

Date: 22 Sep 2003 06:03:35 -0000  
From: "PRADEEP TRIKHA"  
Reply-To: "PRADEEP TRIKHA" <...>  
To: ii  
Subject: Greetings from India and an Important Interview

Dear Inez,

I cannot tell you that how much your visit to Ajmer cheered me up. I hope you are back in your cosy habitus. I am sending your photographs in mail in which I must confess you lend charms to others present in them.

I am sending couple of questions for your kind perusal and will appreciate to have your response to them. I am also keen to get your brief biographical note along with the interview that I intend including in the forthcoming book of the interviews.

with all good wishes,  
Pradeep Trikha.

#### INTERVIEW

1. How reliable are writers about their own work.

I don't know. The work, once finished, belongs to the reader, who creates their own version. The author, Umberto Eco says, must not interpret. But they may tell why and how he wrote their book.

2. Are you interested in myths?

Only in the way most people are interested in them, as aspects of culture and social imagination.

3. You can say something about you impressions of India?

India is far too multifarious, complex and infinite to be summarised.

4. Expressing of writers 'self' in different queries is altogether different. Each language has hidden agenda i.e. 'of thought'. The manifestation of 'self' in creative writing at times becomes a metaphor for national, identity if you agree?

I have not thought of this particularly, and am not keen to enter into questions of national identity. Identity is a complex issue, especially these days, and one prone to political manipulation.

5. Is there any book/collection of yours that you dislike?

No.

If asked to select the best 5-stories from your works what would they be like?

Can you choose your favorite from several children? I love all my works in different ways for different reasons, and the reasons can change. Different readers, I have found, have different favourites, and that's fine with me.

6. Do you consider yourself to have vivid peculiar imagination?

Yes.

7. Is equitable cultural exchange possible through literature between the two nations if not why?

Of course it is. Language and shared humanity make it possible. Refusal to enter into outdated hegemonic relationships make it possible. Energies circulate between cultures through literature, other arts, and personal encounters.

8. Have your writing methods changed over the years?

No, not really. Perhaps I use my computer more, but I still write notes with a pen. I developed my habits of work quite some time ago.

To what extent you consider yourself to be cater to the international audience.

I don't think of an 'audience' as belonging either to a nation or to the international. The model reader has no particular nationality. I would assume any potential reader is a literate adult who reads in the English language and who would find my work of interest for whatever reason. I suppose a cosmopolitan outlook would be one that would have greater sympathy with what I do than a narrow sectarian one.

9. What inspires you the most when you come to writing?

Writing itself. Reading other writers.

10. What are major influences on your works.

I'm not sure I know for sure. Life itself, and reading, would be greatest influences, along with other art forms such as music, painting and architecture.

11. Your novels *The Edge of Bali* and *Neem Dreams* are concerned with South East Asia, with land, landscape and its people. You have been to India number of times, what fascinated you?

I would hope that these novels themselves are the answer to such a question. I cannot sum this up, and can only explore the fascination with, for example, India, by immersing myself in creating a novel set in [part of] it.

12. How are these novels received by Australian readership?

The Edge of Bali had very positive reviews. Neem dreams is not yet available in Australia.

13. Do you ever consciously restrain yourself in writing about sexual relationships and things like that?

No.

14. Neem Dreams is set in India and you have addressed feminist in the region. Do you find yourself more comfortable with issues mentioned above?

Being comfortable is not the point. One does not write to be comfortable or to make others comfortable. A writer will write of the issues that obsess her. The best works disturb one.

15. In your recent novel the image of India is not so positive, any specific reason for that?

What do you mean by positive? Calls for 'positive' images are usually desires for sentimentalized or idealized depictions. I don't think in terms of positive or negative; the complexity of life cannot be reduced to such categories. There is not 'an image' of India in the novel, but a complex, shifting and multifarious setting in which characters experience a range of emotions and perceptions, depending on what they bring with them and how they are prepared to interpret what is before them. The language of 'positive images' is the language of advertising, not literature; of spin, not reality.

16. How does a place or setting in the novel give certainties and extra layers to your works?

Setting has its effects on all the other components of a novel – story, character, language etc – and can be seen as a central concern. Certainly in my work the setting generally is very specific, and is one of the driving forces in a work's development.

17. How much of the novel you're working on now is located in India?

I will write another novel partly set in India, but that will take some time. First I will finish a novel set in the northernmost part of Australia, and a number of short fictions with various settings.