

ISSN 2394-7853



# Assonance

A Journal of Russian & Comparative Literary Studies

---

No.18

January 2018

---

**Department of Russian & Comparative Literature**  
University of Calicut  
Kerala – 673635

---

7	CONTOURS OF RESISTANCE IN CONTEMPORARY PAKISTANI AMERICAN FICTION: A STUDY OF SELECT TEXTS - Navaneeta Bhuyan	59
8	DEPICTING THE CHAOS: LASZLO KRASZNAHORKAI'S <i>SATANTANGO</i> AS A POLITICAL ALLEGORY - Suja Mathew	69
9	SACRIFICE OF THE SELF – REPRESENTATIONS OF INDIAN WOMEN IN FRENCH PLAYS OF THE 17 <sup>TH</sup> AND THE 18 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY - Janani Kalyani V.	77
10	ANTON CHEKHOV IN MARATHI - Dr. Megha Pansare	85
11	IDENTITY AND FOLK CULTURE: A STUDY OF SELECTED RAJASTHANI FOLKS SONGS - Dr. Shalini Attri	93
12	REVISITING BRAJ CULTURE THROUGH SELECTED BRAJ FOLK SONGS - Dr. Manuradha Chaudhary	100
13	IN THE FIRST PLACE: LANDSCAPE IN SEAMUS HEANEY'S <i>DEATH OF A NATURALIST</i> - Saumya A.P.	107
14	URBAN SPACE IN V. SHUKSHIN'S <i>CHUDIK</i> AND D. BATOHI'S <i>SHAHAR</i> - Vinay Kumar Ambedkar	118
15	GRAPHEMES-PHONEMES CORRESPONDENCES IN STANDARD KHASI - Curiously Bareh	128
16	SHORT HISTORY (COUNTRY, PEOPLE AND THE IDEALS TO WHICH THEY ASPIRE) PERTAINING TO FEUDALISM IN RUSSIA - Dr. Peter Dhawan	146
17	TWO TALES OF ONE DAY: SOLZHENITSYN'S <i>ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF IVAN DENISOVICH</i> AND SOROKIN'S <i>DAY OF THE OPRICHNIK</i> - Dr. Nagendra Shreeniwas	158

---

# DEPICTING THE CHAOS: LASZLO KRASZNAHORKAI'S *SATANTANGO* AS A POLITICAL ALLEGORY

Suja Mathew

Assistant Professor of English, Panampilly Memorial Govt College Chalakudy,  
Thrissur, Kerala

*Abstract:* Allegory has always been the tool of the writers to fight against dictatorial regimes where criticism of the state was not entertained. In all epochs people have realised the might of this genre to critically comment on the wrong practices around them. Hungary, as one of the East European nations, had been under the domination of the Soviet Union after the Second World War. The economy modelled on the Soviet Union suffered a setback towards the end of 1980s. The presence of the Soviet military force in the land reminded the people of the Soviet domination over them and their country. The secret service system in the country always put them under surveillance, making their life more difficult. This paper analyses the Man Booker International Prize winning Hungarian author Laszlo Krasznahorkai's *Satantango* as a political allegory depicting the condition of the nation and its people towards the end of the Communist regime in the country.

*Keywords:* Political allegory, Hungarian fiction, Communist disintegration, totalitarianism, surveillance

Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism as I understand it. (-George Orwell)

Literature always springs forth from the social and political milieu of its epoch. It is like a mirror, reflecting all the constructive and destructive tendencies and practices existing in society. At times, writers use their pens as weapons to fight against the injustices and undemocratic practices of rulers. Hungary, after the Second World War, was under Soviet domination until the beginning of 1990s. Hungarian literature, in general, exhibits certain traits common to the nations where freedom of expression has been restricted. Though Hungarian literature has a tradition of over two hundred years, it was not widely translated into English until late twentieth century. The first Nobel Prize winner for literature from Hungary was Imre Kertész in 2002; another international literary prize reached Hungary again in the form of the Man Booker International Prize in 2015 to Laszlo Krasznahorkai. Krasznahorkai began his writing career with the work *Satantango* in 1985, which is an apocalyptic portrayal of the degeneration that the country has been reduced to. The work was an instant

success and his later works *The Melancholy of Resistance*, *War and War*, *Seiobo There Below* and so on followed it in fame and critical acclaim.

Eastern Europe had been under the Iron Curtain after the Second World War till the beginning of 1990s. The nations of the Eastern Bloc had been under the dominance of the Soviet Union with the Soviet Red Army present in most of these nations. Following the Second World War, Soviet troops remained stationed throughout Eastern Europe as a reminder to the Eastern European peoples of Soviet dominance over their countries. These countries were modelled on the USSR in economic, social and administrative matters. The single party system without any democratic elections was prevalent in most of these nations and many of the leaders gradually degenerated into dictators. The transition from socialism to totalitarianism also occurred in these nations as was the case with the Stalinist Soviet Union. Literature was censored mostly; writers who quarrelled with the ruling party and regime were either imprisoned or exiled; only “harmless” literature was permitted to be published, that too under the direct control of the state. All East Central European nations had security services modelled on and connected to the Soviet KGB. Hungary was under the rule of the Communist party after the suppression of the 1956 uprising. In this regard, Miklos Molnar observes: “Having crushed the revolution on 4<sup>th</sup> November, the Russian army installed itself in Hungary and stayed for thirty five years” (319). Janos Kadar ruled the nation until 1989 when Communist Hungary became a Democratic Republic.

With the introduction of glasnost and perestroika, though Gorbachev attempted to revamp the image of the Soviet Union before the world and introduced an openness in discussing the past as well as the present by providing “freedom of the press, freedom of thought or freedom of conscience,” the factions were becoming wider and wider, resulting ultimately in the collapse of Socialism in the country and the disintegration of a great dream: the Soviet Union (Kenez 253). The East Europeans’ aversion towards their governments showed that the march towards the glorious future as offered by Communism was not desirable as was predicted.

The economy of Hungary which was centralised in nature confronted a setback in the beginning of 1980s as the government could not control the national debt and the collectivised farming proved to be a disaster. The relaxations introduced in the laws to check the people’s dissatisfaction resulted in the new values of commodification slowly creeping into the nation. The government found it difficult to continue on the same lines and was forced to introduce and implement reforms on economy and politics. Laszlo Krasznahorkai portrays the situation that existed in Hungary at this time of transition in politics, economy and culture through the work *Satantango*. The present study focuses