THEORIZING NONSENSE IN THE *RASA* FRAMEWORK: A STUDY/ANALYSIS OF SELECT INDIAN ENGLISH TEXTS
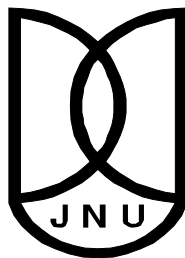
Dissertation submitted to

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

This dissertation titled **"Theorizing Nonsense in the *Rasa* Framework: A Study/Analysis of Select Indian English Texts"** submitted by **Ms. Anurima Chanda**, Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

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Declaration by the Candidate

This Dissertation titled "Theorizing Nonsense in the Rasa Framework: A Study/Analysis of Select Indian English Texts" submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

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For my Bunu

Ma-Baba

and

E-147

Acknowledgement

It was one of those much awaited get-togethers. As we sat catching up on each other's lives, I shared my woes of how my research topic was there but still not there. That was when Teesta shared *The Tenth Rasa* with me which in retrospect I remember as my moment of epiphany. That was when much of this topic was conceived, as we sat reading and discussing on that cool white marbled floor of her apartment, as the setting rays of the sun flooded the room in its reddish gold hue. As much as I have the anthology to thank, it would never have been possible without the guiding light of my hostess, Miss Teesta Guha Sarkar. Also, that late afternoon would not have been so beautifully thought provoking had it not been for the cherished company of Renuka, Dipika and the absent presence of Snigdha.

From there it was carried back in an ambitiously beating heart to the Centre for English Studies in the groovy greens of JNU. Here it was further tossed around between room numbers 159 and 139 as both my supervisors fed more fodder to the topic's gnawing hunger. As the ideas flooded these corridors of learning, our Chairperson agreed to give my boat a further push. For this and for more, I will be ever grateful to Dr. Dhananjay Singh, Prof. G.J.V. Prasad and Prof. Saugata Bhaduri (not to forget his beautiful wife Simi Ma'am) and the room that sheltered the initial throes of my budding passion: CES Office with its guardian angels, Bhagwatiji, Karamchandji and yet again another absent presence, that of Rawatji.

But soon after, the high tide ebbed away and I was left on barren ground. The enormity of the task that I had taken up hit fully on my face as I realized that no libraries here stocked useful books for my perusal and that I was literally orphaned as far as the book-e-tary support was concerned. I left no stone unturned in the JNU library online subscriptions and hoarded my pendrive with articles from JSTOR and Project Muse among others. I tried in vain to fit in pieces in the jigsaw puzzles from Google Books and finally gave up and posted a help plea on Facebook without expecting any answer in return. That's when he answered with the well known buzz of his sitar, from far away Wisconsin and offered to scan and send me books on the condition that I would give in my best. Gokul, I can't thank you enough!

So I built up my army, little by little, with enormous support and kindness from all over the world. Thank you, Priyanka Basu and Tridha Chatterjee, and thanks to you Pavel Chakraborty, for sharing some of you buoyancy of spirits along with some very important books. And you Meenakshi Banerjee, I cannot thank you enough, for that month long of pain that you took for me in trying to spot Mr. Watts. We finally did find him, did'nt we!

In between all this, I visited the well-stocked Landmark in Vasant Kunj, for I was told that Anushka Ravishankar was coming for a book reading from her latest, the Zain-Ana series. She read, she inspired and she readily came forward with suggestions of texts and people when I approached her. She

INTRODUCTION

> I told my uncle the whole story, but he only said, 'Nonsense, my boy. You're making up stories out of some silly dream you've had.' People turn funny as they grow old: they just don't believe things any more. But you aren't very old yet, so I thought I'd tell you all about it. (Chaudhuri, "A Topsy-Turvy Tale" 62)

Even before I knew Alice or the eccentric old men of Lear, I had already met *Kumro Potash* and *Ramgorur er Chana*. They were as popular here as Lear or Carroll had been in England, where the genre of Literary Nonsense is said to have formally emerged. Though, nonsense in some form or the other has always existed in literature, the cultural and sociological impetus of the Victorian Age (as discussed in the first chapter) saw its rise in a formal literary genre, initially through the writings of Edward Lear, soon to be followed by that of Lewis Carroll. This written form of nonsense was preceded and aided by two branches, one that can be traced back to the folk tradition and the other which had its origin in the intellectual adult literary tradition. It drastically changed the face of children's literature at that time, also influencing its colonies, but over time it seems to have lost much of its older appeal. Having discovered its potential for subversion, its techniques were reappropriated into modernist writing in questioning of reality, existence and the efficacy of language, but the "pure and absolute" (Lear 79) nonsense with its "intentional purposelessness" (Heyman, "Isles" 4) greatly diminished if not completely disappeared.

India, as an English colony, inherited this nonsense legacy especially under the championship of Sukumar Ray, and since it already had its own indigenous traditions of nonsense, this gave rise to modern Indian nonsense which was a hybrid product. However given the vastness of the country in terms of its diverse language, region and culture, this genre never managed to elicit a collective response that would herald how important a literary genre it is and that it should be taken with some seriousness. It has been part of the consciousness of individual communities, enjoyed as a part of popular culture, but unfortunately never taken up as a whole for serious study. As my first chapter will prove, the concept and techniques of nonsense has been part of serious scholarship interest in the west for long, but this cannot be said for the Indian nonsense as well, despite having a culture rich with nonsensical resources. Even the

practitioners of nonsense literature are wary about using it and have even denied writing it (as Heyman points out in "Vinda Karandikar's passing" from *The Tenth Rasa – A Blog of Indian Nonsense*).

During my preliminary research, , I chanced upon *The Tenth Rasa* (2007) and my world was literally turned upside down. So long only having known the nonsense of my own culture intimately, I was overwhelmed to suddenly find that it was not only strewn across the country but also had its roots embedded in the ancient past of the country. In a bid to raise the awareness of its position as a serious Indian art, the editors, Michael Heyman, Sumanyu Satpathy and Anushka Ravishankar, took their cue from Sukumar Ray himself, the father of Indian nonsense, whose implication that nonsense is an expression of the spirit of whimsy or *kheyal rawsh*/*rasa* not only generated a revolutionary claim in Indian aesthetics by propounding a new tenth *rasa* but also managed to uplift nonsense to the level of serious art (which by virtue of their nature is supposed to produce complex emotional effects on the audience by combining the nine *rasa*-s). On one hand, this claim can totally change and revise the formal ancient concepts of Indian art as manifested with Indian aesthetics for many long years but on the other hand one has to first believe in the idea of this *rasa* for this revolution to happen, as Heyman suggests (The Tenth Rasa Intro xliii). This could in fact change the way that Literary Nonsense has been conceived so far and defend it against conservative critics.

Nonsense Literature has always evaded clear cut definitions with its extremely overlapping nature. However, it does have certain peculiarities that differentiate it from the others, mainly through its topsy-turvy nature, its absurdity and its lack/negation of emotion. The study of these phenomena unique to nonsense have been the prime way of getting to a better understanding of the genre, but over the ages the critics have merely enumerated these qualities rather than reaching a definitive definition that would suffice to answer the why-ness of these qualities and define the genre as a whole. As a result, people often confuse this genre with others which have similar qualities, as evident from most anthologies of nonsense that is put together, in the absence of any overarching explanation that will bind all nonsense qualities together. In reading it from the *rasa* perspective, what I find most interesting is the fact that while the *rasa* theory is to do with studying the evocation of complex emotional states in the readers/spectators, nonsense is recognized in its very detachment from the emotional. We also know that detachment from a specific emotion is itself a bhava known as *Nirveda*. While the rasa theory

explains the maturing and elevation of particular emotions to the level of intense emotive and universal consciousness, nonsense diffuses its containment within any particular emotion, and in that sense it can be claimed to be closest to *Nirveda*. However, while *Nirveda* is an absence of emotion by eliminating it, nonsense works through a process of active negation which is not the same as absence. The mechanism of this active negation is something that I will take up in the second chapter. Emotions in the world of nonsense behave in an unnatural fashion contrary to reality. Death and violence here does not arouse *bibhatsa* but is perceived as *adhbhut* and when it does evoke an emotion, it is mostly that of *hasya*. Though the study of this complete negation of emotions in nonsense has always been a prime way of approaching to a better understanding of this genre, it has always been a stated quality of nonsense without really explaining why it is so. Putting it up against the theory of *rasa* (that aids in a functional understanding of the evocation of emotions in any work of art), might thus prove to be a better way to analyze that why-ness.

However, my motive is not to study all works of nonsense, but specifically those that fall under the category of Literary Nonsense in India bearing the essence of the aforementioned spirit of whimsy. This spirit is however found even in the folk poetry of any nation but what makes it specifically "authentic literary nonsense" is as Satyajit Ray puts it, when it "masks its caprice beneath an apparent gravity in an urbane and sophisticated manner unknown in popular rhyme" (Chaudhuri, "Intro"). This apparent sophistication is brought about by the use of language, albeit playing with it subversively within the structure of a sophisticated literary form. For the child it is almost equivalent to the world of fantastical gibberish, while for the adults it is a device which teases his intellect, thus proving its charm for young and old alike. However, it never ignores the rules of sense but only subversively plays with them by fighting against all conventional language rules and hence is not equivalent to proper gibberish. In the course of studying Literary Nonsense in the *rasa* framework, I want to see how this use of unconventional language affects the evocation of *rasa*. The relationship between language and reality has been a central question in Indian philosophy producing endless debates regarding the centrality of meaning to the understanding of reality. Since nonsense subverts this very tool it leads to the creation of an alternate reality which ends up resisting all discourses including emotions. But how? This is another question that I will address in the course of my study. I intend to study nonsense using the *rasa* framework to analyze how emotions are channeled through the nonsense narrative. In

this process I will also look at how language operates in an unconventional fashion in nonsense and question its role in how the narrative resists the final evocation of any emotion. Through this, I want to reach a functional understanding of how nonsense operates by defying all conventions of any work of art by resisting the evocation of one particular emotional state or *rasa*.

In my first chapter I have tried to provide a broad overview of nonsense, from its beginnings as a literary mode or a stylistic device, to its formal emergence as a literary genre in the Victorian period. The aim of this study is to collate all the significant work that has been done in this field till recently, which will give us a suitable understanding of how nonsense is perceived. I have also tried to include both ends of the spectrum, English and Indian, by tracing their trajectory from early 1800s to late 1900s through existing studies. As a result, we can also have an idea of the different perception regarding nonsense, from the English and the Indian standpoint respectively through a comparative study. Due to its overlapping nature, there has been no clear theoretical consensus about a definition of nonsense. In the western world it has been often confused with other genres owing to this overlapping nature of nonsense which is proven by the various anthologies of nonsense verse and/or prose, which in fact contains items "which are widely divergent in manner and time of composition, as well as in literary value" (Tigges 1). Thus, the first step at defining this genre is by studying its roots, understanding its technique and thereby arriving at its definition. In a bid to do so, I have closely followed the existing scholarship of Lisa Susan Ede, Wim Tigges, Michael Heyman, Michele Sala, Noel Malcolm and Kathleen Pendlebury, all of whom have brought together a review of the theories in literary nonsense. Through them we can synthesize the research till late 1900s and thus arrive at a chronological development of an understanding of this genre, looking at the answers to what literary nonsense is, what it is not, how does it work, and when and where did it originate and develop, which are the other genres that it is confused with and how is it usually read, both in the English and the Indian context. This will be adequately empowering to proceed to the next chapter and propose a definition of one's own and justify why and how.

Apart from few anonymous reviewers of *The Spectator*, it was Sir Edmund Strachey (1888) who was one of the first to take up the question of literariness of nonsense. Though his definition was too broad to narrow down, he laid the foundation for recognizing nonsense based on its "**topsyturvydom**" and "**the lack of emotion**" (Tigges 8) which becomes two recurring aspects of nonsense in later definitions too. Even when it does evoke something, it is closer to

humour induced by absurd occurrences. As one will realize, this will also be my basic premise in studying nonsense in the Rasa framework and analyze the validity of these observations. Later theorists like Emile Cammaerts (1925), Paul Jennings (1977), Robert Benayoun (1977), Susan Stewart (1978), Elizabeth Sewell (1980/81), Nina Demurova (1982) also champion this topsyturvydom, with Sewell's (1952) forceful emphasis again on the incompatibility of nonsense with a sense of emotion (Tigges 8). Vivien Noakes (1968) also refers to this factor of "detachment" in 'pure' nonsense (in Tigges 21), even though there are also others, like Petzold for instance, who go to the extent of pointing out passages from Lear and Carroll to show how they appeal to the readers' emotions. However, Strachey also sees this topsyturvydom as leading to the creation of something unnatural and absurd, which leads to the **"unfortunate association" of nonsense with "humour, the grotesque ("unnatural") and the absurd**" (Tigges 8). This was further taken up by critics like Carolyn Wells (1902), Angus Davidson (1938), Erika Leimert (1937), Walter De la Mare (1937), Albert Laffay (1970), M.R. Haight (1971), who emphasized on the absurdity, grostesque incongruity and fantastical frivolity of nonsense that made it seem like mere balderdash. Some of these critics along with many others, either considered nonsense to be **a subdivision of humour or argued against it**. It was G.K. Chesterton who supplied nonsense with a "rich moral soil" (in Tigges 8) by invoking its **spiritual** nature. Henceforth, he was followed by many others who ascribed this aspect to nonsense, like that of Francis Huxley (1937), who found in nonsense a kind of "spiritual freedom" (in Tigges 12); Sewell whose mystical findings on nonsense has been voiced in the last chapter of her *The Field of Nonsense* (also in Tigges 16); Leonard Forster (1962), who felt that the absurdity of nonsense pointed to "God as the only solution" (in Tigges 16), Martin Esslin (1961/68) who traces a metaphysical endeavour in nonsense and Thomas Byrom (1977) claiming Lear and Carroll to be "spiritual fathers" of absurdism, surrealism and other such related streams (in Tigges 31). This too is a recurrent claim made about nonsense, claiming it to have acted as a precursor to such modernist trends in literature. Critics like Forster, Henri Parisot and Douglas Hofstadter (1982) saw either Dadaism or surrealism or both as a continuation of nonsense; Michael Holquist (1969/70) and later Alison Rieke (1992) saw it as a precursor to modernist literature in general and Esslin showed its influence on absurdism.

Although there are many others who argue against such claims [like Gabriele Schwab (1996)], this association of nonsense with such modernist literary movements comes mainly

because of its use of **incongruous images in a paradoxical structure**, its **contradictory** and **arbitrary nature**, leaving no space for the development of any argument. This is exactly what is pointed out by critics like Jacqueline Flescher (1969/70) and Robert Sutherland (1970). Nonetheless, unlike most others Sutherland does not seem to agree that it is because of a sustained tension between the terms of the paradoxes that nonsense happens, but the use of incongruity, contradiction and arbitrariness. This is however, what is strongly argued against by most critics who are of the belief that the most important feature of nonsense is its nature of sustaining a sort of **tension** between odds that leads to a **dialectic** nature of nonsense [like in Mare, Sewell, Lisa Susan Ede (1975), Donald Rackin (1976) among others], even though some of them believe that nonsense is created when this tension is finally resolved while the others argue against this claiming that the tension in nonsense is never resolved.

However, most critics do agree to the claim that nonsense by nature does not lead to the development of any argument and that it is **playful** with a **lack of direction** having **no point**. This is what is championed by critics like Wells, Cammaerts, Annemarie Schone (1950/51) and Rolf Hildebrandt (1962) among others. The playful nature of nonsense is taken one step further by various other critics, notably Sewell, Gilles Deleuze (1969), Roger B. Henkle (1973), Aldous Huxley (1976), Dieter Baacke (1978), Susan Stewart, Ina Rae Hark (1982) and Susan T. Viguers (1983), who have used the **play/game theory** to elaborate this aspect of nonsense. Most of them seem to find in nonsense the promise of a mental game that triggers intellectuality (sometimes also by using philosophical problems) through various language games, thus explaining **adult affinity towards nonsense** and discarding the claim that it essentially belongs to the domain of children [like Dieter Petzold (1972)]. The prominence of language games in nonsense seems to validate the claim by various other critics about the **lexical/verbal nature** of nonsense as being one of its primary features. Prominent among them are Eric Partridge (1950), Patricia Meyer Spacks (1961), Alfred Liede (1963), Vivien Noakes and Albert Laffay (1970) among the rest. It is debated by many others that it is this verbal nature of nonsense that is utilized by writers to give rise to the **musical quality** that is so characteristic of nonsense. Angus Davidson (1938) and T.S. Eliot (1942/53) are of this view and believe that one of the most prominent features of nonsense is the dominance of sound over meaning or sense and hence the content of nonsense is ruled by rhyme rather than the other way round as Cammaerts would say.

Eliot has also noted how nonsense inherits the nature of **parody** by which it makes a travesty of sense. This is a point that has been debated upon by many other critics, including Tigges himself, but it is Michael Heyman (1999) who analyses it at large and is a big influence on my own work as elaborated in the second chapter of this thesis. I also look at the claims of people like Cammaerts who find a definite **English taste** in nonsense claiming it to be closely associated with the English brand of humour and the subsequent **psychological readings** by critics like Klaus Reichert (1974) and Stephen Prickett (1979) vis-à-vis the claim of **timelessness** of nonsense as in the writings of E. Morpugo (1960), Paul Jennings (1977), Robert Benayoun (1977) and Klaus Peter Dencker (1978) among others, who are hence more elaborately mentioned in this chapter. In this light, we can also look at the claim of critics like Hildebrandt (1962), Tabbert (1975) and Rieke (again, mentioned more elaborately in this chapter), who believe that nonsense is not a genre but a stylistic device or mode that has existed throughout ages. Despite such diversity of opinions some of which are at loggerheads with each other, we still find that all these observations when put together gives us a general idea of what nonsense is, what it is not and how even mutually incompatible observations reveal which of these aspects render it confusing, even if they might not help us reach a unified definition.

Before moving on to how nonsense has been utilized and perceived in the Indian subcontinent I elaborately point out the various theories which have been used to read and analyze nonsense texts, most of which stem from the above observations that has been made by the critics in Western academia over the ages. With its formal emergence as a genre in the Victorian Age, most of nonsense has been studied in the context of the Historical, Cultural and Psychological baggage of the age like that of the Victorian Child and the role of overt didacticism in literature at that point of time, how the construct of the child as an ideal reader does not mean that this genre belongs only to the children but points out how it assumes the reader to have childlike qualities with the help of the Reader Response Theory. As already mentioned the Game Theory is also used to study the playful attitude of nonsense towards language. Further this aspect of Language in nonsense becomes another important way of analyzing it along with its nature that makes it appear like a Philosophical Category. Among the various critics mentioned, the likes of Partridge, Sewell, Morpugo, Huxley, Banayoun and Stewart, also enumerates the techniques, procedures and themes of nonsense, which will be mentioned in detail in the later part of this introduction.

Nonsense in India seems to have had a different history altogether. The subcontinent has always been rich in nonsensical elements; its dominance has been mainly in the spiritual plane and folk culture. But, what we understand as literary nonsense came to India more as a postcolonial phenomenon, influenced by works of its Victorian forefathers. Modern Indian nonsense is a hybrid of its indigenous influence of the spiritual and the folk with its English counterpart. In the mystic domain, the 'thorn' texts which can be traced back to the early medieval period has been conjectured to be one of the earliest examples of nonsense that was used in Indian mysticism, apart from having existed, albeit intermittently, from the time of the Vedas and the Upanishads, the earliest known Indian religious texts. Later it was highly popularized by Kabir, in his upside down language or *ulat bansi*, which he borrowed from the *sandhabhasa* used in Tantric yoga and the Nathas. It is believed by a majority of critics that this language was used by the spiritual leaders to mask answers to grave philosophical questions in a childlike humour. By evoking the childlike state of mind it sought to break habitual thought patterns in philosophical mysticism aiming towards enlightenment. However, its simple and easy nature, easy to grasp and fun to hear or chant, made it popular among the common people and helped spread spiritual messages with greater ease. Traces of it are also found in medieval Indian poetry of around sixteenth century in the kingly courts, where the poets would have contests to test their skills of literary analysis of complex poetic forms. The winners would be the ones who could challenge the others with their nonsensical wordplay, all of it maintained in perfect formal style. This is almost similar to the English literary nonsense which plays with language, all the time maintaining a strict formal outer structure. The folk tradition of India was also rich in their use of nonsense, much more irreverential in nature. Various other kinds of nonsense also existed, but owing to the diverse languages, were known by different names in different languages. However, the techniques used were more or less the same as its English counterpart, although the themes were sometimes culturally related to the region that it was conceived.

Finally with the colonial impact since the mid-nineteenth century or maybe even before that and the exposure to English education, the English works of nonsense found their way into the subcontinent. It particularly affected areas like West Bengal and Maharashtra, where the influence of English was the greatest. The states neighbouring Bengal, like Orissa and Assam were influenced as well, but more from the Bangla influence rather than the original English. It

was first popularized in Benagli by Sukumar Ray, Rabindranath Tagore and the others and spread to the rest of the country. Oriya author Brajanath Badajena's *Chatura Binoda* is often seen as another pioneering work in this field. However, nonsense in India has never been given the importance that it has acquired in the west. Even Indian indigenous nonsense writers have been known to precede their works with apologia invoking Indian aesthetic theory to defend their work which seems less serious and more child-like. Ray's preface to his *Abol Tabol* where he claims nonsense to have born out of the rasa of whimsy or *kheyal rasa* seem to provide an interesting but serious entry point into this genre which is essentially marked for its 'lack of emotion' and 'detachment'. The Rasa Theory as one knows is the theory of studying emotions that are evoked by any work of art and might give answers to how exactly nonsense manages to appear devoid of all emotions or evoke *hasya rasa* even while dealing with the most morbid of situations. This is where I find a suitable beginning towards my own understanding of nonsense, as I take it up in my next chapter.

In the second chapter, I look at how the unconventional language of nonsense which makes it look frivolously silly and aesthetically inferior becomes one of the major reasons why it is treated with so little seriousness in India. However, I point out how the history of nonsense in the subcontinent speaks otherwise. Since it was essentially a tool used as a means to inquire larger spiritual truths (as discussed in the second chapter), and since spirituality is taken very seriously in the country, the Indian tradition has attached serious value to nonsense in the past. Even at royal courts, the use of nonsense was a means of displaying one's mastery over language and showcasing one's extent of creativity through an impromptu wordplay, despite strictly adhering to a formal poetic structure, which can practically be very difficult. And since even the courtly culture was not a matter of triviality, including these poets who were treated with great esteem, being able to use and understand nonsense seems to appear as being held in high regard in the country. With Kabir, the quest for spirituality was greatly broadened as he became a spiritual leader of the masses. His use of the language of nonsense, popularly known as *ulat bansi*, was appropriated into songs that spread quite easily, far and wide, and gradually assimilated within the folk culture. The folk tradition of India too had its own indigenous nonsense, which grew richer with such associations. However, the lack of proper documentation (mainly because of the dominance of oral culture in the country) make it difficult to prove whether it was the folk tradition that inherited from the Indian mystic texts or vice versa, but one

thing is for sure, that this contact led to a definite secularization of nonsense as it developed as a separate art in itself. Thus, as the spiritual meets the aesthetic in nonsense, it assumes the characteristics of an ideal work of art living up to all the expectations that the various ancient Indian theoreticians had from it. On one hand, Indian art has always been seen as an instrument for attaining greater spiritual and philosophical truths or representing them symbolically. And on the other hand, the language for nonsense was seen as essential for mental exercise that promised enlightenment to the *yogin*-s. Thus, theoretically speaking, in literary nonsense, where this language meets the form of art, the promise of attaining this blissfulness becomes doubly intense. Hence time and again have the Indian nonsense writers referred to this relation of nonsense literature with the Gods by means of the Indian aesthetic theory, thus defending its seriousness.

The use of Indian aesthetics in the reading of nonsense becomes even more interesting because at the heart of the former lies the *rasa* theory which is used to study the various emotions that are evoked, while the latter is credited as disturbing the distinct framework of emotive consciousness. This lack of emotion has been used by the spiritual leaders to their advantage to detach the initiated *yogin* from the emotional experiences of the real world and gain enlightenment, while the evocation of a flavor of emotion is regarded as the most important part of any Indian art; a theory which was developed by Abhinavagupta by combining the best of Bhatta Nayaka's theory on generalization and Anandavardhana's theory of *vyanjana* or suggestion. However, both the cases are ultimately said to lead to the experiencing of a state of blissful unity by complete disappearance of all polarity of ordinary life by a sudden replacement of a new dimension of reality, accompanied by a sense of *camatkara* or wonder, more elevated than the ordinary one. Such a sense of wonder seems to be a distinguishing feature of most nonsense literature without the evocation of any distinct emotion before that. I question in this chapter, if it is because of its nature of infusing the language of mysticism in the art form that nonsense is doubly empowered to immediately reach the ultimate state of wonder, completely bypassing the intermediary stages of attaining a *rasa*.

To answer this question it is essential to realize the connection between the spiritual expression of nonsense and nonsense as art. The answer to this, as I point out through examples, lies in the use of the language, which is man's only tangible tool to manipulate reality. Thus, while in the real world one is dominated by emotions, the purpose of art is to recreate that reality not only to represent the ways of the world involving these various emotions but also to provide

one with entertainment and happiness as well as beneficial advice. Thus, the world of art is that of reality but not in the true sense, and hence a world of alternate reality whose ultimate aim is to teach while pleasing both our sense of vision and hearing and attain the bliss of wonder. This is exactly what we achieve in the world of nonsense literature, where language fights ordinary sense, almost as a parody of sense as Eliot would suggest, through its multitude of verbal/lexical techniques which gives prominence to sound over meaning and has a visual appeal and evokes a sense of wonder.

However, since parody (though always entertaining) does not transcend beyond ridicule/criticism, be it in the positive or negative sense, it limits our emotions (mostly arousing laughter, and anger at other times). But nonsense literature on the other hand acts contrary to this (as already stated) by transcending the emotional state to the state of wonder. This seems to suggest that in nonsense one goes beyond parody, as even Heyman has observed. It entertains with the evocation of a state of *hasya* but almost immediately transcends to the state of wonder. This can only happen if the absurdity and incongruity of nonsense is immediately nullified in a second level of parody, almost nullifying the intent of ridicule and leading to a state of wonder through laughter. This is the reason that nonsense is often claimed to be "pointless" since *its* function is not to criticize but to provoke criticism in man through self reflexivity, rather than by pointing it out for us and making us act through compulsion. It is only by distancing ourselves from our habitual nature, that we can transcend the barriers of the manmade social, cultural and political power structures which get ingrained in us and observe life objectively, question the trustworthiness of this compulsion of meaning-making (that is believed to be common-sense, which as Stewart points out is a "social phenomenon" and thus, slave to many conditions related to power, cultural impact etc.) and attain a "meta-awareness" (*The Tenth Rasa* xxvi). The readers might or might not fulfill this purpose, but that does not stop nonsense literature from being entertaining because even if it fails to awaken that meta-awareness, it never fails to evoke laughter. The evoked laughter is also just a parody of the real emotion that would have been aroused. And, the final emotion is mostly laughter because parody of any emotion inevitably leads to laughter again. Thus, nonsense through its two levels of parody, which I elaborately study through examples in this chapter, manages to parody the *rasa* framework as well in a bid to distance oneself from the world of habitual emotions, taking us one step further in attaining that "meta-awareness". Finally I propose three large subdivisions of nonsense into ones that deal with

Religious and/or metaphysical nonsense or other deeper conceptual truth, ones that are Didactic nonsense and finally the ones that are simply 'pure' Poetic nonsense and study if this above proposition fits well in all the cases through examples from Lear, Carroll, Kabir and Ray.

The validation of this proposition is studied in my third chapter where I study select Indian English nonsense texts according to the above mentioned observation. Like I have already mentioned, the modern day literary nonsense in India is a hybrid product that arose from colonial contact. It was first appropriated by Bengali culture and thereafter spread to the rest of India more through this Bengali influence rather than the English one. Till a long time, literary nonsense in India was mainly written in the indigenous languages. It is only in the last few years, that this genre has found a new voice in Indian English mainly through the works of Anushka Ravishankar, Sampurna Chattarji and Kaushik Vishwanath. Ravishankar and Chattarji's initial challenge was to bring about a change in Indian children's literature which even up to the present day, is often "of low quality in text, illustration, and production, and rarely digs into Indian culture's multiple layers" as Heyman rightly points out. Hence, most of their writings are not completely nonsensical. But they are extremely witty, energetic and most of them veer towards absurdity. Since, Chattarji mainly started off with translations of Ray into English, for a long time Ravishankar was the only Indian nonsense author who was writing in English. More recently, Kaushik Vishwanath, a very young writer extremely talented in the art of nonsense writing, that is almost original and seems like it has gushed forth 'effortlessly', has joined the nonsense family. He agrees himself that it is his natural tendency to write stories that defy the logical order of things at some level and that is what results in nonsense at its best. Among the most recent published authors on nonsense, I also take up two poems by Teesta Guha Sarkar who believes in the "destabilizing potential" of nonsense, whereby it not only destabilizes all that we know and understand as sense but also its own nonsensical format. This is what she tries to explore through her nonsense writing.

I have tried my best at reading some of their better known works of nonsense closely, trying to discern them according to their different categories, point out the various nonsense techniques used and see if they fit the proposed claim of exhibiting the two levels of parody. Ravishankar's works have a wide range comprising of all the three categories. I deal with *Excuse Me, Is This India?* (2001), *Wish You Were Here* (2003) and three of her poems, "Lost and Found", "If" and "Discovery of India" as nonsense of the third category. *Alphabets are Amazing*

Animals (2003), and *Anything but a Grabooberry* (1998) as examples of the second category of nonsense. And excerpts from her novella "Ogd" as the first. From Chattarji's works, I deal with "Very Fishy" and "Explained" from "The Food Finagle: A Capricious Culinary Caper" (2007) as nonsense of the third category. From Vishwanath's I take up "Binoo the Monkey Pilot joins the Air Force" published via his blog on 2nd August 2008 and "The Limpet Division" (2007) as examples of the first category and "Let us Alphabetus", "Chandrabumps" (2012), "Malaise Burger" published on his blog on 19th July 2008, as examples of the third category. I finally look at "Nothing Really" and "He Longed for a Lavender Gown" (2012) by Guha Sarkar as examples of the third category. I also take up two more examples from Chattarji's "The Samosa Feud" and Samit Basu's "Putu is a Hero Now", to show how despite their witty repartee, they do not qualify as truly nonsensical since they achieve only the first level of parody. Thus, their underlying structure of the form which they acquire and also ridicule (like all other nonsense), is not successfully masked, which is what only the second level of parody can achieve. Since it does not transcend to the second level of the parody, it does not capably get rid of the seriousness of that ridicule and does not.

This brings me to my conclusion, where I review the various nonsense aspects within the proposed double parodic structure. All the previous definitions of nonsense based on the features and characteristics of individual pieces, never really explained the functional way in which nonsense operates. I will reassess the same features and characteristics within the proposed structure and show how it emerges as a unifying factor for all of them and thus, offer a better explanation of the functional workings of nonsense. The double layers of parody seem to play subversively with the underlying context of the text so that it is completely distanced from the original, in terms of the contextual specificity or the emotion evoked. It is not an absence of a context but rather a negation of it, which explains why the genre has always been seen as being detached from any context or emotion. The nullification of the context, through the double parodic structure, further takes it away from any 'point' that the text in its original or even at its first level of parody makes. It thus appears to be intentionally purposeless. Unlike parody, whose success lies in staying as closely rooted to the original that it ridicules, nonsense texts try to distance itself from its context as much as possible. This further distances us from discourses that are usually used in understanding any situation. It encourages its readers to be eccentric and adhere to their individuality, just like in the Queen's game of croquet, rather than closely follow

a shared, logical, linguistic or social code. The mind becomes free to assert its individuality in reading the text just as he likes, filling in the gaps within the texts with his own intervention, and in that freedom arises a sense of unbridled joy. In that assertion of individuality, arises the power to play out one's whimsies without caring about convention. That is when the readers move beyond the conventional nine *rasa*-s through a parody of the *rasa* framework and create what Sukumar Ray had termed the *kheyaal rawsh* or the *rasa* of whimsy, celebrating individuality by rebelling against conventions. This liberation of the mind is what the spiritual teachers must have referred to as 'enlightenment'.

Before proceeding to my first chapter, I will attempt to give a detailed description of the techniques and themes that are used in Literary Nonsense, which sets it apart from the other genres and helps us to identify it. This is one genre, whose techniques have been excessively important in differentiating it from the others. Being essentially a verbal phenomenon, the easiest way to identify it is by certain common recurring techniques, which are mostly a defiance of sense through a defiance of the language syntax. The more these techniques, the more the piece is considered to belong to this genre. Otherwise, its nature is such that it overlaps with other genres, making it extremely difficult to isolate it. It has been found that nonsense across various languages and cultures seem to contain these techniques despite such diversity. Like the extended overview in my first chapter also shows, even though each culture was not always directly influenced by the other's tradition of nonsense and was generally unaware of the other in most cases, the techniques remained more or less the same if only with very little aberrations.

It can be roughly divided into two groups: the one that is strictly linguistic and the other that is more logical. However, as I show in my second chapter, since logic too veers dangerously close to the metaphysical, the only way to be able to play with it is through the tangible tool of language. Thus, even the logical group of nonsense has aspects of the former as even Heyman mentions (The Tenth Rasa xxvi). The overlapping of the linguistic with logic and vice versa makes nonsense appear as primarily lexical. Most of the linguistic techniques can be easily listed and are used effectively to write nonsense. These include:

a) Neologism: This is the coining of new terms like that of Lear's "runcible" or "scroobious". These words are coined while adhering to the laws of syntax, morphology and phonetics and have an appearance of being a "normal" word which makes "normal" sense. However, that is not true, as it suits the author's need and may

assume different meanings on different occasions according to the author's requirement. Like "runcible" has been used by Lear of a hat, a goose, a spoon, a raven and a wall. The meanings that are evoked at these various instances are simultaneously denied for the lack of parity. It is also often used to denote non-existent creatures, like that of Carroll's "Jabberwocky".

b) Portmanteau: Smashing together two real words to form a nonsensical third. This was coined by Carroll who makes his Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking Glass* explain its meaning to Alice. There is no parity in which the two real words are brought together always. Thus, the third word rarely leads to an overall denotation and appears nonsensical. Even if t does have some parity, it is not apparent up till a close scrutiny and thus is used quite effectively. Words like "slithy" (said to be a combination of "slimy" and "lithe") coined by Carroll in "Jabberwocky" are examples of this kind.

c) Reduplication: Often languages exhibit the tendency of using reduplicative patterns, like that of "chit-chat" in English or "*puturu-puturu*" in Oriya which is used to describe soil. These have no such solid definition but are onomatopoeically evocative of the words they repeat. This adds to the musicality of the language, adding sound and rhythm, since in nonsense sound is more important that the sense and it is this sound/rhyme that determines the content rather than the other way round.

d) Sound-over-sense. The above observation leads to this fourth point whereby nonsense writers are keener on giving their text maximum musicality of sound, rhythm and rhyme of language and hence use a lot of euphony rather than mere language describing the word. The function of language as a signifier is reduced and used more for the nature and the sound of the language used. Hence, alliteration is more important than litigation and resonance is more effectual than reference.

Logical manipulation is achieved through:

a) Paradoxical simultaneity of meaning: This includes a lot of nonsensical techniques together. Essentially, it is the coexistence of two or more, usually contradictory meanings, which induces a paradoxical state and lead to the tension within the text that is considered to be integral to any nonsense. Heyman calls this the nonsense tautology, which "occurs when two different words or phrases are used side by side,

implying a different meaning but actually having the same meaning" (xxviii). This is further expanded in the next point.

b) Non Sequitur and Arbitrariness: As its definition would suggest, it is a conclusion or statement that does not logically follow from the previous argument or statement. From contradictory co-existence of words in the previous point, this leads to such an existence not just of words but of ideas. Used in a conventional form (say in the structure of a poem or story), they challenge us to make sense of it though it does not have any such thing. In the words of Lautreamont, it is "the chance juxtaposition of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table" (Tigges 70).

c) Absurd Precision and Imprecision: This too leads from the previous point. Here separate elements slide into one another without quite overlapping, as Tigges would say. While sometimes its nature is of absurd precision in including details especially numbers down to the last detail and is so precise that it might suggest some underlying significance when there is none, like "she proceeded to insert all the feathers, two hundred and sixty in number" in Lear. At other times it states obvious facts in a revelatory manner, like Ravishankar's Brother Marbel's reflection stated out loud that the Taj Mahal is "very white". Imprecision occurs when sentences end midway with incomplete thought with deficiency of meaning. Thus through the above ways, one plays with misdirection, deficiency or surplus of significance in the disguise of a meaningful presentation and achieves nonsensical effects.

d) Faulty Cause and Effect: In the garb of arriving at an effect or tracing back to the cause, this takes from the above three points, and leads to the presentation of a topsy-turvy world despite presenting an idea within the structure of cause-effect, there is either an absence of effect or aim, or an absence of cause or motivation, or both.

e) Use of Infinity: the never-ending nature of nonsense, ties up the above techniques in a play like fashion in a circularity. This arbitrariness of a closure helps keep the tension unresolved for a longer time thus contributing to holding the nonsense structure for much longer with greater success.

Several critics have also noted the affinity of nonsense literature for certain themes and motifs. These themes are usually universal and found in both English and Indian nonsense, except for some culturally specific touches that retain their English or Indian identity. At the

universal level, nonsense has been observed to have a penchant for numbers and letters, usually randomly used and in the form of large numbers. It also uses the structure of cause and effect, and time and space which it can reverse according to its whims and fancies. A voyage or a quest is another common motif in nonsense. The individual in nonsense is of a unique identity. He is either eccentric or metamorphosed or malformed. Death and violence are also commonly used in nonsense. Animals and things are frequently used in role reversals, where animals and things are personified and living creatures are treated as objects. Food, clothing, furniture, houses are seen to be frequently used. So is the use of playing games and discursivizing. There is also a tendency of inventing things, be it new words, or new animals or new games. Laws of nature are usually reversed. Courtship is another important motif used in nonsense, between "ill-assorted" or "nonexistent" pairs (Tigges 80). The aural and visual aspect of this genre is extremely high, with dominance of rhyme, rhythm and sound over content and the imagery as proven by the fact that all good nonsense apart from the density of verbal images is also accompanied by illustrations, which is considered a very important part of nonsense. And finally, although childlike in nature, nonsense has always thrived in 'adult' subject matter.

Now to come to the themes that retains the Indian-ness of Indian nonsense. One of the prominent features of Indian nonsense is the way it subverts English culture especially the way it dominates/d the educational system with greater demand of their textbooks like that of the nursery rhymes. This anti-colonial streak has been traced in the nonsense of many writers like that of Sukumar Ray, Annanda Sankar Ray among other nonsense in the indigenous languages. There is also a celebration of typical Indian-ness in Indian nonsense, from the sound of the various languages to distinctive foods from various parts of the country. This is evident in the use of drought, clay pots, rice, buffalo, rupees, devaluation of money, Indian village life, large families with complex familial relationships, the extreme weather and indigenous flora and fauna of the country and food from various parts of the country like *luchi*, *dosa*, *shingara* etc. (Heyman *The Tenth Rasa* xxxvii-xxxviii). It also uses the space of nonsense for upturning the world of "Indian aesthetics, politics, religion, class/caste issues, respect for elders and the guru-disciple relationship" in a carnivalesque form (Heyman xxxix).

Finally, a word must be said about the scope of this thesis. I have deliberately chosen to focus on Indian Literary Nonsense in English rather than in its indigenous languages. The vast diversity of India with its various languages and cultures makes it nearly impossible to get a

unified whole in terms of almost anything. Its indigenous culture of Literary Nonsense is so vast with a lack of any cross-state or cross-language knowledge that just to collect them in one place would have been impossible let alone studying them (also not to forget that even if that may be made possible hypothetically, the lack of proper understanding of the genre along with a pejorative sense that is usually attached to it, makes it even more difficult in obtaining the nonsense writing from practitioners who themselves refuse to acknowledge writing it). Thus, the colourful cultural diversity of India that makes Indian nonsense even more colourful with its contact, becomes the biggest obstacle in studying it as a unified whole. But the one combining factor, if any, would be the adoption of English as an Indian language after its colonial contact. In a nation divided by multiple languages, ethnicity and class, English became way of uniting people from across the length and breadth of the country by providing a suitable via media for people from different linguistic backgrounds to come together and converse. English therefore becomes in many ways a language essential to the integrity of the idea of India and takes a new form of Indian English, a sort of meta-language uniting Indian diversity. Though Indian English itself has its own subdivisions, it still provides a much better place of the coming together of all cultures irrespective of their cultural specificities. More importantly, the Indian English Literary Nonsense is quite a recent phenomenon and has been able to generate a renewed interest in this genre through the writings of Anushka Ravishankar along with Sampurna Chattarji and Kaushik Vishwanath. But sadly enough, they too have been neglected in terms of scholarly work (as, the only minimum work that has been done with Indian indigenous nonsense has been with their English translations) and by close analysis could yield better answers about the genre.

Chapter 1
AN OVERVIEW: HERE AND THERE

From the English Shores

The formal emergence of Literary Nonsense as a genre has been correctly attributed to the Victorian era, when a particular kind of literature completely unknown till then sprung up in the writings of Lear and Carroll, considered to be the fathers of this genre. Though the stylistic conventions practiced by them had been there for ages, the genre itself was heavily indebted to the milieu that saw its birth. Such grounding of Literary Nonsense in the specificity of the Victorian era gives rise to a particular kind of reading, understanding and interpretation of Nonsense, but one observation that has been unanimously accepted by most critics is the fact that nonsense thrives on an internal tension sustained by a dialectical method be it between meaning and non-meaning, text and context, reality and absurdity so on and so forth. Just like its stylistic manifestations, its existence too bear out these dualities, between philosophers and storytellers/rhymesters as Lisa Susan Ede would say, or folk tradition and intellectual spheres as Wikipedia cites, as nonsensical or symbolic as Michael Heyman notes or as Michele Sala would note, everyday nonsense and literary nonsense. Is then the defining feature of nonsense, as Susan Stewart would say, the interaction of two domains that do not necessarily interact? (Stewart 34). Or is it, as Marnie Parson believes, an outgrowth of the linguistic or philosophical disruption of nonsense (*Touch Monkeys*). Expanding on this point he says, "Linguistic nonsense, because of its symbiotic relationship with sense has long been the concern of philosophy; in fact it lies at the heart of much philosophical questioning…There is, I believe, a fundamental difference in philosophical and literary approaches to the topic; for the former nonsense is central and a potentially crippling error in thought, while for the latter it is marginal but (in my view) a playful indicator of language's ability to make meanings in many ways." (Parson, "Touch" xviii). This I think is the most pertinent observation that has been debated upon by almost all nonsense scholars and also forms an important part of my own work usefully utilized in differentiating it from its Indian counterpart. But, before directly tackling this argument, it is better to have a fair overview of the genre and device.

The Concept of Nonsense

Wim Tigges makes an elaborate study of major scholarship in this area and I will closely follow him to achieve a fair overview on nonsense. He states that according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word 'nonsense' was first recorded in writing by Ben Jonson in 1614, as meaning "spoken or written words which make no sense or convey absurd ideas" (Tigges 6). This attitude was held for a long time, also evident in Dr. Samuel Johnson's definition of the same as "unmeaning or ungrammatical language". But the major turn happened in the nineteenth century when nonsense was conceived and popularized in the writings of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll. Though nonsense has also been recognized in much of the pre-Victorian writings dating back to the timeless tradition of the folktales, it was mainly as an aesthetic, stylistic "device" or "mode". For a long time even post-Lear nonsense was majorly regarded as an imaginative children's literature, whose attraction for adults remained in its way of escaping everyday reality by going back to the childhood state or in its deeper underlying meaning (Petzold in Tigges 7). The attempts at defining nonsense were too broad and included topsyturvydom, lack of emotion and associations with many other genres with similar traits. Nonetheless, it gave a major push to the development of the theory of nonsense and gradually paved the way for the recognition and definition of Literary Nonsense as a genre. It was mainly with Edward Lear's 1846 publication of *A Book of Nonsense* that enthused a much more serious consideration of "this peculiar way of writing" (Sala 86) as I have already mentioned.

The late 1800s

"The Science of Nonsense" (1870), which appeared in *The Spectator* was probably one of the first to comment on how admirable nonsense was specially referring to Lear's works. For the writer the defining feature of nonsense was to evoke laughter by recognizing the laws of sense but deliberately defying them making it an essential feature of nonsense that it "should be audacious and capricious defiance of sense, but never go far enough from sense to lose the feeling of the delightful freedom which is implied in the rebellion." "Word-Twisting versus Nonsense", another article by an anonymous reviewer that appeared in *The Spectator* in 1887, called Lear's nonsense as "refreshingly destitute of sense or probability" with "a wonderful

effort of sustained and imaginative absurdity" (381). Nonsense was bracketed as a "recreative literature" of high value of the day as opposed to the other humorists of the age with their "systematic torture of words" (379). It not only defended this genre from mere punning or satirizing, but recognized it as a mainly verbal phenomenon with detachedness from any kind of context.

Among these early theorists/reviewers, a name that stands out is that of Victorian columnist Edmund Strachey, who ponders over the question of Nonsense vis-à-vis sense in his "Nonsense as a Fine Art" in *The Quarterly Review*, 1888. He describes it "as the flower and fruit of wit and humour, when these have reached the final stage of their growth to perfection" (Strachey 515) and also subdivides nonsense into various kinds like that of the storyteller, the moralist, the theologian, the dramatist, of poetry, satire, parody, caricature, of the comic journal, tendentious nonsense and finally the "pure and absolute" nonsense of Edward Lear. His article goes onto give a short history of comic and witty writing starting from Chaucer to his own time and attempts an extremely wide definition of nonsense. The importance of this work lies in the fact that he was one of the first to attempt a description of 'literary nonsense' by enumerating certain recurring characteristics of nonsense like "setting things upside down, bringing them into all sorts of unnatural, impossible, and absurd, but not painful or dangerous, combinations, is a source of universal delight; and the laughter which it gives rise to is…the expression of our surprise at seeing things so out of place, yet not threatening danger" (Strachey 515) thus beginning the tradition of recognizing nonsense through its **techniques**.

In response, another anonymous reviewer published his article "Nonsense Pure and Simple" (1888) in the *Spectator*, maintaining that nonsense "is not necessarily related to humour and that it need not be so detached from any kind of context" (Sala 87). However, he purported the outlook that "nonsense is a typically English phenomenon, given that only the **English** *taste* (as opposed to the French, the German and the American) would appreciate such incongruities" (Sala 87). Later as I take up the comparison of nonsense within the *rasa* framework, which is generally believed to be a 'taste', it would be easier to defend against this argument which became another important defining feature of nonsense.

The 1900s

Another major work on the subject was that of G.K. Chesterton's "A Defence of Nonsense" (1901) which for the first time distinguished between the satirical writings, confused as nonsense, and the new one introduced by Lear. He is also one of the first to have recognized nonsensical writing as having preceded Lear and Carroll in the works of "some of the greatest writers the world has seen" like that of Aristophanes, Rabelais and Sterne. However, he agrees that their nonsense was written in a widely different sense, more satirical and hence symbolic, "a kind of exuberant capering round a discovered truth" while that of Lear and Carroll is more than "a mere aesthetic fancy". Lear's work is poetical with some emotion while that of Carroll is intellectual, something which is pointed out by later critics too. He went one step further to suggest that the appreciation of nonsense is a sort of spiritual experience, since "far from logic, nonsense offers a "**spiritual view of things**" leading to its reader to "exult in the 'wonders' of creation" (Chesterton in Sala 88). Again, later as we compare the English nonsense with that of its Indian beginnings, we will find a similar trait of associating nonsense with a spiritual plane.

The first post-Victorian collection of nonsense poetry, *A Nonsense Anthology*, edited by Carolyn Wells and published in 1902, brings together a large variety including "light verse", parodistic and humourous poetry, mainly depending on Wells' characterization of what is nonsense as one "which embodies an absurd or ridiculous idea, and treats it with elaborate seriousness". It leaves out nursery-rhyme (which in other cases is discussed in association with nonsense) for it has a "point" (while nonsense has **no point**), which is to aid the kids in counting (Tigges 9). She gives nonsense a place "among the divisions of Humour" but makes a very important distinction between nonsense and sense with the statement: "Absence of sense is not necessarily nonsense, any more than absence of justice is injustice" (xxi). Later in my thesis, I propose a definition of nonsense of my own, which could inevitably lead to a possible solution of preventing any such mix-up in future.

The 1920s-1940s

It is Cammaerts who isolates nonsense for the first time in his full-length study of *The Poetry of Nonsense* (1925) and describes it as a genre by distinguishing it from wit and humour

more precisely. For him however, "It is to the nursery rhyme that we owe the nonsense songs" (Kasawneh 8) and thus traces back nonsense to nursery rhymes. Cammaerts says that it embraces an atmosphere of the "fanciful and irresponsible", "grotesque and incongruous", "meaningless", "irrational" and remarks that "It is far easier to say what *not* nonsense than to say what it is is" (Tigges 9). However, he agrees that whatever might be the case, there is no particular "point" to nonsense and claims that "unless we enjoy nonsense for nonsense's sake, we shall never be able to appreciate them" (Cammaerts in Sala 88). He too builds up on the claim of the anonymous reviewer in *Spectator* that this genre is typically English since only England has a sense of broad humour that can appreciate the "pointless joke" of nonsense (Sala 89).

Then there is Huxley, who points out at least two types of nonsense, in his 1923 article on Edward Lear. In Carroll he locates an "exaggeration of sense" while in Lear he points out an "excess of imagination" (Tigges 12). This could also be seen as one of the first main divisions of nonsense into **the emotional** and **the logical**. Walter de la Mare (1932) and Erika Leimert (1937) describes nonsense as "an amorphous blend of humour, irrationality and fantasy" (Sala 89) and an "indefinable 'cross' between humour, fantasy and a sweet unreasonableness" (Mare in Tigges 11) respectively. However, he is one of the first to suggest **a tension between meaning and non-meaning** which later becomes a mainstay in the definition of nonsense. For T.S. Eliot (1942), Lear represents **a parody of sense** rather than its absence (which I take up in the second chapter while obliquely referring to him) and Kusenberg (1947) differentiates nonsense from surrealism by commenting on the openness of nonsense where "a cheerful anarchy prevails, without a hierarchy…it is no more than it appears to be" (Tigges 12).

The 1950s

This era saw critics like Eric Partridge, who is the first to give a detailed analysis of nonsense techniques, such as its preference for neologisms, portmanteau words and puns in his 1950 article "The Nonsense Works of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll" published in *Here, There and Everywhere. Essays Upon Language*. He, thus, shows how nonsense is primarily "**lexical**", as also previously referred to by a reviewer in the *Spectator*, which becomes another significant characteristic of nonsense frequently taken up by subsequent theorists in defining it.

One work that requires elaborate mention is that of *The Field of Nonsense* (1952) by Elizabeth Sewell who attempts an understanding of language as an **orderly game** within a "limited field" and with "fixed rules" based on logic, commonsense and conventions, serial and order (Sala 90). She believes that the world of nonsense is a lexical one and its playfulness is not irrational but a rational game with rules of its own. Language and numbers being the chief sources of mental playthings, nonsense is seen as an attempt at mastering and reorganizing language according to the rules of Play (Tigges 13). Its dialectical nature is due to a **tension between order and disorder**. She is one of the first critics to point out that more the tension within nonsense the more effective it is. She also is the first to discuss the rational nature of nonsense. For her nonsense is "a collection of words that fail to conform to the conventional patterns of language to which a particular mind is accustomed" (Sala 90). This un-conventionality of the language of nonsense, as we will realize, becomes another major defining factor of nonsense, though it's subjective understanding and lack of specificity often results in clumping together of writings which are not truly nonsensical and will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter. She however, uses her argument to differentiate nonsense from dreams and fantasy (which is nothing but a disorganized accumulation of images) and humour (which is just incidental for this genre). She also notes the extremely visual power of nonsense with its use of images (evoked or alluded to) or illustrations, which is an important aspect of nonsense (Sala 91).

Before we move on to the 1960s, one work that requires mention is that of Annemarie Schone (1951/54), who characterized nonsense as a genre of comic literature in England with a playfulness and lack of direction and broadly discussed the stylistic elements of nonsense verse (Tigges 15) also including several features that can also be said to be characteristics of other types of comic literature.

The 1960s

E. Morpugo (1960), the "first and only (brief) discussion of nonsense in the Dutch language" (Tigges 15), talked about its **timelessness** and enumerated **nonsense themes** like that of culinary expressions, geographical names, names of animals etc (Tigges 15) and Patricia M. Spacks (1961), who studied the role of language in nonsense literature, especially through the

works of Carroll. There is also Leonard Forster who adopted a Chestertonian view in his 1962 inaugural lecture on *Poetry of Significant Nonsense*. He discarded the timelessness of nonsense and saw it as essentially as a precursor to avant-gardism and defined it as no "sheer absence of logical sense, but the creation of a structure which is satisfying in itself" (Tigges 16). In the same year, another theorist, Rolf Hilderbrandt, distinguished nonsense into three types: that of the folk or popular nonsense like that of the nursery rhyme, that of the wordplay and similar devices or ornamental nonsense, and finally that of Lear and Carroll where nonsense prevails in form as well as content. He too agreed in the "pointless" nature of nonsense. However, he saw it only as an aesthetic category and denied it its status as a separate genre (Tigges 16).

A German scholar, Alfred Liede, in his 1963 publication on the history of "ornamental" nonsense which forms "playful literature" considers nonsense as an inferior form of poetry mainly based on a play with language (Sala 92). Liede also refers to Walter Blumenfield (1933) in his introduction, who distinguishes five types of nonsense: semantic, telic, eidic, logical and motivational (Tigges 18) and provides a list of nonsense's verbal devices (Sala 92). However, this fascination with only the smaller units of a sentence rather than the theme in nonsense limits the study of nonsense as a genre, Tigges points out. David Sonstroem, another scholar, points out that nonsense is not senseless but a kind of double-talk that presents a double-sense. What makes nonsense unique is its self-consistency with no dependence on any referent whatsoever (Tigges 20). In 1966, Donald J. Gray, with his "The Uses of Victorian Laughter", makes an important differentiation of nonsense over humour in "its carefully fashioned coherence and its stubbornness in keeping in view some profoundly disturbing actualities" (Tigges 20).

Apart from many other genres, the theatre of the Absurd with its use of verbal nonsense is also sometimes conflated with nonsense. Martin Esslin takes up this case in his "The Tradition of the Absurd" (1961) and accords a liberating effect to nonsense in "opening up vistas of freedom from logic and cramping convention" by transcending sense (Tigges 21). Other critics of this period that requires mention are: Vivien Noakes (1968), one of Lear's biographers, who also points out the relation of nonsense with the universe of words and that detachment is one of their chief characteristics (Tigges 21) and Gilles Deleuze, who has an extensive contribution to the concerns with nonsense and equates nonsense to a mental game where the rules are continuously modified (Tigges 22)

The 1970s

Michael Holquist (1969/70), who looks at nonsense as a "closed field of language" where the meaning of each unit depends on the field that it constructs (Tigges 22); J. Flescher (1969/70), who points out the "**paradox**" and "**incongruity**" in nonsense, and Robert D. Sutherland (1970), who begins from the argument that word-meanings are totally arbitrary and in nonsense, especially that of Carroll, it is this linguistic phenomenon that is exploited (Tigges 23). Albert Laffay (1970), another French scholar, again emphasizes the verbal nature of nonsense and dubs the nonsense world as a "non-existent universe in which objects have been replaced by signs representing them" (Tigges 24). M.R. Haight's "Nonsense" (1971) includes writers like Borges and Ionesco along with Lear and Carroll and finds their keynote to be "absurdity" (which by nature is not entirely without meaning and should not be confused with the Absurd school), which is used to amuse by either mocking or playing. He studies the distortion of sense in language at various levels; word, sentence etc. Hence, one can look at nonsense as a parodying two aspects of language, that of words and grammar. He also points out how nonsense writers have always been fascinated by philosophy, which he calls the "most ambitious exercise of reason" (Haight 254). He concludes: "Its characteristic effect is parody of a playful, fantastic kind, carried out at several linguistic levels" (Haight 255). Dieter Petzold (1972), whom I have already referred to earlier, differs from the others in believing that nonsense is not detached from emotion and that along with linguistic play or logical incongruity, it is the element of surprise, a sense of superiority and irony that makes nonsense. He also seems to point out the adult audience's affinity towards nonsense, in its play with logic and its use of philosophical problems that has an intellectual appeal (Tigges 26). Roger B. Henkle (1973) gives a psychological explanation of nonsense historically limiting it to a particular period of time, while Klaus Reichert (1974) saw it as transitory beginning with Lear and ending with Carroll (Tigges 27). Reinbert Tabbert (1975) again has a problem with the generic nature of nonsense and would rather choose to see it as "a quality" which is characterized by five stylistic characteristics: meaningless accumulation of words and concepts, lack of causality in thought and action, conscious expression of trivialities, conscious misapplication of words and creation of new words without definable sense (Tigges 29).

Another work that makes a very important contribution to the study of nonsense is the dissertation of Lisa Susan Ede. She analyses its verbal world and accounts its success to a series of tensions that play along diverse polarities/dichotomies that nonsense produces and successfully maintains, like that between illusion and reality, order and disorder, so on and so forth (Tigges 29). A volume of essays on Carroll edited by Edward Guiliano that came out in 1976, contains few essays based on the roughly the same idea, but with minor differences regarding the resolution the aforementioned tension (Tigges 30). It has a paper by Donald Rackin, who believes that the essence of tension lies in the fact that these tensions are not resolved, while another paper by Jean Gattegno claims that these oppositions are "paradoxically linked" (Tigges 30). Francis Huxley's *The Raven and the Writing Desk* (1976) postulates some of the basic nonsense themes and devices like that of language, reversal, permutation, coupling, space and infinity, time, food, identity and nothingness, doubling, negating, paralleling and circularity (Tigges 31). Thomas Byrom's *Nonsense and Wonder* (1977) is another extensive analysis of Edward Lear, where he equates nonsense with absurdism, surrealism and other related steams and recognizes Lear and Carroll as the "spiritual fathers" of these. He, however, also mentions the tensions which he defines as "what is said and what is meant" (Tigges 31).

In the late seventies, three large anthologies on nonsense in three different languages appeared edited by Paul Jennings (1977), Robert Benayoun (1977) and Klaus P. Dencker (1978) respectively, where nonsense was viewed as a timeless phenomenon and included work by Aristophanes and nineteenth century French "fatrasies" (which Malcolm takes up more extensively) (Tigges 31). Dencker relies heavily on Dieter Baacke who believed that "nonsense fails to take seriously the phonemic oppositions which distinguish words semantically" but is not entirely without meaning. Benayoum looks at nonsense as a peculiar kind of satire from a socio-political perspective, a product of its age of a very specific economic and socially distressed situation (Sala 93).

Another seminal work in the field of nonsense is Susan Stewart's *Nonsense. Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (1978), which even Tigges mentions at large. Stewart talks about how the general act of sense-making from language are a way of conforming to the social system in humans. While common sense refers to the 'real world', nonsense refers to nothing (Tigges 33). She specially mentions the intertextuality of meaning making in the formation of common sense, which too is highly intersubjective in nature. Relating to Sewell's

Play theory, Stewart shows how the behavior in play is paradoxical, where say for instance a fight is not exactly a fight. Reality too has alternative domains, one of which is nonsense. She further proposes five "procedures" to create nonsense from common sense. She refers to various key aspects of nonsense that had already been touched upon by previous scholars even if with not much emphasis, among which are Reversals and Inversions, Play with Boundaries, Play with Infinity, Uses of Simultaneity and finally, Arrangement and Rearrangement within a Closed Field.

Post Stewart, there were a series of other scholars who tried to understand nonsense, however, not in such a detailed fashion. One name that could be mentioned is that of Stephen Prickett (1979), who stressed on the psychological aspect of nonsense as a product of Victorian era.

The 1980s

Taking up an interesting semiotic approach, Winfried Noth (1980) presented seven levels in which Carrollean nonsense manifests itself namely the linguistic, the sociological, the physical, the biological, the semiotic, the psychological and the philosophical/ideological (Tigges 37). Peter C. Lang (1982) differentiated between linguistic (non)sense and literary (non)sense, whereby language in the latter is thematic (Tigges 39). Hofstadter (1982) mixed up nonsense with surrealism and absurdity. He also saw a relationship between nonsense and Zen Buddhism (Tigges 42). Ina Rae Hark (1982) made the distinction between nonsense and light verses and essentially viewed nonsense as a play with language (Tigges 41). Susan T. Viguers (1983) expanded on to this idea of language-play (Tigges 41). Ernst Kretschmer (1983) tied together most of the points mentioned above, like that of playful language and similar themes, and while discussing Morgenstern "four stages" of the unusual in a real world, the impossible in a real world, the (im)possible in an unreal world and the unreal language in the unreal world, he more or less put forward his own idea of nonsense (Tigges 42). Eberhard Kreutzer (1984) discussed the Alice books against the backdrop of a ripe ground in the Victorian period. His view of nonsense is based on incongruity, distortion, unfulfilled expectations, pseudo-logical connections, and a play with abnormality (Tigges 45).

Another seminal study in this field is that of Tigges himself, whose article "An Anatomy of Nonsense" (1987) along with his book *An Anatomy of Literary Nonsense* (1987) provides a detailed study of most of the important works on nonsense till then (as also most other nonsense critics would agree including Heyman and Sala). He also referred to the narrative structure of literary nonsense as an essential demarcation from everyday nonsense. This is something which I will take up in my thesis later, referring to how this narrative structure is important since it leads to the evocation of an emotion. He also described nonsense as having a balance between meaning and non-meaning and that it created its own reality through language, thus adding on to the belief that nonsense is essentially verbal in nature.

The 1990s and After

Among the more recent noted works on nonsense, one would be that of Alison Rieke's *The Senses of Nonsense* (1992). She chooses to deal with Joyce, Stein, Stevens and Zukofsky, which is not really regarded as "pure" nonsense, but her work is worth mentioning, as Sala puts it, "because it summarizes the main misconception about the genre" (97). Ann C. Coley mentions in her review of her book how Rieke maintains that each of these text is nonsense on the surface, which disrupts the conventions of language and syntax, crosses a semantic border and enters into a zone that chooses to remain unnamed and evades sense. Their unfamiliar and playful surfaces hide meanings that the authors do not want their readers to comprehend, but sometimes lead to something close to funniness and at other times remain totally serious. However, for her nonsense was not a genre but a mere "mode" which is found in abundance in modernist writing. However, contrary to pure nonsense, such modal variety of it did not aim a denial of sense, but rather to demonstrate profound sense, "without the filtering effect of logic and conventional discourse" (Sala 97).

Gabriele Schwab's chapter titled "Nonsense and Metacommunication" in *The Mirror and the Killer-Queen* (1996) seem to point out the danger of conflating nonsense with such modern literary movements. The experimental literature of the twentieth century broke free from the reality principle of mimetic-tradition when writers began to "free the materiality of language from meaning and reference" (Schwab in Sala 49). Both nonsense and modernist literature depends on constant disruption of narrative sequences, by abandoning the filter of logic and

linguistic convention. However, the latter utilizes this to present a symbolic representation of internal psychological worlds with deeper meanings, while nonsense uses it to "fold language back upon itself" (Sala 97) unsettling rhetoric conventions of mental habit by breaking free of the boundaries of internalized rules and liberating the mind. Schwab defines nonsense as a formal-verbal phenomenon depending on its "linguistic ambiguity" (Sala 98).

Another scholar, whose work *The Origin of English Nonsense* (1997), need to be mentioned is Noel Malcolm. I will discuss his work at length because in the first part of his book, all the other genres that have long been confused with the genre of literary nonsense are explained at length here along with commenting on similar traditions in French and Italian culture and can be used to figure out the validity of the claim that nonsense is essentially English. He also deals with the parodic overtones of nonsense that will be dealt with me extensively in the latter part of my work. Nonsense's association with folklore of various cultures from across time and space, makes it seem like a timeless and universal phenomenon. But Malcolm, rather argues it to be a product of its age, which rose as a "parodic" response to "the 'high' literary conventions of the day" (Malcolm 4). However, he does trace a specific historical origin of 'literary nonsense', situating a brief early beginning in the late Middle Ages, rediscovered and re-invented in the early seventeenth century, thus aiding its gradual continuation into the Victorian age. 'Fustian' speech with the dense use of 'inkhorn terms' was used interchangeably with nonsense in the seventeenth century, claims Malcolm. However it was still essentially a literary phenomenon. The final impetus, he argues, was due to Sir John Hoskyns, showing "how nonsense poetry sprang, almost fully armed, out of Hoskyn's head into the English literary world" (Malcolm 5). All this while nonsense was like a variety of the "comic genre" (Malcolm xv) with no politics outside its own. It was only with John Taylor, who took up from where John Hoskyns left, that it became ostensibly political (Malcolm 25).

He further points out nonsense works from other parts of Europe, like Germany, France and Italy, contrary to the claim that nonsense is essentially English. Around the twelfth century, 'Reinmer der Alte' written by a German Minnesinger is pointed out by him to be the earliest known nonsense poetry (Malcolm 53). This medieval genre was given the name of 'Lugendichtung' or lie poetry (Malcolm 55), but showed heavy influences by the traditional poetic-rhetorical device of 'impossibilia' (followed by other French, Italian and Spanish writers). It was similar to nonsense in the way that the miraculous became the norm (Malcolm 53), reality

was inverted, the world turned upside-down (Malcolm 54), nobody questioned the poet's so called eye witnessed tall tale (which is actually a display of the poet's inventiveness) (Malcolm 55) and the extensive use of animals in role reversals performing complex human activities and defying rational analysis or exposition (Malcolm 71), but unlike nonsense always had a unifying narrative structure. In French, this tradition minus the unifying narrative structure was known as the 'fatrasies' (Malcolm 62), which too uses impossibilia like its German brethren but in more dilution. But they were mainly treated as a form of humourous poetry. 'Resverie', was another French Medieval poetry that made use of 'relative' Nonsense as differentiated by the French literary historian Paul Zumthor from 'absolute' Nonsense poetry, whereby the transgression of sense in the former happens by the juxtaposition of each line or couplet, which makes sense in itself, in the entire verse, while in the latter it happens in the smallest units of poetry (Malcolm 65). There is also a certain dialogic sense to this style, with the stringing together of inconsequentialities and was known as the 'menus propos'. It is believed that this style further inspired the German 'quodlibet' of which many critics believes the Lugendichtung to be a sub-genre. This further suggests a sort of continuum with a kind of exchange of this style between the German and the French tradition. This further influenced the Italian Nonsense tradition of the 'motto confetto' and 'frottola', both of which stringed together inconsequentialities. Spain's was the 'disparate' which displayed small-scale devices of absolute nonsense but gradually weaned more towards relative nonsense as apparent from the likes of 'perogrullada' or mock-prognostication (Malcolm 74). Thus, pointing out such plethora of nonsensical works in medieval and Renaissance Europe, Malcolm claims that subsequent rebirth of nonsense in later periods and in different countries should not be seen as a spontaneous generation (as some critics believe it to be) but rather in terms of transmission. He also strongly advocates the transmission of these styles to England and its influences on the genre of Literary Nonsense but also agrees that 'direct proof is lacking' (Malcolm 77).

Though different from what we now understand and call as nonsense, 'impossibilia' or the literary rhetoric device which presents reversals of the natural order of things, was a driving influence on these above mentioned kinds and also the English version of Literary Nonsense, as already mentioned. The tradition of impossibilia can be traced back to as early as the verses from Bible. From there it was initially appropriated for its promise of comic effect and later by the courtly poets. It was generally used as a tool of 'satire, of criticism and denunciation' (Malcolm

81) and/or theological teaching. It can be broadly divided into the utopian, the dystopian and the hyperbolic (Malcolm 80), out of which, the first two can be exemplified through works like More's *Utopia* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. However, in spite of portraying a fantastical world out of imagination, the main purpose of these works was to satirize, thus defeating the purpose of true nonsense. The third style of that of the hyperbolic was what was characteristically closest to that which we call Nonsense. Here the rhetorical effect of emphasizing and dramatizing impossibility was the main aim and hence loses much of the satirical intent of the other two kinds. Through slow transitions of the cultivation of logical impossibilia with contradictory events, this genre moved more and more closer to today's understanding of nonsense.

The Parody is another genre that is often confused with Nonsense or seen to have heavy influences on it. About this Malcolm writes:

> …it was possible to make a kind of nonsense poetry simply by describing, in poetry, absurd and impossible things. But there is a fundamental difference between making a straightforward use of narrative or descriptive literary forms to give an account of absurd events or things, and writing the kind of poetry which makes nonsense of the literary forms themselves. The first just presents a nonsense world to our imagination, through the vehicle of literature: the second presents us with nonsense literature. One might say that the former, in describing a nonsense world, describes a parody of the world (though this is an extended and almost metaphorical use of the word 'parody'), while the later *is* a parody – parody being, by nature, a literary phenomenon. (Malcolm 88)

For Malcolm, it is the second kind of the literary-parodic element that distinguishes Nonsense from any other types or kinds easily confused with it. For him, the dissolution of the literary structure from the other kind leads to a cluster of strange things which becomes uninteresting after a point. So it was necessary to couple impossibilia with parodic elements to create proper nonsense literature, which provided 'a special kind of stylistic energy' (Malcolm 89) to it. He gives examples of mock-prescriptions, mock-recipes, mock-booklists, mock-encomiums, mock-love poems and 'medley' as frequently used to produce a rich stock of nonsensical conceits and fantasy. But all of these had an underlying purpose, either as a political critique or critiquing mock-scholarship with its cumbersome practices. In all of these we see a mixing of the high and

the low, thus becoming a defining factor of nonsense for Malcolm, for whom "Nonsense mixed together high and low subject-matter and diction" (Malcolm 96). This also explains why genres like burlesque or travesty is often treated as Nonsense.

Finally he goes onto discuss certain styles of writing whereby a layer of classical language was put on a vernacular base, like that of macaronics and gibberish, to produce humourous effects caused by such disjuncture and incongruity, recognizing its resultant bizarreness as a precursor to nonsense. This in fact gave birth to the tradition of 'neologisms' or word-coining, which is regarded as an important identifying factor for Nonsense today. To provide a sheath of classical language on the vernacular, one had to have a fair knowledge of the vernacular. A growing interest in the vernacular and experimentations with unknown or less known languages were the fad of the Age. 'Canting' terms or slangs used by the lowlifes became popular. They were like riddles with inherent meaning but with the appearance of being meaningless and defying comprehension. These too could have tangentially influenced literary Nonsense. Finally, he mentions the cultivation of mnemonic verses as a precursor to this genre, which also ties up the idea of linking Nonsense with pedagogical pursuits as put forward by many critics like Lecercle.

Nonsense has also been studied with reference to its similarity with texts that use dreams and eccentricity as literary narrative devices. Lear's eccentric individuals are a brilliant case study to prove this point. However, Malcolm agrees that the allegorical nature along with the dissolution of logic and reality in dreams and the "verbal humour in the utterances of these mad characters" had no resemblance with "the concentrated bizarrerie of nonsense poetry" (Malcolm 112). These style of writing produced humourous sense but not nonsense, and their source of comedy did not lie in their incongruity but rather in their bawdiness. He also discards the association of folklore and nursery rhymes with Nonsense and the eventual claim that Nonsense is universal and timeless due to such associations. For him folklore is equivalent to the carnivalesque space of Bakhtin, which had a specific political purpose and hence not really nonsensical. Further, he is also reluctant to give nursery rhymes the status of timelessness since he says that most of them were adult writings for adult, appropriated for nursery use and it was hard to establish their antiquity (Malcolm 115).

Jean-Jacques Lecercle, in his *Philosophy of Nonsense: The Intuitions of Victorian Nonsense Literature* (1994), like Cammaerts traces back nonsense to nursery rhymes. He also

traces a certain dialectics of nonsense between "over-structuring and destructuring, subversion and support, excess and lack" (Heyman, "Isles" 7). Lecercle believes language to be the central concern of the genre (Heyman, "Defence" 188). He differentiates between pastiche and parody and believes that the former describes better the parodic activities of nonsense literature since it entails a kind of unrecognizable parody in which "the style, the clichés, the slips of the pen, are recognized as somehow other, but no name can be given to this other" (Pendlebury 36). He concludes citing the educational purpose of nonsense, "to teach children the rules of language…and more generally the rules of conduct" (Heyman, "Defence" 188).

From here we can move onto Michael Heyman's thesis (1999) where he shows how nonsense, contrary to Lecercle's claim, grew up as a response to the overt didacticism in children's literature, especially during the nineteenth century, thus disproving him. He shows how the literary-ness of nonsense grew out of its relation to children's literature and the theories of the child. He reads literary nonsense as a "Romantic" reaction to pre-Victorian child constructs originating in Locke and later developed by the others and argues that the ideal reader of this genre is actually a construct, that of a nonsense child, thus utilizing the reader Response Theory. He extensively deals with the argument surrounding "nonsense as parody" in his first chapter and explores "the critical debate surrounding parody in nonsense, and parody in general, as he believes that the contentious definition of parody lies at the heart of the whole dispute" (Heyman, "Isles" 5). Finally he argues that "pure" literary nonsense is something which goes beyond parody to establish the genre. Most of my arguments are based on some of the major observations that Heyman makes in his first chapter and are extremely important for my own work.

Michele Sala's M.A. thesis (2000) is not exclusively the study of nonsense but rather that of the non-serious texts like that of humour and absurd along with nonsense. In the process of her study she proposes a distinction between the three on the grounds of linguistic and narratological studies. She provides a very valuable insight with her theory that humour is humourous because of some incongruities which is eventually resolved, while for nonsense and absurd texts the impression of humour depends simply on the awareness of unresolved incongruities. However, in spite of being almost similar, nonsense and absurd differ due to the different role played by language, where for nonsense "all incongruity is created by language, whereas absurd literature

simply narrates facts and events that are incongruous in themselves, independently of the way they are presented" (Sala 3).

Kathleen Pendlebury, in her thesis (2007), claims that part of her purpose is to bring "nonsense literature up to the level of greatness" (Pendlebury 1). Her thesis examines the claim how literary nonsense is distinctively a "Victorian genre" by looking at various Victorian issues vis-à-vis the writings of Lear. Based on how the Victorian era influenced the genre of literary nonsense, she does a close reading of Lear's limericks and songs for a better understanding. She mentions how Lear mainly started writing his limericks (which he discovered from *Anecdotes and Adventures of Fifteen Gentlemen*, 1822) to keep the Stanley household children entertained which could account for the "tender silliness" that characterizes his work. But his obsession with words, language and sound was what made his nonsense so intuitive, which as she claims was an early development as is evident from his own account of how he became Lear from his original Lor when his "Danish Grandfather picked off the two dots and pulled out the diagonal line and made the word Lear…If he threw away the line and the dots only he would be called Mr. Lor, which he didn't like" (Pendlebury 10). At the same time she also shows how his texts are misunderstood by an excessively forced Freudian and Structuralist readings of the same. Her solution is an alternative approach which she refers to as the six "reading principles" which are: to closely examine the drawings that accompany the limericks and the interaction between text and image, to be attuned to the subtleties of Lear's linguistic play, to acknowledge variation in method and intent from verse to verse, to note the inconclusive relationships often depicted between the Old Persons and "they", but without imposing a system upon them, to consider the humourous affront against decorum and Victorian age-relations and not to be discomforted by the violence and annihilation depicted in many of the limericks, but rather read them in the context of comedy and a certain tradition in children's literature.

Hana F. Khasawneh (2008) on the other hand believes that nonsense literature creates an "illuminating meaning" even though it is achieved "momentum of meaning is delayed". The suggestion is that the "controlled manipulation of literary and linguistic rules does not lead to sterile or absent meaning but to the creative formation of a new set of rules governing the production and interpretation of nonsense writing" (Khasawneh 1). For Khasawneh, that nonsense is demarcated as children's literature that lacks content and meaning is derogatory. She ties up the connection of nonsense to dreams and madness through Freud. Freud's parallel

between the language of dreams and the language of the mad seem to point at the fact that meaning is neither static nor contained by rules but changes with time, which is relatable to the language in nonsense writing. She finds the masking of a certain optimism in the writings of Lear and Carroll which founded literary nonsense, as opposed to the dark pessimism of the later nonsense writers like Gorey and Peake, whose nonsense was not the nonsense as we understand it. She differentiated between Lear's nonsense as ridiculing educational schemes, the alphabet and natural history, while Carroll's as creating a new type of girls' books of his time (Khasawneh 24).

Characteristics of Literary Nonsense

From the above detailed overview of the genre, starting with the concept of nonsense to nonsensical devices and finally to the generic understanding of the same, we note few recurrent tropes that could be read as defining features of the genre and help us garner a better understanding of it. They can be summarized as follows:

1. It is mainly a verbal phenomenon and has an extensive "lexical" nature.
2. It is characterized by a sort of detachedness from any kind of context.
3. It is either emotionless or evokes laughter.
4. It does not have any particular "point".
5. It is considered to be typically English.
6. It is like any other rational game with rules of its own.
7. There is a textual tension through never ending dichotomies like between meaning and non-meaning and is understood by working through such dialectics.
8. The use of illustrations is important.
9. Recurring stylistic elements.
10. A sense of timelessness.
11. Recurring themes.
12. Often seen as a precursor to avant gardism.
13. The psychological aspect.
14. The spiritual aspect.

Major Theories used in Reading/Analyzing (Literary) Nonsense

The Victorian Child and the Role of Overt Didacticism in Literature

Much of the education that was popular during the nineteenth century was utilitarian. At that time it was considered as "progressive" children's literature, often inspired by Locke and Rousseau, practicing a "programmatic treatment of children" (Heyman, "Isles" 26). All of it was aimed at informing the child's mind with effective rationality that was considered necessary for it to rise to the level of the adult world. This was achieved through literature that was "alternatively viciously or blandly didactic, representing unrealistic children, in a world reduced to the size of what was perceived as the child's mind" (Heyman, "Isles" 25) or morally charged writing by Evangelical writers aimed at saving the "little sinful creatures from damnation" (Heyman, "Isles" 25) or the "awful warning" book (Heyman, "Isles" 44). Leave alone a freedom to imagination, all these writings only aimed at a rigid edifying convention of children's literature. Heyman sees Lear's work as a parody of these existing forms, in his alphabets or cautionary tale, but "moved beyond parody to the creation of a new children's genre: literary nonsense" (Heyman, "Isles" 27). Not only did Lear baffle adult reasoning with his nonsense, but also created an alternative of the conventional moral and pedagogic models by transgressing them. Pointing out oodles of intertextuality, Heyman notices Lear's love for Romantic melancholy and the solitary. But since his intertextual references are so vague, that it escapes notice, and mostly shows a deep respect for the spirit of the original. This aspect of "positive criticism" (Heyman, "Isles" 19) in parody as many radical critics like Hutcheon, Waugh and Hannoosh suggest, seem to be use in abundance in Lear and could be the defining feature of nonsense from parody. Carroll's work also abounds in parody. He created children characters in the form of the didactic verses of his time and parodied them by eventually painting his characters with viciousness, as opposed to the conventional absurdly good children, who committed wrong without being punished or being repentant.

The "child" construct hence becomes a very crucial entry point into a far better analysis of nonsense. Heyman covers most of it, through an elaborate study of childhood theory with children's literature, with its initial budding in the late-eighteenth century. Why, despite being a genre that especially caters to children, it still attracts adults can be hopefully better dealt with by

looking at its possible relation to children's literature vis-à-vis the theoretical compulsions on this genre at that age. The pre-Victorian construct of child was prominently dominated by Lockean views that childhood is a stage of error that needs to be instructed and disciplined from the adults to adhere to the "standard norms" of adult life. The increased sensibility regarding the individuality of the child began with the public's growing fascination with the figure of the child and their desire for paintings of children (Heyman, "Isles" 115). There was also an increased demand for children's books. Initially the mass-marketed children's books portrayed a generalized unreal child, which underwent gradual change with Rousseau's intervention and the Romantic Movement. The child acquired the status of an 'individual' with unique and valuable qualities. Largely expanding on Rousseau's limited beginning, this idea flowered in writings of Wordsworth, Blake, Coleridge, among the others. That any wildness of the child should be met with immediate castigatory consequences changed with the acceptance that a child can be mischievous while still remaining innocent, and this was treated as a virtue. Thus as per the Romantic conception, the child became an individual, with wildness of innocent mischief and closeness with nature, along with a divine imagination that elevated it to heights not comprehendible by adults. This is where Lear intervened, further exploiting this "child" in nonsense's most characteristic theme of "its insistence on complete individuality disdain for convention" (Heyman, "Isles" 113). Also, being educated at home by his sisters, Lear was scornful of prescriptive schooling from the very start and sought to bring about a revolution in the way didacticism was imparted through children's literature.

What becomes further interesting is how nonsense goes against the Lockean deprecatory image of a child's fancy/imagination which is believed to emerge from a mind which is "narrow, and weak, and usually susceptible but of one Thought at once" (Heyman, "Isles" 192). This ability of a child to combine and hold two contrary ideas simultaneously is vital to nonsense, and explains the dialectic of nonsense that many critics define nonsense by. Instead of treating the child as a blank slate that needs to conform by emulating the adult norms, nonsense treats the adult as "fallen" from childhood and shows them how childhood has not been properly preserved in them. The fact that nonsense's attitude towards death, violence or punishment does not evoke the expected emotion of terror can also be explained by a child's response to it. The graveness of death escapes the child's "elevated" understanding. Death has always been there is children's literature and has also been seen by critics as stemming from the concern with death of at least

seventy-five percent of children born in London before the age of five (Heyman, "Isles" 171) at that time, sometimes used to their advantage to morally police children through the fear of damnation after death. However, the deaths in nonsense are treated with certain triviality and becomes an object of joke, however serious the undertones.

Same can be said about the inappropriate sexual overtone in a children's genre that is alleged against nonsense. Lear for instance innocently uses words, like say "promiscuous" or "Pusseybite" or "wet", which have sexual overtones or are treated as euphemisms. Heyman writes, "The adult will immediately think of sexual connotations, which are certainly improper here. In nonsense, there can be no overt-sexuality, and the adult's knowledge only interferes with the tone and method of nonsense" (Heyman, "Isles" 168). Heyman agrees with Prickett that it is as if Lear is "trying to get the adult reader to be half-shocked in order to show, by this false reaction, what a dirty mind the reader has". The celebration of death or sexuality is evoked in "innocence, joy and irreverence" and ends up being "celebrated, defeated, applauded and irrationality brought on" in children, also pointing out to the adults how "adulthood is tainted and neither innocent nor spontaneously creative enough to accept nonsense for what it really is". So, it can be safely deduced that nonsense as re-invented in Lear was written with a child in mind as its implied reader. This takes us to the reader-response theory, also widely used in our attempt to understand nonsense.

The Reader Response Theory

This theory gives a priority to the reader over the meaning of the text (Heyman, "Isles" 109) based on the idea that an author always fabricates a construct of the reader that is an intended/implied reader. Like nonsense, it depends on dialectic between text and reader for a successful acceptance/reading of the text. Though many theories have been proposed in and around this idea, the most relevant to the subject of Literary Nonsense would be that of Erwin Wolff's "Intended reader" and Wolfgang Iser's "Implied reader" (Heyman, "Isles" 109). The first refers to a shared historical and cultural experience, while the latter refers to solely textual devices that is necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect. The first implies a limited set of reader perspective which Lear's Victorian audience shared with him including knowledge of the parodied text and the model behind the nonsense illustrations. The latter creates the space for a

reader who is more universal and historically independent, but is intuitively attuned to grasp the meaning of the nonsense text by voluntarily playing with the existing gaps (mostly created by the verbal aspect) and fulfills the relation that the author has been looking for in his reader. Both these theories taken together, build the ideal reader that the author has in mind. So instead of the writing, it is the underlying impressions that the text produces through language which in turn purports the reader to assume that particular set of qualities and attitude. Plus, though it has the idea of a child as the implied construct reader, it helps us explain the different receptions of adult and child audiences, because it accommodates both (Pendlebury 43). In fact the appeal of nonsense lies in the fact that it frequently deals with the difficult or what may be considered as 'adult' issues, in a way that it can be handled by children too. Thus, this intended/implied nonsense reader construct is a close descendent of the Romantic child, as Heyman would suggest, who is an "individual" in his own right, "wild" and "elevated" with "divine imagination". (Heyman, "Isles" 110). However, this theory takes us forward to the next theory which better explains how the author expects his intended/implied reader to voluntarily play with the gaps in his text.

The Game Theory

The other idea that is integral to the reading of nonsense and partly develops from the above mentioned theory is the idea of a reader constantly playing with the nonsense text. This was inspired by the idea of "Home Ludens" or Man, the Player as popularized by Johan Huizinga. The work of critics like Huizinga (1938), followed by Eugene Fink, Roger Caillois and others, was crucial in the development of the play theory which is used to analyze nonsense by many critics. The self-defined world of nonsense is equated with a play world, which is "an enigmatic realm that is not nothing, and yet is nothing treal" (Ede 15) and where nonsense operates according to its own unique rules of order and logic. The world of play also helps nonsense maintain its dialectic structure by maintaining a constant tension between a personal freedom and an attempt to forget the upsetting realities of life. Hence, nonsense is often characterized by its lack of emotion since this interplay leads to "a basic ambivalence between the desire to present emotion, with its concomitant pain and confusion, and the tendency to refuse to admit that such discomforting realities exist" (Ede 15).

Thus the world of nonsense is self-defined and like the mode of play provides pleasure to its readers who voluntarily choose to play. In nonsense this happens when the reader surrenders himself to the phonetic pleasures of Lear and Carroll's verbal world of reversals, portmanteau, neologisms etc. thus allowing nonsense to present ideas, emotions and images often unacceptable to more serious literature especially that of Victorian England. We also realize that this interplay takes place as Sewell would say mostly in the reorganizing of language according to those of play. Tigges, too, notes how nonsense has its own set of rules and laws, but unlike a real game adheres to its own rules only voluntarily. This again points out the excessive verbal nature of the genre and leads to a reading of nonsense though its language by linguist philosophers.

Language and Philosophy

Nonsense has always existed, if not as a genre, but as "a stylistic device" or "a literary mode" (Tigges 2). With its generic development post Lear in the Victorian period, not only did it trigger a drastic change to the face of children's literature, but was gradually appropriated for adult audiences in the writings of Edward Gorey, Marvyn Peake or by Joyce, Wallace Stevens and Gertrude Stein, also influencing the surrealists, the Dadaists and the absurdists. Most of it was to do with how the language of nonsense distorted sense making by adhering to no single meaning. It was the time when Kant, as both Ede and Tigges mentions, distinguished between "what man can assert with certainty (sense) and what is beyond his rational powers (non-sense)" (Ede 3). Thus, philosophers and linguists began to consider language as a sense-making tool and a phenomenon in its own right, ruled by its own laws. This resulted in a general turmoil in the direction and methodology of philosophical moorings and the concern with language as an independent structure. I will take up the latter first and discuss the impact of the idea of nonsense on philosophy later in this section.

The obsession with language is what creates one of the major links between Victorian nonsense and modern art and philosophy. The emergence of Victorian literature was partly in response to a highly controlled society with stringent social rigidity. It also emerged "at the beginning of a far-reaching break with the mimetic tradition" (Schwab in Sala 97). Writers started experimenting with language to free them from meaning and reference. In some senses, it was nonsense-language that provided a model for many experimental new literary techniques

like that of Surrealism, Dada, High Modernism right down to the "manifold simulacra of post-modernism" (Schwab in Sala 97). Nonsense became an answer to societal rigidity, by openly opposing basic rules for human existence and defying convention, beginning in a subversion of the linguistic convention and promising a relief from strict boundaries of rules by allowing flexibility of the mind.

Gilles Deleuze, whom I have already mentioned above, also tries to understand the intimate relationship between sense and nonsense through language using the example of Carroll and looks at how language breeds the possibility of creativity through breaking rules, linguistic disruptions, subversions and deviations. Like words have a meaning which does not lie within itself, nonsense words have a way of deriving meaning from themselves and does not signify anything beyond itself and hence it is nonsense by defying the logical meaning-making (Khaswaneh 43). He too advocates a change in the way we think about language and finds its answer in nonsense literature.

Nonsense as a Philosophical Category

Nonsense became a philosophical category with Bertrand Russell around the early twentieth century with the theory of types followed by Wittgenstein (Tilghman 256). The distinction between sense and nonsense is at the heart of Wittgenstein's logic of language. In *Tractacus* (1921), Wittgenstein tries to find out the relationship between language and reality. In his later work, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), which was posthumously published, he discarded much of what he had argued in *Tractacus*, but language still remains his main concern and he states that since in philosophical metaphysical problems expressions turn out to have no use or role to play in language or life except for giving rise to misleading analogies that prevent us from seeing the world as it is, it gives rise to nonsense. The meaning of any word is accorded to the language-game by Wittgenstein. As Ede correctly summarizes

> Wittgenstein believed that the limits of the knowable world and the limits of language are the same, and that "the logical limits of language are the limits both of what can be said and what can be thought, and therefore all that can be said to exist." (Tilghman 4)

The same belief was shared by Structuralism, as developed by Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic studies. This school of thought tried understanding reality through language. Though language as the Structuralists understand it is slightly different from Wittgenstein, they share his belief that what is knowable about "all manifestations of social activity…may be reduced to the same set of abstract rules that define and govern what we normally think of as language" (Tilghman 4).

The Historical, Cultural and Psychological

The Historical, Cultural and Psychological baggage of the Victorian era that is considered to have prepared a rich ground for the growth of nonsense, is also used as a chief way of reading nonsense. However, in reality this entire condition that bred nonsense was part of a broader scheme that pre-dates and post-dates Victoria's reign, as Pendlebury points out (Pendlebury 52). Like for instance the excessive obsession regarding sexuality cropped by around the sixteenth century when it started becoming a topic for discursive enquiry and gradually, as Foucault's *History of Sexuality* would have us believe, "moved into the home" and became a subject for secrecy and moralizing in the Victorian age. Similarly, as has already been discussed, childhood as a romanticized stage, developed during the Renaissance, which heralded the growth of modernity. All of these reached heights in the Victorian age, when there was a revolution in science and technology which gave rise to new modes of thoughts that clashed against these age-old "singular repressiveness, prudery and religious intolerance governed by strict and arbitrary rules of propriety" (Pendlebury 51). Lear is often said to have been influenced by sexuality, rebelling against the social repression on the body by a nonsensical response to physical constraint. Sexual images pertaining to Lear's views on sex, masturbation and his apparent homosexuality is often read in his works, and thought to signify "the displacement of repressed unacceptable desires into harmless childish discourse" (Pendlebury 56).

His penchant for sexuality, as present in a repressed form in his writings, is also associated with the "unbridled sexuality" (Pendlebury 62) of the Jungian Trickster, the figure with which Lear is associated with by Clifton Snider. Snider's Jungian analysis of Lear, merging it with Paul Radin's Jungian study of the Trickster mythology (in native American Winnebago culture), is another reading that is applied in the understanding of nonsense. This Trickster is an ambivalent figure caught between the dialectic of giving in to passion and appetite on one hand

and a bearer of common ethical responsibility on the other. This paradoxical state of the Trickster also reminds us of nonsense's affinity to paradoxes as expressed through the maintenance of a dialectic tension and ties up the both. However, sexual analysis of Lear and his images is not restricted to a Jungian analysis alone. A large Psychoanalytical section of study on Lear also exists, with extensive biographical leanings on his life. Same is true for the Carrollian branch of nonsense too.

The general readings of Lear, as Pendlebury succinctly states is: "...the traditional analysis of his verse is biographical, describing his nonsense as a consequence of various physical and emotional maladies, psychological traits and personal experiences, all coalescing to produce a new and irreverent literary genre with the aid of various "cultural" phenomena, in particular, the repressiveness of the period and contemporary developments in children's literature" (Pendlebury 74). Edmund Miller sees "sex…everywhere in Lear" (Pendlebury 75), while Thomas Dilworth's reads one of his limericks as an "elaborate visual pun" (Pendlebury 75) noting phallic symbols, orgasmic death and the sexual symbolism of riding. Even Thomas Byrom also notes "ambivalent sexuality" in Lear's limericks. A bit too much is read in Lear's animal imagery, the obsession with death and the use of apparent phallic images like that of 'noses' for instance. They are also tied up to his biography, to get to a psycho-biographical (Pendlebury 76) study of Lear and his limericks.

From a very young age he suffered from violent depressions which he playfully called "The Morbids" and was also epileptic fits, which he referred to as the "Demon". Lear went to great length to keep his seizures secret, having been told like many other young Victorians, that the seizures were a consequence of masturbation. This made him into a recluse which is read into his creations of the isolated eccentric figures of his limericks. Lear's supposed homosexuality is considered as another influence on the "incongruent couples" in his nonsense verses.

From the Indian Subcontinent

As Heyman points out in his introduction to *The Tenth Rasa*, "Nonsense veins run through all of Indian culture, touching on spirituality, politics, gender issues, class, conceptions of childhood, education and linguistics" (xxi). However, the modern 'Indian' nonsense as we understand it is essentially a postcolonial phenomenon as it was majorly influenced by the works

of its English forefathers. The modern 'Indian' nonsense is more of a hybrid of its mystical and folk connections along with its English influence. The reason why I put 'Indian' within single inverted commas over here is because, what we understand as Indian in this context can also be a guide to our understanding of the Indian-ness of the Indian modern nonsense. India as a country with its vast diversities and history of shifting kingdoms is too complex for an easy analysis. As we shall later see, most of the Indian nonsense bears a strong stamp of the region that it originated from. This provides a huge base for nonsense in India that is practically impossible to analyze as a whole. Even if we look at the larger picture, the language of one region is practically nonsense for the others. But nonsense has always been there in different forms in the subcontinent, starting from the Holy Scriptures or mystical texts, such as the Vedas, the Upanishads and even in writings of Kabir, to the folk tradition. The question of meaning/non-meaning and sense/non-sense has always been of primary concern in the various Indian schools of thought. All this has influenced into what has developed into the generic literary nonsense in modern India.

Though the English tradition of nonsense greatly affected the modern Indian nonsense, it will be unfair to claim that the whole of it was an effect of this contact. India had had its own indigenous traditions of nonsense, which made it easier for the pioneers of nonsense in India to easily accommodate and assimilate the English influences on it to develop it into the hybrid that modern Indian nonsense has grown to be today. Though it was yet not known or recognized as nonsense, nor had a specific name for similar works of nonsense from various regions and cultures, nonsense has been an integral part of the Indian consciousness. Our Vedas, Upanishads, the works of medieval poet-saints, the folk tales, lullabies, game rhymes, folk theatre abounds in paradoxes, puns or the language games that anticipate the genre of nonsense. Either it was dubbed as philosophy or mysticism or they existed as part of the oral culture dominated with mnemonics or game rhymes.

The 'thorn' texts, as the editors of *The Tenth Rasa* refers to them, traced back to as early as the early medieval period, has been observed to have the nonsense element of tautology. This could be one of the earliest examples of nonsense embedded in Indian mysticism as many people believe these texts to have some kind of spiritual significance, acquired from at least two poet-saints; but no one could exactly explain what the underlying spiritual significance was. These have many folk rhyme descendents, which by virtue of its nature is irreverential in nature.

However one ancient version that was found by the editors, was that of Sant Namdev which ends with a certain 'message' of spiritual guidance after a list of nonsense tautologies beginning with the image of a thorn. Here we find a merging of the literary with the folk tradition quite unique to the Indian culture though which came earlier is an unresolved debate.

Kabir's 'upside-down language' or *ulat bansi* also contains much of the nonsensical characteristics of paradoxes, absurdness, impenetrability and opaqueness, while claiming to have an underlying meaning. Kabir was born to a class of weavers recently converted to Islam, studied meditative and devotional practices from a Hindu guru and though assumed to be illiterate grew to be a powerful teacher and poet. His verses were mostly orally transmitted recorded by disciples, but playfulness was one of their important features. A lot of it also plays with elements of *acaraj* (surprise or amazing things), *adbhut* (wonderful, marvelous, strange) or are pure riddles. This is what is said to expand into the paradoxical and enigmatic world of his 'upside down language' which he is said to have inherited from the Sahajiyas and Naths and adapted it to his own purpose. It is also this aspect of Kabir's verses which also makes it comparable to Zen Koan, another way in which nonsense as a philosophical category has been read.

To say a little about these poems: "these poems fascinate while they perplex the reader, that the images stick in consciousness even when their meanings eludes the mind, initiating a dialogue not only between reader and poet but the reader and himself, which may go on for years. Riddles and their extension, the paradoxes and enigmas of *ulatbamsi*, besides being effective rhetorical devices, are teaching devices…" (Singh and Hess 14). This seems to remind of similar debates surrounding nonsense that took place in the Western scholarship which I have extensively mentioned before. His view on language that is derived from his teaching seems to take truth as independent of logic and factuality, but gauged from the sort of mind that they come from and what they do to the mind they touch. Kabir also harps on about death and claims that fear for death makes one delusional. As Hess points out, part of the function of his upside-down language is to make you look like a fool, by highlighting the ludicrous (S.B. Dasgupta in Hess), using obvious paradoxes, sometimes full of animal characters in upside-down situations. One way to approach it is by Keat's 'negative capability'.

However, such expressions are known to have existed before and according to studies seem to predate him by three thousand years in Indian religious literature. P. Chaturvedi cites some examples in *Kabir Sahitya ki Parakh* (1981):

"This ox has four horns, three feet, two heads and seven hands, and, tied up in three ways, makes a loud noise."

"Man, this body surely merits your attention: river flows through it while the water stands still."

"Hey scholar, whoever knows the form within this beautiful, dynamic bird should explain it. Milk flows from its head and it drinks water through its feet."

-Rigveda

"One standing still moves ahead of the runners."

-Atharvaveda

"Without hands or feet he grasps and moves swiftly, without eyes sees, without ears hears."

-Shvetashvatara Upanishad

Major studies have shown how Kabir has immensely borrowed from the tradition of Tantric Yoga, pointing out links between him and the esoteric tradition of the Siddhas, who were the Buddhist Tantrics and the Nathas, who were the Saivite Yogis. A major movement in Indian religion generally referred to as 'tantrism' that was popular in some regional cultures in the millennium before Kabir (roughly A.D. 700-1200), was where this sort of language was used and is said to have been directly taken up by Kabir. This was popularly known as the *sandhabhasa* (intentional or hidden language) tradition of medieval India. As Hess points out, "Cryptic and paradoxical expressions abound in the Hindu and Buddhist Tantras, the text of hatha yoga, the vernacular poetry of the Buddhist "siddhas" who lived between the tenth and twelfth centuries" (Hess 136). According to Hess, Mercia Eliade and Per Kvaerne provides the most insightful readings of the purpose of the *sandhabhasa* where the "paradoxical situation" is indispensible to the yogin's training. Quoting Eliade he writes:

> The semantic polyvalence of words finally substitutes ambiguity for the usual system of reference inherent in ordinary language. And this destruction of language contributes, in its way too, towards "breaking" the profane universe and replacing it by a universe of convertible and integrable planes…through language itself (that is, by creation of a new and paradoxical speech replacing the destroyed

profane language) the yogin must enter the plane on which semen can be transformed into thought, and vice versa.

This is in turn what the Buddhists claim to achieve at the *Sahaja* (Void) state when the dualities of life is abolished. Hess and Singh suggest that reading of these texts lets us forego our usual two-dimensional, linear way of reading that leads to only one correct answer. We are rather invited to think beyond these two dimensions to embrace multiple, contradictory truths that better reflect reality (*The Tenth Rasa* xxii). These beliefs come very close to the concept of nonsense with its "polyvalence" of meanings whereby "…instead of a series of straight-arrow equivalences, we have a molecular cluster where the possibilities of meaning are multiple but not infinite, where the structure of relationships is three-dimensional, not flat" (Hess, "Appendix" 138). The various ways of enlightenment as available to the yogin was instructed to them in this "secret" hidden upside-down language and thus, forms the literature of these various sects. The Tantric language pulled the opposites together, as opposed to other Hindu and Buddhist doctrines which preached "oneness of opposites" (Hess, "Appendix" 139), and preached in its tantric-yogic language of "concreteness, reversals, apparent obscurity" which is considered to be the immediate source of Kabir's upside-down language.

The Nathas were another major influence on Kabir. The Nath Panths were a sect of *hatha yogi*-s developed by Gorakhnath, who was almost a legendary figure who may have lived in the eleventh century or earlier. Many medieval texts describing yogic physiology are associated with this sect. A large body of literature grew up around this sect which includes songs that are very similar to the *ulat bansi* poems. This was because, even yoga practice depended heavily on *ulta-sadhana* or reversal practice and came to be known as that. Even today, wandering jogis in the North and Northeast commonly sing such *ulat bansi* songs. Shashi Bhusan Dasgupta, who studies tantric Buddhism extensively, cites examples of the style springing up in rural Bengal, associated with the *bauls*, the Vaisnava Sahajiyas or with various individual poets (Hess, "Appendix" 142). The Bengali Buddhist *siddhas* of around the tenth century, who composed songs or couplets in the vernacular, also used a mysterious language thick in surreal images and paradoxes. They could have been another influence on Kabir. These songs and poems used reversal of roles, personality and laws of nature, with anthropomorphism that is animal figures assuming human roles (speaking of a strong folk flavor) that appeared almost comic.

Despite this comic aspect, the serious readership (like the *Bijak* commentaries) would try and interpret such occurrences as thoughtful while working out consistent interlocking explanations in the use of these various figures. These explanations rely heavily on local proverbs with the animals seen as associated with various beliefs and practices. Wordplays are unearthed as having ulterior meanings, so on and so forth. However, Hess also gives the example of how this seriousness is totally undone in the way a common layman would read it. He shares an anecdote where Dada Sitaram, a tantric guru in Varanasi, while explaining a particular poem provided a new insight into the function of *ulat bansi*, not by what he said about the poem, but by the way he read it. One of his students was there, a layman of the town who chanted the poem after him and started to chuckle that "It's fun!" It is then that Hess realized that these snapshots of animals in human guises were like a comic strip, and provided the same amusing and ironic slant on human affairs as say "Minnie Mouse with her hands clasped in a romantic swoon". The poet shows his awareness of this irony in the introductory line itself where he refers to the "untellable" aspect of the tale.

> Before thinking at all about the esoteric meanings of the symbols, we laugh at the prospect of a moo-cow singing auspicious songs, a black crow washing clothes, a newly shaven fly rushing off from the barber, shouting like the white rabbit of Alice in Wonderland, "Wait for me! I'm joining the marriage procession!" We laugh as children do at a cartoon, and evoking this childlike state of mind may be one way of breaking habitual thought patterns. Surely this is one reason why ordinary villagers enjoy singing ulatbamsi songs: the songs are silly. It's fun to sing that the bread eats the cook or that an ant's urine becomes a river in which the pandit washes his clothes. (Hess, "Appendix" 148)

The language which is said to mask answers to grave philosophical questions in a childlike humour, almost akin to modern nonsense, could give us a simple explanation of why nonsense is nonsensical. Evoking the childlike state of mind to break habitual thought patterns is what the writers aspire at, be it in philosophical mysticism aiming towards enlightenment or the Victorian fathers who use it against a particular backdrop of their society or the modernist writers who use it to represent the angst of their age. The *ulat bansi* paradoxes created instantaneous effect with a sense of immediacy, not knowing when the normal world has turned crazy, thus breaking away from habitual reality.

We also find traces of nonsense in medieval Indian poetry of around sixteenth century in the Vijayanagara court of Krisnadeva Raya (*The Tenth Rasa* 6-7). The poets then would have contests to test their skills of literary analysis of complex poetic forms. It is said, that the legendary court jester and poet Tenali Ramalinga created some verses that although in a perfect formal style was full of sheer absurdity and nonsensical wordplay. In Kannada mysticism, the literary form or style of producing apparent nonsense is *bedagu* or *mundige* (*The Tenth Rasa* xlvi) as present in the inner paradox in the *vachana*s of Allama Prabhu, a twelfth century Kannada mystic. U.R. Anantamurthy also refers to another fifteenth century mystic poet Purandara, who uses the word '*lolalotte*' which refers to 'childishly nonsense' in Kannada.

Various other writings in different languages, that had nonsense like qualities was also bracketed under the name of 'nonsense' but in their respective tongues. Like Sanskrit has its '*udbhat*' *shlokas*, Bengali has its *ja-ta* or *abol tabol* or *ajgubi*. Hindi and Punjabi have *und-sund* and *be-matlab*. Malayalam has *asambandham* or *aprasangika*. Basheer has been known to use the nonsense word *hunbusato* as the title of a story. However, as Sumanyu Satpathy points out, the specific genre of Literary Nonsense still does not have any such specific name. Like in Oriya, *nanabaiya* has gained popularity with Nandakishore Bala. Other writers have offered various other terms like *asangata shaitya* by Panigrahi, *alukuchi-malukuchi* by J.P. Das, *ana-bana* by both Dash Benhur and J.P. Das. He also mentions the term *bai-jhaia* which according to Niranjan Behera is what the Bathudi tribe of Mayurbhanj calls naughty and obstinate boys and girls, where the word *bai* refers to madness or whim which when tagged to an alliterative nonsense the resulting term, *bai-jhaia* is indeed closest to the idea of nonsense (*The Tenth Rasa* xlix).

The subcontinent is rich in nonsense-like folk material for both children and adults and the folk tradition has hence also been a huge influence on the formation of literary nonsense. The only difference that it has with modern literary nonsense is the lack of an overarching structural continuity or sophistication. But its arbitrary nature, form, methods, themes and absurdity often find its way into modern literary incarnations of Indian nonsense. A lot of it that can be traced in the folk tradition catering to the children like lullabies, game rhymes, counting rhymes, nursery rhymes or songs. On the other hand a lot of it is also found in religious festivals, weddings or other celebrations where songs are sung in adult nonsense or nonsense games are played. It has also been found to be enacted by a 'fool' figure in *jatras*.

However, today's Indian nonsense develops as a hybrid as a result of its English influences which is almost impossible to separate from the native. The English works of nonsense have found their way into the subcontinent ever since the mid-nineteenth century or maybe even before that. Especially in particular areas like West Bengal and Maharashtra, where the influence of English was the greatest, the impact was felt the most. It is evident in the writings of Sukumar Ray, Rabindranath Tagore and others who are considered to be the forerunners of modern Indian literary nonsense. Sumanyu Satpathy also mentioned the works of Oriya author Brajanath Badajena at one of our discussions, whose *Chatura Binoda* (18th Century), written even before Lear and Ray, is rich in nonsense. Bengali nonsense was one of nonsense's first imprints in India and in a matter of time the rest of India too reacted to its call. The neighbouring states of Orissa and Assam were among the ones that were majorly influenced, though through the Bengali association mainly, twice removed from its English predecessors.

Tagore's understanding of nonsense is reflected in two brief verse-prefaces to his *Khapchada* (1937). He addressed one to Rajshekhar Basu, another writer of his time noted for his wit, which served both as defence and also a justification of his use of such nonsense techniques and strategies. To justify the high status of nonsense Tagore invoked the high canonical traditions with numerous allusions to Puranic myths. In a series of 'if'-clauses, he claims that if his words do not care for sense anymore and his mind is disoriented and reached the state of insanity, he would justify his state by the example of the four faces of Brahma, the Creator. The four faces have a purpose, where one articulates philosophy, through the other the Vedas were born, the third gave birth to sensible poetry to soothe the disordered mind. But the fourth mouth is the origin of "fence-breaking, over-leaping, mad laughter" (Dhar 104). This is the insanity equivalent to the one the author claims to have discovered, which gives rise to nonsensical inspirations thus infusing a spirit of high seriousness to the project. In the second preface, which he addressed to the reader, he aligns nonsense with "disorder and chaos, gibberish and childishness, fun and amusement" (Dhar 105). The title itself could mean incongruity, or could have been used as a pun on *chhoda*, but also suggests a certain a certain release of control, which is what nonsense does, with the lack of rational control or restraint.

Sukumar Ray, the greatest Literary Nonsense writer of India, had founded his own Nonsense Club soon after leaving college. As his son Satyajit notes, it was one of the earliest indications of the direction that his genius would take. True to the spirit of nonsense, his writing

had an abundance of unpoetic matters of mundane domesticity on one hand, while a spoofing of incidents and characters of epic heights on the other, both in simple tune and rhythm. His writing had a distinctive vein of humour like his father Upendrakishore Ray who was himself a fine humourist, "with a simple, tender humour utterly free of satire or irony" (Ray "Intro"). Satyajit recounts how even his father's humour was free of malice but not of satire. His world, too, like Lear was full of eccentrics in their land of "grotesque imagination". His extent of imagination, like Lear and Carroll, was such limitless that the only way to present them was through utterly new words, feels Satyajit. During his illness in his last two and a half years, he returned to a particular poetical project which he named *Sri Sri Barnamalatatva* (Holy Alphabetology) and has a distinct ring of Lear's nonsense alphabets. Around 1915, he formed the Monday Club or the 'Candy Club' (*Manda Sammelan*) an association of promising poets, artists, critics, scholars of his day, and the get-togethers were a place for a range of discussions on varied subjects along with general merrymaking. What is mentionable is the notices of this club that were printed in such a distinctively Sukumarian language. Satyajit specially mentions his short story with the nonsense-title of "Drighangchu" which has a four-line chant or spell, of which a ten-line version was used by Sukumar as the chant of Viswakarma in his play *Shabdakalpadruma*. Satyajit believes that, "It would be hard to find a better example of the pure spirit of nonsense" (Ray "Intro"). This special vein of nonsense was named by Sukumar as the *rasa* or spirit of whimsy, the traces of which can be found in folk poetry of any nation, in spite of not being a part of the nine *rasa*-s of the Indian Aesthetic Theory. Since there was little or no nonsense before him save for the techniques, his nonsense was largely his own creation. He was however influenced by much Western tradition (of say comics etc.), especially the European literature. But he too had his doubt as to how the Indian readers would react to this vein of nonsense and hence added an apologia to the preface of *Abol Tabol*: "This book was conceived in the spirit of whimsy. It is not meant for those who do not enjoy that spirit" (Ray "Intro") almost like Tagore. Despite such whimsy, the mark of authentic literary nonsense as Satyajit feels "masks its caprice beneath an apparent gravity in an urbane and sophisticated manner unknown in popular rhyme" (Ray "Intro") and this I think is one of the most important defining feature of Literary Nonsense.

However, one big reason why nonsense has never achieved the kind of importance that the English tradition has been given is because any other Indian art is considered to be with serious goals and which can be classified with traditional theories or rules, everything which

nonsense lacks. Hence the childish nonsense along with children's literature has never been that big in India in the past. Even the present day children's literature in India is a relatively new phenomenon. However, from the immense popularity of *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesa*, *Jataka Tales*, *Kathasaritsagar* and many more including the rich tradition of folklore throughout the country, transmitted through oral culture from ancient times, one can easily surmise that the very concept of entertaining and instructing children is not exactly new. However, in the colonial period there was a drastic curtailing of children's literature especially the ones that nurtured the indigenous culture and tradition of the country. The British educational policy was designed to cater to their own needs of filling up administrative posts for the government and Civil Service and led to the decline/neglect of literature in Indian local languages or indigenous religious institutions like "the madrassahs, gurukuls and Buddhist viharas that had traditionally nourished the culture and literature of the subcontinent" (Khorana xi). There was an influx of imported books in English. Thus book publishing did not exist as a culture in the country up till a long time. It was only during the time of independence that there were books albeit very less in number was written for the children. As Khorana states, the studies of K.A. Jamuna and Arvind P. Dave, who have done extensive research on the history and development of children's literature in the subcontinent, indicate that "adult writers in all the major languages wrote a variety of juvenile books and magazines because of their concern for the educational and moral development of children" (Khorana xi). However, none of them tried to make reading an enjoyable process for the child, given that the concept of reading for entertainment and enjoyment was almost nonexistent. Rightly has Khorana quoted Manorama Jafa, Secretary-General of the Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children that "The concept of children's literature as a separate discipline has come to India from the West. Contact with European countries and particularly with England and the English language, has led to the growth of modern literature for children" (Khorana xi). Children's libraries and public libraries with sections for children were almost unknown in India till of late. Even the market was dominated by the textbooks till 1970. Further the multilinguality of India and the literacy problem results in limited readership, which leads to a low income for writers thus discouraging this larger growth in this field. Though things have started changing of late, the market for children's literature in India still has a large way to go.

This is the reason that the English influence is so strong in the literature for the children in the subcontinent. Nonsense, which has more often than once been predominantly seen as a children's genre, has been used effectively by writers like Anushka Ravishankar and Sampurna Chattarji, to give a push to the writings in this genre in India. Despite the drawbacks, the children's market has always been considered a rich ground for the distribution and appreciation for nonsense, even though it also has a large faction of adult readers. Tagore appears to have provided an answer to this by recognizing the children's *chhoda* as representing a separate *rasa*. As Heyman points out, he calls it the beauty of *baalras* which is "neither thick nor pungent. It is, rather, clear, innocent, beautiful, and that which cannot be related to anything" (*The Tenth Rasa* xli). This is where nonsense finds a definite direction within the Indian Aesthetic theory, which not only restores it a respectable position earlier denied to it, but also opens up a new way of reading nonsense. Also, since it is essentially a study of how a work of art must necessarily evoke emotion, one can find new ways of studying nonsense, which is a work of art that is claimed to be emotionless or tagged with evoking disputed laughter.

Chapter 2
A JOURNEY TOWARDS A FUNCTIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Towards the end of the previous chapter, while tracing the origins of nonsense in the Indian tradition, we realize that the usual non-seriousness accorded to nonsense is completely misplaced, especially in the Indian tradition. The history of nonsense in India seems to suggest that it was not just another literary form but rather had a serious specific function to fulfill. Its earliest examples can be found in India's earliest texts, which are the Vedas, often believed to be *apausheya* (unauthored) and having answers to all larger questions of life. The language was from the usual literal script, but weaved together to give more of a topsy-turvy sense contrary to its conventional use. This unconventional use of language was a means of inquiring into larger spiritual truths or attaining enlightenment while the form, easy to transmit, was appropriated into poems which were sung largely populating the sphere of the folk tradition. Hess' account of how he came across such songs in the village of Chittupur, along with Dasgupta's citations of how this style sprung up in rural Bengal, associated with the Bauls and the others (Hess, "Appendix" 142) show how this form has travelled through such a trajectory to become a part of the songs of wandering *jogis* today. Whether the folk equivalents of the same descended from the Indian mystic texts or vice versa is open to eternal debate, as Heyman points out (*The Tenth Rasa* xxxii), but the assimilation of one into the other is undeniable, even though they both keep intact their inherent nature, with the seriousness of one and a strain of exuberance and irreverence in the other. The common explanation given in analyzing the use of such language, that such *ulti bhasa* or *sandhabhasa* was a means of preventing non-initiates from understanding secret doctrines, is not an adequate one. As Eliade points out, such language was an integral part of the *sadhana* where it became a mental exercise (Hess 137). This is the quest of the *yogin*-s, who through the nonsensical ponderings were said to discover in themselves the inborn latent pleasure (that otherwise lies latent in all individuals unless triggered), to draw their satisfaction. This is because it removes the knots of "I" and "mine" far beyond any discursive thought. Adapted within the folk culture it might no longer retain such seriousness, but the seriousness of its origin can hardly be denied or discarded. However, my quest here is not to compare and contrast the Indian osmosis of nonsense from knowledge texts to folk or vice versa. I intend to look at this very serious origin of nonsense in Indian tradition, that has till now been relegated to

the domains of spiritual speculation only, as providing a ripe possibility of bringing together the literary, the aesthetic and the spiritual towards a better understanding.

In conflating spiritual pursuits with aesthetic experience, based on their use of a common literary framework, I am not attempting anything new here. This has been a question for serious thought since centuries. Bhatta Nayaka, an important Indian thinker from Kashmir, of about the first half of the tenth century, was one of the first to propose such a relation. He was one of the commentators of Bharata's *Natyasastra*, which forms the foundation of the Indian aesthetic theory based on the birth of '*rasa*'. He believes that, "Rasa, the aesthetic experience revealed by the power of revelation (*bhavana*), is not noetic in character, is not a perception, but an experience, a fruition (*bhoga*). This fruition is characterized by a state of lysis (*laya*), of rest into our consciousness, the pervasion of consciousness by bliss and light: it belongs to the same order as the enjoyment of the supreme Brahman" (Gnoli XXIV). Though largely refuted by Abhinavagupta later, whose interpretation is considered to be closest to what Bharata might have intended, that they have a common source cannot be denied. This is because even Indian art has never existed in isolation. It has always been seen as an instrument for attaining greater spiritual and philosophical truths or representing them symbolically. Both are characterized by a self-centred state of consciousness, implying the suppression of any practical desire, which gives rise to the generality or universality common to all aesthetic experiences, shattering the obstacles (*vighna*) of the disturbing influence of individual egos.

This theory of commonalization' or 'universalization' which lies at the core of Nayaka's interpretation of Bharata's *rasa* theory is one of the main contributions of Indian aesthetics. Bharata had laid down the general parameters of the presentation of *rasa* through *sthayibhava*, the determinants (*vibhava*) and stimulants (*anubhava*) elaborated upon through the transient and contingent states (the *vyabhicaribhava* or *sancaribhava*). It was his interpreters and commentators who theorized on Bharata's insights and took the text to a different level. This is what laid the foundation of the branch of Indian Aesthetics. Most of it hinges on questions that cropped up from one of Bharata's famous aphorism: "Out of the union of the Determinants, the Consequents and the Transitory Mental States, the birth of Rasa takes place" (Gnoli XV). It was mainly through various interpretations and elaborations of this aphorism that brought about a paradigm shift in later Indian aesthetic thoughts. The text proposes eight fundamental feelings, instincts, emotions or mental states (*sthyayibhava*) which are inborn in man's heart and

permanently exist in his mind in the form of latent impressions (*vasana*) derived from experiences gathered in the the present life or from inherited instincts. They are: Delight (*rati*), Laughter (*hasa*), Sorrow (*soka*), Anger (*krodha*), Heroism (*utsaha*), Fear (*bhaya*), Disgust (*jugup*sa) and Wonder (*vismaya*). These latent impressions emerge into the consciousness on occasions in real life when the three elements of causes (*karana*), effects (*karya*) and concomitant elements (*Sahakarin*) excites them and are manifested as complex emotional outbursts in association with each other. These three elements take another name when being enacted on stage or are part of the poetic expression and are respectively known as Determinants, Consequents and Transitory Mental States. The state of consciousness that one achieves on such occasions is like a juice or flavor which is called *rasa*, which are also eight in number, namely: the Erotic (*srngara*), the Comic (*hasya*), the Pathetic (*karuna*), the Furious (*raudra*), the Heroic (*vira*), the Terrible (*bhayanaka*), the Odious (*bibhatsa*) and the Marvellous (*adbhuta*). Later another ninth permanent feeling was added, which was Serenity (*sama*), whose corresponding *rasa* is the Quietistic (*shanta*). Together, these constitute the nine *rasa*-s or the *nava-rasa*.

It became the prime way of evaluating Indian art. Bhatta Nayaka's theory of universalization when applied to this doctrine was regarded as the correct way to go about it and brought about a hermeneutical transformation of Indian Aesthetics which Sheldon Pollock elaborately points out in his article on the same (2010). Pollock appreciates his "stunningly original voice" (Pollock 144) in departing from the traditional conception of *rasa* as pertaining to the characters to locating it in the subjective experiences of the reader/spectator. He sought the help of the Mimamsa school of thought for this endeavour and used its plane to substantiate his argument. While Mimamsa aids in understanding the Vedas better, Bhatta Nayaka equates literature to the Vedas (in a way it was the first Indian written literature), and applies Mimamsa to understand literature and the emotions it produces in the readers/spectators.

The function of the Vedic scriptures, the ancient sacred host of commandments according to the Indian tradition, was to instruct people how to act. Hence, it employs a language that produces action. This action producing behaviour is called *bhavana* which is central to the Mimamsa school of thought. Although these commandments are not directly addressed to one, in adhering to its instructions, one happens to discard all the temporal and spatial specifications of the instructions, appropriates it according to their own need and acts upon it. This is where Nayaka notes the similarity of spiritual language with literary language used in works of art. In

the latter, like in the former, one enters into discourses about people unknown but experiences their emotions as if it's one's own. This seems to point out the nature of a certain 'commonalization' or 'universalization' or 'generalization' of the particular that transcends individuality. Thus he makes the shift from the realm to theology to the realm of aesthetic experience.

The Mimamsika's had developed a general theory for a sort of Vedic language behavior which always resolved into a command to perform or avoid some act and called it *bhavana* or "production". Thus, Nayaka makes a slow transition from the Vedic to the literary by applying this theory of *bhavana* to literary language. *Bhavana* explains the relation between knowledge and action, by its two parts namely *shabdi-bhavana* and *arthi-bhavana*. Together these make up *abhidha* (expression) that is inherent in Vedic language. To clearly understand and fully comprehend the spiritual commandment, one has to get to the bottom of (1) what is to be produced by the action? (2) where it is to be produced, and (3) 'how' it is to be produced. This how-ness, generally termed *arthavada*, becomes the crucial clue to the ultimate production. Abhinavagupta, himself begins his discourse on *rasa* by citing examples of *arthavada*. This how-ness seems to answer how the 'universalization' takes place from the particular to the universal.

Equating this to literary language, Nayaka and his commentators derive that the ultimate production in literature is that of *rasa*. This literary emotion is integral since it links up knowledge with experience by reaching a stable mental state. In studying the how-ness of this *rasa* production, Nayaka follows the three-part Mimamsa paradigm of *bhavana* analysis by dividing it into *abidha*, *bhavakatva* and *bhoga*, but to suit its new purpose explains them in newly interpreted terms. Thus, we move from Mimamsa's scriptural *bhavana* to Nayaka's literary *bhavana*. Within the literary *bhavana*, *abidha* transcends its usage as merely a direct denotation to being identified as a literary language along with its phonic qualities and figures, which defamiliarizes it with everyday discourse. *Bhavakatva* or *anya-bhavana* (another order of *bhavana*) is the solution to the problems one faced in the old ontology and epistemology of *rasa* which failed to escape its basic contradictions about *rasa* as inference. If *rasa* is perceived externally, instead of being a 'taste' (experienced), it will be something perceived in emotional indifference. If it is perceived internally, the agony will be as intense as personal experience and one will never go back to see plays again. Moreover, how will one identify with a character on

an altogether different spatio-temporal plane is a question that will remain unanswered. In *bhavakatva*, one recognizes the 'reproductive' capacity (and not the productive capacity) of literary hermeneutics. It explains the literary process being transformed into something that the reader will fully participate in, thus relocating *rasa* from the character to the spectator/reader. Thus we slowly enter into the initial stages of commonalization. Finally there is *bhoga*, which is not just experience but 'experimentalization'. The self and the other, and the spectator-character divide slowly vanishes to incorporate a 'fusion' of the literary experience and the mind of the reader, which reaches a stable emotion with the coming together of the "factors and the rest" (Pollock 155) which is called *rasa*. This *rasa* can also occupy four different mental plane according to the type of fusion. Thus, by the power of literary expression, the emotions are experienced by the readers but without the danger or impropriety or agony of the real emotion, "for Bhatta Nayaka, "experiencing" the emotions that have been made "common" by the power of literary "expression" and thus rendered accessible to the reader- horror without the danger of real desire—leads to a kind of absorption in or even cathexis on the literary event" (Pollock 156).

Abhinavagupta agrees with most of this theory of generalization but criticizes Nayaka for postulating new functions for words like that of *bhojakatva* which he believes to be nothing but Anandavardhana's proposal of 'suggestion' and thus puts forward an understanding of the *rasa* theory through a bridging of Bhatta Nayaka's theory of generalization and Anandavardhana's theory of suggestion, as I have discussed later. His seminal contribution to the development of Indian aesthetics was exactly this that is to unify these scattered voices of the earlier philosophers, who tried interpreting Bharata's empirical psychology on the aesthetic experience, against their respective background of distinct schools of Indian Philosophy principally Mimamsa, Samkhya, Yoga, Vedanta and Kashmir Saivism. In a bid to contribute to a clearer understanding of Bharata's words, *Natyasastra* was majorly commented upon and interpreted by various intellectuals, philosophers and critics, largely from Kashmir, from around the late sixth century onwards. Dandin and Bhatta Lollata were among the earliest of them. Lollata's chief concern was to locate the source of the *rasa*, the answer to which he explains through *anusandhana*, a highly loaded term of Saiva philosophy. For him the combined effect of the Determinants, Consequents and Transitory Mental States raised *rasa* to its highest pitch, which was actually the permanent mental state. This state constituted the core of any aesthetic work, and the actor who was to present this 'idea' from the aesthetic work, had to imbibe that very state

as if they belonged personally to him, to be able to recreate it. This was made possible through *anusandhana* which was a 'realization' in the actor which made him feel like the character that he portrays without forgetting the fact that he is just the actor. His interpretation had more to do with the process of artistic creation.

Srishankuka was among the chief objector to Lollata's interpretation. He discarded the notion of treating *rasa* as an aesthetic object and raised the point that its efficacy lay only if it could evoke an ultimate aesthetic experience in the spectator. In some sense he preempted Nayaka's theory of universalization by pointing out this universal nature of *rasa*. He adopted the method of *Pracina Nyaya* (logic) pointing out that the artistic process was an 'illusion' and not 'real'. For him it was an imitated mental state, which was aroused in the spectators through the successful imitation by the actor. Forgetting the difference between the actors and the characters, the spectators inferentially experienced the mental state of the characters themselves. This experience was *alaukika jnana*, different from any other kind of knowledge. His interpretation was popularly recognized as the concept of imitation and refuted on the ground that the effect of imitation is laughter and mockery and has no connection with the aesthetic experience.

Hiriyana of the Samkhya school of thought attempted to interpret art as "the interplay of stasis and dynamism as the phenomenal world is of *purusa* and *prakrti*" (Vatsyayan 144). However, it was Bhatta Nayaka who brought about a radical change in the theory with his idea of generalization as has already been elaborately explained earlier in this chapter. Then there was Anandavardhana and his theory of suggestion in poetical language that too was recognized as a means to understanding Indian aesthetics. Anandavardhana developed his theory of language on the lines suggested by Bhartrhari's doctrine on *sphota* (that at times the meaning of the whole utterance is different from what the individual words indicate due to contextual factors) and while accepting the usual division of speech utterances (into sentence and words, speech and suffixes, and the distinction between *abidha* and *laksana*) he postulated a third potency of language which he called "the capacity to suggest a meaning other than its literal meaning" (Raja 279) which was called *vyanjana* or suggestion. It is through these medieval commentators/interpreters of Bharata that a marked shift took place in the discourse on poetics. Along with the aesthetic experience, other things like, the quality of the experience, the poetic form, relationship of 'word' and 'meaning', as also the response of the reader and hearer became a part of this discourse.

However, the contribution by Abhinavagupta is considered to be the greatest because not only did he deal with all aspects of the text but also brought the several streams of readings done by various interpreters together. He is our only source for discerning the views of the early commentators like Bhatta Lolata, Srisankuka, Bhatta Nayaka and Bhatta Tauta, whose texts are all lost to us. He is also the first to comment on all aspects of the text in his *Abinavabharati*. It was in fact he who finally brought about a masterful synthesis, embracing philosophical speculation and mysticism as well as aesthetics. He was among the first to make the distinction between mystical consciousness and aesthetic consciousness. The former, he believed, resulted from the religious experience with complete disappearance of all polarity where the knots of "I" and "mine" merge into one. However, for the latter, "the feelings and facts of everyday life, even if they are transfigured, are always present" (Gnoli XL), referring to the multiplicity of the reality as we know it. Taking the best of each of the philosophers, Abhinavagupta arrived at a correct mix, whereby Indian aesthetics became a unified whole, dealing with all aspects that effect the aesthetic experience and promising possible solutions to all. Starting from the language that sows the seed of the artistic creation, to how it is translated into the aesthetic experience through the "birth" of *rasa*, Abhinavagupta's *Abhinavabharati* came to be considered as the most accurate interpretation of Bharata. What Abhinavagupta does in fact is that he merges Nayaka's concept of generalization with Anandavardhana's theory of suggestion, to arrive at his own understanding of Bharata.

As we have already seen, Nayaka's theory is a transposition of the ideas of the Mimamsika's conception of meaning from the spiritual plane (Vedic language) to the aesthetic plane (poetic language that has the power of evoking emotions). While Anandavardhana's doctrine of *dhvani*, where he applies the theory of *vyanjana* (suggestion) to poetry, is essentially a literary postulation only concerned with poetical language rather than speculations on the nature of language as a whole (which encompasses both theological speculations as well as a better understanding of rhetoric/grammar/dictionary). Indian aesthetic theory, thus, inadvertently becomes a merger of mysticism and language. Ironically enough, I find an equivalence with particularly this aspect of the Indian aesthetics with that of nonsense from what I understand it, especially so in the Indian context: a work of art, in a language that has the duality of a suggestion of poetic bliss along with a pathway to spiritual heights.

We find that what lies on both sides of this thin line dividing the spiritual/religious/theological from the aesthetic is that of language. The philosophy of language has very ancient roots in India and has been dealt with by various schools, but to get into those arguments here is completely beyond the scope of my paper. However, what is of relevance here is the fact that the area of 'nonsense', be it as a mystical category or a work of art, is achieved through techniques which is achieved through the workings of language. Either one would ponder over nonsensicality (expressed through its upside down language) which would lead to the attainment of the eternal truth. Or the suggestive nature of nonsense as a poetic form (since, anybody who has "an insight into the true essence of poetry" (Gnoli XXVIII) is bound to have an epiphany of the poetic suggestion whatsoever the language, in this case the nonsensical framework, masks or pretends to mask the primary meaning) would issue forth the gustation of a *rasa*, equivalent to the bliss attained at working out the eternal truth in the former case.

Taking a detour to what various modern (western) critics have discerned as defining features of generic nonsense, we see that the nonsense world is also essentially a verbal one with: mirroring, imprecision or mixture, infinity, simultaneity, the pun, the portmanteau, the neologism, arbitrariness, an illustration through palindromes, anagrams, lipograms or neologisms among others. Rather than attempting a representation of reality, they have a metafictional function of drawing attention to the text as an artifact, with the implication that they are not to be taken seriously. Coming back to the Indian tradition, we realize that at the heart of the Indian philosophy, is an understanding that the verbal world is not a function of reality but the other way round. Hence, the sense of the reality is dependent on the sense of the spoken language (word or sentence), which is in turn dependent on the meaning of the word or the sentence. This is because the various disciplines in India grew in and around the Vedas, as it was believed to be the origin of all knowledge, which is also what 'Veda' in Sanskrit means. All disciplines, including grammar, were thus conceived for the proper study and dissemination of the Vedas. Therefore, *vyakarana* or grammar in India is not just the functional description of a language but also regarded as *darshana* or the philosophical quest for reality. With its base structure as language it aspires to acquire knowledge of the world. Thus, language has always been at the core of all disciplines in India, since "The conceptual frameworks, the categories of knowledge in other disciplines in the Indian tradition are the same, and, to a great extent, developed by the grammarians. This makes it evident that language is at the core of any

discourse. It provides the framework for the coming into being of knowledge, and then for knowing it, for communicating it, and lastly for receiving it" (Singh 33). The earliest example of this would be a verse from the Rigveda: "Language cuts form in the vast ocean of reality" (Singh 31) followed up by Patanjali in his theory that it is language which determines human cognition, and, brings to the knower's consciousness the existence of the object. This idea was greatly elaborated in Bhartrhari whose doctrine on *sphota* goes on to show how the knowable objects come into being in the knower's cognition only because there is a word to name them. Singh elaborates this as he points out,

> An unreal object like a horned hare can be cognized. The hearer can form an image of the hare with a horn, because of the inseparability of language and cognition. On the other hand, a real object, if there is no word for it would remain vague and obscure, and non-existent in itself, because the perceiver would cognize it only in relation to other familiar objects for which he/she has a word to name. There is an animal, for example, which is neither a cow nor a deer. If the onlooker has no name for it, or does not know its name, he would know it as half deer and half cow, and not as the object as itself. Hence, the ontological phenomena which we usually think pre-exist language and consciousness is in fact a construct of language" (34).

Through language one can attain the Ultimate Reality which is Shabda-Brahma, a compound of *Shabda* (which means language) and *Brahma* (which is reality) thus linking up the two and further proposing that it is through language that the reality is constituted in the *karika* in Vakyapadiya:

> The Brahman who is without beginning or end, whose very essence is the Word, who is the cause of the manifested phonemes, who appears as the objects, from whom the creation of the world proceeds. (Iyer 1)

Thus, language accompanied by logic has always been seen as the fundamental way of making meaning of the world and Indian grammarians and philosophers have always been so occupied with the nature of meaning, from ancient times.

However, apart from speech utterances of which one makes sense out of its literal meaning, language also has another characteristic. It is a matter of common experience that utterances may mean more than its literal sense. Language also has a way of arousing emotions,

be it through a socio-cultural meaning or others which varies from context to context within one language to another language. The objective analysis of fixed literal meanings for words and sentences fail to explain this aspect of language. Charles C. Fries writes, "In addition to the regularly recurring responses to the lexical items and structural arrangements there are also throughout a linguistic community recurring responses to unique whole utterances or sequence of utterances" (Raja 281). This can be explained through Anandavardhana's theory of *vyanjana* whereby sentences have the power of suggesting a further meaning apart from its literal one. Here meaning becomes a loaded term, including not just the information conveyed but also the emotion induced. In this light we see how the emotion aroused in utterances or works of art is ultimately dependent on the use of language, which acts as the Determinants and gives rise to the Consequents and the Transitory States. Even the Naiyayika-s or the Mimamsaka-s, who were more interested in the accuracy and precision in the use of words which they analyze objectively, cannot argue that the emotions induced by language are brought about just by the literal power of words, though they are satisfied with only the normal literary sense and are not interested in the fullness of expression and in the possibilities of extending the range of meanings to the domain of the inexpressible.

However, though we see that sense (literal or emotional) is a product of meaningful language according to these philosophies, Anandavardhana's proposition of 'suggestion' expands the domain of language to sound (say, of music) and sight (say, of dances), since, suggestion can occur even in cases where there is absolutely no expressed sense. Anandavardhana himself did not confine himself to the expressive symbols (*vacaka*-s) like words and sentences as indicators of meaning only, but included indicative signs (*bodhaka*-s) like gestures of all the contextual factors through intonation, stress, etc. and even the pure sounds used in the utterance as well as the literal sense. So there seems to arise an understanding that the emotions aroused, be it on the real plane or the aesthetic plane (the *rasa*-s), depend on language and language alone.

(Un)fortunately, what happens in the verbal world of nonsense is that, language itself undergoes a drastic metamorphosis/bizarreness in its arrangement in structure or form or content. Any attempt to reach to a sense of 'sense' through the cumulative meanings of individual words or sentences does not provide a coherent whole. To elaborate, the primary meaning of a word that is *abidha* does not mean what it means within the nonsensical context, while the theory of

sphota of considering the word or meaning as a single meaningful symbol falls flat due to wordplay. *Akanksa*, as proposed by the *Mimamsaka*-s, which means mutual syntactic expectancy and is a concept which explains "from the analytical and associationist standpoint, how syntactic unity is effected among the various isolated words which comprise the sentence" (Raja 151) along with its various exegeses like *samnidhi* (phonetic continuity), *yogyata* (logical consistency) which together seems to lead to a syntactic unity, is exactly what the nonsensical techniques subvert and hence can never lead to a sense. Sometimes a fourth condition of *tatparya* (the intention of the speaker or the general purport of the sentence), which is added to the above three, also loses sense due to nonsense's nature of bearing no intention as such. Finally, *laksana* or the metaphorical aspect of a sentence, is also easily resolvable into meaning despite denoting a referent other than its normal one and hence not the same as nonsense. Hence, it gives rise to a set of confusing emotions or nullification of the emotional impact and in a large sense such an approach to emotion becomes the defining feature of nonsense. While the themes that nonsense uses may include potentially serious and grave subjects like that of higher spiritual questions, death, violence or morality, the intensity of these weighty matters are always undercut with an absurdity of expression. In most cases, the absurdity is heightened to such an extent that even grave issues are confounded through humour. This can be elucidated through the following examples taken from both kinds that we have discussed till now- the spiritual and the aesthetic:

In Kabir's Sabda 52 from the *Bijak* (*The Tenth Rasa* 5), while it is said to be pouring "sheets" with "deafening" thunder in the second line, it is immediately undercut in the next line as Kabir declares "…but not a single raindrop's fallen!". An elephant, whose enormous size can crush any animal if it were to come under it, is said to be chained "to the foot of an ant" which is one of the tiniest in the animal kingdom. The "sheep" pounces on the wolf rather than the other way round and the "fish" leaps on the shore "to build a hut". The "snake" is sharing the bed with a "frog", the great hunter "lion" is hiding from the "jackal" and the "fish" goes hunting. Such bizarre events seem to constitute a "knowledge" that evokes "wonder" blessing the one who understands it with immortality. While dealing with this poem in translation, it is unfair to comment on its structure as a poem. However, knowing that most of Kabir's verses were sung, it wouldn't be right to completely discard its poetic nature. Thus, in spite of being a part of the spiritual tradition of nonsense, its expression in the form of a poem makes it equally a part of the aesthetic paradigm too. And like most nonsense, it is thus seen to follow the rules of form of

poetics or prose, within a tight structure of perfect grammar. The area where it seems to break all rule is in the area of logic which is created out of word meanings. Like for instance, when one mentions the elephant and the ant, the meanings tell us that one is a large animal and the other one is a minute one, and the logical implication is that their difference in size is so huge, that their association in any form can never be imagined. Yet it happens here, not in a logical fashion like 'the ant was crushed by the elephant' or 'a colony of ants attacked the elephant in large numbers when it accidently happened to step on their anthill' which are the only two possible associations between the two that can be imagined. Rather, it says that the elephant was tied to the ant's foot, making perfect sense by frustrating the expected sense. Many commentators of Kabir have however tried their hand at interpreting such descriptions through a continuous study of his works. The ant, which is a constant seeker of sweetness, has been likened to the mind which always seeks pleasure. While on the other hand, *atma* or pure spirit is like the huge elephant, tied to the inclinations and dispositions of the *mana* (mind). The various subsequent images maintain this as Kabir goes on making such suggestions and the *vyanjana* has to be dug out, as reversals and inversions create an upside-down world of role-reversal in the real world of the hunter and the hunted. Despite such nonsensical trajectory, towards the end Kabir claims that the 'wonder of such knowledge' could give one wings, hinting at a possibility of attaining higher spiritual bliss through this *ulat bansi* world. Now how that might be possible is not stated, leaving it open-ended. Throughout the length of the poem, the sheer bizarreness builds up a confused state of mind, which if not anything else, causes laughter by its sheer incongruous imagery.

This type of imagery is also almost similar to "Zen Yoga", a kind of yoga of the mind, where the student is made to figure out impossible poems. It is a problem, which neither the student can solve, nor can he escape. Though it cannot be regarded as a literary work or included within an aesthetic paradigm, it is interesting to see how a similar technique is being used in this solely spiritual quest and does it lead to any particular emotion or the promised state of bliss? It is often seen as a matrix of verbal impossibilities in which it can be said that a transparent truth lies hidden, or not. This Zen Buddhist teaching devices are called the koans, or nonsense puzzles which are used as objects of meditation in order to shock the consciousness into glimpsing the ultimate truth, or attaining divine enlightenment. In the context of koans, the puzzles are not in the world, or the language of the world or the koan, but in the mind of the human being. The aim

of the koan is not to provide a puzzle solving which we can attain enlightenment, because the puzzle is not the koan, but the human mind. Instead, the koan is the solution that solves the puzzles in the human mind in order to allow it to realize enlightenment. One example is the following koan: "You are on top of a hundred foot pole, how can you climb a step higher?"

If one is to consider the problem logically, one may get the following logical answers. Firstly, one may jump on top of the hundred foot pole, but one will eventually drop back on the pole, resulting in no permanent gain in altitude, and also risk the possibility of serious injury. Secondly, one may decide to climb down, get a longer pole, or attach a second pole to the first, and so climb higher, but nonetheless, in the contours of the problem there are no other poles anyways. Even if there were other poles, there would anyways again be set a limit to how high one can climb, before one has even begun to the act of climbing the pole. Out of the sheer bizarreness of these propositions, no such definable emotions seem to arise even in this case.

The understanding of the real world through language has trained our minds in a particular manner of discursive or rational way of thinking. There are techniques for dividing and distinguishing of the visible segmented world. That is exactly what our language philosophers have pondered for long, with their extensive rules of rhetoric. The structure of the knowable world which is available to us through language is suddenly made a stranger to us through the use of that very language in nonsense. The aim of these poems and riddles is to thus fascinate the readers/listeners by perplexing them with a new dimension of a world by language that dissolves the tight network of divisions and categories in which it chains us. The new images stick to the consciousness even when their meaning eludes the mind, initiating a dialogue that transcends the text-reader unit to a dialogue between the reader and himself, which may take years, resisting discourse and establishing one unit. Thus, we see how this technique leads one to a state of complete isolation in compact solitude of his consciousness, where there is no scope for discursive thought except for a dialogue with one's own self. At the moment when such a consciousness is attained, the motion of the rational consciousness is stilled to reach a state of bliss with complete disappearance of all polarity and the "lysis of all dialexis" (Gnoli XXXIX). There is no individual perception of emotions or theorization, as it is inexpressible, but only a state of wonder. This is equivalent to the bliss attained with the gustation of *rasa* in the aesthetic experience, which is also accompanied with a state of *camatkara* (wonder) more elevated than

the ordinary one, implying the "cessation of a world- the ordinary, historical world, the *samsara*-and its sudden replacement by a new dimension of reality" (Gnoli XLVI).

Nonsense, through its technique of using upside down language which eludes sense, is thus regarded within mysticism as a way to reach spiritual bliss. When this very technique is applied to a literary piece and given expression through its form, the outcome is a work of art which finds its outlet through the act of generalization and the final state of bliss is achieved, but being of a technique whose nature resists any discourse, its transition from the poetic state to the state of bliss is imperceptible. By its very nature, it resists the *sthyayibhava*-s of the reader to be aroused, leading in some ways towards the attainment of the aforementioned unity, and hence, the *rasa* that is aroused is one that is not easily definable. However, the structure seems to promise an ultimate state of bliss, being dually led towards the attainment of this bliss on both planes of spirituality (through its technique) and aestheticism (by presenting the technique in an aesthetic form). The common feature in both cases is the techniques of nonsense, through its upside down language. Whatever might be the trajectory that it takes, even through images of death or violence, always seem to evoke a state of wonder through its incongruity, as evident from readings of Lear or Carroll.

For instance, in Lear's "The History of the Seven Families of the Lake Pipple-Popple" (1871), all the young of the respective families fight amongst themselves over their respective food, contrary to a warning by their parents, resulting in their deaths. The animals which were about to become their food, rejoiced over such death which saved their lives, while the parents pickled themselves so that they could be put in a museum and immortalized. The moral of the tale seem to extremely insignificant over such matter-of-fact absurdity of this tale. Contrary to the moral tale, where death and disobedience is supposed to arouse terror in the reader forcing him to comply, this story totally undoes and nullifies such expectations by the absurd representations of such a morbid situation. This tale, which retains strong echoes of the "awful warning" books typified by the Janeway and the Taylors (Heyman, "Isles" 47), efficiently crushes and transgresses all models of children's literature that sought to teach them morals, by parodying them and reducing its seriousness to nothing but laughter. However, the devices of literary nonsense, faulty logic and misappropriation, which are contained within the sensical narrative structure, seem to undermine the parodic intent of ridiculing the original form that it

uses. So, despite using a parodic structure, it does not achieve (neither wishes to achieve) what a parody aims at.

Similarly in Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), the Queen of Heart's constant refrain "Off with her head!" (Carroll 78) about once in a minute is met with a comic confusion which also leads Alice to wonder "They're dreadfully fond of beheading people here; the great wonder is, that there's anyone left alive!" (Carroll 80). Despite such a grave order, the queen's subjects were not fearful enough to carry it out. Rather, her constant refrain of "Off with her/his head", her only way of settling all big or small difficulties, appeared humourous due to its constant use. This interest in death, like that of Lear, challenges the seriousness with which mortality is regarded. The absurdity with which he describes such a weighty issue undercuts it, thus confounding the conventional sentiment giving rise to a comic situation.

Inheriting the tradition from them, Sukumar Ray's world of A*bol Tabol* (1923) also has such a topsy-turvy world with talking real/imagined animals and a weird assortment of men. However, being an Indian much aware of the native traditions of the country, he calls nonsense the '*rasa* of whimsy', thus suggesting a connection between the modern counterpart of nonsense with its indigenous traditions. However, even in his work any reference to violence, leads to a comic situation rather than a dread. Take for example, his "Doctor Deadly" (Trans. Sukanta Chaudhuri) where the doctor seems more deadly than providing a cure. He treats by tapping and tearing with his "tools" and slits up "tummies" with closed eyes. Unlike the world of fantasy, which never falters from a discernible sense of logic, always providing logical explanations for its bizarreness through some believable overarching concept, however unreal they may be (like magic: lamps, carpets etc. or say an ancient untainted world where even nature could talk etc.), there is no explanation for such violent behaviour in nonsense. It only subtly hints at being a criticism of *hature* doctors (as subtly hinted at in the last line of the poem in the original) or quacks, but loses its seriousness in excessive exaggeration of the whole. The readers simply erupt into mad *hasa* (laughter) which is a precursor to *hasya rasa*.

In all the above examples of the various kinds, we see how the text does not provide a definite space for arriving at any emotion or even if it does, the association of the various emotions produces something so complex that it is beyond comprehension and astonishingly funny and at best might lead to a confused laughter. This is accompanied by the evocation of a sense of wonder in most cases. Such a situation might arise only when the sense that we get out

of a text is not what we conventionally understand, as if the text is fighting against sense, not by ignoring its rules, but by playing with them subversively by "stretching, squeezing, flipping upside down" but depending on their existence (*The Tenth Rasa* xxiv). And man, with his desire to have some sort of a manipulative power over everything, finds his only access into the domain of the metaphysical or the non-tangible through the tangible vehicle of language to tamper with sense, which is non-tangible enough for man to have any direct control over it. So what can one stretch, squeeze or flip upside down to tamper a sensical sense? The answer is through language itself, which is the only way through which man creates a sense of fake control over the world. Thus, one fights sense primarily by tampering with it at the semantic and logical level, the only way that it can be physically manipulated. So, the most recurring feature seems to be essentially the characteristic verbal nature of nonsense which is the only thing that has also remained constant universally. Here I am not suggesting that (a particular kind of) language is the prime defining feature of nonsense, because so is true for all other things, be it in real or literary life. But, something very specific happens here, a manipulation of language whereby an alternative reality is constructed by language, not represented by it and where the sound of language is more important than the sense it conveys. Heyman too believes that

> …we can see that perhaps the easiest way to identify nonsense is by the common techniques found in it. There seem to be certain universal nonsense techniques in both English and Indian nonsense, as well as a few more culturally specific ones that are a set of tools used to work upon geographically specific cultural and literary raw material. As a rule of thumb, the more of these techniques used, the more we consider the text to be in the genre. They can be roughly divided into two groups, the first being more strictly linguistic, the second more logical, though most of these have aspects of the other. (*The Tenth Rasa* xxvi).

While these techniques remain the same (through say mirroring, imprecision or mixture, infinity, simultaneity, the pun, the portmanteau, the neologism, arbitrariness, an illustration through palindromes, anagrams, lipograms or neologisms among others), the form within which it plays its technique is so broad that it is almost impossible to narrow it down.

These techniques of nonsense has been applied to various other forms, excessively large in number, starting from jokes, riddles, limericks, poetry, story, novel, fantasy, absurdist pieces, allegory, irony, wit, light verse, gibberish, along with the various subdivisions of the same like

that of detective, travelogue etc. to constitute a genre of its own. What is unique about its way is that unlike other literary forms which are based on some definite stylistic restraints, nonsense needs an overarching form to provide shelter to its techniques in a recognizable shape. So it has techniques, but no definite shape. One could argue that so is true for most literary movements, like say that of Romanticism, Modernism etc. which has an idea but no specific form and finds expression in different ways, through art, poetry, novels etc. But in its defence, nonsense would beg to differ on the grounds that: firstly, it does not have an 'idea' at its core like the other movements but just an abundance of certain techniques, secondly, unlike other literary forms that has had specific socio-cultural groundings that has impacted its ideas and has kept it rooted to particular periods (like say the novel which developed under influences in the Victorian age), nonsense has existed across centuries and in various forms, and thirdly, that it does not yield to easy resolution since it resists all sorts of discourse and thus obstructs any sort of attempt at analyzing it. Thus, to sum it up in Heyman's words, "…nonsense is a kind of parasite inhabiting a host form, yet it has a life of its own" (*The Tenth Rasa* xxx).

In the light of the above observation, it is the technique that gives nonsense "a life of its own" but due to a lack of a form it needs a host body for expressing itself. It has been known to appropriate diverse literary forms using it merely as a vessel to express itself. The most distinct feature of nonsense that sets it apart from the other movements is the fact that while expressing itself through different literary form it has never stuck to the definitive tight structures of them although meticulously following the many rules of language such as grammar, syntax, phonetics in most cases. If it has expressed itself through a riddle, unlike the purpose of the riddle it has no answer at the end. Like for instance the most famous riddle posed by the Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland*, "Why is a raven like a writing desk?" the one, which in fact Carroll confessed, was originally created without an answer (Susina 16) and as he mentioned in his "Author's Note" for Christmas 1896, "…the riddle, as originally invented, had no answer at all" (Carroll 113).

"Have you guessed the riddle yet?" the Hatter said, turning to Alice again.

"No, I give up," Alice replied: "what's the answer?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," said the Hatter.

"Nor I," said the March Hare.

> Alice sighed wearily. "I think you might do something better with the time," she said, "than waste it in asking riddles that have no answers." (Carroll 69)

Similarly, if it is in the form of a joke it evokes laughter due to its lack of sense while the joke itself is funny because it makes sense. Heyman, in an email dated 25th July 2012 mentions telling nonsense-jokes as a child, which were actually variations of the standard tradition of the anti-jokes like,

> …there are two polar bears in a bath tub taking a bath. One polar bear says to the other polar bear, "Could you please pass the soap?" and the other polar says, "Don't you mean the radio??"

At this point, the joke teller laughs along with others around him who knows the game and participate in it by laughing along with him. The one who just heard the joke is confused, owing to the nonsensical punch line, but joins the laughter because if he doesn't laugh, he looks stupid because everybody else is laughing. However, the joke is actually on this person whose laughter shows that he is just going along with the crowd despite not understanding it. Though the entire premise of the anti-joke was to play a prank on a 'target' and thus upsets the 'intentional purposelessness' of nonsense, it nonetheless gives us an idea of nonsensical jokes to some extent as the truly nonsensical jokes grew up as variations of these.

Similarly, if nonsense has found expression through light verse comprising of parody, limericks, epigrams and other such forms, unlike the original it has never intended to make a 'point'. Parody makes the point of ridiculing an original, limerick's usual point was a violation of taboo through the use of explicit obscenity, and epigram has a witty satirical intent which clearly nonsense does not have because it lacks both the objective and resolution of wit and satire. It might have used the world of fantasy, where both of them create worlds that are not realistic, naturalistic or mimetic. However, unlike fantasy nonsense does not have an explanation for its fantasy. As for example, Harry Potter would be fantasy, because it builds its world based on the existence of magic that can be inherited, learned and practice. So it might evoke wonder initially, but after some time we willingly suspend our disbelief and become familiar with the fantastic situation which is based on some explanatory cause. In nonsense, no such explanation is provided for its fantastical outpourings. It uses absurdity, but unlike absurd literature does not have the ulterior motive of presenting a world that has lost its meaning for man by the loss of

"religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots" (Esslin in Tigges 129) as Lucky's speech in *Waiting for Godot* stands for. Rather, nonsense has no such point to make but uses absurdism just for its absurdity. It uses grotesqueness, but unlike the original which arouses horror through the distorted physical deformity, it evokes laughter (especially when accompanied by illustrations) say through the deformed eccentric old men of Lear. It also has surface similarities with symbolist movement and surrealism along with Dadaism and also often is deemed as gibberish. However, while the former dabbles in multiplicity of meanings and the latter in the absence and gibberish has absolutely no meaning, in nonsense exists a constant tension of both presence and absence of meaning. Nonsense often makes use of the metafictional structure, which is a work of fiction that is conscious of its status as an artifact. Like for instance, Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. However, unlike metafiction it does not serve a further aim of social and/or artistic criticism. If it uses the structure of an allegory, unlike the original it has no 'moral' to preach. Like Aesop's Fables, which use the animal world, but to voice moral concerns, nonsense uses them in role reversals to add on to the ludicrous nonsensicality. If it is in the form of a mystery story, the thief is nothing but thin air which cannot be caught like Kaushik Vishwanath's "Chanderbumps" which I deal with in the next chapter. And it is also like a game, but unlike real games, its rules are not fixed and change according to the whims of the players, the reader and the author, the classic example of which would be the Queen's Croquet Game in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*:

> Alice thought she had never seen such a curious croquet-ground in her life: it was all ridges and furrows, the balls were live flamingoes and the soldiers had to double themselves up and stand on their hands and feet to make the arches…The players all played at once without waiting for turns, quarelling all the while, and fighting for the hedgehogs…'I don't think they play at all fairly.' Alice began, in rather a complaining tone, 'and they all quarrel so dreadfully one can't hear oneself speak – and they don't seem to have any rules in particular, at least if there are, nobody attends to them… (Carroll 81).

Each time the nonsensical techniques seem to frustrate our expectations, by leading "us down a path of sense, only to turn aside from the expected destination at the last moment; in the end we keep walking in circles—or beautiful, infinite fractals—and that the joy and the *meaning* is in the journey, not the destination" (*The Tenth Rasa* xxv). Hence, though it might trigger the

sthayibhava-s initially with certain pertinent determinants, consequents and transient mental states, the moment before it reaches the state of *rasa*, the change in the expected destination causes a disbanding of the emotions under the influence of a mixture of confusion and disbelief which might lead to the state of confused laughter.

Thus, like a fluid, nonsense has only certain distinguishable techniques at its disposal but no form and hence needs to occupy the other literary form simply as vessels for expression. It is this particular nature of nonsense which seems to present an uncanny resemblance with the genre of parody. The connection between nonsense and parody has been long debated upon, however, "the frequency with which nonsense derives from other forms and texts suggest that at the very least we should consider parody as a compelling foundation", as even Pendlebury says (35). T.S. Eliot would suggest that it is a careful parody of sense, and as such it questions logic and language, our usually, unquestioned, fundamental ways of making meaning of the world (*The Tenth Rasa* xxv). Tigges raises a pertinent point that nonsense cannot be a parody, because the most salient feature of the genre is that it does not have a "point" outside itself and because it is characterized by its ambivalent approach to meaning, while parody "satirizes a subject-text, whose weaknesses (usually formal) come under attack" (Tigges in Pendlebury 35). Heyman seems to suggest otherwise in his thesis, whereby though he does not deny that nonsense is not 'truly' parodic, he does argue that it is essentially "parodic" except for its distinctive approach to the parent texts which unlike parody is not motivated by intertextual commentary by attempting a mockery of the original, but mere playfulness (Heyman in Pendlebury 36). Is then nonsense, by adhering to a parody-like form but deviating from its inherent attitude of ridiculing, attempting a parody of the parody? Is it for this reason, that there is either a nullification of the emotions or a parody of whatever emotion the text is supposed to evoke, thus evoking laughter, because the parody of any emotion, even if it be *hasya*, is manifested through laughter itself? So is the essential feature of nonsense is its two levels of parody, by virtue of which it is a parody of an existing structure or author, but unlike real parody does not have any intention of criticism and hence gives rise to the second level of the parody, which is a parody of the parodic intent of ridicule by not giving rise to any such feeling of ridicule at all?

In the first chapter of his thesis (1999), Heyman purports to show how nonsense (he takes up cases from Lear and Carroll), both as a device and genre, "is saturated with parody, while at the same time standing aloof from it" ("Isles" 15). With extensive close reading of texts, he

shows Lear's indebtedness to outside forms, appropriating much of the children's literature available at that time, like that of the alphabets, the cautionary tales, the limerick, nursery rhymes, popular natural histories for children, the "awful warning" ("Isles" 44) books and even the Romantic verses, dense in rich parodic tendencies . However, in doing so he frequently moved beyond parody which led to the creation of the genre of literary nonsense ("Isles" 27). The textual references in his work, of the other genres that he utilizes could be direct, distant or coincidental. But in all these cases what remains a constant is the parodic intent, although it transcends the simple ridicule of parodic intent. So much of it is parodic, without being a parody. The nonsense never rises above its parodic setting, because it is never asserted as truth ("Isles" 43). It is not with the intention of parodying the other form that nonsense techniques are being appropriated within it always, but rather due to a lack of a definite form that nonsense occupies other forms and hence appears as a parody. The ultimate result is something that doesn't claim to be taken seriously. But the reader sees the characteristics of other forms expressed in the typically nonsense technique and has the false impression of a parodic intent. True to a nature of parody, the impact it has is that of a weird concoction that arouses laughter at the expense of some other form or some conventional sense that is being turned upside down. However, in spite of appearing like a parody, it is not a parody, as justified by its "intentional purposelessness" ("Isles" 4). Its occupation of other forms mainly due to a lack of an original form emerges as a parody. And, in its appearance as a parody, devoid of the parodic intent of ridiculing, makes it a parody of a parody or as Heyman would put it "goes beyond parody" ("Isles" 5) by ridiculing the ridiculed genre and thus, nullifying the intent of the ridicule losing all its seriousness and making the ridicule absolutely unapparent. Thus, the evoked laughter, is it just a parody of the real emotion that would have been aroused. And, the final emotion is mostly laughter because parody of any emotion inevitably leads to laughter again.

If so be the case, let us see if this hold true for most of the cases of nonsense. Nonsense as we have seen can be largely subdivided into:

a) Religious and/or metaphysical nonsense or other deeper conceptual truth

b) Didactic nonsense

c) Poetic nonsense

In the first kind, as I understand it, I would like to include texts which are ponderings on deeper metaphysical and/or conceptual truths. Metaphysics as a term has long been used to denote an

abstract emotion that cannot be completely studied. Often the term implies some kind of a religious realization as well. On the other hand by concepts I would like to indicate non-religious or secular speculations.

Let us take a piece from the Bhakti tradition, as an example of the first type. We find in the *ulat bansi* or upside down songs of Kabir, a similar detachment from sense in their exploration of metaphysical concepts. Say for instance, Sabda 62, from the *Bijak*, which has incidentally been incorporated as nonsense in the compendium *The Tenth Rasa*. We find the poem begins with an assertion which is logically turned around in the following lines: the author declares the eating of husbands, the demeaning of women, the destruction of relationships both filial as well as spatial without batting an eyelid, right after declaring that he has brought glory to two families. After this description of destruction, he goes on to describe a state of peace and quiet that this has brought to him, how he is now at ease in a bed, without having to move at all. This is in some ways an eroticized version of the state of '*sahaja*' or bliss, which is the aim of the *yogi*. In the final part he describes how his master has made him devoid of shame, as well as given him the 'name', or shown him the way to bliss.

In the poem by Kabir, when we apply *rasa* framework, we get a multitude of *vyabhicharibhava*-s. We get *avega* (agitation/excitement), a kind of stupefaction or *jadata*, *ugrata* (ferocity), *trasa* (alarm/fright) which finally gives rise to a feeling of *unmada* or insanity. This arouses the *sthayibhava*-s of *bhayanaka* or the *bibhatsa*. However, these *rasa*-s are at loggerheads with the reaction that these poems usually produce that is one of laughter (*hasya*). I would like to point out that the issue is not one of comprehension or language ability. The un-initiated common man laugh because of the rattling off of the images of death and cannibalism (rather like the "Off with their heads!" of the Red Queen in Alice), and the initiated will laugh realizing the play of words which represent the struggles involved in destroying one's relations to society, norms of personal relations, caste and other such material connections and desires. How can we resolve this dilemma where the *sthayibhava*-s being evoked are not leading to the related rasa being manifested?

So at the first level of parody, there is a parody of the society at large where cannibalism does not refer to the eating of meat, but that of societal structures which perversely impede the yogi. It is ridiculing faulty hierarchies of the tangible world which create inequalities that threaten human enlightenment. However, the spiritual understanding of the world as *Brahma*

made it is devoid of any such hierarchies (Fish in Hess 22). So, here arises the second level of parody, where it is parodying the first level of parody which is criticizing faulty non-existent boundaries in order to teach men lessons of equality (Because since such boundaries do not exist, the attempt of parodying the same is ridiculous. Hence the parody of a parody takes place). For us, such transition from one level of the parody to the other is not perceptible. We just experience the final evocation of the *rasa* which is laughter. Going backwards, we realize that the *hasya* evoked is nothing but the parody of the rasa framework as well. Therefore, the actual *rasa* that is evoked at the first level of parody which was the horrible or the odious is further parodied in the second level leading to the parody of the horrible or the odious which then leads to laughter. This framework of the two levels of parody in nonsense is used by the spiritual teachers effectively, because it essentially parodies emotional states in its second level in order to detach the audience from worldly attachment, leading to both enlightenment, and the gaining of a metaphysical concept or the development of *hasya* in most cases, and is used for purposes of enlightenment for those initiated in eastern mysticism. For the common man, the two levels of parody happen without leading them to any enlightenment because of lack of an inherent spiritual insight (of realizing that the world is dimensionless without boundaries), and arouse laughter at both levels due to its funny structure as Hess mentioned in an anecdote (Hess 148)I have already referred to earlier (in chapter one). For them the first level of parody is a parody of the poetic structure itself, where aesthetic seriousness is replaced by mundane happenings and the second level is by parodying this mundane-ness by expressing them through incongruous images that hardly have any relation to life as they understand as reality.

Almost the same happens in the case of a koan, which has been mentioned earlier. But since it is not structured in an aesthetic format, and there is no evocation of any emotion, in it only the first level of parody is possible. One realizes that the puzzle in the koan is not the point. The koans are actually not puzzles in the truest sense of the term, but are rather parodies of puzzles. The koan is a parody of a puzzle, designed to unknot the puzzle in one's mind. The point is perhaps to realize that all knowledge structures are limited by their own presuppositions. The realization allows one to understand that merely reading and memorizing Buddhist texts and interpretations will not turn one into the enlightened one. One must in addition be ready to take a somewhat undefined subjective leap of faith in order to realize one's potential for enlightenment. But the final evocation is only a state of wonder or *camatkara* proving that it's structure and

matter does not provide the scope of any *rasa* to be evoked but rather aims for the final state of wonder in the *yogin*. For the layman it is just a bewildering experience devoid of any overarching bliss. Hence it restrains the attempt of the second level of parody and hence fails to qualify as literary nonsense. It remains a nonsense device, mainly due to its structure which does not support the evocation of any emotion. Therefore, this becomes a very important theoretical point of difference helping us distinguish between literary pieces which merely contain nonsense devices, and literary pieces that qualify as true nonsense, especially when it comes to compiling anthologies and classifying texts as to whether they are nonsense or not.

Therefore, say in *Tristram Shandy*, by Lawrence Sterne, on seeing a blank page we are simply bewildered or puzzled. This is because this in itself does not evoke any emotion, and so there is no second level parody. One is merely presented with a first level parody of the expectation of text in the novel form, which merely frustrates reader expectation. The rest of the novel, like any other conventional literary form continues to make good sense in a self-parodic fashion obliquely commenting on "what happens if one applies Locke's theory of the association of ideas to one's own Life and Opinions" (Tigges 2). One thing can thus be said for certain that for a literary work to qualify as true nonsense it is essential that an emotion is evoked at the first level parody, which should be further parodied in another second level. These two conditions seem to be a must.

Among other works of literary nonsense that can fit into this category, I would like to look at Carroll's "Jabberwocky" (1871) and Alan Watts' "The Lovelorn Loon" (1967), both of which seem to be parodies of parodies of literary forms that have at their core some deeper conceptual truths. Behind the apparent nonsensicality of "Jabberwocky" lies the archetypical story of the hunt of the son or the younger generation for the monsters that have terrified its predecessors. Examples of such kind can be easily found in literature which abounds in such kinds. For example, the first part of the oldest English epic *Beowulf* is essentially the exorcism of the hall of Hrothgar from the sin that the Danish king had committed through his illicit liaison with the monster mother of Grendal. Similarly many such stories based on the same archetype of the younger generation triumphing over the monsters of its previous generations exist and the reader unconsciously accepts these narratives to be the structure of "Jabberwocky". The conceptual truth forming the backbone of this poem is the actual process of demonization in history where enemies of oneself or one's people are recorded in history as monsters. The

archetype is that of the younger generation destroying the demons of the previous generation and winning applause for it. The readers relate to the structure through the inheritance of such myths and archetypes that become completely ingrained in him through social conditioning. The text gives us a potpourri of various *sthayibhava*-s which include the *adbhuta* and the *bibhatsa* as well as the *bhayanaka* and the *vira*. The rasa of *bhayanaka* is evoked by the fearsomeness of the monster or the terror of the fight, and the rasa of *bibhatsa*, arises from the awesome powers of the monster. However, this only happens at the first level of the parody which plays with our archetypes and myths that develop out of real historic situations.

However, at the second level of parody we sense that the seriousness of the ensuing bravery is totally undercut by the use of incongruent images and words like "brillig", "slithy", "toves", "gimble", "wabe", "mimsy", "borogoves", "mome raths", "outgrabe" etc. which have no meaning as such, and renders the seriousness into something that is funny. Used as isolated words, these words would have meant nothing but in the above nonsensical context of its own, it almost builds up a narrative despite having no sense as such. With one or two english words thrown in here and there, like that of "Beware", "sword" etc. one has the feeling of a battle of sorts where a proud father's son kills a beast, a conclusion that even Alice arrives at. The poem then can be said to have the sense of a battle with a beast using a sword. Alice's subsequent words,

> 'It seems very pretty,' she said when she had finished it, 'but it's *rather* hard to understand!' (You see she didn't like to confess. Even to herself, that she couldn't make it out at all.) 'Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas only I don't know exactly know what they are! However, *somebody* killed *something*: that's clear, at any rate – (Carroll 138)

give a clearer insight into the sort of reaction any reader will possibly give when confronted by a text of this sort. While it is clear that some sort of a narrative is there, all the descripters have been exchanged for nonsensical terms that do not mean anything but nonetheless convey a sense. Thus, the flavour of bravery or *vira* that was the intended emotion in the original hinging on the archetypical story of the hunt of the son or the younger generation for the monsters that have terrified its predecessors, is subverted at two level of parody to be reduced to a parody of the *rasa* itself to give rise to hasya, all the time maintaining a narrative with a pretence of some logic or through a debate (*vitarka*) involving the logical faculties, holding out some promise of a

meaning. It nonsensicalizes the feeling of such stories of bravery which is basically intended to encourage young warriors, since it believes in a world devoid of boundaries, with no self and the other. Thus, it mocks the very premise of having the other and challenges the sense of having a set up that provokes such demonization in the first place. Thus, it parodies the parody of the first level, pointing out the faulty premise of the original itself. If the original is futile itself, how can it be parodied? Thus, even the parody needs to be parodied.

Similarly the "orgrundulous tower" of "The Lovelorn Loon" (1967) by Alan Watts seems to bear strong echoes of the Biblical myth of the tower of Babel. The loon falls in love with the moon and sanctions the construction of a tower that would take him nearer to his beloved. His lovesickness is as intense as the *hubris* of man, who sought to build a tower in Shinar that would have its 'top in the heavens'. So it is believed that God confounded their speech and foiled their project to teach them a lesson thus leading to a divine confusion of one original language into several and giving rise to the multiple languages. The origin of languages has always been a widely discussed topic among linguists, although there has been no consensus on its ultimate origin or age. The myth of the tower of Babel is one of the ways this question has been tackled on a spiritual plane. Watts seem to find an apt structure based on this archetype to play with words that mean nothing, adding on to the sense of confusion that man experienced at Babel. So his loon goes onto create a world of "shimular turve", "binlimular gurve", "gorble bassoon", "owzle", "wunculur", "corlimbled", "droogle", "vumular", "strombulous", "bimble", "gro-ululous", "ongrously", "mirgordiously", "umgurgular", "prehendulous", "gimsticle", "gowzle", "gorbulent", ""glundering", "examptulous", "garrable", "flomsible", "fimbleshum", "stromdingungled", "condimbumblesome" and "zatuvle" which in spite of its nonexistence in the world of words, successfully builds up a funny narrative. Thus, one the first level of its parody, it manages to use the structure of this archetype very well as it parodies the language at its econd level and achieves to evoke a sense of *hasya* by undercutting the seriousness of the original.

By the second category of the didactic sort of nonsense, I will be referring to texts that are used for the purpose of imparting some knowledge even though they appear non-didactic. Most people would argue that nonsense has no didactic function, but it is amazing how they sometimes do just that without seeming outright didactic. This form is usually used in children's literature, both because it helps generate an interest in the topic and also because of the form it helps abstract the knowledge to be imparted efficiently. Here by abstract I mean the process by

which the child recognizes not only the shape colour or any particular characteristics of the alphabet but rather the concept on which the usage of that alphabet stands. For example, if one is trying to teach alphabets or numbers to a young learner, it is absolutely essential that the learner identifies not only the shape of the written form, its usage in various contexts and situations and also the possibilities of new usages that the learner can employ in order to better understand the world. In other words, the learner must not only understand the shape of 'A/a', but also distinguish that it does not depend on colours or various fonts, that it can be used as a letter to form words, that it can have variable vowel sounds depending on which word it is being used in, that it is the first letter of the alphabet and as such often used for grading or as a marker of primacy and so on and so forth and this only possible through a process of abstraction. Nonsense literature comes in and helps to bring out this abstraction by refusing to place it in concrete contextual sense. Therefore, at the primary level of learning the employment of nonsense makes the didactic process dynamic in comparison to the usage of stable mono-sensical or pluri-sensical texts. Nonsense helps take the concept, in the case of the above example, the letter 'A/a', to the learner more efficiently. As an example of this sort we can look at one of Lear's alphabets. Let us take the example from his "Twenty-six Nonsense Rhymes and Pictures" in *More Nonsense, Pictures, Rhymes, Botany, &c.* (1872). It follows in the tradition of the alliterative alphabet, and is full of neologisms, lexical misappropriations and other purely nonsense words. For example,

> The Absolutely Abstemious Ass,
>
> who resided in a Barrell, and only lived on
>
> Soda Water and Pickled Cucumbers.

The sheer illogicality and absurdity of the descriptions makes the alphabet rise above the other normal alphabets and becomes a humourous alphabet by parodying an alphabet. At the first level of the parody, it is just a parody of the genre of alphabets for children to teach them the use of letters. In a sense of lessening the intentional didacticism, it makes the genre much more fun to attract the kid's attention. So the transitory mental state of *harsa* is evokes along with *sthayibhava* of *hasa*. At the second level, the entire project of didacticism, even in a fun model is parodied by use of neologism which is funny but irrelevant. However, in an alliterative model, it does evoke a sense of rhythm, squeezing in two more 'grand' A-words that do make sense and aids in better remembering. Thus the parody of *hasa* results in *hasa* again and gives rise to *hasya rasa*. As a result there is a parody of contexts in order to detach audience away from specifics to

the general, leading to *hasya* in most cases and is used for the purpose of teaching universal facts and concepts.

In the third case of artistic nonsense there is neither any overarching metaphysical/conceptual idea nor any attempt at didacticism whatsoever. It is merely a parody of poetic structures and conventions or of rational expectations with the aim of playing with literature itself. They also make use of language barriers, where one language is nonsense for another. Most people would argue that this is the type of nonsense that can be regarded as truly literary nonsense. Its only function if any other than providing joy is to provide some deeper understanding on the nature of human interaction with literature. Examples of these can be found in abundance in Lear's limerick, most of which firstly parodies the structure of limerick and secondly the narrative or the other way round.

From all the above examples, we realize that two things are absolutely necessary for the formation of literary nonsense:

1. It should always have two levels of parody.
2. The first level parody should definitely trigger some sort of an emotional *sthyayibhava* which when parodied further in the second level will lead to either nullifying of the *rasa* framework itself or evoking a parody of the primary *rasa*/*bhava* which will inevitably lead to *hasya rasa*.

By stating the above two facts, we can also arrive at a definition of the genre, that generic literary nonsense is one which successfully achieves the two levels of parody, whereby there is an emotion that is evoked in the first and a parody of that emotion is achieved at its second level. As such nonsense is either regarded to be a negation of emotion or merely humourous. In the next chapter I will look at the application of this theory, on select Indian Nonsense texts in English.

Chapter 3
ANALYSIS OF INDIAN ENGLISH NONSENSE

The origins of nonsense in India and its appropriation into a literary genre around the nineteenth century with Sukumar Ray spread throughout the country more through the Bengali influence rather than the English one. In spite of the fact that Ray himself was influenced by his British predecessors, most of his descendents including he himself, wrote in the indigenous Indian languages and almost nothing was written in Indian English. English became a reality of Indian lived experiences with its colonial contact. English became a part of the Indian consciousness with the British colonization of the Indian subcontinent which started as far back as 1757 in the Battle of Plassey. English as a language was systematically introduced in the country firstly through the organized activities of the missionaries and secondly through the efforts of the government in trying to create a class of 'brown babu-s' who helped administer the country. Since both these influences started the earliest in Bengal, it is not a surprise that the beginnings of nonsense literature as influenced by Lear and Carroll also had its earliest and greatest developments in Bengal, where it was easily accommodate within the subcontinent's own indigenous tradition of nonsense (as discussed in Chapter 1). And what we call modern or literary nonsense in India is a hybrid product that arose out of colonial contact, though it found its earliest expression in the Indian languages alone.

However, the influence of these above mentioned missionaries and traders from England, which started more than one hundred and fifty years before English political supremacy became a reality, the adoption of English as an Indian language in a nation divided by multiple languages, ethnicity and class became a part of the state policy that allowed not only the nationalist movements including the Indian National Congress to unite people from across the length and breadth of the country but also after independence provide a suitable via media from people from different linguistic backgrounds to come together and converse. English therefore becomes in many ways a language essential to the integrity of the idea of India and takes a new form of Indian English. To go into a detailed account of the same would be beyond the scope of my paper, but to put it succinctly, Indian English became a sort of meta-language uniting Indian diversity. At the same time, in the process of Indianization, English in turn inherited specific

quirks of the Indian culture (though what constitutes Indian culture and reality is another broad question with no unifying answer) and came to be the defining feature of Indian English.

In the last few years, the genre of literary nonsense has been finding new audiences through the work of Anushka Ravishankar and Sampurna Chattarji in Indian English. Ravishankar discovered this genre during a university break while spending some time at a British library. She responded to this genre immediately and initially started writing nonsense only for her own amusement. Later, when her daughter grew big enough to read books, she realized the dearth of books in the Indian market for children which were about Indian children set in Indian context and decided to become a writer herself. Today she is a well known Indian children's author, poet and playwright, with over two dozen books to her credit. Often dubbed as India's Dr. Seuss, Ravishankar's forte lies in the genre of Indian English nonsense, though her real inspiration comes from the British forefathers, Lear and Carroll and incidentally, like Carroll, she also shares a background in mathematics ("Anushka Ravishankar: India's Dr. Seuss" Book Trust). She has her own style of writing, mostly verse, which though not always thoroughly nonsense, contains much of the spirit of nonsense. Illustrations are an important part of her books as she believes firmly in the integration of word and picture and is known to have collaborated with artists all over the world.

Sampurna Chattarji, on the other hand, is better known for her translations of Sukumar Ray's nonsense poetry and prose into English. Her translation of Ray's *Abol Tabol* into *Abol Tabol: The Nonsense World of Sukumar Ray* (2004) was reissued again in 2008 as a puffin classic under the title of *Wordygurdyboom*. However, she is also a writer herself and has written several books for both children and adults including a lot of writing that could be categorized as nonsense. What is common to both of them is the fact that their writings are rooted in the Indian culture with references to typically Indian food, people, surroundings etc. carrying a typically Indian flavour. Their contribution is very important in the Indian children's book market which is generally flooded with books by foreign authors.

As Heyman rightly points out, "Indian children's literature, even up to the present day, is often of low quality in text, illustration, and production, and rarely digs into Indian culture's multiple layers" (Heyman, "Anushka"). Ravishankar and Chattarji's writings try to challenge this tendency by bringing in a change to the tradition of writing for children. Though their writing hovers around essentially Indian themes and plot, there is also a cross-cultural aspect of

hybridity that they retain. Ravishankar points out in response that "children who live in an urban context in India are not terribly different from children who live in an urban context anywhere else" ("Anushka Ravishankar: India's Dr. Seuss" Book Trust) but it is this very transferable aspect in their writings that has successfully managed to retain the interest of the country's young readers. They write not to moralize or teach but to promote reading-for-fun among the young. However, though nonsense is essentially considered to be a children's genre, Ravishankar like the others feel that it is not true and that "Anyone can enjoy it" (Bailay). The major problem with writing nonsense in India is that nonsense verse doesn't have much of a following in India. Ravishankar's *Tiger on a Tree* sold only about 2,500 copies in the country whereas the book sold 10,000 copies in the US and 7,000 in France (Bailay).

This was the very book from where her success began. However, this cannot be tauted as one of her nonsense works. It was in *Excuse Me, Is This India?* (2001) that Ravishankar wrote nonsense verse to the art of Anita Leutwiler, a Swiss artist who creates quilt work from Indian textiles (Heyman, "Anushka"). She used the dream sequence trope which is a commonly used scheme for entry into the field of nonsense in literature, including the most famous of nonsense writings in English like those of Carroll. If we are to categorize it within the proposed subdivisions in the previous chapter, this poem would fall under the third kind, where the poetic structure along with sound, colour and images becomes the main form of expression.

Excuse Me, Is This India? is divided into two parts, the real, sensical waking world, which is the beginning and the end of the poem, and a fantastical, nonsensical dream world, which comprises the dream fantasy. The poem creates links between the unreal and the nonsensical through the repeated interrogations of the child protagonist who desires to know firstly where is she going, secondly where is she (or has come to), and lastly where to go (from where she is). The loss of the reality principle is proposed by the very real act of falling asleep and dreaming. We are not surprised that the subconscious mind of the child has taken up the suggestions of travel (from Aunt Anna) to India (from the gifted quilt, which is in some ways a pastiche, a cartoon montage of a real India, with its sights, animals and locales). That it is not only unreal, but also hyper-real is something that also naturally comes to a critical reader. However, it is in the interlocutions and interactions of the child protagonist that we come to realize that actually, something else is going on.

"Where do you think you're going?

And what will you do there?"

"I'm sorry Sir," I said to him,

"I don't know where this goes."

"You only have," he pointed out,

"To follow your own nose."

The reader's expectations of a sensible rational world are turned upside down, not with the introduction of an aeroplane, or of a strange man asking questions, after all, we know that this is a dream world influenced by the immediate stimuli preceding sleep, the arrival of the Aunt, and the gifted quilt, but of the strange advice given by the man to follow one's nose. The poem continues:

"Ma'am,

Which country am I in?"

"It's East of this and North of that

And South-west of the other."

At this four crows that stood around

Began to caw together.

"It's East!" "It's South!"

"It's North!" "It's West!"

Now the nonsensical is evident. We have reached an un-located world. It may be India, after all it does have temples and elephants and three wheeler public transports, and we might ascribe talking animals to the imagination of a child, but the idea of the un-mappable, the idea of non-located locales is surely the work of an adult mind. The way in and out of the world of no directional sense is interestingly through aeroplanes, and one may be tempted to draw a relation between jet lag and general disorientation of a frequent flier with the spatio-temporal nonsense of the poem.

Before we enter into the dream sequence of the nonsense world, the world of reality is dominated by a little girl in the west being told stories by her aunt who has recently come from a trip to India. This provides the stimulus or is the *vibhava*. This gives rise to a sense of pleasurable excitement. We can easily find out the *bhava*-s that are evoked, which will finally lead us to the predominant *rasa* of this poem. Out of the thirty-three *vyabhicari bhava* or *sancari bhava* that is the transitory mental state, the one that finds an outlet in this segment is that of

'excitement' or *avega* and 'pleasure' or *harsa* along with a subtle sense of 'pride' or *garva* for the aunt. There is also a latent 'desire' or *mati* in the girl as she wishes that she could experience it on her own. The involuntary reaction or the *anubhava*-s lie between 'thrill' and 'feeling'. Before we enter into the dream sequence, as the girl falls asleep, *vyabhicari bhava*-s like 'sleep' or *nidra*, 'fatigue' or *srama* and 'laziness' or *alasya* is evoked. But since the reader is never given a hint of this transition, it eludes the reader when he reads it for the first time. Finally as we enter into the nonsense world, the world is predominantly that of 'confusion' or *moha* that is induced in the readers, as one is confronted with situations which have no bearing to logic. There is also a sense of 'suspicion' or *sanka* that is evoked at times.

The very first instance when a little girl transforms into a "bright blue mouse" is the first logical inversion that hits the readers. Since the reader still does not know that they have entered the dream world of the little girl, such an image seems to appear absurd. An Indian audience immediately imagines the spirit of a girl trapped in a blue body, bearing overtones of blue-black image of Krishna. The artist's use of the particular shade of cobalt "blue" is also reminiscent of the representation of Krishna in many madhubani paintings. The very image of Krishna expressed through a "mouse" does not remain just absurd but becomes almost a sacrilege. Despite that, the transitory mental states or the *vyabhicaribhava*-s that are evoked make it appear funny rather than a blasphemy. And in any case, irreverence has always been an accepted part of nonsense. However, as the poem progresses, the rhyme scheme, the colourful absurdities, all add up to produce a sense of 'pleasure' which runs through the entire vein of the poem. The "strangers" are "friendly", the animals can speak and maps are drawn without a place. Another girl she meets waves her goodbye with a broom, which is a sign of disrespect in India, but gives her almost a witch like identity. It is only at the end, when the reader realizes that he had been a part of the girl's dream world till then, that the flavor changes. With the 'awakening' or *vibodha* of the protagonist, there is a sense of understanding that comes with 'remembrance' or *smriti* along with a continuation of the sense of 'pleasure' and 'excitement' at the revelation that all had happened in the dream. In the dreamworld of inversions, a parody of the rational expectation is made possible which leads to a fun ride arousing *hasya rasa*.

The poem depicts everything that is considered quintessentially Indian, which is sometimes held to be a derogatory picture of the subcontinent as an exotic land where cows, crows and elephants are considered to be loitering on the road and the only cars there are "three-

wheeled". The western child is enamoured by such fascinating stories and her only desire is to visit the land of such exoticism. This poem seems to be ridiculing this idea of the exotic land that the child of the west has of India. But since nonsense by its very nature is "intentional purposelessness" and has no real point, its expression takes the course of play with logic, which takes it beyond the scope of parody. Ridiculing within the parodic structure, without the intent of ridicule being apparent, leads to a parody of the parody itself. Where the first order of parody could have led to a sense of discomfort, the second order completely nullifies its effect by piling a series of absurdity that completely defy the rules of logic and sense and lead to a parody of the first order, which leads to *hasya*. Though the structure of a dream attempts to give some credibility to the inverted logic, leading to an acceptance of the fantastical world, even the comfortable sleep inducing warmth of the quilt on a snowy morning in the west vis-à-vis the memories of the extremely "sunny" east in the waking world, does not arouse much hue and cry.

Ravishankar's *Wish You Were Here* (2003) contains about ten such poems belonging to the third category, where each character is shown to visit a place of tourist attraction, but she aptly turns each of them completely nonsensical with the use of various nonsense techniques. She plays with words and names each of the character on the characteristics of the place that they visit. So, Grandpa "Laung" is a play with the tallness of Eiffel Tower; Cousin "Collum" is so named because of visiting The Tower Bridge at London; the pillar like form of The Leaning Tower of Pisa gives the name to Cousin "Pilla", the tetrahedral shape of the Great Pyramid at Egypt names Uncle "Tetra Hedran"; the marbled beauty of Taj Mahal gives the name to Brother "Marbel"; Great Aunt "Kass Kade" is a reminder of the cascading falls at the Victoria Falls at Zimbabwe; Nephew Undawattah visits the underwater attraction at the Great Barrier Reef, Australia; the torch-bearing lady as the Statue of Liberty, New York, gives Sister "Tauchberra" her name; the parapet at The Great Wall, China, inspires the name of Aunt "Parapetta" and Brother-in-Law "Laa Vaa" is obviously visiting Mount Fuji-Yama Japan. These poems can also be seen overlapping with the second category of nonsense or that of didactic nonsense, teaching children the various places of historic and geographic attraction along with architectural marvels by man. But the eccentric visitors to these places reduce the seriousness of such didacticism with their eccentricity and make learning a much more fun process. However, the poetic value of these poems cannot be discarded as it plays with sounds, rhymes and images, thus tipping it more to the category three of artistic nonsense.

The first level of parody in these poems is how they play with the genre of travelogues and at the second level, it transcends any serious mockery by the use of its eccentric characters who take us to a world of nonsense logic where their observations do not follow any logical route. So Grandpa Laung jigged right up to the Eiffel Tower and "had a great fall". It uses the concept of Humpty Dumpty's great fall and makes the plight of Grandpa more relatable than the others. Cousin Collum arouses *harsa* or joy at his excessive obsession with measuring things from different angles and in different colours. Having measured the Tower Bridge he comes to the bizarre conclusion that "it was longer from West to East/Than it was from East to West". Cousin Pilla was irritated at the acute angle of The Leaning Tower while Uncle Tetra Hedran made four points out of which the first two were obviously stated as "One" and "Two" and the third point shows absurd precision in being "Eighty-four". The fourth point ends mid-sentence and thus leads to a deficiency of meaning. Brother Marbel also comes to an obvious conclusion at Taj Mahal that "This building's very white." Aunt Kass Kade who loves washing, wishes she had taken her washing to the Victoria Falls while Nephew Undawattah shouts a "Hi!" to a shark at the Great Barrier Reef. At the first level of parody, it thus plays with travel accounts in the poetic form. At the second level of parody, it plays with the conventional rational expectations and succeeds in evoking *hasya rasa* in the readers.

In one of her recent publications, "The Story of Samarpreet Sood" from *This Book Makes No Sense: Nonsense Poems and Worse* we find a similar nonsensical effect. Samarpreet suddenly vows to give up all food "one day". However, the things that she gives up eating comprise nothing more than a plethora of incongruous objects and idea, mostly dabbling in tautologies. Starting from "anything that was written" to the "quiet, songless bird" and from "sodium monoglutamate" to "all phosphate compounds". In the first place these are objects which are not really considered edible, so the giving up of eating these is not really considered as giving up food. What we totally overlook is that, Samarpreet has not just given up on food, but on "all" food and the poet plays with this all-ness and evokes much *harsa* by bringing together the edible with the inedible and forming an absurd mess. So, as Samarpreet cries that "Food is the bane of the great human race" and proceeds to throw away the "cactus" along with debugging the room for fear that she might consume the bugs, along with cabbages and beans, the reader lets go off his rational sense and enjoys the play with the rhyme and sound rather than the content. Hunger returns in personification and "attacked young Sood with its sudden sharp pangs" and "ripped at

her insides with rude ruthless fangs". Like a fierce animal it clawed her, disturbed her and troubled her so much so that she started dreaming of food acting as humans in her nonsense world of inversions. Not able to restrain any longer she gives in to her hunger, but like her eccentric nonsense counterparts, her food comprises of her "TV", "lamp", "door", an empty "bottle", their "staircase", "walls", "sofa", "cushions", "table", "chair", "stool", "the bags", "the bins", "the dishes", "the pictures of birds, bees and fishes" and finally "ate up her house" with her inside. This world of *unmada*, despite its *ugrata* or ferocity that leads to *marana* or death, evokes *hasya* contrary to what it builds up, merely parodying the serious poetic structures and conventions at its first level and with the rational expectations of the readers at its second level.

Sampurna Chattarji's "The Food Finagle: A Capricious Culinary Caper" has some very witty poems along with others that verge on the edge of nonsensicality. This collection of verses veer more towards macaronic language while attempting syncretism which gives rise to a sense of nonsensicality, also explaining the reason why it finds place in most nonsense anthologies. Its play with sounds and images easily place it in the third category. She plays with the names of Indian food with similar English words that result in a sort of *khichdi*. Like in "Very Fishy":

> There was a fish who called himself
> THANKYOUBHERYMAACH.
> Till the fishermen caught and salted him
> And ate him with boiled starch.

A Bengali herself, Chattarji plays with typical Bengali pronunciation on a typically Bengali object, the fish, which is considered to be their staple diet. There is a constant wordplay with Bengali pronunciation of English words creating homophones with Bengali. As the footnote points out,

> Since the Bengali alphabet does not have a 'v', v-sounds in English and other languages get softened into 'bh'. Hence 'very' becomes 'bhery'. In addition, Bengalis have a habit of prolonging vowel sounds which turns English words like 'much' into '*maach*'. Significant to the wordplay here, '*maach*' in Bengali means 'fish'. (*The Tenth Rasa* 64)

There is an undeniable mockery of the Bengali pronouncing English words that leads to a wordplay which is funny. Eating it with starch also has an indication of *panta-bhaat*, a lightly fermented rice-based dish especially popular in rural areas of Assam, Bangladesh and Bengal

and subtly hints at the poverty ridden rural conditions. However, none of these ridiculous take on the Bengali culture is apparent as we receive it in the second order of parody of the parody in the original. As we consider it on the first level of parody, it emerges as a source of fun for other communities and extremely insulting for the Bengalis in most cases. However, the word play which colours the poem with a particular rhythm and rhyme evokes only a sense of playfulness and leads to a parody of the above mentioned both cases of *hasya* or *raudra* and leaves us only with a sense of the laughter of the *hasya rasa*.

The same collection has another poem "Explained" which plays with names of South Indian food. As the footnote here mentions, the initial inspiration for this poem was the menu in South Indian restaurants, which lists their food items in the roman script. Despite being truly culture specific, their written form seems to have a lurking presence of English words with which Chattarji rhymes and creates the poetic rhythm in this poem:

> Idiyappam keeps yapping
>
> Puttu plays golf
>
> Utthapam's my girlfriend
>
> Mutthu's real name is Rolf.

Like the Bengali tinted pronunciation, even the South Indians are not spared from their set of peculiarities of pronunciation. The English words pronounced with a South Indian accent has been a subject of much inter-community ridicule. The poet uses the peculiarities of this accent in this case to bring out the word "yapping" from the pronounced "-yappam", the idea of the "putter" club (used in golf) leading to Puttu playing golf, the lurking presence of "Pam" in "Utthapam" reminding one of the "girlfriend", finishing in a completely unconnected (except for acquiring a continuity in rhyme in a befitting end) and hence nonsensical last line. As evident, the first level of parody comes from the use of language in which Indian words are parodied through their rhyme or sense or part to bring about a sense in English. Further, the entire poem does not fall into a sensible narrative or for that matter any aesthetic poetic sensibility. This brings us to the second level of parody in which in order to evoke a poetic structure, the poet merely provides an end rhyme and a prosodic structure of tri-metre lines. This in itself becomes a parody of poetry itself. Like the above instance, *raudra* which is aroused because of the communal overtones of the parody seems to be deflated in the second level through the incongruous play with words and this intrinsic parody of the poetic structure itself. The implied

irreverential attitude towards Indian pronunciation from an entirely English viewpoint is completely undone because the poem also parodies the English poem with its rhymes and prosodic structures at the second level and thus replaces *raudra* with *hasya*.

The same anthology has other poems too, which seem quite nonsensical but are not completely so. They are rather wittily playing with the various languages of India, where the same object are known by different names by different communities who might be living in the same building itself. Like for instance, "The Samosa Feud" plays with the different names of "samosa" by which it is known, especially by the Punjabis and the Bengalis.

> There is an old feud that is waiting to be settled—
> Call a 'samosa' a 'shingara' and the Punjabi gets nettled.
> Call a 'shingara' a 'samosa' and the Bengali gets mad.
> While the two are fighting, there's a plateful to be had.

It parodies the linguistic hurdles that cause such bickering amongst the various communities in India. How one word in a language might be offensive in another. How each community fervently preserves their culture amidst such diversity. They might not really fight over such petty issues, but the importance of one's own culture vis-à-vis the other and the ardent need to preserve it especially against the other, is what is being parodied here. Such a clash between two Indian communities have been subject matter of much parody in various media, where one of the recent examples would be that of the Punjabi-Bengali clash in the Bollywood film *Vicky Donor* (2012). However, in the above example from Chattarji, the poem never transcends over the first level of parody and hence does not qualify as nonsense. Its inherent tension between meaning and non-meaning or sense and nonsense is very thin and easily dissolvable. Thus, it remains a witty poem but does not transcend to the level of nonsense.

As an example of type (b), which is didactic nonsense, one can take up any of Ravishankar's alphabets or counting texts. We can consider *Alphabets are Amazing Animals* (2003), her alphabets, which is more nonsensical than her *One, Two, Tree!* which is a counting text. A Learian influence is absolutely undeniable in these texts, as like Lear, Ravishankar parodies alphabets. Alphabets are generally meant for young kids, starting to learn their respective languages, in this case English, and hence always have a didactic function. Here, Ravishankar, like Lear, makes use of alliterative words, illustrated in bright colours by Christiane Pieper. The art work loyally accompanies the sense made out of the alliterative alphabets as they

come to life, save for one, in the letter "X" where for "Xemes" we find an animal not the gull as the meaning is. If we consider it as a parody of the first order, where one parodies an original text or author, we find a stark difference from the original. Since alphabets are the first beginning lesson, it is kept extremely simple with the use of easily relatable stuff one comes across every day, like "A for Apple", "B for Bat" etc. However, parodying that set-up we find the simplicity usurped with animals or objects that are far more obscure with respect to a child's understanding or even an adult trying to learn a new language. There is no sense of ridiculing of the original, but rather the Hutcheon, Waugh and Hanoosh-ian understanding of parody as positive criticism by expanding and renovating the tradition in question (Heyman, "Isles" 19). So, the *sthyayibhava*-s evoked are that of *moha* or confusion along with *harsa* or joy. Also, to a large extent, it invokes a sense of *vitarka* or trepidation/guessing. The words are difficult for an early beginner, but nevertheless, attract them as per child psychology where the child likes flaunting newly learnt words, even if they may be grammatically wrong usage of the same. It is comparable to the situation as Alice talks to herself while going down the rabbit hole:

> …Down, down, down. Would the fall *never* come to an end! 'I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time?' she said aloud. 'I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth. Let me see: that would be four thousand miles down, I think—' (for, you see, Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the schoolroom, and though this was not a *very* good opportunity for showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen to her, still it was good practice to say it over) '—yes, that's about the right distance—but then I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I've got to?' (Alice had no idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but thought they were nice grand words to say.)
>
> Presently she began again. 'I wonder if I shall fall right *through* the earth! How funny it'll seem to come out among the people that walk with their heads downward! The Antipathies, I think—' (she was rather glad there WAS no one listening, this time, as it didn't sound at all the right word) (Carroll 24-25)

However, the parody in Ravishankar goes one step further than this as it creates a world of its own, which might be full of grand words but has no relation to the real world. Here "Anteaters Adore Arithmetic", "Baby Buffaloes Blow Big Blue Bubbles", "Careless Crocodiles Catch

Cold" so on and so forth. True to its nonsensical nature, there is an inversion of logic as sense transcends its obvious nature and embraces an alternative reality and through this transcends the first order of parody to the second order. It is a fun read, with catchy images, and evokes nothing but *hasya* rasa at both levels of the parody.

Ravishankar's *Anything but a Grabooberry* (1998) is also essentially of this second category of nonsense. Its didactic intent, which is also stated in its purpose, is achieved through typeplay, where sometimes a word is a "direct visual representation" where "the word 'cup' looks like a cup" or is expressed through various other indirect and lateral connections like "A smelly sock is suggested through texture. A rocking chair in its movement. A bee creates sound. The colour blue bubbles through water. A crooked wheel zig-zags madly away." Like stated towards the end of the previous chapter, it provides the abstraction of an object helping the child to decipher words not just in isolation but "like puzzles", "perceiving forms", "finding images in them", discovering "unexpected meanings" and "associations in language". Rathna Ramanathan's illustrations, thus, play a very important role in the successful execution of the book, all the time maintaining the parodied structure of the didactic nonsense as already proposed. The concept of the "grabooberry" however is completely nonsensical, having no meaning as such, thus providing a wonderful mix between meaningful words written in shapes that further explain their forms vis-à-vis a word which has no meaning at all played in various forms to mean various things at various times like any other neologism.

The parody in this does not stay limited only to the words, but instead the word takes the form of its concept, thus bringing about the first order of parody. So here, unlike the usual way, the word does not lead us to the concept, but the concept makes the word. Like for instance the word "tie" which does not have the tie in itself is presented like one and thus not only gets across the word but also its concept along with it that it is a piece of clothing tied around the neck. The word that is being taught transcends its nature of being regarded as just a concrete text, and moves towards an abstraction by including its context as well, which is actually its intended purpose in reality. In other words, the young reader is not only made to recognize the "tie" as a series of alphabets but also recognize some elements of the 'tie-ness' of the "tie", which in itself is an abstract idea. At the second level of parody, it thus, parodies the didactic structure by overturning the conventional mode usually taken in getting across such words to children. By such parody it plays around with the didactic structure and appears playful, thus making the

didactic intent even more effective. Instead of images conveying the concepts, the words itself takes up the form of its concept and expresses itself. So, it delivers not only the word in isolation, but also the concept in a way that will be very attractive for the young learner. Needless to say, it makes learning process much more fun than the usual instructive manner. The emotion evoked is more of puzzlement and astonishment, the nullification of which leaves behind an emotionless state with a touch of *hasya* but also, most importantly the realization of the concept of the word which is being taught.

In Ravishankar's "Lost and Found", again belonging to the third category, she plays with English words juxtapositioned with the idea of 'mantra' which originated in the Vedic tradition, and is either a sound, a syllable, a word or group of words that is considered as capable of bringing about a spiritual awakening. The root of the Sanskrit word is to do with *manas* or mind and literally means an instrument of thought (*man* or 'mind i.e. to think'+*tra* or 'an instrument') (Whitney and MacDonell). The sound that it evokes is believed to lead to the attainment of the ultimate cosmic power. It thus belongs to the domain of the sacred. Ravishankar plays with this word, with rhyming words in English. Like for instance, 'mantra' rhymes with 'contra' before we move onto the next line and realize that she had actually broken up the word "contrarily" into two parts and retained only "contra" in the fourth line to rhyme with mantra, before gradually moving into the next part of the word. Heyman points out in his Introduction in *The Tenth Rasa*, how the two words in fragment and as a whole, functions in two contradictory ways. He writes: "The word root 'contra' functions here, but then we see it is just the first part of 'contrarily', yet to make consistent meaning and pronunciation we cannot have both" (*The Tenth Rasa* xxviii). Ravishankar makes use of this contradiction by playing with words and thus achieves the tension in the text. Her "mantra" then bounced off towards the "shapely bosomy bosom" of ones with "painted-up-faces", totally undercutting the sacredness of the word in the Indian tradition. Then as she found back her "mantra", it again "wobbled" and "fell" with "a dinging" of "some earthly bell", which reminds one of the prayer bells. It links up the idea of the sound of the mantra to the dong of the prayer bell, both of which are considered to be an essential part of Indian *puja*-s, especially adding on to the density of various sounds that make up these prayers, believing it to awaken the spiritual energy in and around the place. On the other hand, it plays with sounds of other English words and it is the sound that goes on determining the content, like we have seen happening in most nonsense of this category. Finally, at the end, she pronounces that the fun of

carelessly picking up such words heard suddenly is "wholly incomparable". She plays with the similar sounds of "holy" with "wholly" and true to the nature of nonsense, deals with its sacredness with an attitude of irreverentiality. Moreover, she also relates it to the idea of the 'grandness' of the new words that a child picks up (as I have already pointed out in a previous reference with respect to Alice's fall down the rabbit hole), which adds on to his or her universe of words with no such meaning associated with it. Thus, it plays with the poetic form at the first level of parody using sounds of words as a means of progression contrary to the idea that build up a poem. At its second level it plays with words, rhymes, homophones and explores the wordy world of the child for whom new words are like discoveries, which they carelessly pick up from people around them and though it floats in and out of their memory, they try to guard it like a sacred "mantra" and keep chanting it to feel good about using it, being enchanted about the sound of it, but not really understanding the meaning of it, like dear Alice chanting away big grand words to herself while down she went the rabbit hole.

Kaushik Vishwanath's nonsense on the other hand always seems to have an overarching ulterior motive on first read; till you reach the end and realize that it was all a ruse. He features in *The Tenth Rasa* among "The Rising Stars", a section which brings together writings by enthusiastic members and participants, from a Heyman lecture on Nonsense at Chennai and a nonsense workshop for children held by Sampurna Chattarji at Mumbai. About Vishwanath, the editor writes, "there were quite a few enthusiastic audience members, but the most engaged was Kaushik Vishwanath, who composed a piece on the spot, during the lecture" (*The Tenth Rasa* 193). He was a student of English Studies at the Indian Institute of Technology in Madras. He also writes a weekly satire column called "Dr. K's Cure for Sanity" for a National Newspaper. He has published stories in Karadi Tales, Scholastic and Tinkle. His parents are the founders of "Karadi Tales". His book, The Truth About Ashwatthama, was shortlisted for the 2012 Toto Awards. Most of his nonsense writing has only been self-published in "Kaushik's Magical World of Nonsense: As seen on Earth. OHNOGODDAMNHOLYGAIASPIRITOFTHEEARTH" via his blog nonsenseofkaushik.blogspot.com.

When asked about when he started writing, he says that he started quite early, when he was around five or six years old, although he does not have much recollection of the things he wrote at that time, in an email dated 29 July 2012. About his nonsense writing he feels that nonsense happened to him since writing had primarily been a way for him to entertain himself

and he found nonsense amusing. However, he wasn't conscious of 'literary nonsense' when he started writing, though he agrees that he feels that it was his natural tendency to write stories that defied the logical order of things at some level. Among writers that influenced him, he mentions Dr. Seuss, while mentioning at the same time that many might not even consider his work as nonsense. His love for Lewis Carroll as well as Roald Dahl, though not completely nonsensical, made an impact as well. Unlike many others he feels that the nonsensical can figure quite strongly even in serious literature, or writing that doesn't aim to amuse. He finds nonsensical streak in the writings of Franz Kafka and J.M. Coetzee too, two of his favourite writers, despite their differences where Kafka can be amusing, but Coetzee is usually quite grim. Their writing seems to exhibit a current that resists the reader's natural urge to arrive at a meaning at the end of a text, and that for him is nonsensical. But, the inspiration to write more came through his association with Anushka Ravishankar, whom he knew and meeting Michael Heyman at a nonsense workshop at the Chennai British Council. It is only in the last few years that he has decided to take writing more seriously and jokingly remarks that from writing just to amuse himself, it is "A little less so now that I'm trying to take it seriously. Perhaps I shouldn't!"

The first part of his "Binoo the Monkey Pilot joins the Air Force" (BMP) published via his blog on 2nd August 2008, abounds in weirdness and absurdity as he himself remarks "A delightful tale about a comedic mix-up! Rather, a delightfully comedic mix-up tale! The tale highlights a semantic mix-up and the occasional inadequacy of words to convey meaning! Read it and be delighted." Though he never got around to writing the second part, the first part alone is capable to leave one rolling on the floor with laughter with piles of its nonsensicality. As I started reading it for the first time, despite its nonsensical abundance, I had a feeling that it was not completely pointless. It was a critique of the banality of the armed forces and warring countries through his fictitious "Banal Nasality" the Air Force Headquarters. How humans fighting each other and killing enemies are nothing more than mere animals, like a monkey dancing (famously referred to as *bandar naach*) to the tune of the *madari* or the trainer's *dugdugee*. However, as I slowly reached its end, the entire purposeful feeling was replaced by uncontrollable laughter which had nothing to do with it being a meaningful irreverential sarcasm but rather by its flight from meaning every time it seemed to be on the edge of reaching one.

Vishwanath has a characteristic way of playing with words and sentences as evident from the likes of "Binoo's hand hesitated over the form. Rather, Binoo hesitated his hand", "the paper

was regal-looking and official looking. Rather, it was regalo-official looking or officio-regal looking", "…he had no time for questions of history and philosophy, or rather historic-philosophy", "every second wasted is a wasted second", "Binoo squealed with delight. Rather, he let out a delightful squeal", "…other people who looked very militaristic and official. Rather, very officio-militaristic" etc. The extensive descriptive technique of pointing out each of Binoo's movement and thought, usually considered mundane and boring, seem to find a new definition here. It does prove nonsense's affinity with intricacies of domesticity. However, this piling up of information does not really do much to the building up of a concrete meaning which would lead me to an overall sense. The one sense that comes across is that of the vagaries of the air force or other such establishments. A similar sense is conveyed through his "The Limpet Division" (LD) which is doing the same with the Army. This theme is not new to literature and has been at the core of many post-World War-II literature. One example that immediately comes to my mind, maybe that of *Catch-22*, which also led to the coining of a new term in English, which is one of the greatest satire ever written about warring conditions in the Air Force and how to remain sane. However, being essentially nonsense, BMP follows a trajectory completely opposite to these other novels and does not resolve the chaos but leaves it as chaotic as possible and if possible even more insane.

The text has a persistent vein of the *vyabhicaribhava* of *capalata* or unsteadiness, inconstancy or fickleness. The designation of the "Monkey Pilot" leads one to a sense of *moha* or confusion as what it really means. But the sense of an acute need for regality, "pretty"-ness, official formality, neatness, seriousness, does not escape the reader. At the same time, the informality in the otherwise formal letter in the "pretty envelope" is stated in its use of "yaar", "machan" and "dude", which is kind of a paradox that is inherent in nonsense. All of it builds up a state of *unmada* or insanity/madness through the incongruity of images and sense. LD also follows a similar trajectory, though it is much less nonsensical than BMP and hence does not entirely achieve the second level of parody and leaves us more with a satiric sense. It satirizes war again, but this time through the Army. This army was "not the Indian army, or the army of any country…just an army of people looking for a reason to go to war" who having found no reason to go to war yet, kept themselves "in shape" with their "daily drills and routines" (LD 100). Finally when it did decide to go to war, it was because their superior received information from his "wife's cousin's best friend's neighbor" that their opponent, the Whelks, had with them

"dangerous weapons" like the ones even the Limpets had in their warehouse and hence cannot have them. It not only paints the futility of war but also ridicules the joblessness of the army in the absence of one, since the army by its very definition exists because of war. Like BMP, even LD has its own peculiarities like that of using an excess of "-est" terms where "kindest", "politest", "proudest" make sense, but "wellest", "equallest", "harmoniousest" gets across the sense without being syntactically correct and arouses much *harsa* or joy. However, we also see use of phrases like "…the muddy soil…more like soily mud" used extensively in BMP.

The sense of propriety which is highly exaggerated in the army or the air force is further aggravated when the superior first kindly requests his cadre "Try to say "sir" more often. I am not *asking* for it, but I would like you to say it more often", not really meaning the last bit as he is shown to lose his temper at the repetition of this mistake correcting him, "SIR! WHY SHOULD THEY NOT HAVE THEM, SIR!" A similar thing is seen in BMP where the regality of the envelope, the importance of applications and the professional "typewritist" is mandatory and messy amateurish stuff is not accepted at all. At the same time the tendency of spelling wrong is pointed out when Mohan Sir refers to their opponents as "unstabel rowdys" and repeating them throughout like obedient cadres who are under duress to blindly follow the orders of their superiors even down to their faulty details (though the entire concept of pointing out wrong spellings in a speech in itself is highly nonsensical), mocking this system. There is further reference of how words like Lieutenant get twisted in pronunciations of "Lyoo-tenant" or "Lef-tenant". Such play with words continue when war-bombs inevitably mean cracker-bombs burst during Diwali and the "Deranged Rabid Gorrillas" were inevitably the best in "gorilla tactics" punning on guerilla.

True to nonsensical themes, the larger question of the impending war is suspended in obsession with mundane domesticity like that of breakfast, lunch, dinner, tea with biscuits and samosas but no gulab jamun along with card-games. The soldiers seem more interested in finishing the war and going back to their life of relaxed dinner at home, but the superior gets angry pointing out that "real soldiers stayed on the battlefield until the war was over" and drink their soup out of their "helmets" even if it may be a "motorcycle helmet with all the padding inside" which sucks up most of the liquid soup (though yet again the entire concept of such a helmet being used at war is nonsensical). This is where the satirical intent of the story transcends to the second level of the parody where the opponents sit down and mostly play cards on a battle

field but how they do that under the strict surveillance of their superior remains a big question. The ridiculing of the war and the army does not remain limited to that alone and becomes a ridiculous ridiculing in itself and thus transcends to the second level of the parody. The satirical deeper understanding underlying the text is totally robbed off its seriousness and the *unmada* and *moha* which gives rise to a mixed state of *hasya* and *adbhuta* is parodied to give rise to *hasya rasa*.

The same trajectory is followed in the BMP where the seriousness is maintained even till the time that Colonel Walonel points out that they are not looking for a pilot who flies monkeys to war but a monkey who is a pilot, continuing on the lines of symbolically referring to the monkeying around of pilots and soldiers. But as Binoo proceeds to show his own subconscious collapsible model of a winged monkey, which woke on smelling salts and could be injected back to sleep, the bizarreness of the situation transcends simple parody. It becomes a parody of the entire parody of the first order which had previously seemed like presenting some glaring truths about the futility of the entire process of warring and recruiting. In some sense it echoes Rajim Colenel/Chief's paradoxical desire of rising to a high rank in the army to use its strength "to promote peace and make our world the most harmoniousest" since he was not at all fond of war and violent things. This concept in itself is an absurd one, since using an agency to spread peace, which by its very nature is supposed to go to war to maintain peace (again paradoxical) is nonsensical, but so is the ridiculing of such structures nonsensical because unlike criticisms that bring about change and in most cases for the better, such ridicules only remain ridicules with no such corrective impacts. So it is futile to ridicule such incorrigible systems and there is no "point" in ridiculing it. So it needs to be ridiculed itself, which leads to the parody of the second level evoking the *hasya rasa* again.

An example of a similar sort can also be found in Ravishankar in her novella "OGD", the excerpts of which was published in *The Tenth Rasa*. It plays around with conceptual and philosophical ideas both religious and scientific. At the primary level there is a parody of mathematical and scientific knowledge and structures. This is done by supposedly using scientific concepts in order to provide models for understanding deeper philosophical puzzles. Through the character of the messiah there is an attempt to try and depict an all-messiah. The character engages in not only providing statements that are circular and abstruse, but also in providing a lived experience of sticking her foot in her mouth and thus resembling a Klein Bottle

representing endless space of circularity. This becomes, in some ways, a parody of religion and philosophy itself. Therefore, the entire story also becomes a parody of religion and philosophy as well. Hence, the work behaves as a double parody of both science as well as religious philosophy. The second level of parody lies precisely in this overturning of both scientific as well as philosophical knowledge, indeed all knowledge, thus allowing nonsense to reign supreme. Conceptually, the work, advocates nonsense as not only a means of knowledge but also it makes us realize that nonsense lies at the root of all sciences and philosophies.

The story opens from a different philosophical consideration, one which involves the idea of a world post an apocalyptic event, namely a nuclear holocaust. The entire story is built up around two mathematical objects, the first being a Mobius Strip and the second being the Klein Bottle. Both these mathematical figures are unusual in that they are essentially closed bounded geometrical figures without a beginning or an end. The maths behind these objects is however, set aside for an exploration into the nature of philosophy. Right at the beginning it is declared that Ogd itself has no inside or an outside. Further, Darwin's idea of evolution is brought in order to try and justify how Ogd exists. The explanation given is that being like a Mobius Strip it has no inside or outside. Therefore, it cannot be destroyed by a nuclear holocaust. Some of the circular wisdoms mentioned include firstly how all roads lead to Ogd, which is a place but also is a rearrangement of the word 'God'. In the land of Ogd, since there is no inside or outside, xenophobia is also not possible, as there are no insiders or outsiders. This is of course a nonsensical proposal since it is a play with language. The pun continues that since all roads lead to Ogd and that all roads lead out of Ogd, since there is no inside or outside, people have to conclude that all roads lead everywhere and that all roads also lead nowhere. So in a paradoxical situation, everywhere is the same as nowhere. The narrative further continues that cartographers arbitrarily drew an imaginary line and declared that one side was Ogd and the other side was not. This again becomes a pun on the act of creation of nations specially if one takes the case of India where the lines were arbitrarily drawn by the withdrawing British forces which has left a bitter feeling of xenophobia to this day.

The narrative continues with the story of the messiah and how even as an embryo she refuses to take her feet out of her mouth. Once she was born she continued to keep one foot in her mouth, using only the other for moving around. The entire image is that of a Klein bottle which has no inside or an outside. In other words the messiah becomes a living embodiment of

the principle that there is no inside or outside and that is exactly what she preaches. Some of her teachings include "There is no difference between life and death", "the inside is the same as the outside", "death is a Mobius Strip", "everything that has a beginning has a ending. But nothing begins, so nothing ends", "It is important to believe although it is not important what you believe" and so on and so forth. There is obviously a parody of science as well as religion. This parody is aimed at showing how both science as well as religion is actually more similar than dissimilar. In other words there actually can never be a Klein bottle. However, in mathematics it is possible to formulate equations to describe it. Similarly, religious tautologies cannot be proven. In other words both are based on belief. Ultimately both make predictions or give explanations which are essentially nonsensical.

From this text we can perceive the *vyabhicaribhava*-s of *sanka* or apprehension and *cinta* or anxiety towards a possible apocalypse, *apasmara* or dementedness at the description of the world of Ogd and also the messiah and *unmada* or madness at the sayings of the messiah. We feel a sense of *avega* or agitation on thinking of the possibility of such a situation ever arising. It is only when we realize that the entire text is actually a parody that we get a *sthyayibhava* of *harsa*. For the common reader for whom the intricacies of a Mobius Strip or a Klein Bottle or even the circular tautologies of philosophy are distant and beyond comprehension, the text becomes a parody of the method and language of both science and religion. However, for those who understand these ideas, a further parody of the entire body of knowledge encompassed by science and religion is revealed. The problem is not with certain mannerisms of science and religion but with the entire of it. This second level of parody becomes a parody of the entire idea of knowledge and sense and reveals the underlying nonsensicality of the two largest bodies of knowledge available to mankind. Therefore, the text becomes an exploration of the ideas of sense and nonsense themselves. The text becomes the vehicle to convey the concept of the inherent nonsense present in all structures of sense that humans try to believe in. The text tries to show how nonsense literature is can be as sensible as science and philosophy sometimes.

Vishwanath's spur-of-the-moment creation of nonsense at one of Heyman's lecture, one of which "Let us Alphabetus", was published in *The Tenth Rasa*, shows his nonsensical genius even in the third category of nonsense. Like Chattarji's "Explained", this poem progresses almost in a similar way, with the exception that it does so solely using English words. That is, instead of syncretism, where the lurking presence of one language is found in words of some

other language, he does so in the same language whereby he finds in a English word the presence of another English word, thus progressing in a poetic structure, as one word gives you the hint of a possible next word:

> Do you feel queasy in easy queues,
>
> Or clam-like on lam-like seas?
>
> Do you think Alice with lice has the ace,
>
> Or feel bad in an ad with bees?

From "queasy" he moves to "queues", while from "clam" he gets "lam", from "Alice" he moves to "lice" while he gets "ad" from "bad". The first level of parody achieves a parody of the poetic structure, by substituting poetic seriousness with characteristic nonsense mundane-ness. At the second level of parody he parodies the language itself, which has a unique capacity of reminding us of other words lying latent within it. It's *hasya* arises in this play of word. However, having no such overarching connection in the whole of it, it fails to reproduce emotion per se and is almost emotionless by nullifying any emotional effect through parody.

Most of Ravishankar's nonsense poems generally fall under the second category or the third category, but sometimes we also see a hint of a conceptual truth whose very incorporation into the poem with the other objects of otherwise dull commonplace domesticity makes it nonsensical in its association. Two examples of this kind would be her "If" and "Discovery of India". The former is divided into five parts, out of which all five bring together disjointed images, with the only difference that the first four has no logical believable sense while the last one ties up a scientific idea to it. Both of them play with logic through non sequitur and arbitrariness and faulty cause and effect. Much of the laughter that is evoked is due to the disjointedness of the stringed images which does very little to contribute to an overarching sense. Thus at the first level of parody, like all other nonsense of this kind, it parodies the extreme aesthetic seriousness of the poetic pieces by jumbling of arbitrary objects, images and ideas. So, "an empty tin" has a "stupid toothy grin" and a "funny fly" has a glum attitude and both of them are claimed to be by the poet as "me" and "I". This leads to a state of *moha* which creates a sense of confusion. The next part of the poem, like most other nonsense of this third category gives more prominence to the rhyme scheme than the content as the rhyme scheme itself becomes the determining of the content rather than the other way round. Thus rhyming with "gallop" she proposes a non-existent animal "wollop" (which incidentally remind one of wallop) with a "tiny

tail". This arouses a sense of *unmada* (insanity) and *harsa* (joy) but still has a sense of the *moha*. The next part continues in this spirit as the poet suggests the reader to give away all letters that one "never wrote" to a "letter-writer". The fourth part of this poem has two parts where the poet instructs the readers to treat a mountain lion "looking ill and forlorn" from the one "looking starved". While the second kind is the one that you run from (having some level of logical sense), the former kind is one that belongs to the nonsense world and needs to be taught how to "spell a cat" and "to go" back the way it has come. Despite the serious implication that a starved mountain lion could make you its prey, true to the nature of nonsense, the emotion evoked is not one of *cinta* or anxiety but that of joy again.

Finally, in the last bit of the poem, Ravishankar refers to a scientific concept of physics mentioning Momentum and Newton's laws. Clubbed together with the previous four parts, which bears no such relation to the fifth, even the sensicality of this part is reduced to nonsense. The personification of Momentum and treating it as an old person is reminiscent of Lear's eccentric old men on one hand and on the other means nothing and evokes laughter out of the sheer musicality of sound and rhyme. This leads to the second order of parody where the entire project for logicality is parodied with such arbitrariness where just by a nonsense association; a scientific truth of great value which had changed the very face of science is rendered nonsense. Pointing its finger at the greater truth how these scientific conceptual truth remain as ordinary and nonsensical to the common man as objects of mundane domesticity appear to the scientists, this poem seems to make a point after all, which due to the poems second order of parody gets parodied again and becomes devoid of any point, thus arousing nothing more than *hasya rasa* or laughter.

The same holds true for "Discovery of India" which arouses much laughter in the first six stanzas of the poem with imprecision and faulty cause-effect. The rhyme and rhythm becomes the driving force of the poem as Cousin Nibboo's incomplete sentences evoke more *harsa* rather than *moha* despite its deficiency of meaning. It is only in the second last stanza, that the poet deliberately makes Boo reach a certainty with a completed sentence of "I think!" and leads to the last stanza playing with the certainty of this thought with the Cartesian claim of "*Cogito Ergo Sum*" or "I think, therefore I am!" Ravishankar directly refers to Descartes in this last stanza, however, its absurd association with the rest of the poem combined with the misdirection in which the meaning of this proposition is used, leads to the nonsensicality of this philosophical

proposition too. Firstly, most readers (especially children) might not know Descartes' famous proposition and will thus be unable to grasp the link between Boo's disappearance after his claim of "I think!" and the subsequent effect of his becoming famous by proving Descartes wrong. So, despite not being a faulty cause-effect, it will be treated like one or will be just treated as being a part of other disjointed images and lose its serious implication. Secondly, even if the reader is familiar with the Cartesian model, which does not imply the disappearance of one who does not "think", will find an absurd application of it to Boo's case who not only disappears (not possible realistically) after thinking, but also becomes famous after ceasing to exist at all (how can a person who does not exist anymore be famous?). So after having parodied the poetic structure at the first level, the poem proceeds to parody the conventional necessity of an underling logic by its illogicality. Also, since the very base on which the Cartesian model (which breeds the rationalists) hinges is on the logicality of thought, which is the very thing that nonsense subverts, this poem becomes a parody of this model in its second level attaining a nature of self-parody if seen from the other end of the scale. In the nonsense world, where it is very easy to disappear, one is not chained to any set of rules of logic but can go insane. Thus again it does make a point which is parodically nullified and rendered truly nonsensical by evoking the *hasya rasa* again.

This idea and understanding of nonsense seems to be at the heart of much nonsense literature aiming to understand itself through a self-parodic structure like for instance in Teesta Guha Sarkar's "Nothing Really". She studied English Literature as an undergraduate student at Lady Shri Ram College, and completed her Masters in the same at the University of Rochester. In college, she became interested in psychoanalysis and its influences on postmodern theory, and went on to write her Masters thesis on the idea of civilization in Virginia Woolf's novels. Her research around postmodernism led her into the realm of the absurd, and she was fascinated by Lucky's seemingly incoherent speech in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. This is when she revisited the nonsense literature she had grown up reading, and discovered its destabilizing potential. Now a children's book editor with a publishing house in India, Teesta dabbles in writing in her spare time, and continues to believe that "everything is preposterous".

In her writing we rediscover how nonsense uses the destabilizing potential to its fullest by a manner of subverting even its own nature of this 'nothingness' to some level through a self-parodic structure. Because, although nonsense literature has often been discarded by serious critics for its nature of nothingness, it is this very 'nothingness' that has been used by the

spiritual teachers to their advantage (for detachment from material life and transcendence to the level of enlightenment), while at the same time it has been at the core of aesthetic ponderings in the form of an apologia like the ones by Ray and Tagore as mentioned in the first chapter. This nothingness has been promoted as a human necessity by these poets, celebrating their nature in their own nonsense land of alternate reality. Like even Ravishankar points out that "since nonsense is a negation of reality, its nothingness is of great significance, and defines it with precision…This is the quintessential nature of nonsense – the ability to be nothing and something at the same time" (*The Tenth Rasa* lii). In the poetic form, Teesta reflects on that nothingness in her poem, where "Nobody" is born on the shores of "Nothinghere" and in the year "Neverwere". Progressing on the lines of faulty cause-effect, this "Nobody" grows up to be a handsome prince. Like most nonsense pieces, this induces a state of *moha* or confusion, but carries forward the idea of conveying a nothingness which is integral to nonsense, even though at loggerheads with the logical idea of communication. Hence, at the first level of parody, it is parodying the poetic structure which it assumes. At the second level, it achieves a kind of self-parody by invoking images that are not there and if taken literally means that it is nothing and does not exist at all. Nonsense by nature embraces this alternate reality, whereby its world is full of absurd creatures and things which have no connection to the reality as we know it. It is an expression of nonsense and its tendency to subvert sense and logic even though sticking to its rules and regulations. The illustrations add to the nonsensicality of the poem, where prince "Nobody" has no face or form, but is suspended in midair as an assortment of only his crown and his uniform. It is like nonsense, giving form to a faceless nothingness of incongruity. Thus, the *rasa* evoked is again that of *hasya*.

Her other poem, "He Longed for a Lavender Gown", falls within the same category, but is stringed together with the lurking presence of sense. Her "He", "She" and "They" do look like an "English pronoun" but the way to that is a "lavender gown" from a fantastical "Scavegunj town" and both of them wearing it together "Like birds of a feather" flocking together, as the illustration also aptly illustrates. Thus, much of the nonsense arises by playing out with the pronouns in a nonsensical fashion, leading to incongruous images which evoke laughter. At the first level of parody, it is thus playing with the poetic form and at the second level it is playing with the language itself that nonsense seeks to subvert. What arises is again a kind of self parody, where the prime tool of nonsense, which is language, is displayed in all its incongruity. Despite

the sensical stringing together of the images, the seriousness is nullified with such dense incongruity and leaves the reader with a sense of *hasya rasa* again.

However, in the same collection of nonsense poems, Samit Basu's "Putu is a Hero Now" from his *Nonsense Superheroes*, is more a witty take on the 'Superhero' culture rather than qualifying as nonsense per se. Putu is the parodied Superhero who 'wears the underwear over his pants' and 'strikes a pose' but as the illustrations show, is nothing like what the romanticized figure of the Superhero looks like. He is rather like a stereotypical fat geeky boy with spectacles and a patch of hair on his head. But he has superhero powers like "shooting beam from eye" and principles like stopping the villains but "Only bruisin', never killin'" and "having honour code,/Always paying what is owed" and "Never taking law in hand". He also has a dual life as an "urban planner" with another name, as the Superhero custom entails. However, the villains that he fights are "Sinner Son and Demon Daughter" and also the "Super Squid from underwater" totally trivializing the plight of the Superheroes whose task is to straighten things which are usually out of bounds for ordinary men. Putu, instead, fixes trouble-makers who turn "house to rubble", or "steal your ancient treasure", or "causing you displeasure", or "robbing local bank", or "crushing you with tank", or "making life less simple", or is "playing with your pimple", or maybe "teasing your friend Rhonda,/Throwing her to anaconda" or maybe just "pinching you in thighs", or raising alarm by "Setting off nuclear device", or maybe just telling you that a "cuboid is prism", or maybe "Wallowing in terrorism". He also fixes people who hamper "your application" or just hog on the buttons of the "Playstation" or commit any other crime. As this long list shows, the figure of the Superhero becomes an object of ridicule by trivializing his larger than life projects to petty domestic ones. This achieves a first level of the parody, but owing to the lack of tension between an unresolved pull between meaning and non-meaning, it does not transcend to the second level of the parody, and hence never achieves to subvert the seriousness of the ridicule. It remains a parody of the Superhero culture and raises much laughter out of its ridicule than a lack of ridicule, and does not meet the requirement of what we understand as nonsense.

Contrary to this, Vishwanath's "Chandrabumps" in the same collection, is definitely nonsensical but a delight to read despite all its bizarreness. The story along with its illustrations is highly amusing and extremely hilarious. Chandrabumps, the protagonist cannot retain his pants for long, for he claims that his "pants have run away" (Chandrabumps 31). His name, true

to his plight, has the suffix of "bumps" hinting on the plight of others seeing him pant-less. The narrator, Vivekas the Great, who is also the conqueror of seven nations, has been entrusted with the job of making him wear pants. This entire premise to this story is utterly nonsensical and gives us a hint as to what is to follow. The angst of the villagers concerned about their "collective decency" seems to point out the societal boundary of rules of propriety, but the very reason for the angst is based on a nonsensical cause of Chandrabumps pants running off. The example of a "skydiving tortoise" whose "legs are incapable of pulling the parachute rip cord", given to show his helpless state is hilarious in its incongruity. Like his other stories, he uses words like "pantist", "trouserish", "pantsless" again, which may not be syntactically correct, but does convey the sense of what he means. He also uses lines like "her dying art...become her art of dying" and "make a banana out of your split and a split out of your banana", which is extremely typical to his style. He also plays with homophones like that of "ears" and "years" in:

> 'Through the ears?' Chandrabumps asked.
>
> 'Yes,' she said. 'Down the generations, through the years, into the ears.'
>
> 'Into the ears,' Chandrabumps asked, pulling at his ears, 'or the years?'
>
> 'The ears, obviously. How would you whisper into a year?'
>
> '*Like this*,' Chandrabumps whispered.
>
> 'I guess you could say it has been whispered from year to year, from ear to ear,' I suggested, and that seemed to end the discussion, for we stood around in awkward silence for many moments afterwards. (Chandrabumps 34)

He also strings together a bunch of impossible instances like, Vivekas conquering seven nations single handedly and not knowing what to do with them returning them back, the villagers checking his pockets to see whether he carried the nations in them, Vivekas hiding in a flowerpot in Chandrabumps' bedroom along with all its contents. He also employs arbitrariness and stating obvious facts in at least two instances:

1. "...I had made him fasten I had made him fasten them with belts, ropes, chains, twine, cellotape, rubber hose, horse hair, anacondas, tapeworms, giraffe tongues, tapir intestine, and rose-water infused jalebi."

2. "I had seen all kinds of things in my travels, like three-humped camels, cheese-human hybrids, a village inside a fullstop at the end of a book, a piece of music that could be seen but never heard, and a girl who could sneeze."

It progresses with the force of a sustained mystery as the reader eagerly waits to find out what actually happens to the pants that run away. Thus, its first level of parody is maintained by using the form of a mystery but in narrating a tale that is more bizarre than mysterious. Though we keep waiting to know what happens to the pants, we also have no such expectation.

Using the set up of a village, Vishwanath also uses structures specific to the village like that of the trouser tamer, who is etched on the figure of the village *dayan* or *ojha* or witch. Her trouser taming equipment consisting of "a whip and a chair, a burning torch and a fish bowl" and her tent where she performed the "highly secretive process" with myriad noises like "barking, howling, wailing and skiing" that emerged, is a parody of the real witch with her hocus focus and broom. On another occasion, when Vivekas was chasing the trouser-thief and he "climbed up the stairs of a nearby building and stood on the roof, surveying the scene" and "leapt from the roof, roaring" when he spotted the thief and "fell on him, tackling him to the ground…punching him", he reminds a lot of the superheroes and seems to parody that framework. Vishwanath also makes oblique remarks to Chandrabumps' "danglers" without sounding obscene at all. This I think is one of the greatest charms of nonsense.

Finally when he manages to catch the trouser-thief and takes back the trousers, we feel as if the mystery is solved. However, it does not end here. The trousers "stood up on their own" and spoke through the zipper that they would never go back to Chandrabumps and started running away, befuddling the readers. The story ends with a lot of questions which are left unanswered and becomes a parody of a mystery tale, where the mystery is no close to being solved. The incongruity of the images which have no relevance to sense or logicality takes the story to the second level of the parody. The rational expectations from such a tale are completely undone and transcend to such a level that even though a sense of *moha*, *unmada*, *cinta* and *capalata* are aroused, it does not stay for long and the reader gets habituated to expect the unexpected. It is then that the incongruity of the images is no longer problematic for the reader nor is any obscenity apparent. It all becomes part of a mindless game, a nonsense belonging to the third category, which provokes the reader to just sit back and enjoy. Thus the overarching *rasa* that is evoked at the end is *hasya rasa* again.

One could go on and on with the analysis of such texts, proving the two levels of parody in nonsense. However, given the arbitrary nature of nonsense, there are no clear cut transitions as we have noticed in all the above cases. When does one move from the first level of the parody to

the second is not very easy to point out always and is often rendered even more difficult with its tendency of overlapping. However, the recurring nature of some of the *vyabhicaribhava*-s that are evoked is evident. *Moha*, *harsha* and *unmada* are the dominant ones, while *sanka*, *cinta*, *capalata*, *avega*, *jadata* and *ugrata* are aroused in some very few instances. Whatever *sthayibhava* is aroused at this level of the parody is completely undone by the next level. Not only are all emotions nullified, but the intent of ridiculing also loses all its seriousness. The reader is left with a sense of *harsa* at the incongruity and apparent silliness and hence the final *rasa* evoked in all cases is that of *hasya*. For most cases of nonsense of the first category that is having some spiritual or conceptual truth at its core, the techniques that are frequently used are that of the paradoxical simultaneity of meaning, while for the second category or the didactic, it is mostly the use of infinity. The third category of nonsense, which is that of the artistic nonsense, and considered 'true' nonsense being of an apparent pointless nature, uses a lot of the other techniques like that of neologisms, portmanteau, faulty cause-effect, non sequitur and arbitrariness and also absurd precision and imprecision. Thus, it maximizes the scope for incongruity clashing with various kinds of sense. In Heyman's words,

> We not only laugh at the absurd creations within the text, but also at our own imaginations' courageous attempts to grapple with them, and, most significantly, at our inability to escape our fundamental nature as meaning-making machines. These self-reflexive doubts can lead, in turn, to the questioning of the world we have created, including, particularly, social and political power structures fabricated under the untrustworthy aegis of 'sense'. In such a wider context, nonsense can be seen as a force for social change, linguistic exploration, political satire, religious expression and philosophical inquiry. Yet, nonsense is the opposite of some dreary, didactic tome. Despite the tension, the frustration of expectation and transgression of the sacred, it is *funny*, somehow. In such laughter, such meta-awareness, we briefly stand outside of our habitual selves, question everything—ourselves included—and in doing so face the potentially frightening consequences through the dance of nonsense, our own *ananda tandava*. (*The Tenth Rasa* xxvi)

It is indeed always "*funny* somehow" even though it takes us beyond our habitual selves and despite leading to a sort of meta-awareness of the world devoid of its boundaries in a much more wider sense, the nonsense world.

This is what we see in Vishwanath's nonsense world in his "Malaise Burger" which was posted on his blog on 19th July 2008. In the first level of parody it is the world of dating prospective lovers, deciding on the marriageability quotient of one another over food and finally 'tying' the knot as one of the readers "Pi" states in her comment. But, it is not as simple as that. The prospective groom is a fidgety man who was 'inappropriately' fidgeting with his prospective spouse's hair and clothes. The food joint they were in was "Malaise Burger" whose waitress "spat" at customers, had an apron on which was inappropriately "covered in what seemed to be a carefully blended mix of blood, sweat, grime, and animal faeces", had "a row of yellow teeth, and a row of brown and black teeth below those, that smelled of rotting gums" and served food by shooting the plate from the door itself, as it flies in the air and then lands on the table, sliding across it and almost falling off the table, though it finally does not. Even the customers do not seem like the normal kind, as Tanku, the woman, "liked to have a lot of forks and knives on the table for protection" or "swept the forks and knives off the table in the direction of the waitress" who seems to have previous experiences of such behavior and dodges "all of the knives, and all but one of the forks, which stuck in her neck and caused her to issue forth in a very masculine voice, "Is that all?", and…left", quite oblivious to her injury. The *vyabhicaribhava*-s evoked are that of *ugrata* or ferocity/cruelty, *unmada* or insanity and *trasa* or alarm/fright/fear all of which lead to a sense of *bibhatsa* but is completely undone in the second level of parody which tones down the seriousness of it all to the point of sounding silly.

The inappropriateness of the various actions stated above, no longer remain inappropriate, as Tanku realizes that her newfound love was not "just fidgeting" but tying hundreds of knots all over her hair and clothes each of which was worth at least "300 rupees. And he had done it for free." This finally qualifies him as "definitely marriage material" and her "heart welled up with love and her brain welled up with affection, while her ovaries welled up with lust". Love becomes a factor majorly dependent on acquiring expensive things for "free" to culminate into marriage, thus mocking the entire institution of marriage. However, the ridicule is washed away in the incongruity of the prospective couple themselves in all their ridiculousness. Thus, the emotional state that stays with us is not of repulsion or *bibhatsa* but that of funny

laughter over silly stuff. Yet again, the second level of the parody removes the serious intent of the ridicule and makes it appear as just there for mere fun and gives rise to a parody of the *bibhatsa rasa* which was raised initially, which finally evokes laughter through *hasya rasa*.

All these above examples, taken mainly from the works of Anushka Ravishankar, Sampurna Chattarji, Kaushik Vishwanath and Teesta Guha Sarkar, and belonging to all the three categories that has been proposed in the previous chapter, prove the point that despite all its absurd peculiarities, nonsense emerges to be a genre of fun and entertainment, mainly though its capability to transcend reality or a criticism of it, through its double layers of parody. However, it will be hard to deny, given the above examples, that nonsense lacks seriousness. Its apparent funny exterior is merely masking questions of higher philosophical truth (like, for instance in *OGD*), or the diversity of different communities that makes one an alien to the other (in, "Explained"), or the validity of hierarchies (like, in "The Limpet Division"), or the necessity of wars (as in BMP), or the institutions of marriage (like in, "Malaise Burger"), or the initiation of these socially accepted institutions and boundaries that are considered as a necessity in a child through the technique of formal education (in, *Grabooberry* or *Alphabets are Amazing Animals*), or for that matter, the need for anything at all (like in "Nothing Really"). However, it as Heyman says, not a "dreary, didactic tome". Rather, it is the most ideal form of art, which satisfies all requirements of art as preached in the *Natyasastra*, wherein lies the beginning of Indian Aesthetics. For as Bharata says, art was created not only to "teach…but be pleasing both to eyes and ears" (Rangacharya 1) and that it gives one "peace, entertainment and happiness, as well as beneficial advice based on the actions of high, low and middle people…There is no art, no knowledge, no yoga, no action that is not found in natya" (Rangacharya 4). As this theory that was initially dedicated to natya alone spread to encompass all forms of art, nonsense almost becomes like a symbol of that ideal art form which not only pleases the ears and eyes but also effortlessly aspires to teach one the self-reflexive questioning of things that are usually taken for granted, without any forceful compulsion. For indeed, true learning is a self-reflexive process independent of any external compulsion, which might taint the learning process with the convictions and ideology of the teacher, leaving no scope for the growth of individuality.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion drawn towards the end of the previous chapter seems to reach a sort of circularity in my quest for understanding nonsense better. It indeed began as a radical assertion of the individual (as dealt with in chapter one, especially under the subheading 'The Victorian Child and the Role of Didacticism in Literature') and the 'growth of individuality' still remains one of the integral part of nonsense. Its funny exterior, masks questions of seriousness in a garb of entertainment, without catering to any conventional norms. The form achieves this through the use of the unconventional nonsense language that propels the text through two layers of parody to transcend the conventionality of reality. In the alternate reality of the nonsense world, the discourse on the specificities of cultural or historical baggage, the artificial boundaries of hierarchies and propriety and the divisions between what has meaning and what does not, all dissolve. For as the ancient Indian linguists believe, it is language which constitutes reality and it is within these discourses that language builds up that our minds can function as rational thinking devices. So when the mind dares to disdain convention by asserting individualism and suspends its meaning-making rational consciousness by resisting these discourses, it automatically moves away from subjective specificities, towards a universal unity. This unity is evoked through a state of wonder that does not fail to evoke a sense of wonderful joy irrespective of time and space of the act of reading and absorbing these texts. Thus even though the birth of literary nonsense is very much indebted to its times and bears the stamp of its age, the joy that we obtain from say Lear's eccentric old men has not changed a bit, even if it sometimes lies partially forgotten amidst the multiplicity of literary and cultural productions in our brave new age of multimedia.

The question now is to see if this proposed structure succeeds in providing a better explanation of the functional aspect of nonsense, providing a common base of tying together all its qualities. Most previous critics on the subject have always been more concerned about listing its unique features and characteristics, being one of the easiest ways to spot nonsense and further analyzing the nonsense texts on the basis of that. While recognizing their contribution in unearthing the modes and mores of the language of nonsense, I would also believe that it never provided a definitive stance on the subject, but mostly an enumeration of techniques that are also found in other genres, thus resulting in a confusion of differentiating nonsense from other similar genres. Hence, I would like to briefly review the nonsense qualities in the light of my double

parodic hypothesis. Part of my research query was to study how the lack of an agreement about the nature of nonsense, despite having endless research enumerating its techniques as the best ways of identifying nonsense without an understanding as to what is the cause behind it all, causes all the confusion regarding this genre. What I would like to again assert here is that part of the problem of the previous ways of analyzing nonsense based on the features and characteristics of individual texts, left lacunae in the ways that one can better define what nonsense is, and further, how one can better understand how nonsense functions.

I believe, I have already pointed out how most previous explorations of this question involved the study of the parts of nonsense as various critics perceived them. These included neologisms, portmanteau, reduplication, rhymes over content, punning, play with meaning, paradoxical simultaneity, non sequitur and arbitrariness, use of infinity, faulty cause and effect and so on and so forth. However, my thesis aims to provide one with a functional understanding of how nonsense operates, revealing a double parodic structure. It shows how it might be more beneficial and less confusing, and hence, more productive to locate the double parodic structure in a text in order to categorize it as nonsense, rather than to simply try and find examples of the above mentioned established parts of nonsense, as is being currently done. Since none of the techniques can be said to belong exclusively to one genre, even a single presence of one of the techniques in another genre can be misleadingly identified as nonsensical. Like for instance, Samit Basu's poem, "Putu is a Hero Now" which uses rhymes over content, arbitrariness, faulty cause and effect is not truly nonsensical as I have already pointed out in the previous chapter. Similarly, in the case of the anti-joke, which again uses the faulty cause and effect and role reversals, hardly transcends to the second level of the parody (as pointed out in chapter two). Thus, it seems as if the double parodic structure that has been proposed will not only allow an exploration into the manner and meaning of the sense making process in human beings, but will also provide us with a better way to categorize and recognize the field and purpose of nonsense literature.

Let us look at the various other claims made about the nature of nonsense literature and see if this double parodic structure answers for them too. As I have already mentioned this genre is characterized by a sort of detachedness from any kind of context and hence appears either emotionless or arouses laughter in the way it subverts the seriousness of any context. As extensively seen in the previous chapter, nonsense is not completely devoid of context. Even if it

does so thematically, or plays around with ideas of aesthetics language, art and poeticality it never swerves too far from the bounds of strict poetic form or that of formal prose and usually always expresses itself within some bounds of the rules of language, grammar and phonetics. What it however does, is to subversively play with this context through the double parodic structure. At the first level of the parody, it stays true to the original structure but rearranges its content. At the second level of the parody, it is further distanced from the original by nullifying and upsetting the conventional requirements for that context and thus appears to have detached itself from it. But one should realize that detachedness does not mean the absence of a context. It simply provides an individual space for the reader, inviting his intervention to fill in the textual gaps without being directly dictated by the formidable presence of the temporality and spatiality of specific contexts. It encourages the reader towards the universal, paradoxically through his individual assertion, by creating a space where he does not feel threatened to adhere to specific contexts. The context definitely lies there, but just as a lurking presence, whose seriousness has been greatly compromised by the two layers of the parody. For it is only when the reader can be freed from the forceful intervention of immediate contexts and their preconceptions, that he can resist narrower discourses and finally realize the underlying universal unity that is being explored.

Thus, it appears emotionless even while narrating moments of great tension, because the second level of parody further reduces the seriousness of the context and makes even extreme instances like that of death and violence appear funny. The second level of parody, thus, defamiliarizes us with familiar contexts and we are left uncertain and unsure as to how to approach them in order to understand them. The meaning-making of the rational mind can only happen within the comfort zone of familiarity and contexts and we are left without means at this sudden turn of events. We are unable to make sense of the situation robbed off our meaning-making tools and we laugh not because nonsense lacks sense but because *we* can't make sense of the situation. Our trained minds give us a signal of a lack of sense and we subconsciously laugh, not necessarily a very comfortable laughter, at what might otherwise consciously have been a very alarming situation.

The two levels of parody also achieve this laughter by parodying the *rasa* framework in this process. While moving further away from the context in the conventional sense, it also stupefies the narrative's habitual power of evoking emotions. As Anandavardhana's theory of

vyanjana points out (also dealt with extensively in the second chapter) one cannot deny that sentences have a power of suggesting a meaning other than the literal one which further explains how emotions are induced by language. So, inevitably all contextual references (created through language, as already referred to above with reference to the ancient Indian linguist) have a power of evoking emotions. In order to further detach the habitual selves of the readers from the context, one must also ensure his detachedness from the regular emotions. This is also what the second level of parody successfully manages to achieve by parodying the *rasa* itself, which is the final flavor that one acquires from an aesthetic experience according to Indian aesthetics. And since it is but evident that the parody of any *rasa* even if it may be *hasya rasa* arouses *hasya rasa* again, we get a strong explaination for the almost universal association of laughter with nonsense.

Nonsense literature thus manages to achieve its "pointlessness" through the two layers of the parody which upsets the meaning-making project of the mind ruled by rational conceptual truths encompassing various dictums. It detaches the individual mind from all contexts and emotions by restricting all discourses that are usually employed in understanding art. It is thus pointless to the extent of challenging our commonsense, which as Stewart shows is a social phenomenon and imbibed as a natural process without questioning in the conventional sense. So the staunch defenders of conventionality discard nonsense seeing no point to it and the others enjoy its carefree pointlessness without having to make serious effort in understanding it. But in both cases come face to face with the realization that how fundamental is the project of meaning-making to be accepted as serious and sensible. Nonsense literature, on the other hand, shows us that to be taken seriously one need not always be so seriously conventional that it cannot have a place for simple joy and that there is actually no need to always conform to conventions.

So how is nonsense using the parodic setup without actually ending up making a point, because the parodic setup by virtue of its nature has the point of ridiculing? This is because, parody, even when its ridicule means no harm, is seriously committed to ridiculing. So, despite the fun it evokes, it never transcends beyond the constant association of its context and the ensuing emotions of the narrative that it occupies. On the other hand, nonsense employs a further level of parody to subvert the first level of parodic seriousness, thus ridiculing the ridicule. As a result of this, at first it nullifies the impact and effect of the contextual baggage thus distancing us from its conventional seriousness and secondly it nullifies the impact of the parody too thus

distancing us from its serious criticism. So the detachment from the original is more effective and devoid of any conventional intention whatsoever.

This gives rise to textual gaps in the text (as dealt in detail under Reader Response Theory in the first chapter and also pointing it out throughout the examples in the third chapter) whereby it juggles between presence and absence of sense. It has sense in having a context but it operates by detaching itself from it creating one gap. And it has one level of parody whereby the original context is engaged with through criticisms but is again undercut in the second level of parody, thus creating another gap which makes it difficult to engage with the text in the conventional sense. So there is meaning, but also no meaning, which evokes sense along with non-sense. But altogether, there is no absence of either meaning or sense. This explains the sustained textual tension that has been considered as an integral part of any good nonsense, whereby it invites the reader's intervention to fill up those gaps, by constantly engaging with the never ending dichotomies lying within the text. Thus, the reader resists all discourses contrary to convention and approaches the text by participating in a dialogue between himself and the text, in complete isolation and compact solitude of his consciousness, a greatest possible means of being given a space, from where one can exert his or her individuality.

In that state of individuality evoked by disdaining convention, one reaches a state of unity with complete disappearance of all polarity to transcend to the universal. This is accompanied by sheer joy, untainted and almost childlike, as Satpathy suggests "neither thick nor pungent" (xli) but rather "clear, innocent, beautiful, and that which cannot be related to anything". It takes us back to the state of the tabula rasa when the slate has still not been written upon and is devoid of boundaries. Relating this to the origin of nonsense in Indian mysticism as a means of enlightenment, one realizes that this is what nonsense literature aims at. It helps us reach that state of realization where we are cleansed off all the serious implications that condition us and make us accustomed and habituated to structures that we accept unquestioningly. It is in that state of wonder that one truly achieves enlightenment.

Through the analysis of nonsense texts by Anushka Ravishankar, Sampurna Chattarji, Kaushik Vishwanath and Teesta Guha Sarkar, we realize how the art of nonsense literature takes one beyond the traditional, all the time structurally playing with language and logic, to the zone of self-reflexivity. In this sense it is really like the most ideal form of art, which satisfies all requirements of art as preached by Bharata in the *Natyasastra*. It teaches us to resist discourses

and think for ourselves as an individual but is also "pleasing both to eyes and ears" (Rangacharya 1). Nonsense almost becomes like a symbol of that ideal art form which not only pleases the ears and eyes but also effortlessly aspires to teach one the self-reflexive questioning of things that are usually taken for granted, without any forceful compulsion. For indeed, true learning is a self-reflexive process independent of any external compulsion, which might taint the learning process with the convictions and ideology of the teacher, leaving no scope for the growth of individuality.

So, the authorial figure of the nonsense literature, does not want to burden the readers with his convictions or ideology. He leaves gaps in his text, and invites the readers to fill in those with their own individual assertion. It provides the reader with a space, where he is not dictated by contextual pressures, or the dreary compulsion of adhering to norms. It provides the reader the space to have fun and not to be afraid to laugh out loud. It encourages its readers to be eccentric and adhere to their individuality, just like in the Queen's game of croquet, rather than closely follow a shared, logical, linguistic or social code. In that assertion of individuality, arises the power to play out one's whimsies without caring about convention. That is when the blissful joy that it evokes by rebelling against conventions, transcends the conventional nine *rasa*-s and create what Sukumar Ray had termed the *kheyaal rawsh* or the *rasa* of whimsy, rebelling against conventions.

Appendix

Here, I have tried to include all the texts which I have used, so that it helps to follow the close reading that I undertake in the course of my study. And also, since many of the texts referred to in the work might not be easily available for reference. However, it should also be mentioned that illustrations (which I could not add here) are important for most of the texts included here, especially *Anything But a Grabooberry*. The ones that I could not/did not add are "Ogd" which is a novella and "The Limpet Division" by Kaushik Vishwanath in *Funny Stories*, a book which is readily available. I would like to thank the authors for their kind permission in allowing me to reproduce the following for the purpose of this dissertation.

I. The Lovelorn Loon
Watts, Alan. *Nonsense*. **San Francisco: Stolen Paper Editions, 1967. Print.**

A certain umstumptular loon
Fell vastly in love with the moon;
    With shimular turve
    And binlimular gurve
He caroozed to the gorble bassoon.

But owzle the wuncular day,
The moon was so glimm far away,
    And he turned up his face
    Into infinite space,
Corlimbled with droogle dismay.

So vumular var were his fears,
So strombulous bimble his tears,
    That try as he might
    His gro-ululous plight
Was unstoppable even with beers.

But ongrously evil the hour
When, feling mirgordiously dour,
    His brain got a wave
    In consequence grave-
He conceived an orgrundulous tower!

Ten million ungurgular sticks,
Five billion tormensible bricks,
    Adjoined each to each
    Would doubtlessly reach
To the moon, if they happened to fix.

When a gurgular sum he had paid
From the sticks and the bricks to be made,

The makers were dazed
And the papers amazed
At so burble an increase in trade.

After many lugubrious years,
Made orgrously long by his fears,
    The work was complete,
    So he ordered a fleet
Of balloons to arrange them in tiers.

Whereupon an imborgular hole,
Was dug from a wurzle-top pole,
    And at last mile by mile
    The prehendulous pile
Rose aloft and brought joy to his soul.

To the top of the wurzle-top top
The base zoomed with a gimstickle hop
    So great was its length
    And so dubious its strength
That the foreman declared it would flop.

Undaunted by gowzle advice,
The fatuous loon bought a slice
    Of gorbulent cheese
    To grease and to ease
The supports, and to make it more nice.

The people camevorbling around
As the end of the next pole was bound
    To the top of the top
    And they said, "It will drop,
And comeglundering down to the ground!"

Cried the loon, "You imbolular galls!
The examptulous strength of its walls

Is undoubtedly such
    That I'll give you as much
As the thing cost to build if it falls."

With a garrable yell they cried, "Done!
Impetulous, fandulous fun!
    Oh scrumulous glee!
    What a flomsible spree
We shall get from this gurgular sum!"

Month after month it went on
Till its vorblestep summit had gone
    To such a vast height
    That it vanished from sight
In the cumulous limm of Beyond.

Said the loon, "This orgrundulous tower
To ascend I should not have the power;
    So put in a lift
    So dilummy swift
That it blerbs umpteen miles in an hour."

Thus at last came the supsible day,
(Oh, fimbleshumonglejogay!)
    He dressed in his best,
    The button was pressed
And the lift stormdingungled away.

With spindularspurble it shot
From the foot to the tip of the top,
    And while all had believed
    That the loon would be freezed,
He was kept condimbumblesome hot.

In the distant embargles of Space
The loon saw Her silvery face,
And he cried, "Oh my dear,
I love you, come near!"
AND SHE CAME! At a zatuvle pace.

The loon saw his error too late;
With the whole of Herbumbulous weight
    The gordlebin moon
    At the tower did zoom,
And he greebed at his mordular fate.

With a horrulentvimblesome dash
She snurtled the tower with a crash;
    One gorble contusion
    In heaven, confusion,
On earth, lamdingogular hash!

II. Jabberwocky

Carroll, Lewis. *The Complete Illustrated Lewis Carroll*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1996. 137-138. Print.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

'Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!'

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought --
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood a while in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One two! One two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

'And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
Oh frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!'
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

III. Sabda 52
From The *Bijak*
Translated by Ranjit Hoskote from the Hindi original. *The Tenth Rasa*. Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2007. 5. Print.

Give it a thought, Dr. Know-It-All!
It's pouring sheets, the thunder's deafening
but not a single raindrop's fallen!

An elephant's chained to the foot of an ant,
a sheep has pounced on a wolf.
A fish has leaped from the tide
To build a hut on the shore.

Frog and snake share a bed,

a cat brings forth a dog,
the lion's hiding from the jackal.
Such marvels! They're beyond words.

Who can follow the antelope of doubt
through the jungle?
The archer takes aim, trees catch fire
In the water, the fish go hunting today.

The wonder of such knowledge!
Whoever hears it will go flying
wingless to heaven, says Kabir, and never die.

IV. Sabda 62
From The *Bijak*
Translated by Ranjit Hoskote from the Hindi
original. *The Tenth Rasa*. **Delhi: Penguin Books**
India, 2007. 3-4. Print.

Mother, see what splendor I've rained on both
families!
Twelve husbands I devoured at my father's house
and sixteen more at my in-laws'.
Sister-in-law and mother-in-law
I strapped to the bed,
brother-in-law I abused.
I set fire to the hair of that crone
who harassed me.
My womb swelled up with five,
then two, then four more.
I had a woman next door for breakfast,
and the mother of wisdom too.
Poor little things! Then I laid out the bedroll
of ease and slept, my feet sticking out.
Now I neither come nor go,
neither live nor die.
The master has wiped away all shame.
I grasped the Name and threw the world away.
I grasped the Name—so close, so close!
Sings Kabir: I saw the Name!

V. Doctor Deadly
Chaudhuri, Sukanta, trans. "Doctor Deadly". *The*
Select Nonsense of Sukumar Ray. **New Delhi:**
Oxford University Press, 2005. 12-13. Print.

O come and consider my surgical arts,
This spinning and slicing and joining of parts.
I think of the day that I heard from my master,
'Start off with patients of paper or plaster.'
Heart all a-glow with this counsel of vigour,
I stuck to my bench with the uttermost rigour,
My blood turned to ice with my labours unwearied –
But frankly, it isn't as hard as we fear it.
You tap and you tear – see the range of my tools?
And fix 'em again as you're taught in the schools.

It's fun to dissect all these lovely big dummies:
You just close your eyes and you slit up their
tummies,
Or chop off a leg, or a shoulder or two,
Then patch up the bits with a quick dash of glue.
I've been through the drill and the examinations –
I think I should start on some real living patients!
A mere half-a-dozen would do to begin:
Old Nandy next door is as stubborn as a sin,
He thinks he's arthritic, and just won't be cured:
I'd have him in straight if he'd only be lured.
Now who's got a sniffle, or ache in the ear?
You're saved, my good fellow! The doctor is here.
And bring that poor devil who's broken his leg –
It won't take a minute to drive in a peg.
You're puffy and swollen – a toothache I read:
A rap with a hammer is just what you need.
Both this jaw and that – why, you're shockingly
toothed:
I'll just get my pincers and see that you're soothed.
The young and the aged, the blind and the lame,
The new case and chronic I treat just the same.
A fracture or fever, the gout or the gland –
They just need a touch of my versatile hands.

VI. Excuse me is this India?
India: Tara Publishing, 2003. Print.

My Aunt Anna came back from India
With stories of places to which she had been.
To warm me through winter, she sewed me a quilt
With pictures of all the things she had seen.
I looked at the pictures and secretly thought,
That one day I'd see all the places and things
Which were in the quilt that my Aunt Anna brought:
Elephants, bandicoots, crows with black wings.
At bedtime I snuggled in under my quilt,
But just at the moment I closed my eyes
I suddenly became a bright blue mouse,
And soon I was in for a bigger surprise ...

I was sitting in an aeroplane
High up in the air.
A man who sat beside me asked
With a friendly stare:
"Where do you think you're going?
And what will you do there?"
"I'm sorry Sir," I said to him,
"I don't know where this goes."
"You only have," he pointed out,
"To follow your own nose."
So when we landed finally,
I followed my nose to the sea.

A cow stood on the sunny beach,
Eating paper from a bin.

I went to her and asked her, "Ma'am,
Which country am I in?"
"It's East of this and North of that
And South-west of the other."
At this four crows that stood around
Began to caw together.
"It's East!" "It's South!"
"It's North!" "It's West!"
They circled round my head.
I put a sea-shell to my ear
To hear the sea instead.

I saw a girl outside her house,
I thought we could be friends.
"Where am I?" I asked her.
She replied, "That depends."
She drew a map without a place
And said, "Let me explain the case:
If you were standing on your head
I'd say you're on your hair.
But since you're standing on your feet
You could be anywhere."
I left her with a silent sigh,
She waved her broom to say goodbye.

I met two furry bandicoots
Running in the garden.
"Excuse me," I called to them.
They answered, "Beg your pardon?"
"Could you tell me where I am?
And where I ought to go?"
They twitched their noses and they said,
"We're sorry, we don't know.
We might be at the Equator,
Or even the North Pole.
It doesn't matter much to us,
We live inside a hole."

Just outside a temple gate
Stood an elephant.
"Off with your shoes!
Off with your shoes!"
He blared to all who went.
"Please help me, Sir," I said to him,
"I really need to know:
Where it is that I have come
And how I have to go."
"First left then right then up then down
Then back then forth then here then there
Then to then fro ..." he carried on,
I ran away in great despair.

I hopped into a three-wheeled car
And called out, "Take me there!"
The driver started off at once,
He never asked me 'Where?'

Suddenly he stopped and said,
"At last we're getting near."
"Near to what?" I asked him.
He bellowed in my ear:
"Near to this is far from that!
I think that's very clear!"
Though it wasn't clear to me,
I nodded very cleverly.

At a shop I stopped to see
If I could get a hint
Of where I was, but all I saw
Were clothes of every tint.
"Where am I and what's this place?"
I asked of everyone.
A woman came and said to me,
"You're as far as you can run.
But if you learn to fly, then you
Could catch up with the sun."
I left the shop
With a happy hop.

I hopped until the airport
And there! There was a sign.
But suddenly I realised
I couldn't read a line.
I asked a bearded gentleman.
He said, "Oh don't you know?
It doesn't matter where you are
But where you want to go."
I sat down there
And scratched my head,
And thought of what
The man had said.

I jumped into an aeroplane
And got prepared to fly.
But a gloomy person said to me,
"We'll never reach the sky.
The pilot says this plane has got
A very stubborn wing.
It only flies if somebody
Will continuously sing."
I sang a long and endless song
With a silly tune.
I wondered where I was going now
And whether I'd reach soon.

I opened my eyes and found it was morning,
It was only a dream and I was in bed.
Outside my window, I saw it was snowing,
All that had happened was inside my head.
I looked at Aunt Anna's quilt and I thought,
One day I'll get on a real aeroplane,
And fly off to India like Aunt Anna did,
And see all those people and places again.

VII. Ravishankar, Anushka. Wish You Were Here. India: Tara Publishing, 2003. Print.

A). Grandpa Laung
At the Eiffel Tower, Paris
Grandpa Laung has nimble toes
He dances wherever he goes
He danced long the Paris streets
He did a jig and tapped his feet.
He jigged right up the Eiffel Tower
But there he went too far –

The Eiffel Tower is very tall
My Grandpa Laung, he had a great fall.

B). Cousin Collum
At The Tower Bridge, London

Cousin Collum likes to measure
Everything in sight –
He measures them from up to down
And from left to right
He measures them from inside out
And by day and night
He measures them in colour and
Also in black and white.

He once measured the Tower Bridge
And secretly confessed
It was longer from the West to East
Than it was from East to West.

C). Cousin Pilla
At the Leaning Tower, Pisa

Cousin Pilla's a fussy sort –
She went to Rome
And found it hot.

Venice made her fume and fret
Because she got
Her toenails wet.

At Pisa she was most irate
That they didn't set
The Tower straight.

She told them
'I don't want to wrangle
But I object to its acute angle.'

D). Uncle TettraHedran
In a Great Pyramid, Egypt

Uncle Tettra had four points to make

He made them clear and slow –

The first was
One
The second
Two
The Third was
Eighty-four.

'The fourth – '
He said and then he stopped
And never spoke a word
He now lives in a pyramid
In Egypt, so we heard.

E). Brother Marbel
At the TajMahal, India

My brother Marbel's rather slow
He likes to think things through
He ponders for an hour if you
Should ask him 'How are you?'

He sat before the TajMahal
For thirteen days and nights
And at the end he quietly said,
'This building's very white.'

F). Great Aunt KassKade
At the Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

My Great Aunt KassKade loves to wash
She likes to keep things clean
She washes up three times a day
And five times in between.

She scrubs and scrapes and brushes
And rinses everything
And when she's done, she starts again
Right from the beginning.

When she saw Victoria Falls
She cried, 'Oh, this is smashing!
If I had brought some soap along
I'd have done a whole month's washing!'

G). Nephew Undawattah
At the Great Barrier Reef, Australia

My nephew Undawattah
Is very, very shy.
When you ask him a question
He mumbles in reply.
He never does say hello
And he rarely says goodbye.

But at the Great Barrier Reef
When a shark swam by
He blushed a deep, tomato red
And suddenly shouted, 'Hi!'

H). Sister Tauchberra
At The Statue of Liberty, New York

Tauchberra my little sister
Was born so small
We nearly missed her.

We took her home inside a cup
And used a spoon
To pick her up.
But after that
She grew and grew
And now no one
Can call her tiny

She went to New York
And she found
The top of Liberty's head
Was shiny.

I). Aunt Parapetta
At The Great Wall, China

My maternal Aunt Parapetta
Wrote me a warm and touching letter
From China.

She wrote it in Chinese, so I couldn't see
What she wanted to say to me
From China.

I wrote her a reply, simple and plain –
'Could you write to me again
From China?'

She replied, this time in Cantonese
Except for the words 'my dear niece,
In China…'

I gave up then and tried to call
But they said she'd gone to climb the Great Wall
Of China.

J). Brother-in-Law LaaVaa
At Mount Fuji-Yama, Japan

LaaVaa, whose my brother-in-law
Is a weepy sort of bloke
He whimpers at a funny tale
And blubbers at a joke.

He went to see Fuji-Yama
He'd heard that it was nice
But when he saw the snow-capped peak
The tears came to his eyes.

He moaned and cried and bawled and wailed
When asked why he was weeping
He sobbed that it was sad to see
A volcano that's sleeping.

VIII. Lost and Found
Ravishankar, Anushka. "Lost and Found." *The*
Tenth Rasa. **Ed. Michael Heyman, Sumanyu**
Satpathy, and Anushka Ravishankar. Delhi:
Penguin Books India, 2007. Print.

I lost it
I lost it
my mantra
on a contra
rily judged
word
it fell
with a plop
like a mighty
wallop
and bounced
in a handsome
heavily flounced
and ruffled-with-laces
under painted-up-faces
shapely, bosomy bosom.

I found it
I found it
my magical
comical
quite anatomical
mantra I found
in the entra
ncing mole
of an eskimo
under an
electric pole
it wobbled and fell
with a ringing
like that of a tolling
a warning
a bringing
of morning
a dinging a donging
of some earthly bell.

I found it
I found it
my magical potion

that drank as it sang
and constantly rang
an electric beep
like the bleating of sheep
And nobody
nobody does
realize
how awfully nice
it is to find
a lost, given up
and cast-out-of-mind
a forgotten
beloved
and hopelessly shoved
a magical,
tropical
topical, tragical
infernal
eternal
and final
as ending
unbending
severe
deliverer,
that singing
that chanting
enchanting
that free-as-a-bird
that silent, unspoken
that gleeful, that wicked
that suddenly heard
and carelessly picked
that wholly incomparable
word.

IX. If
**Ravishankar, Anushka. "If." *The Tenth Rasa*. Ed.
Michael Heyman, Sumanyu Satpathy, and
Anushka Ravishankar. Delhi: Penguin Books
India, 2007. 50-51. Print.**

i
If you see
An empty tin
With a stupid toothy grin
Let it be
It's me.

If you spy
A funny fly
Going with a hum
And an attitude
That's glum
Pass it by
It's I.
ii

If you see
A wollop
Going at
A great gallop
Don't ever let it go.
Take it by it's tiny tail
Put it in your bathing pail
And use the shower
For evermore.

iii
If you see
A letter-writer
Writing in the sun
Fix him to a banyan tree
With a bit of gum
Then give him all the letters
That you never wrote
And tell him he can read them, but
Needs permission to quote.

v
If you see a mountain lion
Looking ill and forlorn
Tell it plainly
Where it's at
Teach it how
To spell a cat
Then stick its toe
(the littlest one)
Into its ear and show
It how
To go
The way it's come.

If you see
A mountain lion
Looking starved
And forlorn
Run.

v
If you see
An old momentum
Trudging in the heat
Tell it about Newton's laws
And let it rest its feet
Or greet it with a howdy chum
And ask it sadly
Ain't life rum
Then tell it
That it's lost its way
That poor ageing Momentum.

X. Discovery of India
Ravishankar, Anushka. "Discovery of India." *The Tenth Rasa*. **Ed. Michael Heyman, Sumanyu Satpathy, and Anushka Ravishankar. Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2007. 52. Print.**

My cousin Nibboo—Boo for short
Once traversed India
South to North

At Parur he was very pleased
He said, 'I am—'
And then he sneezed

Srirangapatnam turned him soft
He sighed 'I do—'
And then he coughed

At Wardha he was feeling well
He claimed 'I can—'
And then he fell

In Meerut he was rather mild
He said 'I will—'
And then he smiled

Ferozepur filled him with fear
He cried 'I think!'
Then disappeared

Boo got famous overnight—
He proved Descartes
Wasn't right.

XI. The Story of Samarpreet Sood
"The Story of Samarpreet Sood." *This Book Makes No Sense: Nonsense Poems and Worse*. **Ed. Michael Heyman. India: Scholastic India Pvt Ltd., 2012. 25-26. Print.**

This is the story of Samarpreet Sood
Who one day decided to give up all food.

She stopped eating things that she'd never tasted
For if nothing is eaten then nothing is wasted.
Next she eschewed anything that was written
For what's in a book can never be bitten.
The next thing to go was the quiet, songless bird –
She couldn't bear to swallow what could not be heard
She said no to sodium monoglutamate
And pushed all phosphate compounds from her plate
She threw out the cabbage and banished the beans
The purples, the yellows, the blues and the greens
Anything with fibre was chucked out the door
(Except for the rag used for wiping the floor)
'Hair is to humans as flour is to bread!'

Cried Samarpreet Sood, as she shaved off her head.
'Nothing will stay that can be consumed!
Throw out the cactus! Debug the rooms!'
In a frenzy of anger she cleaned up the place
Crying, 'Food is the bane of the great human race!'
And when she was done, she was well satisfied,
Pleased and contented and swollen with pride.

But hunger, it bided its wicked old time
It snuck up with sneakers, it slipped like smooth slime
It attacked young Sood with its sudden sharp pangs
It ripped at her insides with rude ruthless fangs
It clawed at her tongue-tip, it rumbled her tum
It made her remember her dad and her mum
It made her pancreas scrunch up into knots
It disturbed her dreams, it troubled her thoughts
She dreamed of an egg that was perfectly boiled
With hair that was gelled and a nose that was oiled
She dreamed of a suited and booted banana
With a sombrero, calling out, 'Hasta mañana!'
She dreamed of an aubergine baking a pie
She dreamed that the pie was waving goodbye.
And the worst thing of all was that all through her dreams
She could hear her poor stomach's sad, suffering screams.

Samarpreet Sood could bear it no more.
She ate up a TV, a lamp and a door
She ate up a bottle, filled only with air
She ate up a staircase and left not a stair
She ate up the walls and the sofa and cushions
She ate up all pullouts and hunted the push-ins
She ate up the table, the chair and the stool
The sight of the toilet bowl caused her to drool
She ate up the bags the bins and the dishes
She ate up the pictures of birds, bees and fishes.
The last thing to go was the clock, with its minutes
Then she ate up her house – but forgot she was in it.

That is the story of Samarpreet Sood
Who ate herself up, though she gave up all food.

XII. Alphabets are Amazing Animals
Ravishankar, Anushka. Alphabets Are Amazing Animals. Illus. Christiane Pieper. India: Tara Publishing Ltd., 2003. Print.

Anteaters Adore Arithmetic
Baby Buffaloes Blows Big Blue Bubbles
Careless Crocodiles Catch Cold
Dull Donkeys Dance Daily
Eight Eels Eat Eleven Eggs
Fat Fish Frighten Funny Frogs
Gloomy Geese Gobble Grey Gum

Huge Hippos Have Happy Holidays
Ill Iguanas Imitate Insects
Jolly Jaguars Juggle Jam Jars
Kind Kiwis Kiss Kangaroos
Lazy Lions Lick Lollipops
Messy Mice Make Macaroni
Neat Newts Need Nappies
Odd Otters Order Only Onions
Plump Penguins Play Ping Pong
Quick Quails Queue Quietly
Rude Rabbits Ride Red Roosters
Sleepy Snails Sing Silly Songs
Tiny Tadpoles Tickle Turtles
Untidy Uakaris Use Upside-down Umbrellas
Vipers Visit Vultures
Wet Wolves Walk With Weeping Walruses
Xemes X-ray Xemes
Yaks Yell Yahoo
Zebras Zoom Zig-Zag

XIII. Anything But a Grabooberry
Ravishankar, Anushka and Rathna Ramanathan.
Anything but a Grabooberry. India: Tara
Publishing, 1998. Print.

i want to be a beehive
Hanging on a tree
or a beeeeeeeeee or a pea or a cup of tea
i want to be an elephant
or a packing trunk
Or maybe Something smaller
like a big toe of a monk
i wouldn't mind if i could be a 12-armed octopus
or a pin-striped hippo-po-po-po-potamus
anything anything i'd like to be…
but please please please not a graboooberry
i think i'd like to be a sneeze
flying through the sky
or a pie or a tie or a dotted i
i'd like to be a black cloud
pouring reddish rain
i'd like to be a latitude
or a map of spain
anything I'd like to be anything but a graboooberry
a tadpole's tongue
a crooked Wheel
a wrinkled worm
an orange peel
a smeely sock
a tube of glue
a rocking chair
the colour blue
a question mark
a skating rink
a word like yuck!
a blot of ink

the sun the moon or sixteen stars any planet, even
ours
but 1 thing i'll never be
and that one thing's a graboooooooberry

XIV. Nothing Really
Guha Sarkar, Teesta. "Nothing Really." *This Book*
Makes No Sense: Nonsense Poems and Worse. **Ed.**
Michael Heyman. India: Scholastic India Pvt Ltd.,
2012. 57. Print.

On the shores of Nothinghere,
In the year of Neverwere,
Nobody was born.
He grew to be a handsome prince,
And after that and ever since,
Between this land and Nothingness
He feels that Nothing is amiss

XV. He longed for a lavender gown
Guha Sarkar, Teesta. "He longed for a Lavender
Gown." This Book Makes No Sense: Nonsense
Poems and Worse. Ed. Micheal Heyman. India:
Scholastic India Pvt Ltd., 2012. 58. Print.

He longed for a lavender gown;
She found one in Scavengunj town.
They wore it together
Like birds of a feather
And looked like an English pronoun.

XVI. Putu is a Hero now
From Nonsense Superheroes
Basu, Samit. "Putu is a Hero Now." *This Book*
Makes No Sense: Nonsense Poems and Worse. **Ed.**
Michael Heyman. India: Scholastic India Pvt Ltd.,
2012. 18-19. Print.

Putu is a Hero now.
Stop him if you can, but how?
Putu wearing underwear
Wiggling like he just don't care.
Putu stopping every villain
Only bruisin', never killin',
Putu shooting beam from eye,
Like a lightning in the sky.
Putu having honour code,
Always paying what is owed,
Never taking law in hand,
Except when there is real demand.
Putu having secret name,
Out of custom, not of shame,
Secret Putu mild in manner,
Self-effacing urban planner.
Is your city facing crime?
Naughty people all the time?

Never worry, Putu here
Striking pose and heart with fear.
Sinner Son and Demon Daughter,
Super Squid from underwater,
All these villains, without fail,
Putu putting in the jail.
So if you are facing trouble,
Someone turning house to rubble,
Someone steal your ancient treasure,
Someone causing you displeasure,
Someone robbing local bank,
Someone crushing you with tank,
Someone making life less simple,
Someone playing with your pimple,
Someone teasing your friend Rhonda,
Throwing her to anaconda,
Someone pinching you in thighs,
Setting off nuclear device,
Telling you cuboid is prism,
Wallowing in terrorism
Hampering your application
Hogging buttons of PlayStation,
Or committing other crime,
Do not worry! Just take time,
Smile a smile and make a call,
Putu comes and fixes all,
You are laughing, saying *Wow*,
Putu is a Hero now.

XVII. The History of the Seven Families of the Lake Pipple-popple
Lear, Edward. *Complete Nonsense*. **Great Britain: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1994. 217-230. Print.**

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTORY
In former days -- that is to say, once upon a time, there lived in the Land of Gramblamble, Seven Families. They lived by the side of the great Lake Pipple-popple (one of the Seven Families, indeed, lived *in* the Lake), and on the outskirts of the City of Tosh, which, excepting when it was quite dark, they could see plainly. The names of all these places you have probably heard of, and you have only not to look in your Geography books to find out all about them.
Now the Seven Families who lived on the borders of the great Lake Pipple-popple, were as follows in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER II
THE SEVEN FAMILIES
There was a Family of Two old Parrots and Seven young Parrots.
There was a Family of Two old Storks and Seven young Storks.
There was a Family of Two old Geese, and Seven young Geese.
There was a Family of Two old Owls, and Seven young Owls.
There was a Family of Two Old Guinea Pigs and Seven young Guinea Pigs.
There was a Family of Two old Cats and Seven young Cats,
And there was a Family of Two old Fishes and Seven young Fishes.

CHAPTER III
THE HABITS OF THE SEVEN FAMILIES
The Parrots lived upon the Soffsky-Poffsky trees, -- which were beautiful to behold, and covered with blue leaves, -- and they fed uponfruit, artichokes, and striped beetles.
The Storks walked in and out of the Lake Pipple-popple, and ate frogs for breakfast and buttered taost for tea, but on account of the extreme length of their legs, they could not sit down, and so they walked about continually.
The Geese, having webs to their feet, caught quantities of flies, which they ate for dinner.
The Owls anxiously looked after mice, which they caught and made into sago puddings.
The Guinea Pigs toddled about the gardens, and ate lettuces and Cheshire cheese.
The Cats sate still in the sunshine, and fed upon sponge biscuits.
The Fishes lived in the Lake, and fed chiefly on boiled periwinkles.
And all these Seven Families lived together in the utmost fun and felicity.

CHAPTER IV
THE CHILDREN OF THE SEVEN FAMILIES ARE SENT AWAY
One day all the Seven Fathers and the Seven Mothers of the Seven Families agreed that they would send their children out to see the world.
So they called them all together, and gave them each eight shillings and some good advice, some chocolate drops, and a small green morocco pocket-book to set down their expenses in.
They then particularly entreated them not to quarrel, and all the parents sent off their children with a parting injunction.
'If,' said the old Parrots, 'you find a Cherry, do not fight about who should have it.'
'And,' said the old Storks, 'if you find a Frog, divide it carefully into seven bits, but on no account quarrel about it.'
And the old Geese said to the Seven young Geese, 'Whatever you do, be sure you do not touch a Plum-pudding Flea.'
And the old Owls said, 'If you find a Mouse, tear him up into seven slices, and eat him cheerfully, but without quarrelling.'
And the old Guinea Pigs said, 'Have a care that you eat your Lettuces, should you find any, ot greedily but calmly.'
And the old Cats said, 'Be particularly careful not to meddle with a Clangle-Wangle, if you should see one.'
And the old Fishes said, 'Above all things avoid eating a blue Boss-woss, for they do not agree with Fishes, and give them pain in their toes.'

So all the Children of each Family thanked their parents, and making in all forty-nine polite bows, they went into the wide world.

CHAPTER V
THE HISTORY OF THE SEVEN YOUNG PARROTS
The Seven young Parrots had not gone far, when they saw a tree with a single Cherry on it, which the oldest Parrot picked instantly, but the other six, being extremely hungry, tried to get it also. On which all the Seven began to fight, and they scuffled,

<div align="center">

and huffled,
and ruffled
and shuffled,
and puffled,
and muffled
and buffled,
and duffled,
and fluffled,
and guffled,
and bruffled, and

</div>

screamed, and shrieked, and squealed, and squeaked, and clawed, and snapped, and bit, and bumped, and thumped, and dumped, and flumped each other, till they were all torn into little bits, and at last there was nothing left to record this painful incident, except the Cherry and seven small green feathers.
And that was the vicious and voluble end of the Seven young Parrots.

CHAPTER VI
THE HISTORY OF THE SEVEN YOUNG STORKS
When the Seven young Storks set out, they walked or flew fo fourteen weeks in a straight line, and for six weeks more in a crooked one; and after that they ran as hard as they could for one hundred and eight miles: and after that they stood still and made a himmeltanious chatter-clatter-blattery noise with their bills.
About the same time they perceived a large Frog, spotted with green, and with a sky-blue stripe under each ear.
So being hungry, they immediately flew at him, and were going to divide him into seven pieces, when they began to quarrel as to which of his legs should be taken off first. one said this, and another said that, and while they were all quarrelling the Frog hopped away. And when they saw that he was gone, they began to chatter-clatter:

<div align="center">

and huffled,
blatter-platter,
patter-blatter,
matter-clatter,
flatter-quatter,

</div>

more violently than ever. And after they had fought for a week they pecked each each other all to little pieces, so that at last nothing was left of any of them except their bills,
And that was the end of the Seven young Storks.

CHAPTER VII
THE HISTORY OF THE SEVEN YOUNG GEESE
When the Seven young Geese began to travel, they went over a large plain, on which there was but one tree, and that was a very bad one.
So four of them went up to the top of it, and looked about them, while the other three waddled up and down, and repeated poetry, and their last six lessons in Arithmetic, Geography, and Cookery.
Presently they perceived, a long way off, an object of the most interesting and obese appearance, having a perfectly round body, exactly resembling a boiled plum-pudding, with two little wings, and a beak, and three feathers growing out of his head, and only one leg.
So after a time all the Seven young Geese said to each other, 'Beyond all doubt this beast must be a Plum-pudding Flea!'
On which they uncautiously began to sing aloud,
'Plum-pudding Flea,
'Plum-pudding Flea,

'Wherever you be,
'O come to our tree,
'And listen, O listen, O listen to me!'
And no sooner had they sung this verse then the Plum-pudding Flea began to hop and skip on his one leg with the most dreadful velocity, and came straight to the tree, where he stopped and looked about him in a vacant and voluminous manner.
On which the Seven young Geese were greatly alrmed, and all of a tremble-bemble: so one of them put out his great neck, and just touched him with the tip of his bill, -- but no sooner had he done this than the Plum-pudding Flea skipped and hopped about more and more and higher and higher, after which he opened his mouth, and, to the great surprise and indignation of the Seven Geese, began to bark so loudly and furiously and terribly that they were totally unable to bear the noise, and by degrees every one of them suddenly tumbled down quite dead.
So that was the end of the Seven young Geese.

CHAPTER VIII
THE HISTORY OF THE SEVEN YOUNG OWLS
When the Seven young Owls set out, they sate every now and then on the branches of old trees, and never went far at one time.
And one night when it was quite dark, they thought they heard a Mouse, but as the gas lights were not lighted, they could not see him.
So they called out, 'Is that a Mouse?'
On which a Mouse answered, 'Squeaky-peeky-weeky, yes it is.'
And immediately all the young Owls threw themselves off the tree, meaning to alight on the ground; but they did not perceive that there was a large well below them, into which they all fell superficially, and were every one of them drowned in less than half a minute.
So that was the end of the Seven young Owls.

CHAPTER IX
THE HISTORY OF THE SEVEN YOUNG GUINEA PIGS
The Seven young Guinea Pigs went into a garden full of Gooseberry-bushes and Tiggory-trees, under one of which they fell asleep. When they awoke, they saw a large Lettuce which had grown out of the ground while they had been sleeping, and which had an immense number of green leaves. At which they all exclaimed:

> 'Lettuce! O Lettuce!
> 'Let us, O let us,
> 'O Lettuce leaves,
> 'O let us leave this tree and eat
> 'Lettuce, O let us, Lettuce leaves!'

And instantly the Seven young Guinea Pigs rushed with such extreme force against the Lettuce-plant, and hit their heads so vividly against its stalk, that the concussion brought on directly an incipient transitional inflammation of their noses, which grew worse and worse and worse and worse till it incidentally killed them all Seven.
And that was the end of the Seven young Guinea Pigs.

CHAPTER X
THE HISTORY OF THE SEVEN YOUNG CATS
The Seven young Cats set off on their travels with great delight and rapacity. But, on coming to the top of a high hill, they perceived at a long distance off a Clangle-Wangle (or, as it is more properly written, Clangel-Wangel), and in spite of the warning they had had, they ran straight up to it.
(Now the Clangle-Wangle is a most dangerous and delusive beast, and by no means commonly to be met with. They live in the water as well as on land, using their long tail as a sail when in the former element. Their speed is extreme, but their habits of life are domestic and superfluous, and their general demeanour pensive and pellucid. On summer evenings they may sometimes be observed near the Lake Pipple-popple, standing on their heads and humming their national melodies: they subsist entirely on vegetables, excepting when they eat veal, or mutton, or pork, or beef, or fish, or saltpetre.)
The moment the Clangle-Wangle saw the Seven young Cats approach, he ran away; and as he ran straight on for four months, and the Cats, though they continued to run, could never overtake him, -- they all gradually *died* of fatigue and of exhaustion, and never afterwards recovered.

And this was the end of the Seven young Cats.

CHAPTER XI
THE HISTORY OF THE SEVEN YOUNG FISHES
The Seven young Fishes swam across the Lake Pipple-popple, and into the river, and into the Ocean, where most unhappily for them, they saw on the 15th day of their travels, a bright blue Boss-Woss, and instantly swam after him. But the Blue Boss-Woss plunged into a perpendicular,

<div style="text-align:center">

spicular,

orbicular,

quadrangular,

circular depth of soft mud,

</div>

where in fact his house was.
And the Seven young Fishes, swimming with great uncomfortable velocity, plunged also into the mud quite against their will, and not being accustomed to it, were all suffocated in a very short period.
And that was the end of the Seven young Fishes.

CHAPTER XII
OF WHAT OCCURRED SUBSEQUENTLY
After it was known that the

<div style="text-align:center">

Seven young Parrots,

and the Seven young Storks,

and the Seven young Geese,

and the Seven young Owls,

and the Seven young Guinea Pigs,

and the Seven young Cats,

and the Seven young Fishes,

</div>

were all dead, then the Frog, and the Plum-pudding Flea, and the Mouse, and the Clangel Wangel, and the Blue Boss Woss, all met together to rejoice over their good fortune.
And they collected the Seven Feathers of the Seven young Parrots, and the Seven Bills of the Seven young Storks, and the Lettuce, and the other objects in a circular arrangement at their base, they danced a hornpipe round all these memorials until they were quite tired: after which they gave a tea-party, and a garden-party, and a ball, and a concert, and then returned to their respective homes full of joy and respect, sympathy, satisfaction, and disgust.

CHAPTER XIII
OF WHAT BECAME OF THE PARENTS OF THE FORTY-NINE CHILDREN
But when the two old Parrots,

and the two old Storks,

and the two old Geese,

and the two old Owls,

and the two old Guinea Pigs,

and the two old Cats,

and the two old Fishes,

became aware by reading in the newspapers, of the calamitous extinction of the whole of their families, they refused all further sustenance; and sending out to various shops, they purchased great quantities of Cayenne Pepper, and Brandy, and Vinegar, and blue Sealing-wax, besides Seven immense glass Bottles with air-tight stoppers. And having dome this, they ate a light supper of brown bread and Jerusalem Artichokes, and took an affecting and formal leave of the whole of their acquaintance, which was very numerous and distinguished, and select, and responsible, and ridiculous.

CHAPTER XIV
CONCLUSION
And after this, they filled the bottles with the ingredients for pickling, and each couple jumped into a separate bottle, by which effort of course they all died immediately, and become thoroughly pickled in a feew minutes; having previously made their wills (by the assistance of the most eminent Lawyers of the District), in which they left strict orders that the Stoppers of the Seven Bottles should be carefully sealed up with the blue Sealing-wax they had

purchased; and that they themselves in the Bottles should be presented to the principal museum of the city of Tosh, to be labelled with Parchment or any other anticongenial succedaneum, and to be placed on a marble table with silver-gilt legs, for the daily inspection and contemplation, and for the perpetual benefit of the pusillanimous public. And if ever you happen to go to Gramble-Blamble, and visit that museum in the city of Tosh, look for them on the Ninety-eighth table in the Four handred and twenty-seventh room of the right-hand corridor of the left wing of the Central Quadrangle of that magnificent building; for if you do not, you certainly will not see them.

XVIII. Binoo The Monkey Pilot Joins The Air Force
Vishwanath, Kaushik. "Binoo the Monkey Pilot Joins the Air Force." Kaushik's Magical World Of Nonsense: As seen on Earth. OHNOGODDAMNHOLYGAIASPIRITOFTHEEARTH. Blogspot.com. 2 Aug 2008. Web. 15 May 2012.

A delightful tale about a comedic mix-up! Rather, a delightfully comedic mix-up tale! The tale highlights a semantic mix-up and the occasional inadequacy of words to convey meaning! Read it and be delighted.

Binoo's hand hesitated over the form. Rather, Binoo hesitated his hand. The next detail he had to fill in was what he wanted to join the armed forces of Banal Nasality as. He hesitated not because he didn't know what he was, but because he was not sure if they would understand it. After two more seconds of hesitation, Binoo put the pen to the paper, and wrote, "Monkey Pilot".
In a week's time, Binoo had received a reply in the post.
It was a regal looking envelope. It smelt of regality and bananas. Rather like regal bananas. The envelope had gold emroidery and silver stamps and the Royal Seal on it, which was rather like a big deal. Binoo's hand hesitated over the envelope. Rather, Binoo hesitated his hand to open it. He did not want to ruin such a pretty envelope by opening it. Still, he knew that just like friends must be friends, and friendship must be friendship, envelopes must be opened, otherwise we will never know the many truths of life and facts of friendship. So Binoo hesitated for two more seconds and then opened the envelope. Inside was a paper. The paper was regal-looking and official-looking. Rather, it was regalo-official looking, or officio-regal looking. Binoo would have said officio-regal. The paper was printed with the print of the ink of a typewriter. Rather, it was typewritten. But neatly. No eraser marks and overtyping and all that messy stuff that usually happens when typewriters are used by amateur typewritists. Strange, Binoo thought, the typewritist who typed out this letter must have filled in the same form that Binoo had filled out, only, instead of writing "monkey pilot", he or she would have written "typewritist" instead. Then that person would have received a similar officio-regal-looking letter that would have been typed out by another typewritist, who would have also filled out the form at some point. That got Binoo wondering – who was the first typewritist?
But Binoo knew he had no time for questions of history and philosophy, or rather historico-philosophy. He knew he must read the letter right away, for it might be important and urgent, and every second wasted was a wasted second. So he read it. "Dear Binoo," it said, "Thanks for applying to the Banal Nasality Air Force, yaar. We are in serious need of monkey pilots especially since it seems like we might be going to war with the Fundraiser Nation of Boring Drivel, machan. War is scheduled to begin next week, da, so it would be helpful if you turned up at the Banal Nasality Air Force Headquarters sometime before then. We assume, of course, since you filled in "monkey pilot" and not "monkey pilot trainee", that you won't require any training, dude."
Binoo squealed with delight. Rather, he let out a delightful squeal. It was rather delightful. All his life he had trained to be a monkey pilot, and here he was, about to be one. He decided not to report at the Air Force HQ right away, as he might come across as being overenthusiastic and needy and it might be interpreted by some as a tactic for garnering attention and brownie points. He did not want to report at the very last minute, either, for that might make him come across as rather unenthusiastic and lackadaisical, and Binoo was not one for lackadays.
Binoo reported at the HQ three and a half days later. Rather, he reported exactly half a week later, thereby seeming neither overenthusiastic not unenthusiastic. However, he did not foresee that people at the Air Force HQ would see his reporting at exactly three and a half days as being overly calculating. Anyway, the Banal Nasality Air Force was in dire need of monkey pilots, so they did not say anything to Binoo.
The Air Force HQ was like the typical Air Force HQ – it had planes, pilots, mechanics, and other people who looked very militaristic and official. Rather, very officio-militaristic. Binoo decided he must go and see and see the man in charge and tell him that he had arrived and was ready to go to war and fly across enemy lines and bomb enemy targets. Rather, the targets would be the enemies, not the targets of the enemies, because if he were to bomb the targets of the enemies, he would be bombing his own country, and that would not at all be nice.

"Binoo, you say?" the Colonel said. His name was Colonel Walonel and he looked like a cross between an elephant, a horse, a chimpanzee, a woolly mammoth, a tyrannosaurus rex, a giraffe, a praying mantis, and an atlas moth – and of course a human, because that was basically what he was. He had a big quivery moustache that quivered whenever he pleased. Rather, he quivered his moustache whenever he pleased.

"Yes, sir, my name is Binoo," Binoo said, stating his name.

Colonel Walonel went through a number of sheets clipped to a clipboard, for that is what clipboards are for, for clipping sheets to. "Binoo what?" he asked.

"Binoo Peepee, sir," Binoo said, stating his full name.

"Ah, Binoo Peepee, yes, your name is here. We have been looking forward to your coming. As you know there is a serious dearth of monkey pi…" Colonel Walonel looked at Binoo quizzically, and back at the sheet with an equal amount of quizzicitude.

"…lot?" Binoo finished, hoping the Colonel would be pleased with his helpfulness at finishing words.

"There must be some mistake, no? It says here that you are a monkey pilot," Colonel Walonel said.

"No mistake sir. I am a monkey pilot, to be sure."

"Is this some sort of joke?" Colonel Walonel asked, not sure whether he ought to be angry or quizzical. Rather, he was in a mixed state of those two feelings – of anger and quizzicitude, that is.

"No, sir, this is some sort of monkey pilot," Binoo said, pointing at himself.

"But you are not a monkey, Binoo! How can you call yourself a monkey pilot when you are not a monkey? You are a human, plain as can be! You are a human, full of humanity! A human is a human, like a tree is a tree! What you are certainly not is a pilot monkey! Rather, monkey pilot."

Colonel Walonel sometimes talked in rhyme.

"But sir, I am not a pilot who is a monkey, but a pilot who flies monkeys. I thought that was what was known as a monkey pilot."

"Alack!" Colonel Walonel said, in deep, deep sorrow, "Had we kn0wn there were such things as pilots who flew monkeys, perhaps we would have won the war years ago. This is the first time I am hearing of such a thing, Binoo. Alack! we do not have a separate division for pilots of your kind. For this reason, I shall put you along with the monkey pilots, that is, the pilots who are monkeys. Do you have your own monkey to fly, or will you be needing one? I pray that it is the former, for we have no flying monkeys with us. Rather, we have no monkeys that can fly without planes."

"Don't worry, sir, I do have my own flying monkey. It is a rare flying monkey from the land of Oz," Binoo said, lifting a winged monkey out of his bag. The monkey seemed to be unconscious.

"But how will you fly on that?" Colonel Walonel asked, "Is it not a trifle small for you?"

"This is the collapsible model, sir," Binoo said, unfolding the monkey to reveal that it was much larger than it seemed. "Right now it is sedated for carrying purposes, but I shall awaken it with some smelling salts."

Binoo took some powder out of his pocket, and held it near the collapsible flying monkey's face. It instantly awoke. Then Binoo injected it with some injection and it fell asleep again.

"Wonderful, Binoo, wonderful! With this flying monkey, you will win us the war!"

Binoo beamed from ear to ear. He was filled with feelings of courage and warfulness.

To Be Continued

Next time on Binoo The Monkey Pilot: Binoo The Monkey Pilot Goes To War! A delightful tale about the horrors of war. Rather, a delightfully horrific war tale!

XIX. Malaise Burger
Vishwanath, Kaushik. "Malaise Burger." Kaushik's Magical World Of Nonsense: As seen on Earth. OHNOGODDAMNHOLYGAIASPIRITOFTHEEARTH. Blogspot.com. 19 July 2008. Web. 15 May 2012.

Across the table, the green-eyed man would not stop fidgeting.

"Stop fidgeting," she said, throwing him the same silver-hot glare that she was using to heat her plate.

"I'm not fidgeting," the green-eyed man said, "I'm tying knots."

But it was evident to her that he was doing much more than tying knots. Sure, he was tying knots, but he was doing much more. For example, he was fidgeting. He simply would not stop. He fidgeted with everything – the pieces of string that he had ordered in order to tie them into knots, the pieces of string that had already been tied up into knots, his hair, the pages of the Motorcycle Magazine he had so carefully chosen a few minutes ago from the motorcycle stand outside Malaise Burger. As if that much fidgeting wasn't enough, he was now leaning across the table and fidgeting with her hair and her clothes. It was entirely inappropriate, she thought. And to think she thought she loved him.

"I said stop fidgeting, I'm trying to heat my plate," she said again, and more sternly.

The green-eyed man withdrew his hands, sliding them back across the table, bruising his arms on the forks and knives strewn across the table. She liked to have a lot of forks and knives on the table for protection. They were not so much strewn as strategically arranged to protect her. Unfortunately apparently evidently they were not enough protection from the fidgety green-eyed man.

"You've got my hair in knots," she said, with an air of consternation.

He didn't reply. He was busy fidgeting with himself.

"What's your name?" she asked, as she tried to take the knots out of her hair.

"Suraj," the green-eyed man said, looking at her shiftily with his shifty eyes. He mustered some courage and asked, "What's yours?"

The waitress arrived before she could reply.

"Can I take your order?" she asked, and spat a wad of chewing gum at Suraj's face.

She (the woman with the silvery hot glare) already didn't like this waitress. Her apron was covered in what seemed to be a carefully blended mix of blood, sweat, grime, and animal faeces. Besides, the waitress had just spat chewing gum at the man she thought was her newfound love, and that was not a very polite thing to do. The waitress had eyes of steel, like the ones they made in the factories, except they were all natural.

"My name is Tanku," she said to Suraj.

"That's – that's a lovely name," Suraj said.

"Frankly, I hate it. You won't believe how embarrassing it is to respond reflexively to people calling out to you with 'you're welcome'"

"I think it's lovely."

The waitress cleared her throat loudly and conspicuously, as if she were trying to draw attention to herself. Tanku could have killed her. What did this woman want with her new man?

"Are you going to order?"

"I – I'll have the Malaise Burger," Suraj stammered, his hands now fidgeting with each other.

"I'll have the Malodorous Fries," Tanku said, blistering under her breath.

"You mean the Marodolous Flies," said the waitress, and grinned, revealing a row of yellow teeth, and a row of brown and black teeth below those, that smelled of rotting gums.

"Yes, that," Tanku said, and in one swift motion, swept the forks and knives off the table in the direction of the waitress. The waitress, experiences as she was, dodged all of the knives, and all but one of the forks, which stuck in her neck and caused her to issue forth in a very masculine voice, "Is that all?"

Suraj nodded, and Tanku nodded, and the waitress left.

"So what do you do, Suraj?" Tanku asked her new prospective lover.

"I run a business," he said. Now that the forks and knives were off the table, he was fidgeting with her again.

Tanku grappled with his hands, trying to keep them away. "That's nice," she said. "What kind of business? You run a chain of Xerox shops, don't you? I just know it."

"That's what most people think, but – but I actually have a company called Suraj Knots."

"Oh. So what kind of a company is that?" she asked, still trying to keep his hands off. She would be fine with such behaviour in private, and after they had gotten to know each other a little better.

"We tie knots for people who need knots, and untie them for people who need knots untied. You'll be surprised how lucrative it is. We charge around 300 rupees for tying the smallest knot."

Suddenly Tanku welled up with emotion. Her throat welled up with choking and her eyes welled up with tears. Her glass welled up with water, but that was because the waitress had returned and was filling the glass. Her heart welled up with love and her brain welled up with affection, while her ovaries welled up with lust.

All this time she had been pushing this man's hands away, thinking they were just fidgeting. She ran her hands through her hair and felt the hundreds of knots he had made in them. She ran her hands through her clothes and felt the hundreds of knots he had made in them. Each knot worth at least 300 rupees. And he had done it for free.

"So sweet," she told him. He was definitely marriage material now.

A door flew open and a plate flew out of the door, landed on the table, slid across it, and almost fell off the table, but it didn't.

"That's your Malaise Burger," the waitress said, still in a masculine voice, but when she looked at Tanku, there was the feminine throb of joint sisterhood and female understanding. The waitress could see Tanku may be falling in love with this green-eyed, fidgety man.

XX. Chandrabumps
Vishwanath, Kaushik. "Chandrabumps." *This Book Makes No Sense: Nonsense Poems and Worse*. Ed.
Michael Heyman. India: Scholastic India Pvt Ltd., 2012. 31-39. Print.

There was a man in my village who never wore pants. His name was Chandrabumps.
"Put on your pants, Chandrabumps," the villagers would say to him. "It is not decent to walk about like this."
"I cannot," Chandrabumps used to cry, "for my pants have run away."
"That is indeed unfortunate," the villagers would say, "But surely you can buy another, more obedient, pair of pants.
Perhaps you can wear a veshti or wrap a towel around your waist. At the very least, some underwear might reduce
the toll you are taking on our collective decency."
So it was five years ago that I, Vivekas the Great, single-handed conqueror of seven nations (I returned them after
the conquest, I did not know what else to do with them), was assigned the task of making Chandrabumps wear pants.
"Put on your pants, Chandrabumps," I said to him.
To which he said, "I cannot, for my pants have run away."
"But I bought you a new pair yesterday," I said.
Chandrabumps shrugged with all the helplessness of a skydiving tortoise (its legs are incapable of pulling the
parachute rip cord), and said "They too ran away."
I did not appreciate having been given this responsibility. Two weeks into the task, and Chandrabumps's lower half
was no closer to being clothed. I had bought him jeans, shorts, lungis, veshtis, mundus, dhotis, boxers, briefs,
stockings, kilts, skirts and sarongs; I had made him fasten them with belts, ropes, chains, twine, cellotape, rubber
hose, horse hair, anacondas, tapeworms, giraffe tongues, tapir intestine, and rose-water infused jalebi. I made him
promise never to take them off, but every morning I would find him naked from the waist down with the same
excuse: they ran away.
And while previously the villagers would scold Chandrabumps for his lack of pants, they would now scold me.
"What is this, Vivekas, didn't we tell you not to let him wander around without pants?" they would ask as I walked
with Chandrabumps every morning to the pants store.
"I, Vivekas the Great, am the single-handed conqueror of seven nations, not some amateur pantist! I am worthy of
greater tasks than this!"
"Oh, really? Where are these seven nations, eh?" they would ask and check my pockets.
"I don't have them in my pockets," I would say, "I, uh… left them at home." I was afraid they wouldn't believe me
if I told them I had returned the conquered nations.
I shouldn't have bothered. They didn't believe me anyway.
"Oh, *sure*, you have single-handedly conquered seven nations," they would say, "and I have corn kernels for teeth/ I
am dating Leela Lumbanga/ I am the President of the East Gloobur Butterfly Eradication Front, EGBEF/ I ate
nothing but green chillies this morning for breakfast and when I farted a few minutes ago it was so powerful that it
ripped a hole in our dimension through which otherworldly fiendish creatures are attacking our village." Their
sarcasm was so biting it left a hole in the seat of my own pants.
"Fine, don't believe me," I said. "Anyway, I am taking Chandrabumps to the pants store now to buy him some new
pants."

It soon dawned on me that perhaps Chandrabumps was simply incapable of exerting authority over his pants, which
is why they repeatedly ran away from him. With the next pair of pants I bought for him, I took them first to the
trouser tamer in West Gloobur.
"Mine is a dying art," the trouser tamer sighed. "No one needs their trousers tamed anymore, since pre-tamed
trousers are all the rage these days."
It struck some people as unusual that the trouser tamer was a woman. "What could a woman possibly know of
trousers?" some would ask, but it was evident to anyone who saw her that she was a master of her trade, for she was
clothed in a sari that was in fact made of several pairs of trousers sewn together.
"These are pre-tamed trousers," I said, holding the new pair of pants up to her, "but I would appreciate it if you
could tame them further. You see, Chandrabumps's pants tend to run away from him."
"Aah, the famed Chandrabumps," the trouser tamer said to Chandrabumps who stood behind me. "I have heard
much about you and your trouserish troubles," she said, "Or should I say pantastic problems?" She laughed riotously
at her own joke. It annoyed me how Chandrabumps was more famous than me, the conqueror of seven nations.
Then, carrying the pair of pants I had brought, along with a whip and a chair, a burning torch and a fishbowl, the
trouser tamer stepped into her tent. She would not let us follow her inside. "I am afraid I cannot let you watch me at
work. Trouser taming is a highly secretive process that has been whispered down through the years."

"Through the ears?" Chandrabumps asked.

"Yes," she said. "Down the generations, through the years, into the ears."

"Into the *ears*," Chandrabumps asked, pulling at his ears, "or the *years*?"

"The ears, obviously. How would you whisper into a year?"

"*Like this*," Chandrabumps whispered.

"I guess you could say it has been whispered from year to year, from ear to ear," I suggested, and that seemed to end the discussion, for we stood around in awkward silence for many moments afterwards.

After the trouser tamer disappeared into her tent, Chandrabumps and I waited for several hours playing chessopoly and wondering at the myriad noises that emerged from within. I counted four: barking, howling, wailing and skiing. Chandrabumps counted one more: gallivanting.

When the trouser tamer finally emerged from her tent, she handed back the pair of trousers and assured us that this pair of pants would not run away.

"Those trousers are tamer than last year's winner of Gloobur's Tamest Clothing," she said. "I will stake my entire reputation on it."

The next morning, Chandrabumps was pantsless again.

"They ran away," he said.

When I conveyed the news to the trouser tamer, she went back into her tent and emerged, clad in her finest trouser sari and carrying her trouser taming equipment. At first I thought she was going to hunt down the escaped trousers and try retaming them, but she solemnly walked up to a nearby well and emptied her fishbowl into it. "I will see you soon, sweet Pantfish," she said, as a trousered fish swam out into the well. Then she stood on her chair, swung her whip about herself and cracked it in the air, held a burning torch aloft between her teeth, before jumping up and diving headfirst into the stony depths of the well. She was going for a swim with her fish, I thought, but when I heard neither a splash nor the hiss of her torch being extinguished in the water, I looked into the well and saw that it was dry. Who would have thought that her dying art would become her art of dying?

And so I bought Chandrabumps another pair of trousers.

 "I am sorry for making you spend so much of your money on pants," he said to me. A few weeks ago I would have resented him for it, but I had grown rather fond of him and was beginning to believe that perhaps to put Chandrabumps in pants would restrain his true nature by shackling his danglers.

Chandrabumps interpreted it differently.

"Could it be…" he lamented, "could it be that pants simply can't stand to be around me? Is it my legs they detest? Or something else?"

As he plaintively put on his new trousers, I decided that I would spend the night in Chandrabumps's house to see exactly how the trousers escaped. Did they really run, as Chandrabumps claimed, or did they quietly slink away?

That night, as Chandrabumps slipped into a quiet snore, I stayed awake and vigilant, hiding in a flowerpot in his bedroom so that his trousers wouldn't know that I was watching.

Two, three hours passed, and the trousers showed no sign of movement. My eyelids were heavy and drooping and I found myself nodding off to sleep when I heard a noise.

There, beside Chandrabumps's bed, stood a pantsless young man, a boy, almost. Quickly the man began to undo the trousers from around Chandrabumps's waist, unbuckling the belt, and pulling the pants off by the legs.

Chandrabumps awoke and began to scream. "My pants! My pants!"

Having removed Chandrabumps's trousers, the young man put them on his own legs, fastened them, and began to run.

I stood in the flowerpot, frozen for several moments in complete shock. Then I stumbled out, toppling the pot and all its contents, and began to give chase to the trouser-thief, Chandrabumps yelling after me, "My pants are running away! My pants are running away!"

I ran through the moonlit streets after the youth, who turned one corner after another, in and out of narrow alleys. I realised that I would soon lose him in the maze of the city streets. I quickly climbed up the stairs of a nearby building and stood on the roof, surveying the scene.

There he was, on the streets below, attempting to flee the scene. He was fast, no doubt, but did he really think he could escape Vivekas the Great?

I leapt from the roof, roaring, and fell on him, tackling him to the ground, and punching him with my one hand. He resisted at first, but surrendered quickly under my heavy blows.

"Take them," he cried, "take the pants." He unbuttoned the trousers and slid them off.

"Who are you?" I shouted.

"Please, sir," he blithered, "I am just a common trouser-thief. I did not think that the famous Vivekas the Great, single-handed conqueror of seven nations would come after me for this most petty of crimes."

Finally, here was someone who recognised me! I tried not to get too excited.

"Why do you steal Chandrabumps's pants?" I roared.

"I come from a poor village where we have no pants," he bluthered.

"Nonsense! An entire village without pants?"

"Surely, in your travels far and wide as a single-handed nation conqueror you must have come across some such village. Indeed, there is nothing a man as well-travelled as you could not have come across."

The boy had a point. I had seen all kinds of things in my travels, like three-humped camels, cheese-human hybrids, a village inside a fullstop at the end of a book, a piece of music that could be seen but never heard, and a girl who could sneeze. However, as much as I racked my memory, I could not remember having come across a pantsless village. But to admit that to this young man would be to admit my ignorance.

"Hmm, yes, I have, in fact, come across a pantsless village," I lied. I then decided to let him off with a stern warning. "If Chandrabumps's pants ever go missing again," I said, "I will hunt you down and make a banana out of your split and a split out of your banana."

This explained everything, I thought. Chandrabumps would keep saying that his pants ran away, yet the poor idiot never thought to mention that they always ran away on a pair of legs.

But as I stooped down to pick up Chandrabumps's trousers, they stood up on their own. "We will never go back to Chandrabumps!" the trousers said, speaking through the zipper.

Then they started to run from me. I grabbed at them, but they easily slipped out of the grip of my one hand. I gave chase again, but the trousers were too fast for me. "Why?!" I shouted after them, "Why won't you go back to Chandrabumps?", but my questions were answered only by the sound of trouser legs swishing in the silent night air.

When I returned to Chandrabumps's house empty-handed, I found him standing by the well. When he saw that I had returned with no pants but my own, he jumped into the well.

"No, Chandrabumps!" I yelled, and ran to the well. As I peered inside, I noted, with some relief, that the well was quite full. My relief was short-lived, however, when I realised that Chandrabumps could not swim. Before I could do anything to save him, the poor wretch disappeared under the surface of the water.

Now, five years later, I, Vivekas the Great, have accomplished a great many things. Twenty nations I have conquered (including the original seven (but still no pantsless village)), and this time I have been wise enough not to return them, but carry them in my pockets for all the doubters to see. But every time I reach into my pockets to show people my conquered nations, I feel a tinge of sorrow for the man who never had pockets, who never had pants. To this day I cannot fathom why those events transpired as they did. Had Chandrabumps committed some grave crime against pantistry? Is that why his pants repeatedly ran away? Did he throw himself in the well because the guilt of his actions was too much to bear, or was it merely out of shame? Who was the trouser-thief and how was he involved in all this? If only I had interrogated him further… to this day I curse the vanity that made me let him go. Where do I find him now?

Day after day I ask my own trousers these questions, staring down at the zipper and hoping that it will open to answer my questions. But I am only met with stony silence.

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