

SHORT STORY

Ms. Padma

PREMCHAND (translated and slightly abridged by S. Mahnowar)

After becoming a successful lawyer Ms. Padma discovered a new experience: the emptiness of life. Considering marriage an unnatural bond, she had decided that she would remain single and enjoy life.

pleasure why should she? She saw no moral obstacle to enjoyment since she considered it merely an appetite of the body to be appeased. Therefore she had dozens of lovers—lawyers, professors, doctors. But every one of them were mere sensualists—like bees who unconcernedly drink the nectar and fly away.

pendence," said Prasad. "You don't want to lose yours. If your lovers come to you I'll be jealous and vice versa. Ill feeling will spring up, how can our friendship continue?"

enforce the oath only by my brute strength, but how could I do anything in front of all these servants of yours?"

"You shall stay as master not only of the house but of me as well. And I shall be your mistress."



Professor Prasad and Ms. Padma live together and are happy. For both of them the ideal of life they had set for themselves has become true. Prasad earns a salary of only two hundred, but now it doesn't bother him to spend twice that.

He would make some excuse not to go out with her, then take his car out and dash off. By now two years had passed and Padma was pregnant; she had also begun to get fat. The freshness and charm her looks once had were now no more.

you're really fed up with me I'm ready to leave right now.' 'How can you threaten to leave? You gave up nothing when you came here.'

Motherhood was now a very unpopular topic with Padma. One concern alone hovered over her. What should she do, what should she not do? She had reached the final stage of her pregnancy and no longer went to court but sat at home alone the whole day.

face away from it, as though she'd found a worm in a sweet fruit. When after five days she left the lying-in room, she had turned into a naked sword. Having become a mother she experienced a strange power in herself.

Premchand, the pseudonym used by Dhanpat Rai (1880-1936) is arguably the greatest writer in Hindi, with an astonishing output of fourteen novels and around three hundred short stories.

Book Reviews

A Search for Truth

RUBAIYAT KHAN Bombay to Eternity: memoirs of a laid-back rebel by Uma Ranganathan; Penguin Books



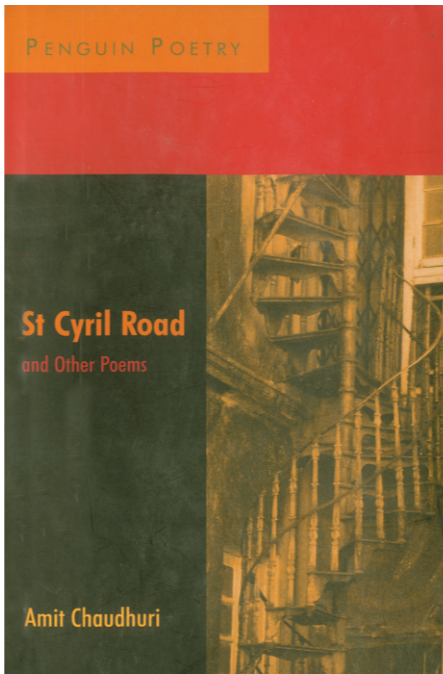
India; 2004; pp. 289; Rs 295 I could have been looking at a mind-killing mosaic of grey stone instead of at the grey waves rippling back and forth between the black rocks...

And so goes the narrative voice in Uma Ranganathan's Bombay to Eternity. The metaphorical grey waves may well represent our minds, the ominous stone wall emblematising all our collective experiences, prejudices, our inhibitions and fears, and serving as the obstacle that separates us from the path of enlightenment, or 'the Big Meaning', as the author says.

the core, discard societal rules that bind, and ultimately embrace life to simply be. Ranganathan leads a rather Bohemian lifestyle, defying conventions by staying single, befriending Sarla her maid who becomes her closest confidante, and toying— if momentarily—with the notion of finding love in a member of the same sex.

Metonymy to Metaphor\*

KAISER HAQ St. Cyril Road and Other Poems by Amit Chaudhuri. New Delhi: Penguin/Viking, 2005. Rs. 200.

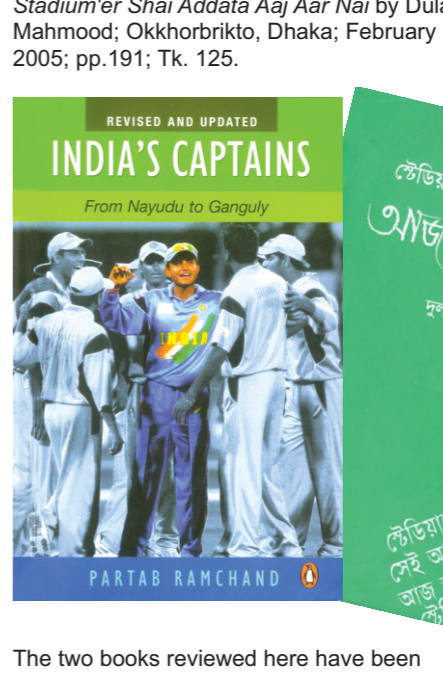


My first encounter with the work of Amit Chaudhuri was in the pages of Alan Ross' London Magazine, which published two of his poems in 1987. They made an impression on me, especially 'The Bandra Medical Store,' partly because of its unassuming tone, partly because of the way it wrung poetry out of the commonplace.

neoclassical poetry leans towards the metonymic and Romantic prose towards the metaphorical pole. In our time the poetry of Larkin deliberately swerves towards metonymy. Not that Larkin doesn't use metaphor, but 'the metaphors are foregrounded against a predominantly metonymic background, which is in turn foregrounded against the background of the (metaphoric) poetic tradition' (Modes of Modern Writing).

On Vizzy and Viv

KHADEMUL ISLAM India's Captains: From Nayudu to Ganguly by Partab Ramchand; Delhi: Penguin India; 2004; pp. 272; Rs. 250.



The two books reviewed here have been written by sports journalists: one by an Indian and the other by a Bangladeshi. Both have been aimed at the popular market, and make for easy reading. Dulal Mahmood's book is a collection of his thoroughly topical newspaper articles, and is divided into three sections: cricket, football, and 'other.'

balcony at Lord's) are quite good. For me, though, the best parts were, as always, the cricketing lore. As when, during India's farcical 1936 tour of England led by the sartorially dazzling, intrigue-ridden 'Vizzy' (the maharaja of Vizianagaram), while walking out to the pitch during a Test match Mushtaq Ali confided to Vijay Merchant that he had been 'instructed' to run him out.

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