

Mrinal Sen's Maha Prithibi: Victor Banerjee, Aparna Sen,

Prasanjeet, Shatapdi Amar Shathi (Romantic): Shatapdi, Arjun Chakrawarty tic): Tapash Pal, Sudha Chan-

gal, Ektaa Rafi Ki Yaad (Vol-4) (Musical)

Lehren (Vol-19) (Video Magazine) Yeh Aag Kab Bujhegi (Action): Sunil Dutt, Rekha,

Climate Change and World

Agriculture, by Martin Parry.

Earthscan, 3 Endsleigh Street,

London WC1H 0DD. ISBN 1

85383 065 8. Published in Oc-

tober 1990 (£9.95).

don (Stage Programme)

Poonam, P. Kholapuri

Shilpa Shirodkar

Chawla, Nagarjuna

Qurbani Rang Layegi

Do Matwale (Action): Sanjay

Shiva Dada (Action): Nagar-

Vicky Dada (Action): Juhi

Khatra (Horror): Sumit Sai-

juna, Shanti Priya, Silk Smitha

Dutt, Chunkey Pandey, Sonam,

(Romantic Drama): Sanjay Dutt,

VIDEO SCENE

S.M. Mamoon

Afsana Pyar Ka (Romantic): Amir Khan, Neelam mondi Bengali Top 5

Sumitra Prem Pujari (Romantic): Raj Nartaki ( Roman-