

**Book Review**

*Jareela (The Castrato)* by Bhalchandra Nemade (translated by Santosh Bhoomkar)

by Swagata Bhattacharya<sup>1</sup>

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Published ten years after the publication of *Bidhar* and *Hool* (published initially in 1967 and later identified as two separate novels), *Jareela* (1977) continues with the quest of Changdeo Patil for the meaning of existence. The protagonist of Marathi novelist Bhalchandra Nemade's tetralogy (*Bidhar-Hool-Jareela-Jhool*), Changdeo Patil is the quintessential hero in an existentialist crisis, the 'degraded hero in a degraded world' who has realised the need to adjust. While the protagonist of Nemade's debut novel *Kosala (The Cocoon, 1963)*, Sangvikar was cynical in his attitude to the world at large, Patil learns to compromise and adjust to the situation around him. In the words of the novelist himself, Sangvikar had come to realise by the end of *Kosala* that in order to survive he will have to adjust and so Patil was born. What is most striking in Changdeo Patil is his ability to simultaneously accept and reject the world. In *Bidhar*, Patil was seen confronting the questions of life and death which perpetually vexed him. His western education had played a great role in shaping his mind and making him a misfit in his own society. In *Jareela*, however, we get to see a pacified Patil who has sobered down to the extent of accepting his restlessness and trying his best to adapting in a new environment absolutely alone.

*Jareela* opens with Changdeo Patil's journey to the new town where he had joined as a Professor in English. His shabby rented place, his loud garrulous colleagues, his often boring teaching assignments and power tussles at the college leave him with enough leisure for self-introspection. The issues of caste and language come up again and again throughout the novel as Changdeo relentlessly insists on the significance of the native tongue. What Vice-Principal Rajput had declared towards the beginning of *Jareela* — "Marathi must be made compulsory" keeps on recurring as the small town college battles its own prejudices

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<sup>1</sup> Swagata Bhattacharya is a UGC Post- Doctoral Fellow at the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. She can be reached at [swagatarchithi@gmail.com](mailto:swagatarchithi@gmail.com)

against casteism and provincialism. And when suddenly the power station collapses making the entire town plunge into darkness after sunset, Patil begins to confront another enemy, this time his own loneliness engulfs him. Maddened by the thought of having to survive without a human companion, Patil finds himself attracted to the opposite sex in a way he has never felt before. From here begins the second phase of his self-mortification. Thus his obsession with Gulab bai's song "akeli dar lage/ raat mori amma" becomes symbolic of his state of mind. His initial attraction towards a female student, his advances to Dr. Miss Pingle and his eagerness to get married to the girl arranged by his aunt, all ended in making a fool of himself. It was better to get married than remain a bachelor, Patil had thought and in his imagination marriage was the magical cure to all his problems of loneliness, social ostracism, and even the drudgery of daily household chores! With the refusal of the girl's family, Changdeo decides to quit his present job and move on to a new place for yet another time. As he quits the place, he allows himself to be "caught in the throes of change—a new town, a new road and a new life". But will Changdeo's life change at all? Change of place has never been able to make any substantial change in his life. *Jareela* had opened with Changdeo's journey and his query to the bus conductor, "How far have we to go yet?" As he was being shown his destination, Changdeo had thought to himself that nothing had ever come easy to him and that struggle had left its bitter memory in his mind.

Forever haunted by his disturbed childhood, Changdeo Patil ( ~~deleted~~ ) is referred to as 'Jareela', a reference used for a bullock. The English translation 'The Castrato' refers to someone who has been castrated, one who can never attain sexual fulfilment. Towards the beginning of *Jareela*, Patil had felt that "There could be procrastination as far as teaching was concerned" and that he had to be careful about it. By the end he realises that he is as good as a castrated bullock. The procrastination motif is another recurring motif which in fact becomes the theme of the novel. The castrated one learns to adjust to the world and move on while rebelling silently, internally.

Following the pattern of *Bidhar*, the translation is replete with indigenous words, particularly the Marathi words 'bhau', 'chiwda', 'bidi', etc have been retained. Portions of the text even retain Marathi transliterated into English as part of a dialogue, for eg, "Si Taht telmo si revo" meaning "Is that omelette business over?" (p 68) Such instances lend more authenticity to the translation. The glossary at the end of the text is a comprehensive one

featuring all the culture-specific words, their connotations along with short bio-notes on historical, political as well as contemporary famous figures mentioned in the text , for eg, Aurangzeb, Bajirao, Bhagat Singh, Ambedkar, Namdev and even Naushad among others. Notes on texts such as *Dhyaneswari* and organisations like the Arya Samaj shall definitely help the foreign reader to get acquainted better with the text.