

CHAPTER III

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C.S.Koch (choose) India as the setting of his second novel Across the Seawall but he did not choose any momentous period in the Indian history to project a cross-section of Indian people caught in the maelstrom of historical events, and portray outstanding characters representing the political and socio-cultural upheavals as for instance Dickens did in 'A Tale of Two Cities', or Paul Scott's 'The Raj Quartet'. In his third novel, The year of living Dangerously, (1978) C.J.Koch attempts another Asian connection, this time, it is Indonesia. In this novel he (choose) the period of Civil War in the recent history of Indonesia. This involved in great skill and even research.

The year 1965, was the great moment of recokning in Jakarta, and the downfall of Sukarno, the president of Indonesia. In Indonesia, there was a combination of nationalists; Muslim religious groups, communists, and the army. Sukarno opposed the creation of the federation of Malaysia, and determined the policy of Confrontansi, a kind of undeclared war. Many people as well as parties were against this decision. There was a possibility of chaos, so he sought new glories in deplomatic relations. He preferred non-aligned power, and declared the year 1965 as 'the Year of Living Dengerously.'

The communist coup was crushed by a vicious countercoup on the part of the Indonesian army. Thousands of people were slaughtered in this ghastliest programme. Sumarno's folly and Indonesia's exhaustion were cruelly exposed. The communists were dispersed. The new government recommended the 'Free World' and rejected communism. The blood bath of the Civil War of 1965 didnot cure the disease of anti-chinese racial hatred; there was no strong sense of national unity.

As a result of the Civil War, Sukarno's fate was in danger. But as he was ' a popular legend', Suharto, a new president preferred to keep him in obscurity rather than to make him a martyr.

Sukarno was ambitious and believed that he was hand-picked by God Himself to change the world. He always realised himself to the image of Arjuna; the brave knight, the great lover of woman. He also thought himself as Krishna, the most wise. This self deception brought himself to ruin; and the year 1965 is the year of the fall of this magnetic king, Sukarno.

Against this political and social background, the novelist, C.J.Koch has written his most ambitious novel, The Year of Living Dangerously. Larry Mac Murthy, describes the novel in Washington Star -

Rich and fully realised fiction beautifully executed.¹

According to Les Murray, the Australian poet-critic
the novel is -

a profound and beautiful book - - -
tells its momentous story with a style
and pace few recent novels can rival.²

The story is narrated on three levels : diaries,
dossiers and first person narrative. The first person
narrator is one of the newspaper reporters. It is quite
interesting to note that he has no active part to play in the
action of the novel. He is an objective observer and reporter.
In other words, he is realist narrator, the novelist himself.

The novel, The Year of Living Dangerously is about
the crisis between good and evil. It is the story of love and
anguish, which is developed in the three way relationship
between correspondent Guy Hamilton, his extra-ordinary Chinese-
Australian Cameraman Billy Kwan and the woman, Jill Bryant
whom they both love.

Koch has created an extra-ordinary character in Billy
Kwan. He is portrayed as a dwarf. In order to make this
character Koch gives the history of the dwarfs in a dossier DZ.
Billy Kwan has a mixed identity, Chinese, Australian and
Indonesian. He is everywhere in the novel, and yet, he is not
the central character in the novel. Billy Kwan, the most loyal
friend to Hamilton, is hopeful about their friendship. He
assures Hamilton -

We will make a good team, Old Master,
you for the words, me for the picture.³

Billy Kwan has a girl friend, Jill Bryant, the prettiest girl in the European Embassy. He would like to marry Jill but she has no emotional involvement in him still Billy is hopeful that she could change her mind. But to Jill he is a friend, an escort. Though he is frustrated in his personal life, he could encourage Jill to love Hamilton. He suggests her to go with Hamilton and encourages Jill and Hamilton to love each other.

Billy is sympathetic to Ibu, a woman from the Village of Krawang in West Java. She is a deserted woman by her husband. She has a girl and a son. Billy used to help her by giving her money. In a sense, he worships her as a goddess of life. He wants to change her life. Ibu family is starving and her son, Udin is suffering from gastro-enteritis. As he dies Billy becomes furious and disappointed. He blames Sukarno, who builds his futile monuments, instead of drains which would rid the city of diseases. This episode exposes Indonesia's poverty for which Sukarno is held responsible. It was Sukarno's ambition to build a nation on the sound footing and prosperity and happiness for all.

Billy Kwan is also disappointed by Hamilton, his friend. Hamilton's attraction towards Vera, the Russian Cultural attached in the absence of Jill, and his nocturnal expedition

with Pete Curtis, a Canadian to the Cemetery at Kebayron makes him sad. He believes Hamilton as a ' man of light ' but he finds ' Durga's darkness ' ; a mysterious lust in him.

In Indonesia, criminals and tyrants join their hands together, so Sukarno's year must to be end. Billy is aggressive and almost a lunatic. At one moment, Billy would have been an assassin of Sukarno. Billy unfurls a banner from a window on seventh floor addressing ; **SUKARNO FEED YOUR PEOPLE**, and is killed from below by Sukarno's guard. He is thus portrayed as the conscience of Indonesia and a martyr who once worshipped Sukarno, but who find to his utter disillusionment, that Sukarno was ' a god that failed '.

Guy Hamilton is like the other journalists ^{is in} Indonesia to cover the political crisis in Indonesia. In the process and in the course of time, he becomes the hero of the novel. He has the advantage and also courage to be present at the time of the national upheaval. The love story of Jill and Guy adds to the complexities of relationship among the central characters involved in the crisis. Sukarno is overthrown at the end, and Suharto becomes the new president of Indonesia. At the time Jill and Guy leave Indonesia and marry.

The novel is divided into three parts -

- 1) Patet Nem : Hamilton's Dwarf.
- 2) Patet Sanga : Water from Moon.
- 3) Patet Manjura : Amok.

Like Koch's early novel, Across the Seawall, the present novel, The Year of Living Dangerously, has the multicultural and the multiracial context.

The first part of the novel, "Patet Nemi: Hamilton's Dwarf" is a prologue to the novel. Every character is introduced against the social and political background of Sukarno's regime. This section also describes Indonesia's poverty and innocence, Sukarno's general feeling towards his people and his supremacy over the foreigners. He has popularised the term 'Konfrontasi' : that is enemies of Indonesia, but 'the Wayang', the hotel, is an exception to it. The members of the Wayang have cosmopolitan brotherhood in their relationship. Billy Kwan is half Chinese and half Australian whereas Hamilton is half European and Half Australian Pete Curtis is red-haired canadian working for Washington Post. Wally Sullivan is a correspondent for a Sydney Daily, and an analyst of the Indonesian scene. British and American journalists have no place in it, their work is done by Australian and journalists from other nationalities.

Sukarno has declared the year 1965 as 'the year of living dangerously' which makes it clear that the year will be dangerous for himself as well as for his nation. Sukarno gives each year a title. To the Villagers Sukarno is 'Visnu coming down from his magic car'.

Most of the Indonesians suffer from poverty and disease; as we are told -

Five American dollars would be a fortune to one of these people; it would keep him for a month more;⁴

Or

Doorless huts gave glimpses of public privacy, frozen in yellow frames; a table with a candle on it; a small, naked girl playing on a straw mat; a middle-age woman in a sarong and incongruous brassiere, heating water in a discarded can over a little fire. The rooms were so small they were little more than boxes, and could not be stood up in; children's playhouses. It was hard not to see the place as gay, and poverty as a game.⁵

Sukarno has been portrayed as a liberator of his people and at the time as a tyrant, megalomaniac and demagogue who is incapable of solving his people's problems of poverty backwardness and diseases. Sukarno can be understood as a representative of the third world countries where revolutions degenerated into dictatorships.

The story deals with such themes as love, racism, communism and colonial consciousness. As far as love is concerned, it is seen as love towards friend and also towards fiancée. Billy Kwan, as wise man loves his friend Hamilton, who is honest and hardworking Australian, and who sees Jakarta as a place in which he has to make his reputation. Known has introduced Hamilton to Aidit, a leader of PKI (Parti Komunis Indonesia) and who has a special goodwill towards Australians. This makes Hamilton a great newsreporter. Billy gives him a poem which warns him to 'stay away from cemetery'. The meaning of this line becomes clear much later when we learn that 'cemetery' refers to a place in Jakarta where prostitutes lived.

Kwan's love towards Jill Bryant is futile because she takes him as a most loyal friend, but she can't think of him as her husband so she rejects to marry him. Hamilton loves Jill Bryant, so we find Billy Kwan somewhat envious towards their relationship which is reflected in Dossier B26, BRYANT, Gillian Edith, in which Kwan ironically suggests to Jill -

You go alone with my giant brother to
priok. In a Pasar he dares to kiss you.
So it begins.⁶

This section also describes the colonial attitude of Englishmen towards Australian which is reflected in the

relationship between Colonel Handerson, the British and Hamilton, the Australian . Hamilton sees his dead father in Handerson. Handerson treats him as Colonial. See, For instance, the following conversation between Handerson and Hamilton -

... I thought all Sustralians were good at swimming'.

' Well, may be thats what's wrong. I was born in England '

' Really ? But surely all British Journalists are barred here now ? '

' I' am on a an Australian passport - I spent most of my life there '

'Ah. Too late then - you're a Colonial '

'You mean you won't have me back ? '

' Afrain not, You are a convict, aren't you ? ⁷

British superiority is seen in Handerson's behaviour at the cocktail party. When he says that ice in everything is a barbaroc habit, and boasts as he is a real Pukka Sahib.

Koch has introduced a real indonesian character, Kumar, an assistant of Hamilton and who is concerned with PKI. His early tip-offs helps Hamilton to write. successful stories for his paper. Kevin Condon, a NewZealander, who works for an American news agency and Harold Sloane, a London journalist

are also introduced in this section.

Billy Kwan is portrayed as an ambitious character. He seems to lead a double life, as a photographer, assisting his friend Hamilton, and as a citizen of Indonesia concerned about the fate of his people. He is not simply an onlooker like the other journalists; he is an insider concerned with his loyalty to Sukarno on the one hand and his disillusionment with him on the other. He has strong faith in Sukarno as a humanitarian leader and loyalty for Hamilton as a true friend.

The second part is 'Patel Sanga', Water from Moon' The title means 'anything impossible'. This section develops an episode which involves Ibu, an Indonesian woman and Billy's sympathetic view towards her. Koch, in this section, deals with Hamilton's moral fall and Sukarno's failure in handling the problems of poverty and backwardness of Indonesia.

Ibu is the representative of poverty in West Java. Though she is prostitute she is respectable. Kwan's dossier informs us -

In another country she would be a decent woman. Here she begs, and perhaps sells herself. She is a nulty - a vaccum. But with what dignity she holds herself together around that vaccum, as her shabby national dress holds her body ! Her tragedy is repeated a million times in this city.⁸

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Billy wants to change her life; he gives her money always. He is very disturbed by Sukarno's self-centred behaviour. Once he was the god of Indonesian people but now he is turned into a beast. In him there is no love of the soil of Indonesia or no belief in the five principles of Pantja Sila. Thus Sukarno's politics makes Billy disappointed, the people are starving but Sukarno does nothing. He forgets the Marhaen - the peasant, while they starve. He says 'let them eat rats.' They have no rice and Sukarno won't give them rice. Now his basic philosophy is not Marhaenism but Sarinalism i.e. his womanize.

Billy has a strange interest in the love relation between Hamilton and Jill. He makes self-sacrifice in love. He gives his bangalow to Hamilton and Jill for privacy. He is involved emotionally in Hamilton.

Meanwhile, Jill is going to Singapore for three weeks with Colonel Handerson. Hamilton also decides to visit the hills, the Javanese countryside with Kumar. There he meets Vera Chostikov, a cultural attache to Soviet Embassy. She wants Hamilton for the political purpose. Billy objects to his affair with the Russian girl. It is also shocking that Hamilton visits the cemetery with Curtis. In Dossier H 10, Kwang vents his anger'.

You have changed : you are capable of betrayal, I sense the invasion of Durga's Darkness in you : she who turns time into sleep, and love into lust, and life into death : the Black One, the dancer in the burial ground. '9

Billy's disillusionment is reflected in the diary entry of 22nd July:

You are inconstant, when I had thought that constancy was your chief virtue. Hamilton, you betray our darling through the same sad lechery which keeps a man like Curtis tied to the wheel.¹⁰

Also, 23rd July :

Is it possible I was wrong about you, Hamilton ? It is possible you are not the Unmet Friend ?¹¹

Apart from this, Hamilton himself is going away from Billy. There is a great misunderstanding between them, Hamilton wants to go to central Java to see PKI's power exhibition in countryside, but he doesnot want to take Billy with him. Billy warns him not to go there because there is no security. He tries to prevent him from going there and his meeting with the Russian girl at Bandung. He also assures that Jill wants to marry him, she is pregnant and needs him. Jill also prevents him but he doesn't care; this makes her lonely and hopeless, when she says -

I'm so cold. Can't you love me at all !¹²

Billy becomes cynical and unfriendly in the Wayang. As a result he is banished from it. He tries to find out good in everything but he gets nothing, because in this dark age anything is impossible. Koch has used the Durga motif which is the

embodiment of darkness. Only possessions, property and power are the qualifications to confer a rank or position.

The last part is 'Patet Manjura:Amok'. The climax of the plot takes place in this part of the novel. This part deals with the end of Sukarno's regime as well as Billy's death and also the union of Hamilton and Jill. The whole situation has changed. The rebellion against Sukarno's regime with the help of Chinese arms succeeds and Sukarno Virtually becomes a prisoner of his own people. The civil war is the most terrific happening in the country which overthrows the dictator.

The journalists have been ordered to go back to their respective countries. Only Hamilton remains behind to report the events of the Civil War.

In this section, everyone has a sense of lost connection in the city. For Hamilton all connections are snapping now with sly completeness; his radio circuit link with Sydney could no longer be counted on. Billy exiles himself and moves outside normal standard; and he is referred as 'the Dying Typhon'. Hamilton is dependent on Billy, he goes to meet Billy. There he realises his mistake of betraying Jill, and the hidden mystery of Billy. He finds Billy, more philosophic in a sense, when he says to Hamilton -

Desire, lust, then anger : that is the
sequence for the sensual man, and for our
whole society.¹³

Billy also explains that his trust in Hamilton is futile. Everything that is good is given by Billy but Hamilton cannot understand Billy and he remains a 'Peeping Tom' according to Billy.

Billy is disturbed much when Udin, a son of Ibu dies due to gastroenteritis and for the first time Billy becomes furious and wishes to murder Sukarno. The butchery of Sukarno is described in the diary entry of 29th August of Billy.

I say, Sukarno killed him (Udin) as surely as though he were a Herod.

He starves and kills, with his egomaniac foolishness, the children of his people.¹⁴

Billy's diary entry on 1st September also throws light on the contemporary Indonesia in Sukarno's regime.

Terrible violence is simmering, simmering. Your country is sick with the fever of evil: is it possible that the Beast has chosen, Java as a crucible? Is it possible that here is where those marked by the Beast & those still struggling for the light must confront each other?¹⁵

Billy is caught between the trap of evil and good. He becomes a victim of the 'dark' society. On Bulgaria's National Day, Billy is shot by a guard thinking that Billy might shoot

at Sukarno. Sukarno is scheduled to visit the Wayang to attend the celebration of Bulgaria's National Day. Billy wants to demonstrate in a dramatic manner how Sukarno has neglected his people. From the window of the Seventh floor of the Wayang he unfurls a banner saying 'Sukarno feed your people'. But, he is shot by a guard from below in the garden of the hotel. And Billy becomes a martyr.

The revolution takes place. Sukarno who is old and full of sins is under the protection of General Suharto. In the tumultuous event Hamilton has lost his eye. Thus the injured hero Hamilton lies immobilised with a bandaged eye. It suggests that the most important things about East are beyond western understanding.

Thus all things are revealed in this section; Hamilton and Jill leave Indonesia for Europe.

C.J.Koch has created his characters from a realistic and historical point of view. The main characters in the novel are Billy Kwan, Guy Hamilton and Jill Bryant. As he weaves complex relationships among them he elaborates his theme of ambiguity of good and evil. Billy Kwan is the character which overshadows the hero of the novel Hamilton. It means he is anti-hero.

Anthony Burgess, in the "Times Literary Supplement" remarks :

In Billy Kwan, Mr. Koch has created one of the most memorable characters of recent fiction.¹⁶

Billy is a hybrid, half Chinese and half Australian. He was working as a cameraman for the ABS i.e. Australian Broadcasting Service. He is a dwarf and it is his dwarfishness which gives him a special view.

According to E.M.Forster, love is the most dominating theme in human life :

And besides sex, there are other emotions, all strengthening towards maturity : the various upliftings of the spirit, such as affection friendship, patriotism, mysticism.¹⁷

This is significantly seen in Kwan's character. The feelings such as friendship, affection are dominant in him. Because of his true friendship to Hamilton he sacrifices his love. He gives his beloved to Hamilton. He thinks to create a new, better world with the help of the innocent Australian, Hamilton which remains only a dream. He is a sensitive intellectual, who believes in the poetry and philosophy. He gives a poem to Hamilton which reflects his earnest feelings towards the friend. He marks the line that is directive and becomes a recurring motif in the novel : 'Stay away from the cemetery.' His love for Jill is frustrated; still he respects Jill.

Kwan is Koch's most interesting character. He represents the mysterious East - Indonesia in particular which has inherited the ancient Indian culture which has undergone radical changes in the new context. He speaks like a philosopher who has understood the nature of good and evil as essential aspects as if they are the two sides of the same coin.

Billy Kwan is religious who has faith in humanity and good will. His relationship with Ibu, is exceptional. He finds in Ibu the goddess and the life. Though he believes in Sukarno's humanitarianism, he bursts out when Ibu's son Udin dies of starvation and gastroenteritis. His sympathetic view is seen in his diary of 29th August which reflects his agony :

Little Udin was buried today. There is a great respect for the dead among the Kompong people, and Ibu's friend arranged a funeral procession of betjaks, - - - -
- - - - -
Ibu, holding him, rode in the leading betjak, on which yellow cloth had been tied ; the colour of death, indicating to other traffic that this was a funeral of the poor.

Ibu wept now, riding in her betjak. Did her wails reach your ears, Bung Karno, in the Mardeka Palace? Udin died of a simple complaint, from which no child in

the city need die, were it not for your
Folly : gastro-entertis.

The infant Udin is dead. I mourn him
as though he had been my own. I say
Sukarno killed him, as surely as though
he were a Herod. He builds the futile
monuments instead of drains which would
rid the city of disease ! He starves and
kills, with his egomaniac foolishness, the
children of his people.¹⁸

In his room there are the Wayang puppets - King
Krishna, Arjuna and Princess Srikandi. Kwan is the Arjuna who
is inspired by Krishana for spiritual battle -

There is a war that opens the doors of
heaven. Arjuna ! Happy the warrior whose
fate is to fight such a war.¹⁹

Kwan undertakes the quest for spiritual redemption.
He is a man of action, so he fights against the tyrannical and
dark forces. In his march he is lonely. He believes in
Sukarno but his quest is not be fulfilled by him. Sukarno, the
supreme manipulator, cannot solve the problems of poor people.
He cannot fulfil the basic needs of human being. His true
friend, Hamilton also has the touch of Durga's Darkness; this
is a striking phenomenon in his life. He believes in love and
not in lust. Kwan says to Hamilton :

'All this because I banked everything on you. You seem to think I just got you leads for stories.' - - - - -

- - - - -
'Stories ! Is that what life's about ? What is a bloody journalist, really ? Nothing but a Peeping Tom. You slow idiot : I put on course; I made you see things; I gave you the woman I loved, who loved you, who's carrying your child. She needed all your understanding, all your constancy.' His voice rose to a flat shout. 'I created you !'²⁰

In this world of darkness, Kwan cannot survive. He is a ' Dying Typhon ' Koch has made him a tragic figure who is the only capable of self sacrifice and martyrdom. In Kwan, we find the resembalance of Krishna as well as Arjuna.

His action of martyrdom is emphasized as an action of saint. On the day of his martyrdom, he has underscored the passage in the Bible -

If man may have an ear, let him hear - - -.
He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity; he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.²¹

Hamilton, the Australian journalist is the hero of the novel. Like Billy Kwan he is also a hybrid; a European Australian. He is a journalist, different from the contemporary journalists because he has not preceded his career with a University course; he has no taste for literature. He is the most practical minded character. He loves Billy, his friend with all his secret affiliations.

Hamilton is an introvert and never speaks like a confessor. Throughout the novel we see him as neutral and expressionless. He is a true Australian who takes life as it is. As Max Harris points out -

'- - - the Australian is cynical and selfdenigratory towards himself as well as towards the world he sees around him.'²²

Hamilton loves Jill Bryant, but he is not very serious about it. In her absence he goes to Kebayoran cemetery where there are prostitutes, with Curtis. He is also attracted towards Vera Chostikov, the Russian which shows his real nature: the dark side of a human being i.e. lust. In his love there is an absence of ardent anguish. He never takes it seriously except at the end of the novel, when he accepts Jill with her child and decides to go to Europe with her. Kwan's dossier on Hamilton reflects his character clearly.

- - - - moderate to conservative in politics, somewhat 'correct' for a man of his generation : a 'gentleman'.

Fastidious to a fault. His danger is to shut himself off in a sterile orderliness ruling neat lines around himself, making a fetish of his career, and making all his relationships temporary, lest they disturb that career. He must learn to give himself. He must learn to love - - -²³

We may summarize his character as 'a watcher' and 'Watcher merely' as Kwan describes him also as 'a Peeping Tom.'

So far as his profession is concerned he is a born journalist, secretly waiting for something more. This is his speciality which gives him envious reputation. Billy Kwan describes him as the best newsman in Jakarta.

Jill Bryant, only is the important female character, whom Billy and Hamilton both love. She is a secretary at the British Embassy. She has come to Indonesia with Ralph Handerson. She is a divorcee having no children. She wants to develop his career. She is trapped in the present condition because she has no alternative. She loves Billy but rejects his proposal. Her early love experience has not been a happy one. She had an affair with a man from French Embassy which ended badly. So she is thinking of marrying Handerson. Afterwards, she changes her decision and decides to marry Hamilton due to Billy's insistence. The triangular relationship between Kwan, Hamilton and Jill is the most significant human relationship in the novel.

Kumar is a significant character because he is the only native Koch has taken from Indonesia. He is the representative of Indonesians and close to PKI. He has respect towards Hamilton. He is formal and westernised in his appearance. He asserts that his countrymen need discipline and PKI is an Indonesian party which asks for planning and hardwork. He never accepts China's or Russia's ruling over them. He is a typical Eastern character who has great attraction of the Western prosperity, and yet he loves his country and hopes that his country is going to win at last.

Koch has delineated the character of Sukarno which more or less conforms to the historical character of the President of Indonesia as a liberator, dictator, demagogue and womanize.

Sukarno is the president of the Republic of Indonesia. He is also a hybrid. His father was Muslim, but his mother belonged to highcaste Hindu. In the novel, he is labelled as 'Main bearer of the Indonesian people', 'the father of the farmer's' etc. His tyrannical regime torments the poor Indonesian people. His lust for woman is very great. He always hunts 'nubile girls', and spends much of money on his personal pleasure. In fact, Koch seems to suggest that Sukarno is a typical dictator of a third world country who to begin with is the liberator of his people but who fails in his mission of revising his people from the wretchedness of life to a better

and prosperous way of life. Such a situation necessarily leads to revolution or Civil War. The novel serves as it were as a parable for the third world countries of today.

The novel describes the crisis between good and evil on the mythical level. Koch uses the legends and myths from Indian epics such as Mahabharata, into the fabric of his novel to attain the desired effect. He uses the myths to illuminate characters and situations. For example, Wayang Kulit - a puppet show which is a moralistic play.

The novelist, C.J.Koch has used the 'Wayang' myth which shows Indonesia's cultural ties with India. The Wayang is an ancient picture show. Harold Stephens describes it as follow -

The Wayang Kulit, or "Shadow Play", is unabashedly moralistic. The characters, after all, are either immortalized heroes or infinitely doomed villains. They clash in the shadow battles time and time and again yet everyone knows that Prince Rama, personification of godly grace, will eventually prevail over the hideous ten-headed demon king called Ravana.²⁴

The Wayang figures in Indonesia are none but the figures from the Indian epic The Mahabharats. For example, the figures of Krishna, Arjuna etc. However, the myths have

undergone almost radical changes in their transit to Indonesia. The Wayang puppet play is a combination of different myths from the Mahabharata as well as the Ramayana. Koch integrates the contemporary conflicts in Indonesia in terms of the Wayang myths; and perceives Kwan as Arjuna.

In Kwan's room, there are some two dimensional leather puppets in which the Hindu gods and heroes have been changed into weird cartoons. There is also a picture of a fat, hunchbacked, bald old man whose face was painted with gold; i.e. Semar, a dwarf who serves Arjuna. He is also a god in disguise - the old Javanese god 'Ismaja.'

The Indian influence is also seen in the Indonesian's belief in animistic religion i.e. the worship of the mother-Dewi Sri, the Goddess of Rice. The narrator has made it clear that -

Spiritually, this place is still a colony not of Holland; of Hindustan. It's old Hindu Kingdoms that are most real here.²⁵

So far as the technique in the novel is concerned, Koch has used the first person narrative technique. The first person narrator is a newspaper reporter called Cookie who builds up the narrative of the Indonesian revolution or Civil War from a journalistic, objective point of view. The story of Guy Hamilton and his relationship with Kwan on the one hand and Jill Bryant on the other forms the dramatic backbone caught in the maelstrom of the Civil War. For this purpose

the narrator makes use of dossiers and diary entries of different characters which give a sense of authenticity as well as a sense of intensity to the narrative. With the use of dossiers, for example, the narrator can use shifts in time, indirect narration of events or flash-back, and self-communings on the part of writers of the dossiers. All the dossiers are written by Kwan. Dossiers on individual are of two types -

- 1) Photographic
- 2) biographical details in a quasi-official style including the subjects & zodiacal sign.

The biographical dossiers on Sukarno, Hamilton and Jill Bryant are helpful to understand the characters and also to understand their role in the development of the plot.

e.g. the Dossier S g : Sukarno, Kwan gives the biodata of Sukarno as well as his relationship with the Javanese people.

To the people of the outer islands, he is the incarnation of the god Visnu, who sometimes comes to earth as a dwarf !

- - - - -.

Are you in some aspects Dwarf Semar ?
You who love the Wayang must sometimes think about Semar - who is the Old Javanese god Ismaja, transformed into a dwarf and a clown, Your people say Ismaja could still

rule the world if he wanted. The Javanese dream of glory ! A god in disguise -. ²⁶

The dossier on Ibu is photographic which elaborates Indonesia's poverty and Sukarno's negligence towards the poor. The dossier on 'Dwarf' has a mythical reference; it is a personal note of Kwan himself. In it we find the thin mask of pain and bitter humour but there is no self pity. This dossier also tells the history and mythology of dwarfs - for instance : Dossier D₂ : Dwarfs -

In Celtic mythology, the Kingdom of dwarfs below the earth, filled with precious metals, is called the Antipodes. Joke : I'm a dwarf from the Antipodes : and my files are my underground work - my secret mine of paper. ²⁷

The dossiers have an appearance of official records which makes for objectivity in the narration. In fact history and fiction are blended in such a dossier as the following.

DOSSIER S g : SUKARNO, Doctor Engineer Raden
(Kusno Susro), President, Republic of Indonesia.

- - - - -

B O R N : 6 June 1901, in the opening year of this terrible century, under the sign of Gemini. - - - he has twin personalities,

hard as steel, or poetic and sentimental. He was born at dwan, and a volcano erupted - both portents of future glory, of his role as a Javanese god-King !

NATIVE PLACE : East Java.

RELIGION : Muslim. But his mother, a Balinese, was high-caste Hindu. His father a Muslim of the priyay's class. Thus he unites in himself the two great religions of Java. A double man, a man of dualities.

- - - - you tell how you found yourself watching a ragged peasant hoeing a tiny field there : a property of less than one-third of a hectre.

You spoke to him, and asked him who owned the lot he worked on - - - - -. You then asked if his crop was sufficient for his needs. 'There's just barely enough to keep us alive', the peasant said.

This typical Javanese farmer was in fact a papur. You asked his name, and he told you, 'Marhaen'. And you used this

name for the poor landowning peasants of
of Indonesia, on whom the nation's well-
being depended, and whose voice you would
be.²⁸

The diary entries are analytical which describes
characters own torment. In the present novel Kwan's diary
reflects his misery and vicious dismissal. Diary entries
provide a variation on the device of dossiers. Diary entries
record the events currently taking place. Hence, they indicate
a sense of urgency and importance of a particular happening.

For instance, the following diary entry describes Kwan's
anguish after the death of Ibeis child Udin. Kwan is totally
moved by the child's death so much that he wishes to assassinate
Sukarno who was God to him once upon a time. The diary entry
runs as follows :-

Little Udin was buried today

Ibu wept now, riding in her betjak.
Did her wails reach your ears, Bung Karno
in the Merdeka Palace ? Udin died of a
simple complaint, from which no child in
the city need die, were it not for your
folly gastro-enteritis.

This is enough, Ibu and Udin will be
revenged. There must always be an instrument
to end tyranny's folly.²⁹



Technique is discovery. Technique is useful in organising and controlling the material. Mark Schorer says -

What we need in fiction is a devoted fidelity to every technique which will help us to discover and to evaluate our subject matter, and more than that, to discover the amplification of meaning of which our subject matter is capable.³⁰

Koch has selected for the material of the novel a momentous event in the history of an Asian country i.e. Indonesia. The fall of President Bung Sukarno and the Civil War which ends in violence is great event. But by itself, it would only be a historical record. But Koch being a novelist can build up the events leading to the Civil War and the fall of the dictator in an imaginative and dramatic manner. The story of an Australian newspaper reporter and his love affair could have been narrated against the backdrop of the civil war. But there, the love-story would have been the Central theme. Koch, in order to avoid the popular theme and in order to concentrate and focus his attention on the tumultuous commotion of the Civil War, has inter-mixed the love story in such a manner that the reader confronts a host of different thematic possibilities which recreate the times of the Indonesian Civil War as well as throw light on the socio-cultural

panorama of the Indonesian people. For this purpose, Koch has made use of the first person narrative, the use of dossiers and diary entries which "bounce" the reader, to use E. M. Forster's famous phrase, into accepting the story of the novel as an artistic and yet convincing experience.

** NOTES AND REFERENCES **

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9. Ibid., P. 184.
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14. Ibid., P. 240.
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19. Ibid., P. 241.
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